

We all want to cheat. Whether it's getting inside secrets, cheatsheets, unfair advantage, whatever, a surefire way to sell something is to position it as giving the buyer some benefit not available to people who don't buy.



We want to cheat death – there are massive industries built on helping us to postpone dying. Sad statistic – 60% of your lifetime healthcare costs will be incurred in the final year of your life. And you'll still die anyway. But it's taboo to suggest that this is a waste of time, money, scarce resources and life even. Most countries outlaw end of life measures that would allow those people actually staring death in the face to choose the manner and timing of their own death. It seems my right to life outweighs my right to die.

I can't speak for anyone else, but when my time comes, if I am awake and aware I will take myself somewhere I can die peacefully. And if I'm not, I already have my DNR (do not resuscitate) order prepared.

Back in the land of the living, cheating is ubiquitous. Being late for work, leaving early, not doing your work, helping yourself to paper, pens, printing, office and kitchen supplies – these are all cheating.

I worked for an organisation that would happily spend \$1 million to make sure no-one could steal \$1, or avoid paying their bill. But they tolerate presentee-ism by a significant proportion of staff.

In any organisation or society there will always be the 10% who will always cheat, even when there is little to no benefit. And there's the 10% who will never cheat.

The other 80% will cheat if they have a need and believe they will get away with it.

This applies to all laws. It's human nature.

Yet we spend billions of \$\$ and billions of hours enforcing laws and rules that don't make sense, don't work and even if they did, they still wouldn't achieve the desired aim.

A mind that's changed against it's will is of the same opinion still.

Contrast that with:

A mind, once stretched, can never resume the same shape.

I think our hunger for the shortcut stems from societal beliefs around being shortchanged and/or entitled. If I'm on the wrong side of the economic tracks, I want to get to the greener grass and as quickly and painlessly as possible. If I'm born on the side of privilege, I not only want to preserve it - I want other people to preserve it for me, and pay for it too.

The cheetah is the fastest land animal, capable of 0-60 mph in 3 seconds. Human cheaters are equally speedy burning through whatever is fueling their thirst to be ahead - be that family, friends, colleagues, customers, suppliers, employers, competitors, banks, inheritances, windfalls, winnings - anything really.

And we all cheat. To some degree, some of the time. We cheat on our spouses, our children, our parents and siblings more often than anyone else, because they're closer, and to maintain our fiction, we've got to cheat - doesn't matter if it's lying, or stealing or infidelity - we've got to cheat. And we keep on cheating until we're caught.

But the person we cheat most often is ourselves – every excuse, every pretense, every justification robs us of our integrity. We turn a blind eye to our problems instead of facing and resolving them. We pretend everything is ok, when really we’re suicidal and hanging on by the thinnest of threads. We watch helplessly as the last of our self-respect slithers down the drain of mind-numbing distraction – alcohol, drugs, gambling, reckless and dangerous behaviour, over-eating, promiscuity, speeding, frenzied spending, buying and hoarding stuff and property to fill the unfillable chasm.

There are few things more terrifying than stepping into the light from the darkness. From the dark side, we can only see the pain and torment we are suffering being made infinitely worse if we allow others to see and know it.

And as long as we cast everything in terms of others, life outside ourselves, we’re doomed to rinse and repeat the cycles. Becoming honest is hard. It hurts. It’s inherently painful. And it can kill you.

Those who had to choose between a life of honesty or a dishonest death and chose death number in their millions.

Why?

Because we are conditioned to see life through a lens of what others will think, say, and do. Because we cannot see the burden of shame and guilt being lifted – we cannot forgive ourselves and therefore we cannot imagine that others would forgive us – and we think their forgiveness is important.

In the New Testament, Jesus tells us that anyone who has sinned is a slave to sin but that “the truth shall set you free” (John, 8:30 KJV)

The truth is that the opinions, thoughts, feelings, words and actions of others are

meaningless and unimportant insofar as our lives are concerned.

Shakespeare's Polonius says in Hamlet  
"This above all: to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

And the Master Therion, the infamous Alestair Crowley tells us in The Book of the Law:  
"Do what thou wilt, that shall be the whole of the Law.'

So, being true to my own self (i.e. my self-interest) and doing what I will (will being an exercise of will, and not a fancy) place me squarely in the realm of freedom and responsibility. I am free to do whatever I will and my guiding star, my North, is the prosecution and advancement of my interests.

There are few things more nakedly honest than to admit to doing something because I wanted to or I willed to.

And the wonderful thing is that having stepped through, from the darkness into the light, I can at last "see clearly" as St. Paul says in Corinthians 13.

Once I take responsibility for myself, I need not worry anymore about my brother. Indeed, being responsible, I am best placed to help him or her. No man's burden is heavy to anyone except himself. What does it cost me truly to lift the monkey off his back? Nothing. It makes both of us better, stronger.

Now, if you've stuck with me this far you may be wondering what's this got to do with business? Everything and nothing.

How I am in one thing is how I am in all things. The late Wayne Dyer tells a wonderful story

about a lady who consulted him because her husband was a drunk and no matter what she tried or did, he kept on drinking. Dyer pointed out to her that her husband's behaviour was entirely consistent with what he was - a drunk. Drunks drink. What else would you expect? He suggested she was the one who needed help because she was unable to accept reality.

So, drunks drink, liars lie and thieves steal. Cheaters cheat, conmen con, apples apple and grapes grape. I cannot fix my sister - the sooner I stop trying, the sooner I can be happy. My sister cannot fix me - the sooner I stop expecting her to, the happier I will be.

Commerce is an exchange of items of value. Clean commerce is where neither buyer nor seller is trying to cheat the other. Dirty commerce is the opposite. There is a lot of dirty commerce.

But that doesn't really matter, unless I choose to engage in it.

So yes, I am a cheat, a liar, a fool - and so are you. Some of the time. The key to giving value is to pick yourself up every time you fall, forgive yourself, and go again. And rinse and repeat.

I'd love to hear your thoughts and comments...

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