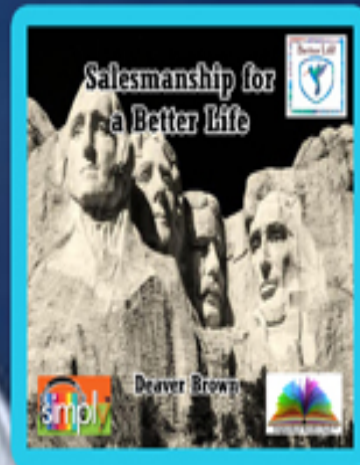


The Better Life Collection: The First 6 Titles



Deaver Brown



The Better Life Collection: The First 6 Titles

Deaver Brown

Simply Media Inc.
POB 481
Lincoln, MA 01773-0481
www.simplymedia.com

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01. Preface

You are halfway home to a better life because you have opened your mind to reading or listening to this book. Creative people spend a considerable amount of time doing this as Erasmus did, saying, “I would rather buy a book than food.” Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were both great readers as is Warren Buffett who said when asked how he could have made more money, “Sit longer on the porch and read more books.”

So you are in good company here.

The classic ironic cartoonist, Pogo, famously said, “We have met the enemy and it is us.” A good place for us to start as I have found my biases, and perhaps prejudices, often stopping me from pivoting from old ideas to new ones, old methods to new ones such as buying online not just in stores, depositing checks on apps not using tellers or ATMs, and investing in Apple or Amazon.

Yet, I have also found that even pivoting later works well when I have started to buy things online, deposit checks on my app, and buy Apple and Amazon stock. The metaphor for me is the advice great investors give about buying stocks, “It is never too late to buy a good stock or asset.”

A noteworthy example is when Buffett didn't buy Apple or Amazon until 2015 and yet almost doubled his investments in just a few years. So don't beat yourself up for not pivoting earlier. And don't stick with things because you are defending a position. Just let it go, easier said than done of course as I know from my own reluctance to abandon what I thought were solid practices to adopt new ones.

Our purpose here is to help you abandon old practices and ideas without undo remorse by accepting the practice as the smart thing to do despite not being early to the party. The first step is not to believe you must be omniscient and expect to get Amazon when Bezos

himself was driving books to his post office for book rate prices or Sam Walton had just 55 stores on his way up.

These should be your considerations, and possibly excuses they have been for me too, to pivot to new things, approaches, and ideas. Above all, to pull the trigger and go the mile to finish your new efforts. We are often our own worst enemy at this as Pogo said and drew in his famous cartoon. Most people have a hard time shifting from an ideological position and are derisive of those that do.

Tom Peters said it well. Sometimes you need to go ready, fire, aim to get something done. Otherwise you may get stuck aiming, and not the last 5% and running through tape as in a foot race.

Giveaway statements start with an aggressive point, "I have always...." or "I never...." When you hear yourself saying or thinking that, reconsider. Why are you so aggressively saying it; what are you defending and why. Listen for this from others since that is easier to do. The statements are meant to close the discussion. Why?

The why is straightforward: they are stuck as we all often are. The key to a better life is going the last mile in your work and thinking. How can you liberate yourself so you can be open to the options available to you.

When doing a challenged pivot stop you: when you get stuck defending the past.

My simple retort is, "I was wrong. Which word don't you understand?" Ironic and liberating. Dumping ideological baggage is a relief, much like dumping extra weight from a physical backpack.

A friend of mine, and MIT genius type with a sense of humor, told me early one morning, "Our new plan is we can be wrong once a day. That's 365 times per year, pretty good."

I called him at 9:30 AM the next day and said, "I'm over my limit. Now what?"

We had a good laugh and were on our way. Try it. Liberating. Every time I tell the story people get a chuckle out of it. It deserves a chuckle.

That point of view helps me every day and will help you here and elsewhere.

At Simply we have learned from our customers such as you that our mission should be to leave them with one good idea per title. That's what we are trying to do here.

02. Introduction

In the eCommerce world, we spend a lot of time talking about the last mile, how to get goods off of long distance conveyance and to people's houses, offices or their devices. And then there is discussion about how to turn those over safely and cheaply to people, proving it all happened, and completing the transaction.

Those that succeed in this last mile at this are the winners. Why? Because this is the last 5%, the hardest part. In sports it is called running through the tape as I wrote and said in the preface. Finishing off the run or match. The same is true in most of life. Those that finish the task are the winners, whether Jeff Bezos or Steve Jobs, down to the rest of us if you will allow me to write this without disparaging anyone.

This book is about that. How you can live a better life by doing this yourself in your personal and work life. And how you should motivate people around you to do the same whether they are your children, coworkers, customers, or suppliers. This is the ultimate way to lead a calmer, happier, and more productive life.

This book is full of short stories to illustrate the points. Since ancient times with Homer in the Iliad and Odyssey and in all tribes, humans learned through stories. Accordingly I do that here to make my points and give you more to think about and come to your own conclusions as they relate to your life experience.

03. Promotions given to the Go-To, Get It Done, Last Mile Person

Doug McMillon, Walmart CEO, put this clearly and convincingly: “I was promoted because in my work groups I took the lead by getting things done. Not as the boss or official leader, but as someone who stepped up to finish the task whether large or small. Not necessarily as well as I would have liked on many occasions, but I put my shoulder to the wheel and got them done.”

Implied but not directly stated by McMillon, organizations appreciate those who finish things and give them slack about failures along the way. At least they got it done in the spirit of good today is better than great tomorrow. This is how most bosses feel because they are responsible for getting things done.

When I was selected to join Birdseye in product management, the route to be CEO, I asked my nominal superior in my first few minutes how I could be of help. He said that he didn't want to impose on me but he needed a copy from the Xerox room as it was called then. I took the copy and went. The attendant was aware I was one of those in the horse race to the top. I told her I needed the one copy to finish a project for my boss. She said, “Most people give it to their secretary.” I said, “He needs it faster than that so I came down.”

She unbent and said, “I've got a stack of work here but I'll get yours done now.” I thanked her and said I would tell the boss and did. That made my reputation. It seemed obvious to me but many stuffed shirts who stand on formality and heirarchy, don't. When I got back with the copy, my boss's boss came in and I told him the story about how nice the attendant was.

He said, “She's tough on the newbies. But you made an ally for life there. Good for you,” and thanked my boss, and took off with the copy to finish his report to the big boss of Birdseye.

Advice upon last mile success: when you succeed, find out why you succeeded. In those days secretaries were important gatekeepers. It turned out that my boss and his boss were both put off by their own secretaries. And the Xerox attendant always had trouble with them too. So I broke the knot. By asking why, I learned why.

So when both secretaries soon asked me why I didn't ask them to do it. I was prepared so said, "because you were busy, and your boss had to wait, so I thought as the bottom person on the totem pole I would do it to break the knot."

From then on my nick name among the staff was The Knot breaker, a good epithet. It turns out they enjoyed telling the story and it reached the President of Birdseye's secretary which led her to glided me by in the rare occasions I had reason to see or interrupt him.

Years later he told me he had heard about it and was pleased, and then said, "After all, I made the final decision on the day you were here after 8 interviews and we offered you the job. You made me look good too, not being a pushy young man. Never discount doing small things."

That saga stuck to me like oatmeal to the ribs.

This was not my first rodeo. I had done that since 7. Pitching in on what I could do. People remember that. Most of the time the help isn't particularly important. Sometimes it is. Recently I realized it was called the last mile, thanks to all the smart people around the Internet and online activities who have added a host of good words and phrases such as this one.

04. Your Stories

So far I have framed the subject like framing a house. Now you need to think about your own last mile stories, those you did and those you didn't do. Write them down; reflect on them as we continue in this book and later again and again as you add to them and learn from them.

Mozart got it right the first time. Few people can do that so don't beat yourself up for continually working on your narrative. I am old now and still work the problems. Many people say I am young in spirit. I am because I keep enjoying pivoting by learning new things and finishing the work. We all know plenty of people who are stuck fossils by 30. Don't be one. Keep fresh; be like Socrates who said he went out everyday to find out what was going on. Adopt his attitude to stay current, active, and fresh.

When Socrates was voted the wisest person in Greece, he was at first surprised. Then he said, "I see. I know what I do not know."

That attitude is important for a better life and finishing the last mile, working to get better and better at it in as many ways as you can. At the Umbroller company, we had one all purpose go to guy from delivering a critical product sample to a remote buyer, to getting a hard to obtain part. He nick named himself RAM for his initials since he rammed things through.

An intuitive name because it wasn't always pretty what he had to do. He was a one off. I never had anyone else that amazing. He had me beat cold on that as he did most people. But it never stopped me from trying and shouldn't stop you either.

05. Respect People & Organizations Doing the Last 5%

Although this seems obvious, most people withhold as an act of no power and defiance, the not my job point of view. This is a no win situation but is still adopted by many. These people who stand in doorways ultimately must be sidestepped. So don't be one.

In the old days with travel agents, they were too busy to get me my tickets. Out of frustration I got my own. This evolved into online ticketing which eliminated all of these gatekeepers who thought they had no power.

Accountants used to tell me they were too busy to do my taxes but would graciously file an extension which I had to pay for of course. TurboTax came along to eliminate them as the travel agents had been.

On and on the story goes. Don't put yourself in that position. Be the Go to Last mile person everyone likes.

As Jennifer Aniston said about her waitressing, "I wasn't much good at it but I was nice and people liked that. My boss always put the difficult people at my tables and the regulars came back. I got lots of tips of course. It all worked out."

She said it so well about the last 5%. Similarly she has always been regarded well as a TV actress for that reason.

Worthy of note.

06. Approaches to Success: Turn the Chessboard Around to See Their Perspective

Although seemingly obvious, most people don't turn the proverbial chessboard around to see things from other people's perspective. When I have literally walked around a chessboard to see their position and POV, it has a reality I can't see otherwise. In the Bible it says walk a mile in a man's shoes to see his perspective on things. Keep focusing on their POV and you will do better in getting things done.

Start with why are they hiring you? Most people blow by that question without stopping to think about it; yet, it is the crucial question. What do they want you to do and how do they want you to do it? Start with what they want, not what they will tolerate.

Turn the proverbial chessboard around by asking yourself what you want when hiring someone or service. Almost uniformly it is prompt and completed work; no hassles and low maintenance in general. And finally their focusing on what you want, not what they want.

Doing most or all of these things gains them repeated work and will for you too. There it is. Just do the same for your employer, customers, and bosses. Above all they want you to go the last mile and get stuff done as Doug McMillon did on his way to be the CEO of the largest company in the world

Then flip the question around and consider what you don't want them to do.

First, you don't want to hear about what they will not do, in the "it isn't my job POV." This is exactly why companies, for better or worse, hate unions and their work rules which are essentially about what they won't do. In the no power tradition, creating complexity and inflexibility about getting work done, especially as circumstances change or unexpected things occur, are hurdles to getting things done.

At Xerox when I was a janitor in a college summer, the rain poured down one night and flooded the halls. I started to mop it up; my senior coworker said it wasn't our job. I replied that we were at the bottom of the totem pole and if we didn't do it no one would until the next day at the earliest. The security guard was there and supported me. The older guy just marched off in a huff and never helped at all.

When I came in the next night, the senior VP in charge of that operation thanked me, wrote me up with great praise for going the last mile, and pushed to assign me to manage janitorial and moving functions in his department. 5 years later as an MBA seeking a big job at Xerox, that was the closing argument about why I got the job: I was a Harvard guy who actually did the work and completed the job. It was amazing to me at the time that this was considered so rare. But after decades of work experience, I know it was and still is. Note: nothing was said about the quality of my mopping. As with Doug McMillon, I had completed the work and that was more than enough for the big boss.

Second, people seek those with a quiet positive attitude, not recalcitrant, upset, or no power oriented. They seek quiet, can do workers from beginning to end.

These people are jewels so be one yourself.

Third, a willingness to do the work without fuss is a major plus.

No one wants to hear about it. A great slang phrase is, "Don't start." Exactly so.

As an employer, I had a rule about employee absences. If someone was absent, they weren't permitted to tell their boss about it. If they did, they would be terminated automatically. No one wants to hear it. From the good employee's POV this policy kept their privacy intact.

Some people had to burden the boss with why they missed work because they had something more important to do than coming to

work, a clear stick in the eye. They were terminated by policy to save the boss the burden. Good workers appreciated not being quizzed.

Fourth, anticipate what needs to be done and accomplished as often as possible without further carrying on, as I did with the water mopping, and just do it, that marvelous Nike symbol.

This is a wonderful talent you should nurture and develop in yourself and look for in others.

That's what you need to do when working for someone or company.

Remember: You are hired as an employee, contractor, or supplier to extend their reach not for them to have to train, listen or otherwise deal with you. Of course some training is often required. But good workers generally hit the ground running, plow right in, and get things done. This is exactly what you want when hiring people or services yourself.

In sum follow the golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Simple, clear, but hard to do. Get stuff done by going the last 5%.

07. Summary

Reread this. Remember the best writings are short, concise, and to the point which we do in our Better Life series, following the example of the 209 word Gettysburg Address versus the 4 hour main keynote address by Edward Everett, then a US politician and later a Harvard President. To Everett's credit, he immediately said Lincoln's address was immortal.

FDR later said, "I wrote you this long letter because I didn't have time to write a short one." We work hard to write short eBooks and narrate them too.

And reaching back in time, Plato's short Allegory of the Cave is thought by many philosophers to be 50% of philosophy.

And my academic father said, the learning comes in the rereading and relistening.

In that spirit, reread and relisten to this as well as others in our Better Life and Harvard Thoughts series.

Thank you from Simply.

Pivot for Success & A Better Life



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01. Introduction

Change is always with us in modern times. The best way to deal with it comfortably and happily in your life is to pivot as changes come along. The first and most vital step is to learn to admit you must change to go with a new flow, not be obstructionist, defiant, angry, and upset by all of it. So start with that.

Let me name a few worthy and successful people who have done that for you to think about. And you need to decide as we go along which group you want to be in. In short, what will work best for you.

Then to show the obstructive people and organizations that lost by getting stuck, then often grew angry about it, but did have the comfort of sticking to their point of view (POV). Most people and organizations think it is safest, cautious, and prudent to do this. I will show you evidence this is not true now and never has been in modern times.

But change is hard for all of us. Some prefer not to try it at all. Since this is just a book, you can keep on without considering change but still rightfully congratulate yourself on examining the issue. The wisest in this group will come back and consider this again in a rereading where most knowledge comes to us.

An important pivot often can come when you don't understand something. In other words, a disruptive or unexpected event or trend. Especially reflect more deeply and pause if you just want to dismiss it by using an epithet such as it is stupid, crazy or plain wrong. This is the point to step back from it all and consider that everything has a reason. It may be a wrong one but there is a reason. And come back again later to see how you feel about it then. Often the first inkling is not sufficient to motivate us to pivot. But repeating the examination often works as it has for me and may have for you in your past.

If you find yourself not understanding a POV and you can restate it to the other person's satisfaction, you are on your way to learning

something new possibly. If you cannot do so, you are trapped in your own narrative and may miss out on something that may be important. Most of us lack this important, often life changing, skill because we don't work at it hard enough and it is work, uncomfortable work as a rule.

Socrates, considered the wisest person in Greece in their golden years, said, "I go out everyday to find out what is going on, what I don't know about." The wisest person of his time expected to have to pivot in his thinking frequently and welcomed the idea of doing so. Most of us can't rise to his enthusiasm but we can try and be mindful of that being the best way of thinking, not always sticking to our own narrative and POV.

Consider three such examples in our lifetime before we move on: when the PC was considered a toy before it evolved into the workhorse of computing; eBooks were considered a fad before they became the major media for books; Amazon was considered unimportant before it became the major competitor to Walmart and forced even them to make a huge pivot into online sales themselves to survive and prosper.

You can read this safely since you are not being put on the spot and forced to defend your point of view. You are the sole judge and jury of all of this. So please sit back and relax. Just reading or listening to this puts at least part of you in the pivot world. That is in and of itself relatively rare.

02. Emotional Comfort is the Beginning of a Better Life

Consider how emotionally satisfying it can be when you discard old unused or troublesome things. Most of us think, why didn't we do that earlier? Similarly, it can also be satisfying to discard older ideas and practices. We often also wonder then, why didn't I do it before?

At one level it is hard to discard anything; at another it is satisfying to eliminate those dusty remnants of the past, a particular skill of Americans, a major reason for our national successes: Time to move on as we say, from a job, location, and some people can be more productive and satisfying when you take this step. Also this approach to your life keeps your garden clear of weeds while preserving what you care about in work, place, and people important to you.

My friend and insightful writer, Amar Bhide, wrote the Venturesome Economy about how American entrepreneurs have the distinct advantage of our consumers and people that routinely try new things. I recommend the book to you as more evidence of the benefits of pivoting as Americans tend to do more than any other national group. We move, take new careers, try new things. As Peter Drucker writes, you can't eat if you don't void and clear out your system. Pivoting is how you do just that.

It is similarly satisfying to eliminate people from your life who are difficult to deal with. In my work, I have always wished I had terminated bad or disruptive workers earlier. It took me a while to realize I felt similarly about anything I discarded, which gave me more confidence to do so earlier in the future.

The other thing I learned was not to lay a trip on the discarded people. With workers I learned to say, "We can't do what you want so you are better off moving to some place where they will."

They saw the truth in it as they saved face at the same time; they could say we weren't good enough for them, which we weren't in their terms. It led to peaceful separations. A good thing all the way

around. Pivoting need not be grim. It should be happily encountered and done as best and calmly as possible.

When I first learned to do this at my Umbroller factory in Rochester, New York, I had terminated employees sign an agreement blaming us for not being the employer they wanted and felt they needed; and then writing they had quit voluntarily. Several managers and advisors working for me believed no one would sign this kind of document, but they did. I explained to these people that the terminated person was right on their own terms: we didn't meet their requirements and conditions. So I pivoted to explain their termination from their POV not ours. It always worked out.

We only wanted them gone because of the inappropriate fit, without stirring the dust with as few hard feelings as possible. It worked as I have said. Americans are the best at moving on. Not perfect of course. But solid. This served as a good example to me to take the same medicine myself: tough sometimes; but always better than not doing so.

03. Learn to Turn the Chessboard Around

One of the best methods to pivot is to consider the other side of things such as turning a chessboard around and looking at things from another person's POV. For example, in your family and extended family do that with each person who will let you do that. As you do so, you will start to see gaps in your understanding of them and be able to start filling them in.

This is your opportunity to ask and learn more about them. Since people spend 80% of their time thinking about themselves and their doings, there will be many openings to do just that. After doing this for years, I learned that the shortest distance between two points is not usually a straight line because people have learned by and large to block those kinds of direct approaches.

So consider indirect approaches and see where that takes them and you. Be patient and let them go on as they wish to do. The best insights are when you pay attention to what you didn't expect. When you hear something like that, follow up by letting them continue with their narrative. I have found most people welcome that once they get started.

People have a need to be understood and appreciated. If you make that effort, you will stand out in their minds. They won't expect you to get too much of their thinking and feelings at first; most are just delighted that you are permitting them to do so at all.

Does this sound right? If not, consider how few people have done this with you. Most people pin us to the wall with their own POV about us and don't tolerate us wandering off from it. Hence if you are the exception and let them wander off as they choose to do, you will stand out and please them. In turn you usually will feel more welcome yourself. Sometimes they go too far and feel embarrassed to have done so. If you watch out for this you can usually remedy it. If not, you moved further forward than you otherwise would have and can just let it ride that way for a while and hope for the best.

04. Take Inventory of What You Have Missed

Gaps often tell you more about things than filled in spaces. Consider what you don't know. A simple tactic to learn more about people is to ask one question in each conversation, and no more. In ten conversations you will learn ten different things which is quite a bit in total.

At a minimum, you get to know them better and have a more comfortable time together. The following are a few questions that are not too intrusive yet are telling.

1. What is your favorite time of day? An open ended question that can take you a long way.
2. What was your favorite vacation?
3. Who was your favorite teacher in grade school, high school, and college?
4. What job did you like best and why?
5. Follow up with asking why? Which takes them and you in deeper still.
6. Note these kinds of questions focus on the positives from their POV, not the complaints.

These are examples of questions rarely asked so they will give you fresh answers. I have always asked those kinds of questions and made good friends and business allies as a result. This approach took me a while to learn that often my short time hearing them answered seemed short to me but not to them, in the style of turning the chessboard around.

It was brought home to me in Business School when I met someone new who I got on with and we talked a while. He said after a while, "You know I know your best friend at Dartmouth." I didn't have such a

friend I could think of but nodded with interest and let him go on. The person he named I liked and respected but had never said much to me. The next day I clued in by pivoting in my thinking. He had talked to me more than he did to anyone else. A stunning memory. You may have similar ones yourself.

From that day forward, I devoted and treated my friend better and our relationship quietly improved over the years. I often didn't see him for 10 years at a time. But when we did see each other, we slipped easily into our solid relationship of old. If I hadn't pivoted after hearing his friend's comment to me in our initial encounter, it wouldn't have happened and my Dartmouth friend and I would both have missed out on something nice. He didn't need to pivot because he was already there. I did need to do so and did.

Be mindful of these pivoting opportunities to have a better and happier life.

05. Having the End in Mind

Stephen Covey emphasizes having the end in mind as a way of thinking. Focusing on how you want something to come out helps keep your eye on the prize, your goal, rather than getting stuck wandering around. In another book, I call this the last mile: Doing the last 5%, trying to get things done as you want them completed to meet your goals.

Importantly, before you begin an effort, you need to determine what you want the outcome to be so you have a chance to reach your goal. In *Alice in Wonderland* the famous question put to Alice by the Cheshire Cat was, "Where do you want to go?" She answers, "I don't know." So the Cheshire Cat concludes, "Then it doesn't much matter which way you go."

Keep this legendary dialogue in mind when you need to pivot to something else to accomplish something. Many lament their fear they can not get what they want. First you must determine what you want so you can pivot in that direction so you have a chance of getting it. Otherwise you will wander around aimlessly as the Cheshire Cat reminded Alice she would if she didn't decide what she wanted her destination to be.

Yale did an interesting study about the happiness of their graduates. The least happy 90% by their own judgment were those that didn't have a plan or destination in college. The top 2% had a specific plan. The next 8% had a plan though not overly specific.

The researchers found that the telling point was not whether they accomplished their plan, just that they had one. As I dug more deeply into the data, I discovered that the top 10% usually pivoted to something else, but they always had a plan. Those that focus on the end they have in mind as a principle in their life seem to have a greater ability than others to pivot to new plans to reach new ends they have in mind then.

That was the major takeaway for me in this research and my suggested guidance for you. Have a plan but be willing and open to pivoting as things change. Deal with ambiguity as Amar Bhide describes as the most important entrepreneurial skill in his book, *The Origins of Entrepreneurship* from Oxford. What Bhide said about Entrepreneurship can be said about all of us as we become entrepreneurs of our own lives: The happiest of us learn how to live with ambiguity as much as possible in order to pivot and seek new goals.

The key here is to be open to see and follow the green shoots of new trends and ideas, and see where they lead you. Some fade away like Blackberry and minicomputers; some hold their ground and become huge like Amazon and Google.

Fred Shero, the coach of the Philadelphia Flyers, said, "An oak is just an acorn that held its ground."

Since first hearing that Shero quote, I have adjusted my entrepreneurial objective from growing to holding my ground first. By creating stability through a cautious financial structure, I have been able to grow quickly in times like these down periods when people and organizations are less smug and more willing to try new things. Since I expect this period to continue for a decade or more, you can seek to stabilize your own life so you can do that too.

One of my most illuminating contributions to others at little cost to them or me was writing a case with my respected colleague, Professor Amar Bhide at Harvard Business School at the time. The short case of just 4 pages had everything in it.

Deaver Brown and Cross River is the name and now taught in 100s of business schools. At Simply I published a version of it for our downloadable eBook and audiobook collections. The premise is I had a 10 minute appointment to sell Macy's and then Kmart, the Walmart of its time, my product at the time.

Cross River was an emerging company selling the first portable juvenile product, a stick folding baby stroller branded Umbroller. As an entrepreneur, defined as not being backed yet by VC money, I knew I had to get a toehold with Kmart that I believed would be sufficient to catapult us to category leadership.

When the case was written in 1993, MBA students had already evolved into consultants rather than the sales, operations, and basic financial people of my student era. Sales had become a noted weakness in the curriculum as Amar had learned as a professor, despite being critical for entrepreneurial and business success in general. So we wrote the case together for his Harvard entrepreneurship course and Harvard Business Press case studies.

The case worked and always was a student favorite because it forced them to pivot in their thinking. Many came up to me 10 and 20 years later to thank me for it, the gritty one on one presentations in their classes, and the summary video produced by Amar interviewing me candidly with telling questions.

What was the pivot? The students tried to get everything in one shot. Huge numbers. Negotiated terms and more. The fact was I was only seeking a test order. I got 4 stores with 12 units each at Kmart, the Walmart of its day, a seemingly small order. But a year later we had evolved to 25,000 units per year with Kmart on up to 250,000 units per year, or 10% of the entire market, later which forced other retailers to follow suit and buy from us. This information all appeared in Amar's skillful video questioning of me with the recap after the class had 3 students make 10 minute presentations to someone standing in as the buyer, and had fully discussed the case after that.

There was more. But the key was for students to pivot and see first that a 10 minute meeting meant the buyer thought it would be a simple transaction which it was. The buyer told me what he could pay, \$11.80 to do a \$19.99 retail and \$14.99 on promo. My job was to say yes or walk away. The key at the time and in the case was we needed \$13.50 per unit at our current volume of 30,000 units per

year though \$11.00 would have been fine if we did 120,000 units per year..

The pivot was to see that Kmart would take us there if our marketing concept was right. We did not need promises or other commitments from Kmart other than the order from them. I did exactly that, had the end in mind of getting an order without regard to size. Almost no student did that; they held out to negotiate which wasn't in the cards. However, on reflection, they later pivoted mentally and learned they should have taken the \$11.80 test order by seeing what the upside could be. I learned as much from this case process as any student of ours did.

I was most delighted about how this taught the students to pivot successfully to get their end goal. As one said to me later like Alice, "I wasn't clear on what to ask for. I learned after the case to always be so in future sales meetings, and other meetings as well, or not even to go to them."

06. Simplify: Life as on a Canoe Trip

Pivoting is made easier by having a simple life. Everything you add must be moved with you as your life changes. Less is more is the credo for success and happiness in this regard.

This is especially true in tough times. A smaller residence, office, or footprint in general helps. Fewer if any vehicles. Using simpler bulk foods as at Costco or cheaper things in general such as available at Walmart and elsewhere in the discount world. Simpler hobbies such as walking, hiking, canoeing, or tennis versus motorbiking, golf, traveling, or skiing.

All of this means you pay less and save more.

Ben Franklin comes to the rescue with his legendary adage: A penny saved is a penny earned. When young I didn't get the full meaning of this as I didn't of many things at the time until I experienced them first hand in my first job, entrepreneurial venture, and married life. However, I got a glimpse of it in college summer jobs when working as a canoe guide and later as a boarding school teacher at Exeter versus a regular factory job at Xerox.

When working as a teacher or as a canoe guide in Canada, I got my room and board paid while living in both places. The gross amount was less than my summer work at Xerox as a handyman but there I lived at home, bought my own meals, and paid commuting expenses. So I came out with less money. This led me to pivot to recognize it is not what you earn but what you are left with after expenses that matters.

This was an invaluable lesson when later doing manufacturing or having offices of my own versus using drop ship contractors. My companies made a higher margin doing our own manufacturing or running offices; but we netted less than when contracting that work out and avoiding those costs. My summer work experience taught

me to pivot and think differently about things. Keep vigilant about how you can do that in your own life.

Often I had to start new ventures with manufacturing facilities and offices. But I kept the end in mind of cutting those costs out when I had enough business to move to contract manufacturers and outsourced office work. In short, I planned for the pivot when I could do it, having my goal clearly in mind.

Do so yourself in your own life. You may not be able to do it now as I wasn't able to do it many times. But prepare to pivot when you can do so. It took me a long time to figure that out. So don't beat yourself up if you haven't figured that out either. But start thinking this way now. As the Chinese proverb declares, "The journey of a 1000 miles starts with a single step." That credo has helped me over the years. As with the small 48 piece order from Kmart, the first step can lead to big things.

07. I Was Wrong.

This statement brought it home to me as I started to use it when I pivoted after 50. I learned to admit I pivoted because I was wrong or had become wrong. Surprisingly to me then but no longer so since it has happened to me frequently since, many people objected to me doing so and admitting my error.

Ideologues as I came to learn want everyone to hold their same positions such as the classic from some people about their voting habits, as they say they voted that way because “I have always been a Democrat.” Or, “I have always done that because...” I have always been a Republican, a trade unionist, a Northerner, etc and so on.

Few things are as rewarding as abandoning a dry hole whether you are seeking water or oil, a business or personal matter, or other failed efforts. Pivoting means you have had the courage to do that, an all too rare thing for most of us.

Peter Drucker, the legendary management thinker, said, “The most important thing a CEO can do is abandon failing or mediocre products or efforts so they can make room for better ones to nurture and invest in.”

The ancient airline joke serves: “I have one piece of good news and one of bad. We are traveling at record speed but are lost.” Just slowing down can be a victory; pivoting starts you on the way back to something possibly rewarding but at least not as bad as hurtling forward on a wrong course.

08. No More Than 3 Objectives, Check Back on the Story & It is Never too Late to Pivot

As Lord Chesterfield said, “Do one thing at a time and you can get everything done in a day. Try to do two things at a time and nothing gets done.”

Similarly limit your objectives and only work on one at a time. Too many objectives mean you only have a laundry list. Pivot to identify which three are most important and focus on those as legendary GE CEO Jack Welch said. And he said further, “When you complete one, pivot and decide which new one should be your new third based on what is going on at the time.”

Always check back on the results of your decisions. Few of us do that. Harvard College used to check back on how their admitted students did. The Director of Admissions, Fred Glimp, told me that it was their greatest learning device to do better over time. Impressive. He called that pivoting too. Checking back on your choices and decisions can work as effectively for you. Peter Drucker and Sam Walton recommended doing the same thing and recounted the many times that led them to readjust and pivot successfully later.

Warren Buffett said he did that frequently and was the better for it. “In their early days I didn't buy Microsoft, Apple, or Amazon. Later I did when their stories changed. I bought the stocks then and we did very well by it. Remember that it is never too late to pivot and change course.”

I will leave you with that parting advice from Buffett which echoes in my mind as I recommend it should in yours: “It is never too late to pivot and change course.”

Thank you for reading this from Simply and Deaver Brown as the author.



Declutter for a Better Life

Deaver Brown



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Deaver Brown

Simply Media Inc.
POB 481
Lincoln, MA 01773-0481
www.simplymedia.com

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01. Introduction

Clutter is a major obstacle in many people's lives. You understand this because you are reading this book. The good news is there are a number of reliable strategies to declutter your life. Two of our best selling eBooks & audiobooks over the years have been *Organize Yourself for a Better Life* and *Busy & Stressed: Creating White Space in Your Life*.

These readers and listeners requested us to write a specific book about decluttering and simplifying their lives. As you know, these things are harder to do than write about. The challenge is to sift through various approaches and select the few best ones.

This has worked well for our readers and listeners with other titles such as *Handling Difficult People* in which we boiled down the types to just 4 and then recommended strategies and tactics to handle each of them. We are applying the same logic here. In short, to have too many solutions is to have none at all. We needed to simplify them so you have a manageable list to work with in your daily life.

There is no silver bullet here, just concepts and specific small things you can do to improve your life over time.

02. The Flat Surface: The Second Greatest Invention

One of the greatest insights I have ever received was from the CEO of APC who was an MIT PhD graduate in engineering, who said: "The second greatest invention was the flat surface." I added, "When clear," and he chuckled along with me.

So as with the adage of how to cook a chicken, the first thing is you must catch it; similarly, your first step in decluttering is to keep your flat surfaces clear in your closets, drawers, garage, house, office, and vehicle if you use one. This is an enormous challenge worthy of effort and vigilance to maintain.

As General Patton famously said in organizing one of the greatest armies ever mobilized in World War 2, "First you will clean up and organize yourself; then you will do the same for your area; and then we will try to transform you into the greatest military force in history." Many believe he did just that by starting with the basics of cleaning up oneself and one's area, before attempting to achieve the larger goal of building a great army. It is said the Nazi's only feared one general, Patton, and for good reason as it turned out.

We are transferring those goals to you to declutter your life for success and a better life through more efficiency and effectiveness. The task is hard as it was for General Patton; it takes effort in large and small ways; you must be vigilant to do it at all times. And when you slip and fall off the proverbial horse, hustle back up on it again.

We all get knocked down and off our objectives. Don't be stressed by that. The key thing is to persist, dust yourself off, and get started towards your goals again.

As Shakespeare's king said, "My kingdom for a horse," to try escape with his life from a battlefield. Small things such as one horse can turn out to be decisive events, just like the flat surface. Keep that in mind as you explore the small ways to declutter and improve your life as well as your larger concepts and goals.

03. You

Everything starts with you as General Patton told his soldiers. Decluttering involves simplifying everything you have and work with. The first place to start is with your clothes. The simplest approach is to discard everything you haven't used or worn in 3 years. This usually eliminates over 50% of your things in your closet and drawers. Anything you might use but have buried away, separate out and see if you use or wear them in the next 90 days. If not, out with those too.

Less is more in the decluttering business. Sometimes you need a strong hand with you to help you execute this process. My wife and I had an ironic moment when we stored some things in a friend's barn in Rochester before moving to Boston. One day five years later, he called to say there had been a flood and our stuff was a mess. My wife and I looked at each other, nodded, and told him to throw it all out. We hadn't wanted to throw it out before, but we had gotten along just fine without any of it for 5 years. The flood was our savior.

Ministorage units can do that for you by letting you send things to an intermediate place and see if you want any of it back again. My wife agreed to do this when we moved out of our big house when the children grew up and left.

First, we dumped dumpster loads of stuff. Then we moved what was left and not needed for our new place, but we wanted to keep, into a \$525 per month ministorage unit. We gradually pruned it down. We are now down to a \$75 per month unit nearer us. We haven't taken anything out in years. We need another flood to save us from ourselves from the rest of our unused things. In short, we know better but still hang on to them.

My business school roommate owns and runs ministorage units in California. He says most tenants eventually stop paying and abandon their stuff for his firm to deal with it. He said their auctions never pay much of the overdo rent but it usually covers their removal

costs. So you are in good company if you have this letting go problem. So relax, don't beat yourself up about it, and just move on with all the rest of us imperfect people and do the best you can. And consider having a good horse laugh about it all as a tonic with your version of this if this happens to you.

My wife used to buy things she never liked. I recommended she wear or use them once in the next week. If she didn't use them, or didn't plan to use them again, I suggested she return or discard them immediately if not sooner. I coaxed her along by saying we all buy things that don't work for a variety of reasons. This followed the retailer's credo that your first loss is your best loss; discard the unneeded as quickly as you can bear to do so, so you don't suffer twice by having them clutter up your life and remind you of your purchasing error every time you see them.

The best example for us was when we learned to leave a movie immediately if we both really didn't like it. Why both pay for it and be trapped by it? This was an enormous liberation for us. We learned to do that in restaurants too. If we got seated but not served, we just left. Clothes are no different and she bought into the program as did I.

I bought fewer things but also found it just as hard as my wife to discard them. I forced myself to follow my own advice, chuckling about it as I went along. Tip: Again, a good laugh about your reluctance to discard things eases the pain as it did for me.

Moving is another opportunity to rid yourself of the unnecessary. Whenever I moved, it gave me the opportunity to decide whether I wanted to keep something or get rid of it, then and there. As I discussed before, when moving out of our family house with the 5 children we had raised, we got rid of dumpsters of stuff. Some of it was fine, but would never be used again. Some we just weren't motivated to eliminate but did so later as we downsized our ministorage unit over time.

First we downsized to a smaller house and did the same discarding when we moved in. After that, we realized the new house was unnecessarily big and we moved to a smaller condo house and got rid of more. At each stage, we felt more liberated by having less stuff. Make the same happen for you.

Lesson: Don't stress yourself about simplifying. Recognize how hard it is and do a little at a time.

Be mindful of what Mark Twain said about bad habits, "You can't throw bad habits out the window; you have to coax them down the stairs."

04. Your Personal & Work Area

Paperwork is similar. Pick an annual date and use it to purge your unused paper work. Anything you haven't referred to in 6 years discard, which covers IRS paperwork and eliminates everything but a few official records such as birth and marriage certificates and licenses.

In home or business offices, the same rule should apply. When I ran offices before I moved all of my employees and contractors to their home offices, I never bought desks with drawers. Things got stuck and lost there. Whenever we let go of an ineffective person, we always found undealt with paperwork in their drawers which clogged their office area and worked like a form of constipation.

After a year of that, I learned to check out a desk of a questionable employee. Uniformly, ineffective employees had stuffed away things that needed to be dealt with but they had put off. My best employees got most, if not all of their things, moving the same day they received them and were in what I called the clean desk club. Now in the digital era, it can be much easier except for those who still keep unnecessary backup files and data.

In short, the workers' desk and area space was a picture window into their effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Make that work for you as an individual, employee or boss.

05. Your Kitchen, Other Living & Work Spaces Part 2

The same approach works in your kitchen, your other living spaces, and at work. Discard any device you haven't used in 3 years. Then eat or discard old food.

Then learn to buy by the meal, not just food. I buy as for a canoe trip when I was a canoe guide: 28 days until the next Costco shopping trip, with a few trips to my local grocery store to fill in with a few fresh groceries until my next shopping trip. See our eBook and audiobook, *Discipline for a Better Life*, that covers this in more detail.

06. Summary: Getting Things Done

Decluttering helps you clear away unused things that stand in your way so you can get work done faster, more efficiently, and effectively. Consider it like a runner losing weight to run more smoothly, faster, with less injury to their body parts, and more calmly. Eliminating baggage of all sorts works for better trips, whether long or short. Use this succinct guide to do so. Reread this eBook occasionally to refocus on your objectives and tactics. This is one of our shortest books because the approach is simple but hard.

Keep up these practices every day so they become hard, ingrained, automatic habits that will create your better life.

Thank you from Simply.

Discipline for a Better Life



Deaver Brown



Discipline for a Better Life

Deaver Brown

Simply Media Inc.
POB 481
Lincoln, MA 01773-0481
www.simplymedia.com

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01. Introduction

In a world where everyone is above average as Garrison Keillor wrote in *A Prairie Home Companion*, the victories are easier for those that are disciplined and understand, act, and communicate that they are average until they prove otherwise. This point of view will have you stand out in a world increasingly abandoning standards in favor of no criticism, inclusion, and many gold stars.

In this book we will present ideas for you to be disciplined to achieve more for yourself and be recognized for doing so by your associates, decision makers, bosses, family and friends. John Kennedy's famous line in his 1961 Inaugural Address said, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country."

Take this message to heart to have a better life. Refine it for yourself by saying, "I don't ask for others to give me a free pass, but to earn my successes by merit and performance in supporting myself and others." This attitude will take you far in school, work, community, family, and relationships.

Doug McMillon, Walmart CEO, was asked how he got promoted up to CEO. He said, "In every group I was in I stepped up and did what needed to be done. That led me to be a leader, whether with a title or not, and I moved all the way up to CEO in 25 years."

02. Being On Time & Organized

As Woody Allen said, “75% of life is just showing up.” This is the first element of being disciplined: showing up. This melds in with the aphorism, “You have to catch the chicken before you can cook it.”

Viewing these statements as valid is a divide between those that do and those that have disdain for cliches and aphorism. As I have gotten older, and this is true for the successful people I know, I believe as they gain more experience, that cliches and aphorisms are generally, if not always, true.

At a minimum, be mindful of them. The betting odds finalize this thought, “You can pull to an inside straight and win; just don't bet on it.”

When I had to run a factory back when selling the Umbroller stroller, I inherited a group of older workers from a contractor. They were at least 20 years older than I was at the time. These people had learned to be on time and were. When I had to expand the factory and the workforce, I hired younger workers who had struggles being on time and other related issues. I reverted to older workers for stability thereafter.

At the employees' suggestion, we expanded the cafeteria when we reached 200 employees to include 3 hot meals per day for a dollar each which would be four dollars each today. The older workers tended to come in early for the first shift and have coffee and breakfast. On the second shift they would arrive early and have coffee and dinner. Very calm. The younger workers tended to rush in at the last moment, be agitated, and therefore disruptive.

I modeled myself on the older workers. When listening to them, they told me things such as, “I used to do that.” In the same way, the older workers needed less supervision and required little discipline.

Later a wonderful new term came into use that succinctly described it all: a low maintenance worker. After a few years, I had learned to seek out one answer about prospective employees: were they on time in their last job. Those who were on time consistently always turned out to be low maintenance workers. They almost always worked out if they lasted my 1 day, 7 day, and 30 day trial periods relating to the work itself.

The second part was being organized which became more and more important in higher levels of responsibility. At the worker level, the measurement was simply: hitting 1800 rivets or more per day was good; hitting 1799 or less was bad. And other precise measurements like that.

In higher levels, the work and evaluations became more complex and varied. The deciding variable then became were they organized? Their desk space was the key to their work and evaluation. The effective managers had a clean space and clear workspace. They had no piles of old papers, notes, and other insundry things such as old coffee cups. After a few years, I only bought desks with no drawers so things didn't get stuffed away, out of sight, out of mind.

Then I got another signal, anyone who asked for drawers was a loser at work. It was like a red flag to a bull with me. That was enough after I listened earlier to the common complaint of ineffective managers, "I have too much to do; I don't have time," etc., and so on and so on.

The same rules apply in one's personal life. I trained my children to have a clean, organized space at school and their room at home, with various tips and rules that are good for all of us at any age.

1. The Ohio rule: Only Touch It Once. Don't put a spoon or cup in the sink. Put them directly into the dishwasher. Then you don't have to handle them twice, or you will have to rinse and scrub it when encrusted, and put in the dishwasher then. When dealing with a letter or document, deal with it at once. If it is a

bill to be paid by check later, put the date on it to be paid and put it in a single pile for that purpose. Or better yet, now that you can usually pay bills online, set payment up right then for the date you want it to be paid. Done.

2. Anything you bring into your space, discard one or more items of similar size. If you buy a new shirt or pair of socks, discard an old one. As Stephen Covey says, "Have the end in mind." Before buying anything, decide what you will discard. If you can't think of anything, don't buy it.
3. Sweep, wash, and do your bed linens on the same day and time every week so it becomes a habit.
4. Use two hands, something many people don't do, to carry things, straighten up, lift, and more.
5. Pick up things as you go by so you don't have to make a separate trip.
6. Travel light in all respects from commutes to trips.

Start with these six rules for a more peaceful and productive life.

03. Kitchen, Dining Area & Supplies

This is the area you use 500 to 1000 times a year. By exerting discipline here, you can streamline your situation for a better life.

Start by eliminating anything you haven't used in 3 years. Gift utensils away at dump swap tables or to Goodwill. Send old bottles and other things to the trash.

Clean out your refrigerator of anything you haven't used in 3 months. Most people now have 30% to 50% more space if they do this.

The flat surface is the greatest invention after the wheel. Remove anything you haven't used in 30 days from these surfaces. Consign those items to a nearby shelf. If you don't use them in the next 3 months, consider sending them to a swap table, Goodwill or garbage too.

Now you are ready to consider your supplies: food and related items.

1. Clean out your refrigerator first.
2. Put older food up front to eat first.
3. Buy by the meal not food.
4. Buy as little food and other things that are bad for you that you can tolerate.

Those 4 rules cover the big issues. Everything else comes under habits. Don't try to make too many advances at once. Most of us can't do that successfully As Mark Twain said, "Bad habits can not be thrown out the window; they must be coaxed down the stairs."

Your refrigerator requires a good scrubbing as most of ours do. Now is the time to do that simple but hard task of unloading everything and cleaning it out at the same time. Check out the age and utility of everything again. Discard the unneeded and unused. Then carefully

reload your refrigerator thinking about every item you put back in on the same criteria. This gives you a second bite at the apple.

Learn to buy by the meal as on a hiking or canoe trip. I used to do that as a canoe guide for 7 up to 21 days, with a spare meal. It is surprisingly easy to do once you get the hang of it. You must have the discipline to buy that way and then eat your meals relatively in that order. It is really quite similar to buffet free meals at home or in institutions such as schools or camps: you eat what you are served.

See our audiobook and eBook, No More Diets.

Tip: Disciplined inventory planning means you never have to “run to the store.” This contributes more than you may think to cost and time savings as well as the comfort of things being under control. My mother did this by having back ups of insundry items such as frozen foods, light bulbs, cereals, tape, staples, paper, checks, and such things. A small investment in extra inventory for a big return in cost savings and less stress in your future.

Personally I buy 28 days of food and supplies from Costco on each trip, while sprucing up the last 14 days with fresh food from our local grocery store. It saves money and time. As you get the hang of it you will do better. This leads to creating a healthier diet by what you buy which leads to the next chapter on using discipline for what you eat & drink as well as regular exercise.

04. Your Health & Well Being

As the Harvard medical journal writes, “The only way to keep your weight down is to eat less.” Since your intake relates to your weight, women have to eat less than men. Restaurants are a particular threat to women since they are served the same portions as men.

The best way to work with food is to think of it as investments in calories and nutrition. There are substantial opportunities to trade down in calories such as replacing 200 calorie peas or corn with 60 calorie green beans or spinach. Then boiled versus seasoned chicken. Eliminating or limiting condiments such as sour cream, butter, and cheese helps too. Substituting low calorie Greek yoghurt for high calorie sugar yoghurts. Then use low cal balsamic vinegar instead of high calorie cream based salad dressings, and occasionally use none at all.

Restaurants often have calories listed in what is called nudge law. This is a requirement to list the calories, but not enforce anything, so diners can make an informed choice. An excellent example is at McDonald’s with their great Southwest salads. With their good low cal dressing it is just 290 calories if you have the broiled chicken. If you go for any of the high cal dressings and grilled chicken, it is 550 calories. Even if you only choose the 290 calorie item one time out of two you help yourself. Again, see our eBook or audiobook, No More Diets at \$2.99 at all of our accounts listed at simplymedia.com.

If you get in the habit of adding no salt and boiling not frying meats, you will find the taste of the jazzed up versions repellent later. If you get in the habit of adding fruits and vegetables versus bread and starches to your meals, you will feel likewise. Baked bread or rolls now taste like dessert to me.

Finally, don't bring temptation into the house: No chips, ice cream, high calorie anything. If they are in the kitchen, we all eat them.

Exercise is similar. Don't overdo it as my Doc says not to do. He goes on to say 10 minutes of extra walking every day has more impact than taking that to 100 minutes every day. Do some; don't press yourself on speed or distance. I run 400 yards a day with this in mind and walk 5000 steps. No more or I'll quit.

With exercise, do some simple stretches once or twice a day. Nothing hard; no machines; no gyms needed. Almost all of us give up on the hard stuff quickly. Stick with simple exercise you can get into your routine several times a day.

The other tip is to stand up when you can, at least once an hour. Apple does this at their meetings with some success and laughter, a great human tonic. My doc also talks about wiggle time. When talking on a cell, walk around. When I write this or record an audio, I am standing up most of the time.

My best example of people not doing it was on my last trip to Dallas from Boston. On the 4 hour flight, only 8 people of 100 or so ever stood up. Only 2 of us walked down the aisles. I pretended to go to the bathroom to have cover from curious eyes.

It takes discipline to get started at all of this. After a while it will become a habit if you keep it up. Then it becomes automatic. Try it. And as you get thrown off your plan as all of us do, just get back on the horse. Getting thrown off is normal; getting back up and continuing again is not. Be the unusual one; don't beat yourself up for failures. Just do it again. That marvelous Nike slogan, Just do it.

Final take away: Follow the Delphic Oracle wisdom of three things to live by from the golden years of Greece. The first is Know Thyself. The second is Everything in moderation. Discipline need not be extreme. It should be moderate and consistent.

The third is never sign a personal guarantee called a surety note back in the day, which leads us into our next chapter, your finances.

05. Your Finances

The best two quotations are from Charles Dickens and Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great wit and compiler of the first English dictionary from which all others evolved down to Google search.

Dickens: "Earn 20 pounds a year and spend 19. Happiness. Earn 20 and spend 21. Misery."

Johnson: "Spend less than you earn."

Financial institutions prove this over and over again in their own statistical analysis about creditworthiness. Income has no impact on creditworthiness. Either plus or minus. The great leader of Citibank, John Reed, had the courage to declare it. He also recognized that most people hate and fear banks so ATMs allowed them to avoid tellers and their suspicious looks.

He then said, "We learned that high income well educated people preferred ATMs more than most people. Lower income less educated people liked the tellers and the sociability of the event. We asked ourselves why this was true and researched the matter further in small focus groups." The answers were unexpected but logical when stated and thought about.

Poorer less educated people started working earlier in life while still living at home. They didn't use checks much. They didn't have bank or credit cards or that debt. Any debt they had was private and at high rates. Banks, therefore, appeared good and safe to most of them.

People going to college depended on banks to cash their own checks for cash. Often they didn't have it in their account and were rejected by tellers suspiciously. As they prospered in the work world, they took out credit cards as well as loans for cars and houses. In the struggle to get those loans and credit lines paid, they sometimes missed payments and were dunned.

Reed discovered all that with his handsome Yale bond trader looks along with his math training at MIT.

This brings us back to you, and your following the advice of Johnson and Dickens.

How to do it, which is always easier said than done.

1. Win at gambling by not doing it, from casinos to lottery tickets. Remember they didn't build those fancy buildings or turn over big profits to the states because they lost. That money was all voluntarily spent by gamblers of one sort or another, unlike taxes which are involuntarily extracted from us with substantial penalties if we don't comply.
2. Invest your extra money in a safe but growth oriented low expense mutual fund such as from Vanguard or Fidelity. My favorite is the growth and dividend fund from Vanguard. If a company doesn't pay a dividend the Vanguard fund doesn't invest in it. If they cut a dividend or are about to do so, they sell. So they protect the downside by getting you out of failing companies early, such as Sears, JCPenney, GE, and IBM. You miss out on the high flyers like Amazon that don't pay dividends. But as Warren Buffett said, "They are a rare occurrence so we missed it."
3. Save your pennies. Do small things such as brew coffee at home and don't buy it elsewhere. I brew a big pot of Kirkland by Starbucks for about \$.20 a day. That is a \$1000 or more a year you can add to your mutual fund. Big money over time with the miracle of compound interest. The intellectual respectability for this comes from Ben Franklin, in his Poor Richard's Almanac (k). "A penny saved is a penny earned."
4. Invest to the maximum in your 401 or Roth depending on your circumstances. Either choice is better than neither one.
5. Buy only used cars. As with any depreciating asset, best to buy the cheapest which has multiple additional savings: lower insurance costs & excise taxes. Consider a higher collision

deductible and put the savings into a higher personal liability amount, where the real risk is.

6. If you buy a house or condo, don't buy too much. Boomers are downsizing. Many Millennials have done well by being in the market versus owning property. Be cautious here.

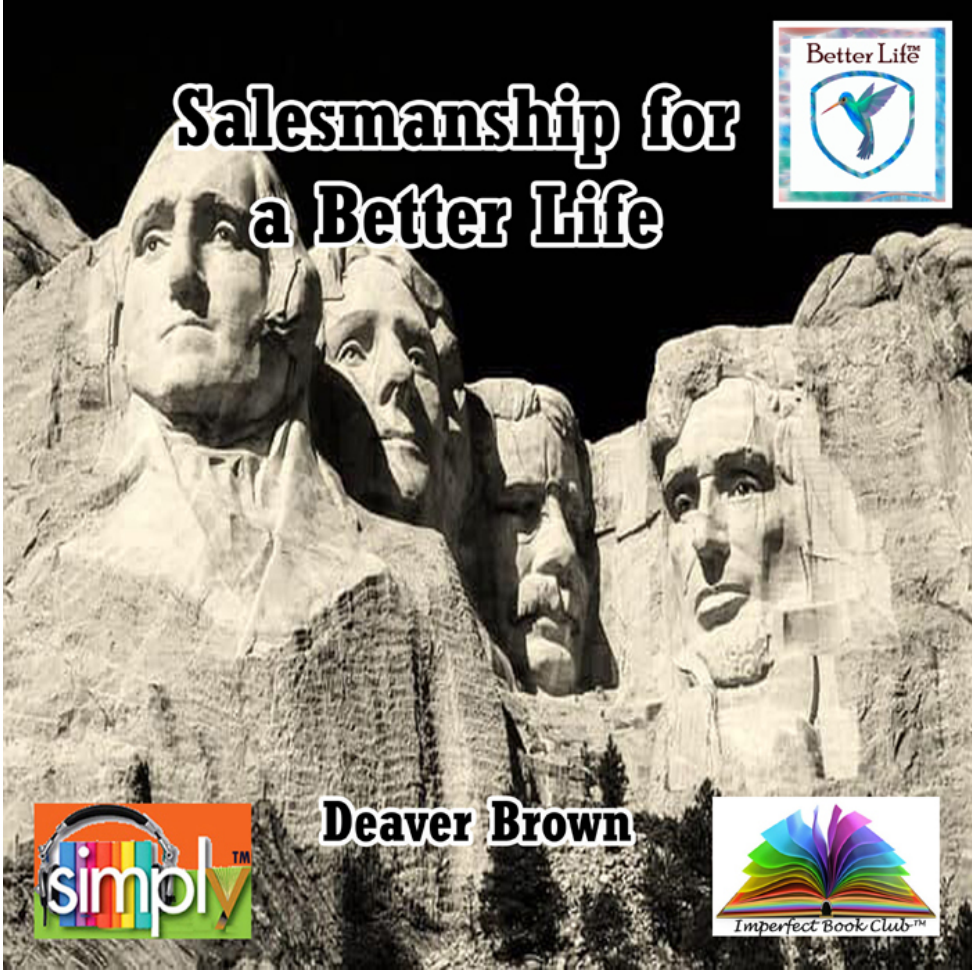
All of this takes consistency, discipline, and time. There are periods you can't do it with job losses, young children, divorce, college expenses, and more. But as with all of these suggestions, get back on the horse when you can.

Again, praise yourself for your successes and don't beat yourself up over your failures. Most of us fail; the prosperous happy ones stagger off the mat and get up again to go another round. When doing portages on a canoe trip. I never looked up or I would have been discouraged. Just go the next five minutes and one day at a time. Our Better Life series is consistent with this POV. Read our related eBooks or audiobooks on all these subjects from Finance to Calm Yourself for a Better Life.

I will leave you with an historic quote that has worked for me and mine for decades, from Justice Louis Brandeis's famous letter to his daughter. "My dear, if you only realized how hard life is, you would find it so much easier."

Amen. Take that thought with you. Don't beat yourself up. You read this book as a good start. Just do your best! And keep on truckin as they say in Texas!

Best wishes from us at Simply Media.



Salesmanship for a Better Life



Deaver Brown



Salesmanship for a Better Life

By Deaver Brown

5th Title in the Simply Media Better Life Series

Simply Media Inc.
POB 481
Lincoln, MA 01773-0481
www.simplymedia.com

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01. Preface

The cover is meant to be provocative about connecting our legendary Presidents with the idea of salesmanship, long having negative associations as in the famous writings of Arthur Miller in *Death of a Salesman* or Elmer Gantry in Sinclair Lewis's novel about evangelical selling preachers. Today people refer to themselves as account executives or marketing people to avoid admitting they are sales people.

Yet as Robert Louis Stevenson wrote, "Everything starts with a sale from the baby's first cry." In the 1960s when Boeing was America's greatest exporter, the CEO, T. Wilson, was asked what he was and he replied, "A salesman." The *New Yorker* writer admitted she was taken aback and asked why he defined himself that way. He replied, "Because when I sell a lot of planes, people like me; when I don't, they don't."

Then bring the story forward to when legendary entrepreneurs like Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, and Jeff Bezos appear on stages alone. They are selling as much as Willy Loman did in *The Death of a Salesman*.

Then we have Tim Cook, Jobs' successor, who appears on stage alone as well as routinely flying the long route to China to sell the Chinese on Apple. In my small ball world, I have always done the same thing as CEO in my ventures. When selling the Umbroller stroller, I personally met Sam Walton when he had only 55 stores and sold him. I personally met the Kmart buyer, the Walmart of its day, and sold him.

Later when selling my CDs at Simply Media, I personally met with the Best Buy buyer. After a few visits, she took me to the cafeteria for our chats. She asked why I saw her personally 1 on 1 as the CEO. I asked her, "Aren't you the largest buyer of software in the world?" She replied, "Yes." Then I replied, "Where else should I be."

She paused and said, “No other CEO does.” I nodded as we were sitting comfortably in her cafeteria while she told me what she needed and I took notes and said yes on the spot as CEOs can.

This is why sales is so important in people’s lives from the baby’s first cry to small companies like mine to the great companies such as Boeing, Apple, and Amazon. The rest of this book presents ideas and proven practices about how to make selling work for you and help you create your better life.

02. Introduction

Salesmanship is a critical skill to get what you want for the better life you want. In short, everything you want in life is controlled by another or others. Consider the basic items throughout your life: toys, ice cream, and freedoms from your parents. Admissions to colleges; being hired and promoted at work. Getting dates, relationships, and marriage if you are so fortunate.

The great entrepreneurs and executives know they have to get orders and business from others. So it should be clear it is also to your benefit to learn how to do likewise, refine your skills, and make this a top priority in your life.

This book is about what hard and soft skills you need to develop to get the better life you want by your own definition and as conditions change for you as your life continues. We also discuss what holds us back and give suggestions about how to move by those self imposed restrictions and constraints.

This is hard. As in diet books, most of us read them in hopes we can find a way we can have more ice cream or cake. Most of us know we can't; but we remain hopeful. That is true in selling as well. It is hard work; it is not easy; we fail a lot. The solution is always to get up again and go another round which is much easier said than done.

I leave you with an adage that has served me well on trying to get off the mat after being knocked down. Fortunately, there is no 10 count limit in life it get up as in boxing. You can lie on the proverbial mat for a while to bemoan your fate before you must stagger to your feet, look sharp, and go another round.

Justice Louis Brandeis wrote to his daughter, "My dear, if you only realized how hard life is, you would find it so much easier."

That line has gotten me off the mat more than a few times. Let it do that for you. If you only remember one thing from this book, let it be

this line to comfort you in your journey off the mat for a better life.

03. Getting What You Want: Turn the Chessboard Around

First step. Turn the chessboard around. Your first step to get what you want is to figure out what they want. I learned early on that the best way to do this was to see things from the other person's point of view. In other words turn the proverbial chessboard around to see things from their point of view. This appears elegantly in the Bible, "To understand someone, walk a mile in their shoes."

Second step. Ask people what they do. I was blessed with a curious mind, wanting to know what was going on, what other people did, and what they were interested in. So before an adult party when I was 5, I asked my mother what I should do since the big people, as I thought of them, knew and had so much more to say than I did. She said, "People spend most of their time thinking about themselves. So ask them about themselves such as what do you do or what do you like. That will get them off and running."

I did that rather crudely and woodenly at first but it still went off like a dream. I got people in my three conversations off and running. They clearly were surprised that a little guy like me would take any interest in them so I stood out that way as a child and that was enough.

Third step. Listen so you can follow up appropriately. After I stumbled through my first conversation that evening, I realized the awkwardness was caused by my not having appropriate incontext follow up questions. In the second conversation, I listened with my new understanding and asked appropriate follow up questions.

My second adult conversationist's eyes literally brightened up because she had been heard and listened to attentively by me; I found myself more interested in her conversation so we both enjoyed the conversation more than in my first one. Whenever we met again we built on that understanding and I learned more still. In the third conversation I had it down how to manage a conversation to make it work for both of us.

Final step. Once you have worked through the first 3 steps they will reciprocate out of curiosity to know something about the person that asked those questions, namely you. You have reached the point now that the fish is on the line and you have the beginning of the chance to get what you want. As with any fish on the line, you must keep the line taut and under control. You must respect the fish's ability to get off the line at any time and not come back again.

Note: This approach is not disrespectful. They had a reason to talk to you as you did with them. If you let them continue to be the person they want to be, they will tend to help you. Your challenge is to keep that in focus and alignment. In the next chapter we will discuss how you do that.

04. Keeping Conversations in Alignment so You Can Get What You Want

The first step is to know what you want for a better life whether you are 5 as I was in the last chapter's example or 75 as an older adult. When young as I was at 5, my conversations with adults were critical for me to learn what I wanted based on what they wanted themselves and respected, what they confessed they felt they had succeeded at as well as failed or missed out at. In short, I gradually realized what mattered to them was likely to matter to me. As I talked to more people, I got more in depth knowledge of these things. The process also made me more attuned to listening attentively, discussing thoroughly, and relating to adults who I realized early had everything I wanted then and later.

I kept talking to enough people so I could get a fair sample size, though I didn't learn that term of art yet. I later learned in statistics that accuracy within 4% happened with 25 data points and within 2% at 100 or more. Often it takes no more than 5 opinions to get a sense of things as Tom Peters' wrote.

You can do the same thing too. One conversation is better than none and two better than one, and so on and so on. My key tip is not to beat yourself up about what you don't do but congratulate yourself on what you do. The operative phrase in most things is good today is better than great tomorrow because it carries you to the next step and doesn't let you get stuck as much in old habits and thinking. In short, it helps you to learn how to pivot for a better life.

The second step is to seek out people who can help out your thinking, not just passively waiting for opportunities to come to you. This takes planning about what you want to learn about. The more you plan, the better you will do.

05. Planning To Get What You Want: Set Your Objectives to Achieve Your Goals

In our Better Life series, we use a few core images to convey how to get what you want for your better life. The first relates to defining where you want to go so you have a chance of getting there. The image comes from Alice in Wonderland. Alice asks the Cheshire Cat how to get where she wants to go. The Cheshire Cat responds, "Where do you want to go?" Alice responds, "I don't know." The Cheshire Cat responds, "Then it doesn't much matter which way you go."

That summarizes the challenge for most of us: We don't know where we want to go so stagger around as Alice was doing. A Yale study of their graduates proved the point. When trying to ascertain who were their happiest and most successful graduates under their own terms, Yale discovered they were the top 10% who had a plan in college. The top 2% had a written plan; the next 8% had a plan, but not written down. The others admitted they had no plan while at Yale.

In digging into the data, I discovered that accomplishing their plan didn't influence their later perceived happiness or success. Many pivoted to other objectives. The key takeaway was they always had a plan.

So do be in the happy and successful group by always having a plan. As Jack Welch, legendary CEO at GE in their hay day, said, "You can only work effectively with 3 objectives; more than that and you just have a laundry list." He went on to say, "You can only work on one at a time."

Lord Chesterfield famously said, "Do one thing at a time and you can get everything done in a day; do two at a time, called multitasking today, and you get nothing done in your day."

Take this wisdom to heart. Identify what your three goals are today. And as Jack Welch further said, "When you accomplish one goal,

don't just pick the fourth from earlier. Reassess where you are and add the top new goal for now.”

Now that we have discussed planning, we will move on in the next chapter to how to achieve your three goals.

06. Steps to Reach Your Goals

First, plan ahead as far as possible. When I set my college goal to go to Harvard, I did so in the 8th grade. I took note of what they looked for. Going to a competitive private school, Choate, 75% of our graduates who went to Harvard then wound up in the top 50% of their graduating class. So I concluded that if I could make the grade at Choate, Harvard would take note and that would be satisfactory on that metric. At the same time, the traditional Blue Blood schools did poorly with a substantial portion of their students finishing in the bottom half of the Harvard class. Harvard knew that too.

Second, take the time to broadly build help from those that can assist you meet your goal. In my case, I identified the Head Master recommendation as the most important thing to be admitted since Choate had a long history of successful students at Harvard. I talked to the Choate college admission officer early on so he would know my commitment and have confidence I would successfully carry the flag at Harvard to help Choate students get admitted in the future, which was essentially his job to do.

Third, find out what the decision makers' criteria is. In Harvard's case, the purely top academic students from Choate went there. From Choate they were looking for something more so I emphasized participation in the Current History Club and became Treasurer, won a model United Nations' award representing India, became coCaptain of the Wrestling Team, VP of the Chess Club, did a school sponsored 6 week trip to the then Soviet Union and Eastern Europe with a Russian immersion program 5 weeks immediately beforehand at Choate.

Fourth, try to get multiple interactions with the deciding powers. In Harvard's case, I went to Harvard in June just after my Junior or Fifth Form year and interviewed informally. I showed my serious interest in Harvard as my first choice, got a clearer lay of the land, and discussed my credentials and efforts. This got me the feedback I

needed to get ready for my big interview at the School in early October. I asked for one thing, which you usually can get: I wanted to interview with the formidable Director of Admissions, Fred Glimp. I got my request from my June interviewer and I paused. He filled the gap as many do. He said, "Look, your credentials are fine. Talk to Fred about the UN, the model UN meeting and award, how you prepped for being India, and the Current History club." I thanked him and did.

Tip: People who admit others are in a superior position in making a deal have a better chance of doing so. Be direct and straight with them.

When I interviewed with Mr. Glimp, I told him directly about my long term plan to go to Harvard, what the Interviewer in June had told me to talk about, so I said let's talk about the UN if that makes sense to you.. He was pleased and said, "You were listening."

I got early admission in October. Years later Mr. Glimp talked to me at my class's 25th reunion. He remembered my interview and told me about the Yale study of personal happiness and success. He also told me, "We check back on how we did. You actually graduated higher in the Harvard class than at Choate, but you were spread thinner there."

In sum, it took planning, hard work, and sacrifices to reach my goals. At Harvard, for example, I only went out with my steady girl on Saturday night because I needed Friday and Sunday to study.

Tip: The Renaissance Man died in the Renaissance.

You have to be very selective on what you attempt in order to achieve much of anything. Peter Drucker, the legendary management advisor to great CEOs like Jack Welch, and author of several landmark books of which we have published shortened versions done by him for Harvard Business Review and we published the audiobook versions, said succinctly: "Results come

from focus. Concentrate for results.” He influenced Welch to have only 3 objectives at a time to avoid dispersion of effort.

The downside of this point of view was described clearly and ironically by Tom Peters: “The only angry mail and reviews I ever received were about my saying, ‘You can’t have it all.’ You can’t; it upsets many people to be confronted by that truth. Get over it.”

So reflect on this and what great thinkers have said about it. Reading and listening to Peter Drucker and Tom Peters’ writings will repay your effort.

07. You are Usually in the Weaker Position When You Want Something Big: Deal With it or Fail

The richer the country, the less it negotiates. Americans and Canadians move on when they get what they want. They leave some money on the table, wonderful grease for a relationship, personal or business, when it hits its inevitable weak spots. You don't want to be the customer who when suppliers hear your name, they start breaking pencils out of frustration.

In a similar way, you need to recognize when you want something big the other party usually holds all the cards. Harvard held all the cards with me. My opportunity was they had to select 1100 new students per year so I tried to be a comfortable admit. Similarly when trying to make an important sale, you almost always have a weaker hand. If you recognize that and act accordingly, you can win. If not, you will lose almost every time.

There are four things you need to do to have a good chance of winning.

Before starting, carefully set your objective for the negotiation and try to limit it to 1 but at least no more than 3. As with the Yale graduates, the 90% without a plan fail in their own estimation.

First, start by finding out what they want and try to give it to them on the spot.

Successful negotiators with the weaker hand start by letting the stronger party describe what they want and what they will do. Then they try to say yes; but if you can't do it, say why you can't do it in your weaker position which prevents you from being able to do this and then ask the stronger party if they have a suggested work around. Unsuccessful negotiators won't do this for many reasons from not wanting to hear it, to thinking the description gives the stronger party more authority, they have brittle egos or something else.

Second, acknowledge that the other party holds the cards.

Successful weaker party negotiators acknowledge this up front to get it out of the way and set the tone for the discussion, often with a sense of humor to lighten the admission. Weaker negotiators focus their time on why they are important and demand what they want.

Third, respectfully work within their schedule and time frame.

Successful negotiators ask up front how much time they have. Unsuccessful ones just launch in.

Fourth, at the end of your meeting, thank them for the opportunity and ask them for a followup appointment if you need to provide more information and/or need to figure out how to say yes next time. This closes the meeting on a positive note.

This excludes a great many things that cause negotiations with a stronger party to fail. The list is long and fractured. Consider notorious failed negotiations:

The Palestinians have failed since 1948 because they have been unwilling to treat Israel as the stronger party. And as with stronger parties in general, Israel can live without a deal and have done handsomely while doing so.

In the business world, Walmart, Costco, and Amazon can do just fine without any supplier's goods. They have bought from me because I have acknowledged their superior position and give them what they want for the small marginal gain my products will give them.

Listening intently is the silver bullet. People like to be listened to and accommodated. Setting the table this way, I have always gotten enough to be able to say yes. When getting to the end of the discussion, always ask them what they need to close the deal.

I will end this book with a classic example from Dollar Tree when I was selling our dollar software and audiobooks. The buyer liked the

deal and was thinking about buying at \$0.48 each in our displays prepaid to their warehouses. Our rep had good instincts and stepped back to let me close the deal. She had helped me get the meeting and that was critical.

I paused and asked the buyer, "What would seal the deal?" He said, "\$0.46." I said, "Done" and stood up and shook the hand of the smiling buyer who was an old pro. As we were leaving the rep said, "Why does he need it? 52% is a great margin at \$0.48." I said, "I don't know and it's not our business."

The buyer grinned and softly patted me on the back. As with Pandora, don't open the lid and leave without a word when you have the deal. More than one deal of mine has been lost in my presence when someone said one more thing that unraveled the whole thing.

Thank you for reading this from Simply.



The New Depression In our Deflationary Age: How to Protect Your Money



Deaver Brown



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Deaver Brown

Simply Media Inc.
POB 481
Lincoln, MA 01773-0481
www.simplymedia.com

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01. Introduction

This book is about what is, not what should be. Keep that in mind as you read it. When done, you can decide whether these points should be opposed, supported, or left as they are. In the meantime, review the data and the conclusions. Decide which points and conclusions you think are right, wrong, or just to be left as they stand.

My model is Peter Drucker who many believe was the best business thinker and practical economist ever, a large statement that seems worthy to many of us in business and economics. Drucker kept politics, nationalism, and side taking out of his writing. Hence he was and is admired by people of all political persuasions and nationalities. So, please honor that approach in reading or listening. Then decide what to do or not do about the points made herein.

People are learning once again in the lockdown that cash is king in downturns as we are experiencing in 2020. Many economists talk about the coming inflation because of government giveaways, the Fed loosening interest rates, and flooding the market with money and liquidity. But most people know that huge unemployment means more competition for available jobs, hence less pressure for higher wages, and more willingness for people to work for less pay. Also many know skilled people who are trading down in pay for a job, taking less desirable jobs, and delivering results at a lower cost. Few things are as deflationary as these kinds of lower labor costs.

Instacart was able to hire 550,000 people in less than 60 days, about the population of Boston proper. Walmart 200,000. Amazon 150,000. All without incentives. This is further evidence of a slack labor market with the attendant lower costs that accompanies it. All of this contributes to Walmart's long term efforts to lower costs and corresponding retails as they did in 2019, by a 1.7% reduction in just 12 months.

The Media dines off of bad news because it inspires us to watch, listen, and read, depending on the medium available. Hence we

should take a measured approach and consider the more unsensational facts and conclusions presented here.

Shortages and out of stocks on a few items for a few weeks got lots of media attention. But soon the items were back in stock after most panicked hoarding had subsided. Now things have come back in balance and the news stories about the shortages have evaporated with them. Costco, as one example, reported that April sales were flat with a year ago, Y/Y, a rarity for them in the last 12 years or so.

When I went to Costco in March the line was around the corner. The panic was on. Three weeks later in April, there was no line and I had the best and shortest Costco shopping trip ever since fewer people were there, they had decluttered the aisles, and only yeast was out of stock. Amazon remedied that problem in two days with a home delivery.

In addition, the Costco people were happier with an uncluttered, faster moving group of shoppers. We all seem to have adapted well to the New Depression as human beings tend to do. Yuval Noah Harari gives intellectual respectability to this idea in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*. His primary thesis is that humankind has survived and prospered through all kinds of turmoil because of our adaptability. It is a worthy book to read in any event but possibly more so now.

Where does all this leave us? With more goods and services at lower costs, purely deflationary.

Bankruptcies are accelerating which eliminates much investment wealth and money held by lenders as well as the money of the owners themselves as their companies liquidate or are worth less than before the New Depression started. This works to shrink the money supply as the government and Fed pump money into the economy to try to reliquify it.

Reduced corporate earnings are reducing money supply as well. Reduced employment does the same thing with those earnings and

taxes not flowing into the economy. All of this means there is less money available to buy goods and services from businesses, purchase property and vehicles, and various other assets, leading to lower asset values and less money available when assets can be sold.

On a personal basis, my company has been able to buy almost anything for less money than before the New Depression started. This trend is accelerating as buyers become more aware of the cost saving opportunities available to them and sellers become more pressed to make sales with lower priced deals.

That's Main Street. That's what people and businesses are facing, deflation with lower prices and slack in the economic system virtually everywhere.

02. Fewer Dollars Available for Purchases

From 2017 until January 2020 companies created more dollars as they earned increasingly higher cash profits and benefited from lower costs due to the Internet savings from online everything, corporate federal tax cuts, and automation such as retail self-checkout, online ordering, and robots doing 24/7 work.

Even under these circumstances inflation was reported to be subdued. In reality the economy was even then moderately deflationary when counting in substitution, the economist's term for replacing higher cost items with lower priced ones that do the same task such as bill paying online versus the cost of a check and mailing it.

In the recent boom times, most CEOs did not press for additional cost reductions unlike what Walmart did. In this New Depression these savings are more important to their companies hence more CEOs are prioritizing them which accelerates deflation. This has also led to more cost saving experiments such as closing physical bank branches and letting ATMs and their websites do the work. This immediately cut the costs of their daily operations of these branches. Significantly, long term the banks can let their leases expire or sell the property if they own it. This means more commercial property will be on the real estate market driving those costs down. The employees not needed will be added back into the labor market putting more downward pressure on their area labor costs. Yes, some branches will reopen; but many never will.

03. Bond Market Evidence

Long term developed country government bond rates have moved to historic lows in 2020 which means investors do not expect inflation in the next 30 years. Since large institutional investors are the primary purchasers of long bonds, this is a serious educated prediction of at least moderate deflation for the next three decades.

Similarly, price levels are already tumbling in most developed countries as a result of rising availability of labor with high unemployment and lower demand for goods and services due to lower incomes, dividends, interest payments, stock buybacks, and side gigs such as offered by AirBnb and Uber; and automation with online branchless banking and with AWS and related products, cutting IT costs for large businesses with Microsoft and smaller ones such as mine with Amazon.

04. Inflation Fear Mongers

These lower bond prices don't deter the inflation fear mongers as they go full steam ahead as did Captain Smith on the Titanic through an iceberg filled Atlantic. They focus on the bond market being wrong because governments may inflate their debt away. Then they pile on saying developed countries may de-globalize and bring large suppliers and factories back to their higher cost markets. Thus, they conclude, domestic pricing pressures will pressure costs up versus cheaper Asian sources.

They proclaim we are walking through an inflationary minefield. The antidote for this conclusion is provided by a distinguished macroeconomist, Oliver Blanchard, who has an excellent long term record of being correct on major economic trends. As a tempered thinker, Blanchard admits an outburst in inflation is possible but highly unlikely.

He starts with the basic foundation of economic strength in developed countries, the consumer, 70% of the US and Canadian economies, for example.

As usual, he starts at the beginning with the foundation, the consumer. He posits that demand for products and services is likely to stay depressed for a long time because so many households are already struggling to stabilize and later rebuild their financial life that has been ravaged by lower employment, the trading down in hourly pay to get jobs, mortgage principal harder to pay off with deflation, and automation so rapidly filling many job requirements.

Businesses have little reason to invest in new stores, factories or real estate since so much is available already and more soon. In fact abandonment of small spaces is already rampantly accelerating as many companies have already closed their branches with most never opening again, on top of so many restaurants and small stores disappearing long before a recovery might start to take place. Then

there are the bankruptcies unfolding daily such as Gold's Gym, Neiman Marcus, and J Crew, to name a few.

Three ingredients would have to take place together before inflation would start again according to Blanchard, former IMF chief economist and MIT Professor. The first would be a huge run up in the ratio of government debt to GDP, something not expected even with various stimulus programs contemplated. Then strong upward pressure on interest rates which is not predicted and the bond market doesn't believe based on low long term interest rates now which should continue downward. And third, government pressure to keep interest rates artificially low which current long term bond prices make unnecessary.

Blanchard declares his expert friends say the odds of these three things happening together are less than 3%, a remarkably low percentage given estimates about any future long term trend.

05. Higher Savings Rates & Lower Investment Rates

People and businesses with liquid assets have already started to save more and invest less. In March 2020, the personal savings rate went up to an historic high of 13% of income. Even large profitable growing companies such as Google, Microsoft, and Apple have announced lower hiring and investment plans which has been reinforced by pleased investors such as me.

These trends remind me of the Pearl Bailey quotation, "When the rich get a cold the poor get pneumonia."

In the 2020 Democratic primary, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren both announced plans that would increase investment and corporate taxes, limit mergers, and create an annual wealth tax on people and companies. These programs have remained popular with many Democrats with only modest objections by wealthy ones.

The 2017 \$10,000 state and local tax deduction cap had already started the deep Blue State and City evacuation for lower tax venues such as to Florida and Texas which has created an outcry by the deep Blue venues to banish the Cap and eliminate those substantial decreases in federal income taxes for the wealthy.

All of this created a conversation among well off people, with the New Depression being an accelerating factor, for pulling in their horns, saving more, investing less, and trimming their stock portfolios to those firms doing the same. This has since been amplified by several deep Blue state Governors such as in New York demanding the Red states support Blue State deficits because of the accelerating tax flight of deep Blue venue millionaires to lower tax states.

None of this discussion is about the right and wrong of these policies and attitudes as initially stated. It is about what are the attitudes and actions of the well off. The increasing mobility of the highest market

cap companies makes migration from high tax venues more possible than ever before which is discussed in chapter 7.

06. Consumer Debt at an All Time High In early 2020

The reciprocal problem to those with money are those without it, who have gotten along due to low interest rates on secured debt. Now deflation adds a big additional expense and hurdle of paying down debt that deflates and makes it harder to pay down and off year after year. This is the opposite of our recent times of relatively high inflation from the 1970s until about 2000 when the PC and Internet converged to transform gradually and almost unnoticeably, the economy from inflation to deflation as the railroads caused to happen between 1865, after the American Civil War ended, until 1914 when World War 1 started in Europe.

The New Depression has radically accelerated this trend of deflation. Economic history suggests this will be a long road down as it was from 1865 to 1914 in America, when World War 1 started in Europe to inflate the economy again with a huge jump in demand creating scarcity and higher prices along with it.

The logical conclusion about this as it relates to now is to expect at least a decade of deflation as a modest expectation when a much longer period is probable as in other similar economic cycles. This worrisome conclusion means a substantial part of the economy, the consumer, will have far fewer financial resources to pay for goods and services for decades which will extend the deflationary economy.

In the post Civil War period less than 1% of consumers owned houses, with condos unknown, so they benefited from the deflationary pressures on rent since they had almost no mortgage debt because even the small amount of property personally owned then had been purchased by the rich with cash.

The small farms of the time had debt and accordingly many were foreclosed upon in this period, just as small businesses started to suffer recently with the rise of mega retailers such as Walmart, Home

Depot, and Amazon, and small restaurants by the mega restaurant chains such as McDonalds, Dominos, and Starbucks. The New Depression has accelerated these trends.

07. Increasing Capital, Corporate, and Personal Mobility

Increasing capital, corporate, and personal mobility means tax authorities have increasingly less power to pin people and companies down to physical location or venue to use the legal term. When tech companies started to prosper in cash, profits, and assets in the W Bush Presidential era, they were far less restrained by physical location than older businesses due to their increasingly existing in cyberspace with no required physical location for their offices, factories, or farms. Material, products, and IP suppliers were available all over the world to deliver to them anywhere.

To escape high corporate and personal US taxes in the Obama years, many of these firms went offshore to lower tax venues such as in Ireland. This was termed a tax inversion and vilified, rightly or wrongly, by Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and their followers. Trump reversed this process by lowering corporate taxes to the Developed world average and cut individual taxes as well. This immediately caused tech companies to pivot, stop going offshore, and return their headquarter domiciles to the US.

Hardly commented upon at the time was how fast they moved out and then back again when their tax rates were cut. Elizabeth Warren noticed and announced her plan to create an exit tax so if companies and people tried to leave again to escape her planned higher assets taxes, she would create a high exit tax price if she became President. The concept is still alive and well in the Democratic Party.

Again whether right or wrong, these proposed policies had an immediate impact on those targeted parties like the physics law, "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction."

All of this got relatively little press publicity though it was potentially powerfully important. What did get noticed was AOC objecting to New York subsidies to Amazon for moving into Queens for their

second headquarters. The fuss was substantial and was the hourly diet of many media outlets for some time.

Amazon pivoted from the attack and moved their second headquarter's startup to Virginia and Tennessee. This was not just political since Virginia had a Democrat governor and Tennessee a Republican one, it was economically ideological. New York had already suffered from millionaire tax migration to lower tax states such as Florida and Texas that resulted in a 10% year over year tax collection drop while their government expenses were growing.

Governor Cuomo, a Democrat, had made an economic incentive deal with Amazon because he knew the financial advantage directly and indirectly with Amazon suppliers and other tech companies if Amazon moved into New York State. AOC counted on Amazon being stuck; Cuomo knew better; they weren't. That was a poignant lesson for wealthy people and companies. They weren't stuck either.

Now the die was cast. The New Depression just amped it up.

08. Real Estate Deflation: Rental Housing

The aging population and delay in Millennials starting families had already accelerated the trend pre Depression to smaller housing units and less acquiring of large suburban houses. Job losses and downsizing has accelerated this trend as it impacts people's ability to pay for middle and higher priced rental property.

This in turn reduces the value of these housing units as landlords' cash flow declines. With the New Depression adding to this trend, April 2020 saw one third of renters not paying their monthly rent, and not getting evicted either, a devastating and unprecedented event in American life.

09. Real Estate: Home Ownership & Increasing Real Cost of Mortgage Debt

Our deflationary age with higher unemployment and lower earnings puts downward pressure on home prices and people's ability and willingness to take on long term debt in these deflationary times when the value of a dollar continually rises making paying off debt principal progressively harder to do year by year, the opposite of the previous inflationary period that inflated the impact of debt away.

This new trend will inevitably lead to more personal bankruptcies as consumers find it increasingly harder to meet these ownership costs which in turn will cancel more of the money supply with these loans being reduced or eliminated. This expected long term trend is why banks have already started to tighten credit requirements to get new loans, limiting many home equity loan credit lines now, and tightening consumer credit standards in general.

Solvent home buyers will become more prized by lenders since they will be more apt to be able to ride out and pay off deflationary debt. But these same people are more apt to shift to rentals to ride the lowering costs of rentals down due to these deflationary trends. This fits the old asset rule: own assets that appreciate; rent assets that depreciate. This standard economic rule applies to this huge asset area of home ownership.

This trend has been quietly going on for some time as big suburban houses had become increasingly harder to sell and many required deep discounts to move. This trend is accelerating now in the New Depression. Increasing property taxes and energy costs pre Depression had motivated boomers to down size and Millennials to remain renters and not upsize to them. This new deflationary age has accelerated these trends.

I sold my big house in Massachusetts in 2007, invested the nest egg in the market, and my first rental saved me lots of money. My second

move to a more compact house was nicer and saved us even more. From my new lower cost basis, my rent went up only 1% per year as property taxes and other costs went up much faster. Now it has already flattened for some time and I recently upped for 2 more years. I have not been alone in benefitting from selling property and becoming a mobile renter. More people are joining me now to avoid the higher costs and depreciating value of most housing real estate.

10. Real Estate: Commercial Offices

Most owners have seen an upturn in productive activity when their employees and contractors work from home. Jeffries investment company in New York was one of the first companies to announce they did not plan to go back to their offices again. Daily reports indicate many other companies are joining them.

My backlog in customer processing of our new titles accelerated as three months of backlog pre Depression disappeared in four weeks of lockdown except for one retailer with a cumbersome processing system. Owners get the benefit of more worker efficiency and lower costs without offices even when having to pay for them until their leases expire or sell the property if they own it.

Warren Buffett has weighed in on this issue as he sees a permanent change taking place regarding office space and related travel. He also announced he had sold all of his airline stocks because he didn't see corporate travel coming back to anything like pre Depression levels due to the cost and inefficiency of it as with much office space.

In the preJet era, companies wrote letters. Now they write texts, emails, and add PDFs. Back to the Future in fact with huge cost savings and eliminating wear and tear on traveling business people. In my company I hadn't had to take a business trip since 2017. The cancellation of the annual London Book Fair in 2020 meant my customer people had to stay home and do work, from processing titles to creating promotions. This was a big boost to their sales and profits as well as our own.

With home workers having to report doing something every day, I find my customer people getting more creative about increasing their sales and mine as a supplier by doing more consumer promotions, distributor people acquiring new customers, and almost all of them simplifying more things since attending meetings and travel no

longer counts as work. I have noticed an uplift in their enthusiasm and morale as they find their suppliers like us at Simply Media are delighted with their accomplishments that benefit their employer and us financially, as well as eliminating long, tiresome, and expensive commuting for them.

In short, being home means their outside contacts have become more important to them than their inside office people in the past. I saw a similar thing happen when UPS drivers went on strike in the late 1990s. Many UPS drivers then realized their daily contacts and business friends were their customers who welcomed their deliveries and shipping, not their own inside office people. Our driver stopped by when on strike to share some coffee and say, "Never again." They quickly called off their strike due to unionized driver pressure. The most effective workers at home seem to feel the same way as they get tighter with their contacts and praise from them for their effectiveness as our UPS driver did back then.

11. Real Estate: Branch Offices

In the New Depression, many companies have already started eliminating some of their branch offices and are experimenting with eliminating more of them.

Banks are a prominent example of the branch closing phenomenon. Their customers had already increasingly migrated over to online banking, especially their wealthy and better educated ones who are the major profit centers for banks. Most of these people already have savings and investment accounts. The fall out from this New Depression will be the creation of fewer new wealthy people, and therefore those interested in creating those types of accounts. Most of those who do become well off will be tech savvy younger people used to doing everything online already, including opening new accounts and expanding their services from them. So the banks are anticipating this and now have decided to close some branches permanently and experiment with closing others on a temporary basis because the cost savings outweigh increases from new prospects who will not sign up online.

In Eastern Massachusetts, Bank of America, Santander, and some smaller banks have already started doing this in March 2020. A quick Googling of Bank America Waltham branches will show 50% closed in the area on a permanent or temporary basis. This trend is reverberating through the economy with depeopled branches, no cleaning or other servicing required anymore at these closed facilities, lower utility and insurance costs, and more savings in phones, faxes, equipment, printers, and other such things.

The same can be seen with other financial service branches such as stock investment companies, tax preparers, and others, all of which hollow out physical customer traffic as they move more online.

In 2018 there were 77,000 bank branches in the US, about the same as the number of dollar stores. The average bank branch size had

been decreasing from 4,000 to 6,000 square feet to 2,500, more typical of modern dollar stores as well. If 50% of bank branches close, that would be approximately 9.5 million square feet abandoned, more than the combined square footage of Dollar General, Dollar Tree, and Family Dollar. In short, a huge amount.

Tax Preparation offices exceed 125,000. They are physically smaller but still disappearing at a similar rate. Stock brokerages are in a similar decline.

To put the cost savings in perspective, each online deposit costs the banks 3 cents each versus 68 cents for a teller transaction. This is an overwhelming 95.6% savings per transaction for the banks, while being much faster for the consumer.

12. Malls: Downsizing & Becoming Entertainment Centers

Strip malls will largely disappear as the remaining malls that are losing stores will become more predominantly entertainment centers with restaurants, theaters, and other such things. This trend has already been in place in some locations so it will start expanding soon. These malls are similar to parks where people wander around and enjoy their time there. This trend will decimate traditional mall retailers except for those who can afford to display merchandise as in a museum for prospective buyers to look at before buying online, which trend had already started pre Depression.

13. Retail: Pickup & Home Delivery.

This trend is accelerating now as mentioned earlier with Instacart needing to hire 550,000 people in less than 60 days, Walmart 200,000 to bolster their curbside pickup and home delivery, and Amazon 150,000 for their warehouses. Walmart and Amazon also bolstered their third party contractor hires for home delivery. All of this will reduce impulse Instore buying, the lifeline of many retailers with these products having higher margins, and has increased the proportion of their sales of lower margin basics. Among other retailers' first quarter 2020 earnings reports, Amazon and Target have already reported lower margins which reduced their profits and cash flow.

14. Vehicles Extended Life Reducing New Purchases & Making Uber More Attractive

Vehicle insurance companies have already started to rebate money with less driving and clearer roads leading to fewer accidents. Today I received my first \$50 rebate from Liberty Mutual for this reason. My family didn't refill a vehicle gas tank for 2 months due to no commuting and working from home.

This trend has extended vehicle life as well as reducing maintenance, insurance, and fuel costs. Since vehicles are the second largest consumer expenditure, this will have a profound deflationary impact on the economy. When people feel it is time to buy a new vehicle, many will instead use Uber, Lyft, or other such services as a more attractive option with no down payment and lower monthly costs. This trend will be especially true for those with more than one vehicle in their household.

15. Automation

Automation started in about 1700 in the beginning of the Industrial Age. Before then, farming, the main source of employment in the world, and making goods, the second, were done about the same way as centuries before. The Wealth of Nations published in 1776 by Adam Smith, considered the Father of Economics, described the beginning of automation in the 18th Century and its deflationary impact on costs using a pin factory as an example.

Canals were the first major automation innovation in transportation as memorialized in *Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation* by Peter Bernstein. Then came the railroads, followed by the airplane. Then the container, and finally the PC and Internet that are driving deflation today.

16. How to Benefit & Not Lose

First and foremost do not buy any depreciating asset which has always been true but now includes a wider swath of things in today's economy with real estate, retailers, suppliers, vehicles, energy, and other things all under deflationary pressure.

Remember that in a deflationary era any asset that doesn't go down in value proportionally goes up with more buying power associated with it.

Therefore, a safe move is to rent and not buy until the deflationary dust clears which may be three decades away. No need to try to predict the unpredictable bottom. Warren Buffett, Peter Lynch, and other great investors say wait until trends are clear because it is never too late to buy a good stock or other asset.

As an example, Buffett waited until 2015 to buy Apple and Amazon. He still doubled his money in a short period of time with the stocks still going up.

17. Where to Invest

For passive investors, seek a growth and dividend fund from a low cost investment company fund such as the Vanguard Growth and Dividend fund because they sell stocks they think will reduce their dividends or do so, protecting you from the downside. This commitment provides a hard stop before large stock losses occur. For stock pickers there are few safe choices except for the FAANG stocks, Microsoft, and possibly Visa and Walmart.

In this disruptive era, political turmoil is inevitable which will lead to many political attacks against business, wealth, more demands for higher taxes, more regulations, and other negative challenges for owners and investors.

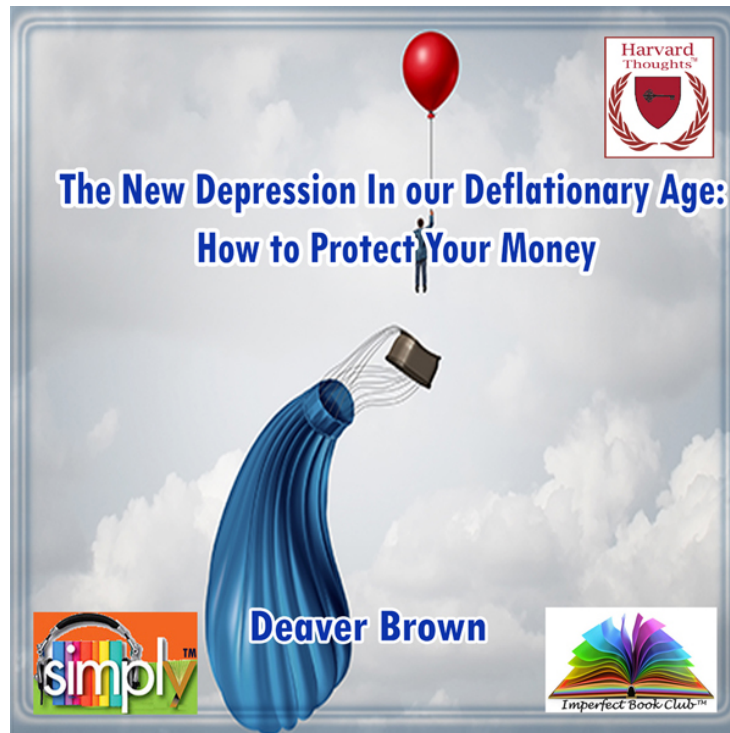
Your best antidote is to invest in portable businesses such as those named above, and those centered in cyberspace that can pivot to anywhere to avoid these costs when they erupt in a local or national venue.

The second best antidote is to invest in royalty or network based companies which also have high brand value. These are Warren Buffett's favorites because they earn money off the top due to royalty or network profits as Apple does with its App Store and Apple Pay, Visa with its debit and credit cards, and Facebook with over 2 billion members in its network. Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Google, Visa, and Walmart seem to be the best in this group.

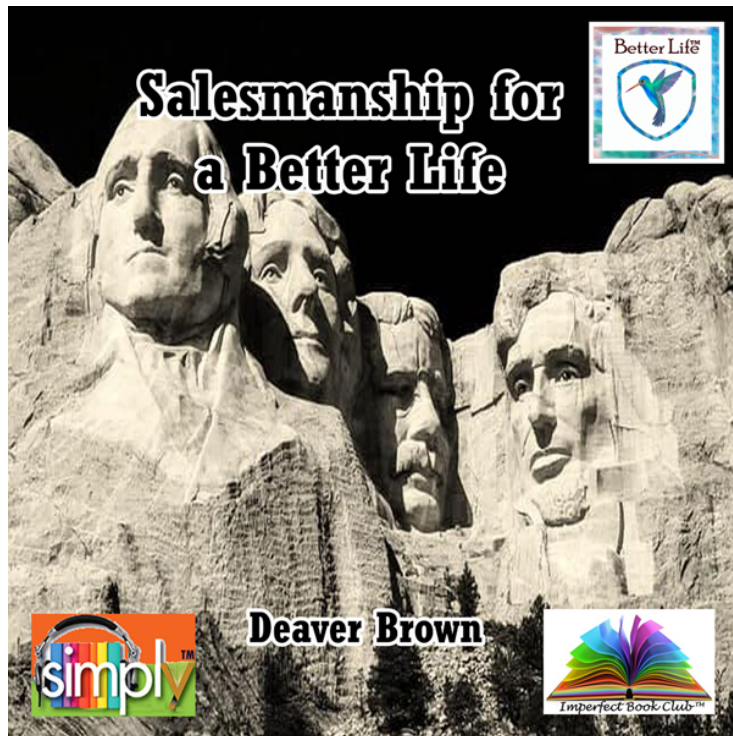
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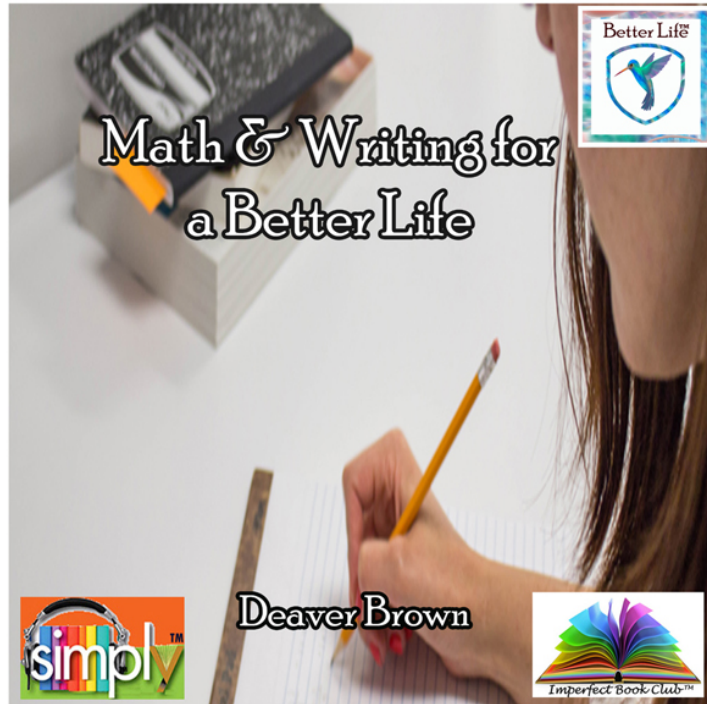












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