

Welcome Mid-June!

With summer weather now upon us (even if it's not officially "summer" yet), I'm excited to pen this issue of "Communications Digest." Some positive changes are taking shape to reformat this newsletter, so that the July issue will be more interactive and easy to read. Thanks for your patience, thus far, and please stay tuned!

In last month's issue, I returned to a blog series from 2012 on Seth Godin's visionary book, *Linchpin: Are You Indispensable?* The book importantly reminds us that each of us has genius of some kind to share, if we only stay motivated to facilitate its expression. This is as true in business as in any other field. I shared Lindsey Pollak's helpful writing about LinkedIn's publishing platform that deserves a look from entrepreneurs, and I shared Bryan Garner's parsing of the phrases, "Toe the Line" and "Toe the Mark."

Thanks to those of you who wrote in to say you found those articles interesting!

This month, I feature the second of three (encore) postings on Godin's writing, focusing here on his concept of internal "resistance," that can become anyone's enemy when one works creatively (to be a "linchpin"). I present some urgent words from technology and health consultant Meghan Telpner on how to use cell phones safely--which may cause you to rethink your own use. And Bryan Garner shares why we can say or write "as best" but not "as best as" and still be linguistically correct.

Enjoy this issue and the beauty of late spring, before the scorching sun reaches us. I hope that a beach, a barbeque and/or some genuine relaxation are on the calendar for you, this month or shortly after.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth

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Do You Lack the Motivation that a “Linchpin” Needs? Resisting your own Resistance in Seth Godin’s *_Linchpin_* (Part Two) (Revisiting a blog from April 11, 2012)

“The Thing you most need to do . . . is the thing the resistance most wants you to stop” (Godin 131).

Returning to Seth Godin's creative manifesto, *Linchpin: Are you Indispensable?*, I want to revisit Godin's ideas on how you can gain self-acceptance and respect as a "linchpin" paradoxically by doing the things you least want to do, and that you know you'll do *imperfectly*. This work (if we are to create value) requires us to counter our own "resistance," that comes from the "lizard brain" (in Godin's famous term).

Godin divides the human mind into two parts—the "daemon" (Roman for "genius"), an "inner or attendant spirit or inspiring force" (OED), and the "resistance." He says that the world forces us to "trade our genius and artistry for apparent stability" (1). A painful truth that he acknowledges is that creative work of all kinds can threaten one's mental health, partly because we feel anguish from the conflict between our ideas and the outside world. And, perhaps more relevantly to this newsletter, we exert mental energy and feel stress when we experience the clash between the work of expressing one's inner artist (i.e. to record what the "daemon" says) and the insistent force of our own mental "resistance."

"Resistance" is the enemy of the "daemon," Godin writes and the daemon has no control over it. At the same time, the resistance is "afraid" of what will happen "if your ideas get out" and "your gifts are received" (107). How many of us haven't felt that love/hate ambivalence of taking on a new (difficult) client or project?

As I'm foregrounding here, Godin's writing on "resistance" is powerful: if you ever lack motivation and courage in what you do, read the section of *Linchpin* named "The Resistance" -- even if you read nothing else in the book.

Godin catalogs examples of "resistance" including pressures to fit in, by doing what your supervisor wants; declining to offer your peers criticism, because it's uncomfortable at first; using a sales script with a client, because it's easier than having to engage with them more deeply; spending millions of dollars and far too much time to create an office space that you "can defend"; following a manual for how to do something, rather than making your own rules; delaying on calling prospects because you feel unable to face more potential rejection; and generally taking a comfortable route through work that rarely gets you to the places of "engagement and change" that "discomfort" yields (115-116).

If we're conscious about our motivation and psychology as creatives, it's obvious how powerful and pervasive our "resistance" can be: "Resistance seeks comfort [and] . . . wants to hide" (115), Godin says. The "lizard brain" that he sees as the source of "resistance" will "invent stories, illnesses, emergencies and distractions to keep your genius bottled up" (107).

Consider the marketer who demonstrates the "shiny, new penny" syndrome of studying new programs, before finishing any one or taking a contract. Or your assistant, who calls in sick when you most need his or her help.

The "lizard brain" motivates a person to procrastinate whenever possible, and that's often. It drives us to use task lists and to look busy, even to the point of workaholism, when we are not accomplishing anything important. The "lizard brain" is the archaic part of the brain, housed in the top of your spine (the small "amygdala"), and it is always "hungry, scared, angry," and lustful. It cares too much about what everyone else thinks, because the status of others is basic to primitive survival.

The “lizard brain,” as Godin writes, was there with homosapiens in ancient history and first shows up in the womb. It keeps you alive. It’s in charge of “fight or flight,” and so is valuable in an emergency. But it conflicts with the neocortex, the part of the brain that has developed only in recent human history and that has “evolved to allow art” (109). This creative part of your mind “makes you a happy, successful and connected member of society” (109). But with it, we can’t beat the “resistance” of the lizard altogether. Godin argues that we must “seduce” the “lizard brain,” by creating an environment that lulls it into sleep, so that we can create without its chatter of “resistance” undermining our efforts.

We can strengthen our creative voices against the “resistance” by keeping a daily journal, in which we don’t censor our own creativity.

“Wild animals have only a lizard brain” and not the neocortex, Godin writes. Animals equate survival with success, which should not be the case with us. He observes that “Survival interferes with the risk-taking needed to get through a day.” The “lizard brain” will “fight to the death, if it has to, but would rather run away”(107). It also “hates your genius and tries to stamp it out” (113) by the kind of negative self-talk and self-sabotage that writers and artists should guard against. Godin says that the best weapon against the “resistance” is consciously to overpower it, by bravely allowing your discomfort, fear and uncertainty to exist, while still doing your risk-taking, creative work.

So if you feel unmotivated at work, that may originate in something deeper than you first think. In the next (and final) issue on Godin’s book, I’ll explore how the “resistance” works, which is knowledge that we need if we are to subvert it.

Do you struggle with internal resistance in your work? Please write to share about it through the “contact” page of my website (www.elizabethshih.com). I’d be delighted to hear from you. Good luck in subverting your resistance.

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"Ask an Expert": Meghan Telpner on Healthy Cell Phone Use

Most of us use cell phones daily. I don't want to be a scaremonger, but they do carry radiation that is their biggest hazard—something many users know nothing about.

American health blogger Meghan Telpner cites American physician Dr. Devra Lee Davis:

"A cell phone is a two-way microwave radio. In order for it to receive information, it must send signals to the tower for the tower to send signals back to it.

Whenever you are moving (e.g. in cars or on bikes) while you are on your phone, the phone operates at full power to maintain connection with one cell tower after another. That means continuous, maximum microwave radiation.

On top of that, you have constant microwave radiation plumes generated by Wi-Fi and Bluetooth two-way transmissions as well as the notifications and updates of numerous smartphone apps.

The mobile industry euphemizes this radiation as “radio frequency energy,” because marketing cellphones as two-way microwave radios used next to the brain would not make them very popular.”

Since cell phones are not a fading trend, Telpner recommends these eight phone habits to make them as safe as possible:

(1) Avoid wearing your phone. Some women and men wear their phones in their underwear or shirt or pant pockets. This reflects ignorance that their phones are constantly sending and receiving signals, which emit radiation. Telpner cites the World Health Organization (WHO) as classifying cell phones as a “Class B carcinogen.” They can cause breast cancer for women and cancer and infertility in men.

She recommends carrying one’s phone as far away from one’s body as possible, especially when you travel, since that is the time when the phone continually emits and sends and receives signals. If you’re not expecting a call and aren’t actively using your phone, she suggests putting your phone on airplane mode, which switches that signal off.

(2) Avoid pressing your phone to the side of your face. If you position your phone less than 15 mm (5/8”) from your body, you will be exposed to RF energy that exceeds industry guidelines. In small print in the “settings” of iPhones, for instance, you’ll find the recommendation that you keep that degree of separation. Studies have shown that cell phone radiation exposure can contribute to brain tumours, salivary gland tumours, mouth cancers, and in children and adolescents, increases in brain cancer. Telpner suggests that you use the speaker phone function or a headset.

There are also radiation-blocking headsets available. If you do speak with the phone next to your face, remember to hold it at least 15 millimeters from your head.

(3) Get a radiation protective case: While so many worry about how their phone case will look or help them to take selfies, cases can reduce the cell phone signal, making your phone weaker. That is not only an inconvenience, but also increases the levels of radiation it emits:
<http://www.ewg.org/research/does-your-cell-phone-case-raise-your-radiation-exposure>

Since the Government of Canada’s Federal Communications Commission isn’t seeking our health and safety, we should. Telpner writes: “your brain, breasts, heart, uterus/ovaries or testicles and general nervous system will thank you. So will your healthy-brained children.”

She also recommends the "Pong" smart phone case, whose company makes research on this topic available to consumers. The case works to organize radio waves away from you as speaker, rather than towards you.

(4) Avoid streaming content, especially for children. The reason for this, Telpner says, is that “the rate of MWR (microwave radiation) absorption is higher in children than adults, because their brain tissues are more absorbent, their skulls are thinner and their relative size is smaller.”

To reduce harm, place every cell phone in airplane mode when not in immediate use. You can still watch videos in that mode, but the phone no longer sends and receives the signal. If you don’t have room on your phone to save videos, you can buy an app to store content inside.

(5) Use the “Night Shift” functionality in the evening. One of the main reasons late cell phone use can impair sleep is because it emits blue light, much like daylight. Our hormones regulate our brains to sleep in the darker, nighttime hours and to stay awake during daylight hours. Telpner reports that late night blue light exposure increases risk of diabetes and obesity. By reducing melatonin, the hormone that enables us to sleep at night, the phone can contribute to increased risk of some cancers.

One solution is to avoid phone usage a full hour before you go to bed. Or you can find the “night shift” settings (on an iPhone) that block out the blue light making, so that the screen appears “more orange/red,” when you view it. (There are also apps to make that change in screen when evening starts.)

(6) Cut yourself off: consider using your cell phone less. Research shows that using social media for more than three hours per day increases children’s anxiety and depression. Telpner suspects the same thing is true for adults. A solution is simply to cultivate conversations with people, live and face-to-face, rather than over devices, and to read books (hard copies!) to distract yourself from your portable technology.

(7) Switch your phone to airplane mode for overnight use: avoid using your phone as an alarm clock, or at least turn off the Wi-Fi signal by putting the phone in airplane mode and activate the “night shift” mode. Better yet, ban your phone from your bedroom. There’s no reason to sleep with your phone near your pillow, when it will “buzz,” “ping” and “ring” when you should be sleeping.

Telpner notes that breaking up your deepest sleep is terrible for your health, alone, even without considering radiation. One solution is also to unplug your router at night, if your family won’t avoid these risks.

(8) Set a turn-on time: why not start the day without turning your phone on, taking some exercise or eating breakfast? You could focus on your own family, rather than your readers or workmates. She adds that “reading all those work emails before you get to work does not make you more productive.” Morning news will not start your day with positive, calm emotions. Chances are very good that your reduced availability will improve your life—that you “won’t miss anything” good.

Moderate use of smart phones will not harm your health. But “too much” of a good thing (like any addiction) can threaten your well-being. Consider these tips from Meghan Telpner to make technology a more healthy part of your life, rather than a worrisome one.

Does your current smartphone use conform to Telpner's recommendations?

Please share your experience and thoughts on the “contact” page of my website: www.elizabethshih.com

I'd be delighted to continue this conversation.

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"Word Nerd's Corner": The Case of "As Best" and "As Best As"

American etymologist Bryan Garner recently blogged on the case of “as best: as best as.”

He writes that "the traditional idiom in question here is "*as best*" *she can*, meaning “in the best way” that she can. The "*as*" in "as best" isn't part of a comparison in terms, which would take the positive form of the adjective (*as good as*).

So adding a second *as* is wrong—e.g.:

- “Good dog owners try to discipline their dogs *as best as they* [should read: *as best they*] know how, but I don't think people give us a chance.” D. Andrich, “Dog Bias,” *Chicago Trib.*, 26 Sept. 1998, at 20.
- “He raised himself *as best as he* [should read *as best he*] could on his hands and knees and crawled out of the store.” Bruce Von Deylen, “Store Owner Felt Remorse, Fear After Shooting,” *South Bend Trib.*, 31 Jan. 1999, at A1.

Have you used "as best" or "as best as" when speaking or writing? Do you think Garner is splitting hairs?

Please send me your usage issues and bugbears on my "contact" page and I'll use them in a future blog or issue!

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Shop News . . .

Thank you to Kent Smith Windsor, Executive-Director of the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, for sharing a compelling article on mental health issues for entrepreneurs, published in Halifax Chamber's "Business Voice" magazine. The link, shared with members of the Saskatoon Chamber's Health Opportunities Committee, has motivated me to think and speak more broadly, as a workplace mental health advocate.

Thanks also to Barry Frain, graduate of the Praxis School of Entrepreneurship (2016) for sharing contract postings and staying touch via the Raj Manek Business Mentorship Program. Barry provides customs consulting amongst other services. To read more about his company, visit www.emanifest.express

And special thanks to family in the Okanagan, BC, for hosting a week long visit from me! I saw and ate in beautiful wineries, enjoyed conversation and some lovely walks. I'll return the favour in a month's time, when I'll host a family reunion.

And thanks as ever to fellow Raj Manek colleagues, Bob Pitzel and Ernie Quintal, who continue to share their thoughts and insight on building our businesses.

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About Us . . .

Since 2011, Elizabeth Shih Communications has provided B2B marketing and communications services on the Prairies and across Canada.

Do you need help writing your “marcom” materials? Please contact me through my website, via the CASL-compliant email form, on the right-hand side of each page (www.elizabethshih.com).

After I have received your permission, I’ll be pleased to discuss projects with you!

I help small- and medium-sized businesses create e-newsletters, blog postings, promotional emails, press releases, case studies and related documents that secure good clients. Please visit my website for more information (www.elizabethshih.com).