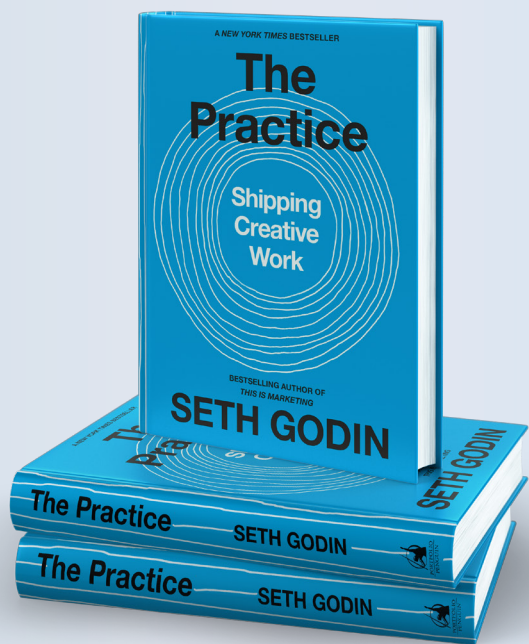


BOOK SNAPS™

Zooming In On Your Next Read



The Practice

By Seth Godin

Seth Godin is the author of 18 international bestsellers that have changed the way people think about work and have been translated into 38 languages - among them *Unleashing the Ideavirus*, *Permission Marketing*, *Purple Cow*, *Tribes*, *The Dip*, *Linchpin*, *Poke the Box*, and *All Marketers Are Liars*. He writes the most popular marketing blog in the world and speaks to audiences around the world. He is the founder of the altMBA, the founder and former CEO of Squidoo.com, the former VP of Direct Marketing at Yahoo!, and the founder of the pioneering online startup Yoyodyne.

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Learn to Embrace Imposter Syndrome

Seth Godin knows a thing or two about putting his work out there. As the best selling author of 19 books and the voice behind one of the most widely read blogs on the entire planet, Godin understands that creation requires consistency above all else. *The Practice* is founded on the principle that writer's block is a myth. In it, Godin instructs writers, artists, and entrepreneurs in a tested approach to getting unstuck, overcoming the fear associated with sharing creative work, placing consistency over authenticity, and learning to embrace imposter syndrome as a natural part of the human experience.

Godin's dedication reads, "The magic of the creative process is that there is no magic." He believes that we all have passion and creativity inside of ourselves. What we sometimes lack is the empathy required to create work that contributes in a productive, but authentic and joyful way. There is an identifiable pattern amongst those who succeed in creative pursuits and in those who fail. *The Practice* serves as a guide to leverage that pattern of consistent pursuit and turn passion into creative work that needs to be shared.

Why Shipping, Creative, and Work

Before getting into the meat of the matter, Godin explains why he chose the words "shipping, creative, and work" as the terms used throughout the book. The word "shipping" is used synonymously with the word sharing and he says that "it doesn't count if you don't share it." This book is not about journal entries that will never see the light of day. It's about creations that are put out into the world for the right people to consume at the right time.

He chose the word "creative" because he aims to separate us from "cogs in the system." We are "creators, problem solvers, and generous leaders" who are creating in order to make things better than they are right now. He makes no distinction between the creative work of artists, writers, or business leaders. Anyone who is making something new is creating.

The word "work" is used to show that this is a professional pursuit. Whether or not you are currently paid for the work is not of consequence. You are approaching the creation as



if you are a professional and the work in and of itself, not the outcome, is the reason you are here.

Trust Your “Self”

The world is full of distracting noise that prevents us from seeing a simple, but extremely powerful truth. “Creativity is a choice, it’s not a bolt of lightning from somewhere else.” At its core, creation is the result of having a desire to “find a new truth, solve an old problem, or serve someone else.” We have control over our process alone. If we commit to practicing creation, we will live in service of making the world a better place and understand that “creativity is not an event, it’s simply what we do, whether or not we’re in the mood.” Engaging in the process honors your own potential and allows you to enjoy the support of all other creatives who began the practice before you. You merely have to trust your creative self.

We are all on individual paths that are distinctly unique and ours. But many before us have found a way to share their perspective and make a difference. You can, too. It’s all about finding the courage to be creative and the commitment to follow the pattern that those who paved the way are already implementing. The door is there. The practice will allow you to walk through it.

We live in an economy primarily focused on output. We are “brainwashed from a very early age” to believe that we must play by the rules of the system. We need to work hard, perform tasks, and in the end, we will be rewarded for our efforts. Godin posits what happens, however, when the world changes? What happens when the “prizes” we were taught to seek are suddenly “not as engaging as you’d like them to be?” What happens when the “emptiness of the bargain” becomes plainly obvious? In a changed world, you may find that you’ve been “busy sacrificing your heart and your soul for prizes, but the prizes aren’t coming as regularly as promised.” What then?

We must trust ourselves rather than the system. We must follow our own path, even if it is wholly imperfect. Godin shares a quote from The Bhagavad-Gita which says, “It is better to follow your own path, however imperfectly, than to follow someone else’s perfectly.” If we think about people who manage to make a real difference, they each have widely divergent paths but they have a common and overlapping practice. If we can learn to trust our hidden selves that make us and our point of view entirely unique, then we can “see the pattern, find our practice, and begin to live the process of making magic.” You can make an impact. To do so, you have to “trust yourself enough to ship the work.” It won’t always work. It won’t always make an impact. “Do it anyway. And then do it again. If you care enough, it’s worth doing as many times as it takes.”

When you make the decision to trust your self, two choices are combined. Firstly, you are making the choice to create something “that matters a great deal to someone,” not to everyone. You choose to “be peculiar,” meaning specific. Secondly, you are making the choice to “commit to the journey,” not to the destination or output or outcome. You cannot control what the

outcome is, only what you put into it. Not all of your work will “resonate” and that is perfectly fine. “Great work isn’t popular work; it’s simply work that was worth doing.”

The Professional

There is a difference between talent and skill. We are born with talents that we can choose to develop or not. We can develop skills. Professionals have skill in excess of talent. “Skill is rarer than talent. Skill is earned. Skill is available to anyone who cares enough.” The practice asks us to put the effort required to develop our skill and in return, “we are rewarded with better.” We gain “better taste, better judgment, and better capabilities.” This is what separates the amateur from the professional.

To be clear, Godin does not put down the amateur. He says it is “possible, admirable, and even heroic to be an amateur.” However, the amateur works only for herself. She creates work for herself and exclusively finds joy in it. If you want to go from being an amateur to a professional, you must commit to the practice. You must do the work, show up and produce, even when you really don’t feel like doing it. However, Godin begs us to “avoid the path of becoming a hack.”

He writes that it may be true that any work is better than no work, we must bear in mind that “the posture of giving up your standards to get that work can quickly become toxic.” When we place the value on being paid rather than creating something meaningful from a position of empathy and generosity, we risk turning ourselves off from the pursuit entirely. You become a hack when your primary goal is to “please the audience.” If you lose your unique point of view, you become a hack. Professionals understand how to walk “the fine line between showing up with a generous vision and showing up trying to control the outcome.”

An important responsibility you have as a professional is choosing better clients. A better client is not an easy client. They “demand better work, want you to push the envelope, win awards, and challenge their expectations.” They will tell others about you and about your work. They will pay you more, on time. The problem is that most of us “don’t trust ourselves enough to imagine that we deserve them.” The trick is to “earn better clients by becoming the sort of professional that better clients want.” You have to toss things out again and again and again until one day, you catch a better client. “When you trust yourself enough to turn pro, you’re entering into a covenant with those you seek to serve. You promise to design with intention, and they agree to engage with the work you promised to bring them.”

Professionals should not seek authenticity. When work is created with intention, it is by definition inauthentic. After all, a professional will create what the audience expects time and again, even when there is something else they would much rather be doing at that moment. Authenticity is not a prerequisite for professionalism and in fact, may be a detriment to shipping creative work into the world. Consistency and intention are far more valuable than authenticity for the professional.

What elements are involved in intentional action? There are six simple steps.



Being creative is a choice and if you choose to engage in the process you will never be blocked.“

1. Figure out who the work is for, taking into account “what they believe, what they fear, and what they want.”
2. Be able to describe what change you are seeking to make in them through the work.
3. Commit to making that change in them and genuinely care about making it.
4. Send out work that “resonates with the people it’s for.”
5. Watch for the reaction from your audience to determine whether or not the work worked in the way in which it was intended.
6. Repeat.

No Such Thing as Writer’s Block

Sometimes we look for an excuse to avoid shipping the work and really good excuses are quite easy to find and hide behind. Not having the proper credential in terms of education or experience is a very effective excuse. Fear is another excuse that is often masked with things such as a lack of time or some other constraint that won’t permit you to stick to the practice. Any excuse that works is a good excuse. Godin writes, “If it works on you, if it gives you a way to stall, to interrupt your practice and to avoid the truth of your work, then it’s now a good excuse.” Whether or not the excuse is real doesn’t matter as long as it worked.

Actual roadblocks stop everyone, not just you. Therefore, if you stop the practice or avoid the practice because of something that only affects you, “it is an excuse, not an actual roadblock.” Following this logic, Godin asserts that there is no such thing as writer’s block because “being blocked” is a chosen belief. Being creative is a choice and if you choose to engage in the process you will never be blocked.

“Writer’s block is invented” just as fears of certain bugs or beliefs in certain unverifiable phenomena are invented. We know that writer’s block is invented because it changes and is different for any person on any given day. Effectively, it is a choice just as being creative is a choice. When we choose writer’s block, it is a reflection of our uncertainty. There is no “manual or playbook” as you are creating something new entirely. It is easier and safer and more certain to choose being blocked. Writer’s block is a story we tell ourselves to avoid doing the work.

The great thing about stories is that they can change. “If the story isn’t working for us, we can find a better one to take its place.” We can rewrite the narrative that will help us get where we want to go. Writer’s block is a result that comes from the

narrative we tell ourselves. “It’s not an actual physical or organic ailment, simply a story we tell ourselves, one that leads to bad work habits and persistent fear.” We simply have to stick to the practice. It’s impossible to get stuck if you are always in motion. Keep moving in the intended direction and leave writer’s block behind for good. “Good process leads to good outcomes.”

Earn Your Skills

The Superman comic eventually bored readers because the writers would simply invent new superpowers for the hero to employ whenever a new obstacle got in his way. The real world doesn’t have superheroes and you can’t expect yourself to be superhuman. Instead of trying to be really great at everything, pick one thing that you can develop and use to make a lasting contribution. Over time you may choose to develop another superpower, but in the beginning start with just one. “Choose the skill you’re going to assert to the outside world.”

In order to earn your superpower, or your skill, “you’ll need to trust that this process makes it possible, and trust that you are the one to do it.” Likewise, you will need to stay actively engaged in learning, understanding, and applying your skill based on all available resources, of which there are more available now than ever. Your skill is earned and you cross the line from amateur to professional when you have an understanding of both the pioneers and the current state of the work.

Seth Godin has long been recognized as a thought leader in marketing, leadership, change, and how ideas spread far and wide. *The Practice* is based on his wildly successful Akimbo Workshops, which have catalyzed change in the work of thousands upon thousands of people.

The book veers away from the prescriptive and sticks to the inspirational, offering readers bite-sized nuggets of wisdom that can be taken in any order. Organized into a numbered list of short, pithy, poetic paragraphs, it could just as easily be read as a daily devotional that is visited here and there when a lift is needed as it could be a cover-to-cover guide for getting going. Readers looking for the latter may want to opt for the workshop itself, which is sure to include a more actionable approach for putting *The Practice* into practice.