

GOCONTENT

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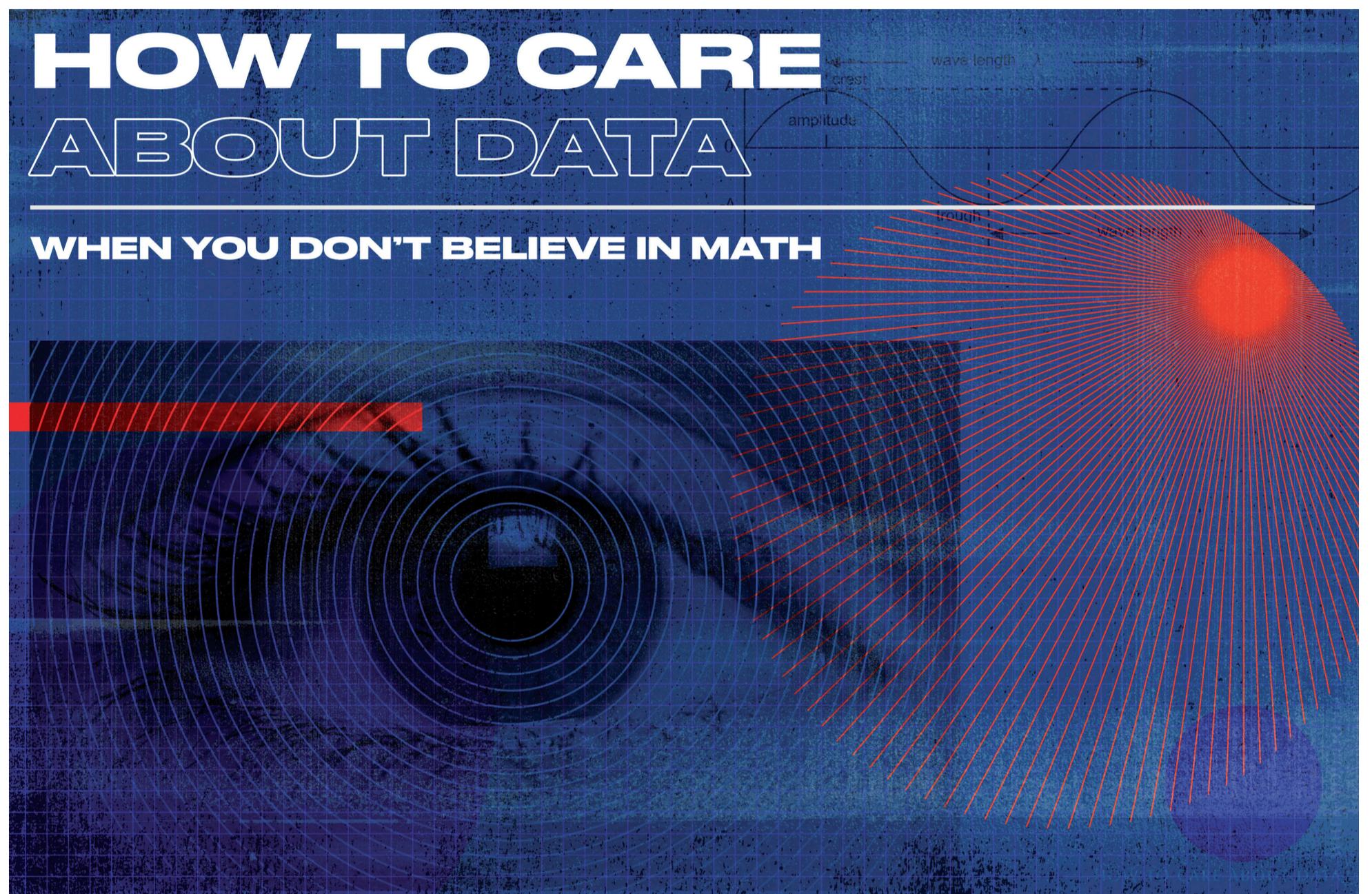


ILLUSTRATION JESS HARRINGTON

By Ryan Hynes

Here are the titles of seven TED Talks:

1. "Own your body's data."
2. "Why you should love statistics."
3. "The quantified self."
4. "The Mathematics of Love."

5. "What's so sexy about math?"

6. "Turning powerful stats into art."

7. "How we can find ourselves in data."

...How we can find ourselves in data?

I imagine a precocious young student digging his way through a heap of numbers like it's a pile of leaves. Late fall. The air is brisk. The student (let's say he's a college freshman because college is really when people start trusting this stuff) finds himself buried in a host of numbers — huge 5s, 6s, some heavy 0s — each of which fell from a grand oak tree shaped like a parabola.

la. He was dared to jump in the pile. He hates the way the 6s feel, and the 7s scratch his glasses. His foot is lassoed by a 9. He'll never get out of the data. He's found himself in data.

If you, like me, shrug whenever someone says "The data suggests..." your shoulders might be getting tired. But don't panic. There are small ways you can participate in the statisti-

cal conversations taking place in your office right now even if you don't believe in math. You might even start to build positive relationships with other members of your team.

A few suggestions:

USE DATA TO BREAK CREATIVE TIES.

Say you're deciding between creating a video or a still image; a photography shoot or an illustration; a subject line with "You" or "We" in it. This could be a good time to connect with your team's analysts or to look at those Mailchimp numbers you've been ignoring. What's there to lose? You're already deadlocked. Think of it as flipping a coin.

Plus, when you present your work to the team, you can defend the decisions you made by saying they were data-led.

USE DATA TO CREATE CHARACTERS.

Demographic data is everyone's wet dream (or nightmare – looking at you,

Facebook!). But if quantifying the masses is disinteresting to you, a people person, consider applying demographics onto an imaginary consumer of your creation. Draw the character! Dress her up. Add characteristics. Name her!

You might not be inspired to know what percentage of your customers "engage with online applications 1-3 times per hour." But what if that customer were a 40-something named Harold, and his back was so arched from looking at his phone 1-3 times per hour that his body formed a full circle? Would you be inspired to create a brilliant new campaign that depicts Harold rolling his circular body down the street?

USE DATA TO UNDERSTAND HOW SOME PEOPLE THINK.

If half the population is, in fact, left brain (that's the analytical one), then understanding data is also about understanding the people who understand data.

Why do we obsess over polling data? Why do we worry about miniscule changes in stock prices? Why is data sometimes easier to conceive than people are? Perhaps the objectiveness, neatness, and universality of data can help to inspire better creative decision-making. Perhaps the project you're working on right now could be more cohesive or its argument more overt. Perhaps the story you're writing needs more structure. Is your copy causative or correlative? Can you defend why one sentence you've written leads to another?

The next time you must sit through a presentation about analytics, consider asking yourself how you would describe your work to the speaker. Could you conceive your art in terms they would understand? Would that help you reach broader audiences?

We right-brainers should try to do right by our analytical colleagues (if not just for the sake of our former math

teachers). We should listen more, ask more questions, and research ideas that bore us.

In fact, I was one of millions who watched the "How we find ourselves in data" TED Talk. Lo and behold, the speaker actually advocates for less reliance on technology and more on human nature. She calls it, "data humanism." The philosophy is all about making sure humans are at the center of critical analysis, rather than trusting data as if it's some all-knowing God. People first; numbers second. That sounds like a plan to me.

A TRANSITION PLAN IS PROOF THAT YOUR WORK MATTERED

By Jenna Britton

I see this one book every time I'm roaming the "Self Help" aisle at Powell's. It's called *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*. I've been through some pretty significant transitions in the last few years, but I only picked it up for the first time recently, after I was laid off from my job.

I wasn't sure that I was the target demographic for the book: I didn't particularly feel like I was grieving the loss of my job and I parted on good terms with my boss, but I was curious about whether it might be helpful for me to read anyway.

What I've learned in the weeks since I walked out of that office for the last time is that regardless of how or when or why you leave a job, it's still a huge change. And the transition to the next phase of your life and your career can be bumpy, whether or not you know where you're headed next.

A TRANSITION PLAN AS PROOF

Minutes after I was told that my position had been dissolved, I opened a Google Doc and started writing a tran-



PHOTO UNSPLASH

sition plan — a multi-page document meant to provide my boss (and any potential successor) with the informa-

fied with the work that I did — and if that work wasn't enough to keep me on board, what did that say about me?

It wasn't so much that I didn't appreciate the forced change that this layoff precipitated; it was that I identified with the work that I did — and if that work wasn't enough to keep me on board, what did that say about me?

tion they needed to continue the work I'd done. I still had a month left in my position so there wasn't really a rush, but it felt like the only thing to do in that moment.

Creating a transition plan isn't always required when you leave a job, but it's almost always appreciated. Making it as easy as possible for your team to pick up where you left off without any lost time or money is a nice way to leave on good terms; to give your team and your (soon-to-be former) company the support they need to continue on without you.

But it was more than that for me. It was proof that I had been there, proof that I had contributed, proof that continue on though they might — I had helped create what they would continue.

WHEN YOUR WORK IS YOUR IDENTITY

In *Transitions*, author William Bridges shares stories and question prompts to help guide readers through various significant transitions in work and life.

"Why is letting go so difficult?" Bridges asks. "This is a puzzling question, especially if we have been looking forward to a change... We feel these unexpected losses because, to an extent that we seldom realize, we come to identify ourselves with the circumstances of our lives."

Of course.

Of course I had come to identify with the circumstances of my work, my role, my coworkers, my daily schedule and responsibilities, and even of my commute. It wasn't so much that I didn't appreciate the forced change that this layoff precipitated; it was that I identi-

CREATE A PLAN FOR YOUR TRANSITION

Something began to shift as I created my transition plan, though. As I listed every responsibility and every step of every process and each in-progress project that I would be transitioning over, I began to see what my work said about me.

It said that I was strategic, creative, and smart; committed to my company and to my craft. All professional decorum notwithstanding, this is the main reason that I recommend creating your own transition document, whether it's requested of you or not: it will remind you of everything you did, and it will remind you that your work mattered.

Here's what I included in mine:

Responsibilities.

Write down every responsibility expected of your role, and how often you do them. Even if it seems insignificant or obvious to you, it might be helpful for the next-in-line for your job to know. If you can't think of everything you've done, ask to look at your original job description and add anything you've forgotten.

Close-to-Completion Projects.

List all of the projects you'll finish before you leave — making sure that you're considering what you can realistically complete before your last day.

In-Progress Projects.

Are there projects that you won't be able to finish before you head out? Add them in, too. Include as many details as you can, including important tasks, resources, and contact information for relevant collaborators and contractors.

Process Lists.

If there are certain tasks you do over and over again — every day, week, month, or quarter — walk yourself through the process and write down every step. And try to write it down in terms that anybody could understand and follow.

Contact Information.

Share the name, email, and phone number of anyone you communicated and collaborated with often. This might include colleagues, project contractors, or collaborators from different teams within your organization, amongst other people.

Important Tools, Resources, and Passwords.

If you're the sole user and keeper of passwords for specific tools and re-

As I listed every responsibility and every step of every process and each in-progress project that I would be transitioning over, I began to see what my work said about me.

That last step is a key part of the transition plan. Or, at least, it was a key part of mine. Even though it never ended up in the Google Doc I shared with my former boss, acknowledging and appreciating all that I had contributed in my role was integral to helping me transition out of this one phase of my professional life and into the next.

For me — someone who was admittedly feeling the sting of this professional breakup, amicable or not — my transition document marked not just a bullet-pointed list of my responsibilities and processes, but also evidence to counteract some now lacking confidence. It was the boost I needed to remember how valuable I had been in that role as I transitioned into whatever I did next.

"Remember that a change in your work life is just that — a change — and that being in transition means that something more than that is going on inwardly," Bridges says. "It means that you have reached the point where it is time to let go of an idea or an assumption, a self-image or a dream. It means that you are moving from one chapter of your story to the next."

Transitioning out of a job — whether you're transitioning into your dream role, a temporary project, or god-only-knows-what next — doesn't often seem to carry the same gravitas as life's many other significant transitions. But it's still a change and it's still a loss, which is why it's still nice to deliver that transition plan — that reminder of all that you gave and all that you gained — before you leave.

It's proof that you were there, that you did good work, and that your work mattered.

sources, make sure you share that information too.

FROM ONE CHAPTER TO THE NEXT

And then, at the end of it all — before you hand it over — look at what you've done. Take a minute (or more) to remember how accomplished and productive and useful you were! Whether you're transitioning out of your role by choice or... well, not, you should celebrate all that you did before you go.

LESSONS I LEARNED FROM MY OLD BOSS, WHO HATED ME

by Annie Goodman



ILLUSTRATIONS JESS HARRINGTON

Three days, nine hours, 12 people.

That's how many people it took and how many hours I spent interviewing for my first official job as an Account Coordinator at a small, boutique ad agency in Los Angeles.

The agency was 21 people large, so I had, in essence, met with over half of the entire company over three separate days of interviewing. Although my most notable work experience had been several years as "Camp Counselor" at a day camp and "Hostess (With the Mostess)" at California Pizza Kitchen (three separate times, by the way), I had been deemed a "culture fit" due to my sociable nature and self-deprecating humor.

The job was mine and I would be the youngest person on an account team of two men with monosyllabic names and years of rapport under their leather belts.

Three weeks into the job, my Account Supervisor, who managed me directly, announced that he'd be moving to another state for a new job and a new relationship... which meant that I was going to be reporting directly to the most senior-level person on the team – aka the only other person on the team.

It was around this time that I learned that my boss-to-be was not looking forward to being stuck with the outgoing 21-year-old who thought the world was waiting for her. Yes, that was me.

So, even though my boss got me a chef's knife for Christmas, which is technically bad luck, I learned many things from him during the process of our intricately-complex dynamic over the 10 months that I worked for him. And don't worry: I secretly placed pennies on his desk when he wasn't looking to undo the knife's curse!

Lesson 1: Sit Down And Shut Up

About three months into the job, my boss's best friend (who also worked at the company) pulled me aside in the kitchen.

"You need to rein it in and show your boss some respect. You're a little too comfortable."

I was rocked. As a Millennial, I was used to positive feedback, cooperative learning, and personal encouragement. I had entered this job thinking that showing my whole self was a priority. I thought that the sooner everyone could see what I housed inside my figurative trench coat, they'd have no choice but to love me and see how special I was.

Whether or not I believed in the feed-

back I received, I realized in that moment that I needed to take a big step back.

My misguided and hyperbolized effort to tell everyone who I was resulted in an inability to see the clearly-laid boundaries that had been set by my colleagues. In boldly and immediately trying to connect through presumptuous comfort and intimacy, I falsely assumed that:

1. Everyone wanted to socialize on my terms
2. My way of engaging was the only way to connect
3. Building a personal rapport was everyone else's priority

Accepting that my personality wasn't the work, but rather that my personality needed some work, forced me to sit down, shut up, listen, learn, absorb, and then acclimate to a new community where there were bottom lines and deadlines. In spite of my only-child upbringing, I wasn't the most important person in the room and it turned out that no one was dying to hear what I thought at the meeting room table.

Lesson 2: Your Time Is Not More Valuable Than Anyone Else's

"What is 100% of your day is actually 12% of mine."

These are words my boss said to me after I had followed up with him several times about a project I had been

asked to complete.

boss for my finished work (did I mention I'm a Millennial?).

I always assumed (yes, there's that word again) that a lot was riding on my work because I had been asked to do it. I often thought, "He can't do his job without my job, right?"

So when he sat me down in a conference room on a cloudy Wednesday, I was yet again paralyzed into perspective, zooming

out just a little bit to see the other person on the other side of the table.

As I gave it more thought, I understood that even though my work assisted my boss's goals, he had his own tasks and priorities. And the completion of my daily tasks was not at the top of his list.

Throughout every job I've had since, valuing other people's time has been... well... invaluable. I still see incoming, entry-level employees jump on senior staff with urgency, almost begging for their work to take precedence over everyone else's. It's encouraged me – in moments where I feel frantic about an unresponsive email – to remember that everyone has something else they're dealing with and that I have to patiently wait for them to make my priority their own.

Lesson 3: Not Everyone Is Going To Like You

Growing up, children are taught to be affable and well-liked. Popularity is sought after and valedictorians get the keys to the kingdom. As a child, the idea that someone doesn't like you creates an unresolvable anxiety that leaves most scrambling for any solution to move the needle in the other direction.

I felt this way until I worked with my boss.

Aside from the humbling lessons I had to learn from just being a young and entitled post-grad, my boss and I, very plainly, had no chemistry.

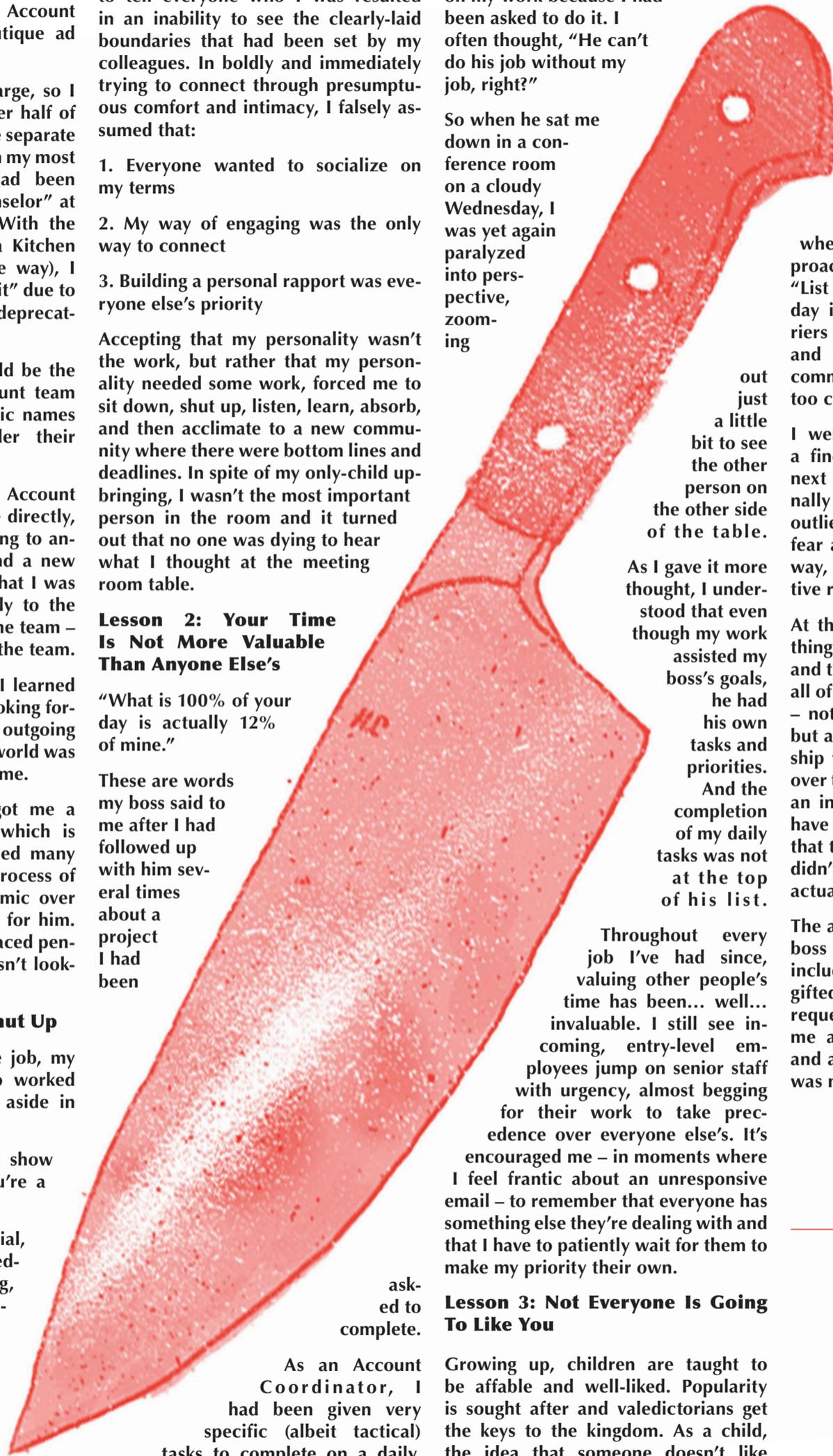
For 10 months, to no end, I worked really hard to continue to iterate my behavior in the hopes that reversing each identified flaw would somehow reverse his distaste for my presence.

We even reached a point where he had asked that I not approach his desk and simply email him a "List of Reminders" at the end of each day instead. He placed as many barriers between us as he possibly could and refrained from any constructive commentary, fearful that I might get too complacent.

I went through my personality with a fine-tooth comb, searching for the next thing to fix, so that we could finally be copasetic. But in looking for outliers, I found myself bloated with fear and worry instead (which, by the way, led to psychosomatic and digestive repercussions).

At this point, I realized that the only thing that mattered was the work itself and that I needed to compartmentalize all of this self-doubt and personal strife – not only for the sake of my health, but also because my personal relationship with my boss didn't take priority over the work. Sure, it would have been an incredible add-on, but in order to have clarity, I had to separate the upset that there was someone out there who didn't like me from the fact that I was actually really good at my job.

The almost-year that I worked with my boss was a mentally-intense one that included tension one could cut with my gifted knife. He still hasn't accepted my request on LinkedIn, but he did make me a stronger, more humble person and a sharper employee. And yes, that was meant to be another knife pun.



asked to complete.

As an Account Coordinator, I had been given very specific (albeit tactical) tasks to complete on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Once I got the hang of my job, I constantly sought out approval, validation, and, most importantly, celebration from my

Designers, Writers:

You Need 2 Become 1

by Stacy Nguyen

Each year, a new crop of young and hungry designers and writers graduate from college, put up bombass online portfolios with neato animated elements, and list out all of these new technical skills I haven't even heard of. Like, aggregated-SEO-C++-analytics-on-rails.

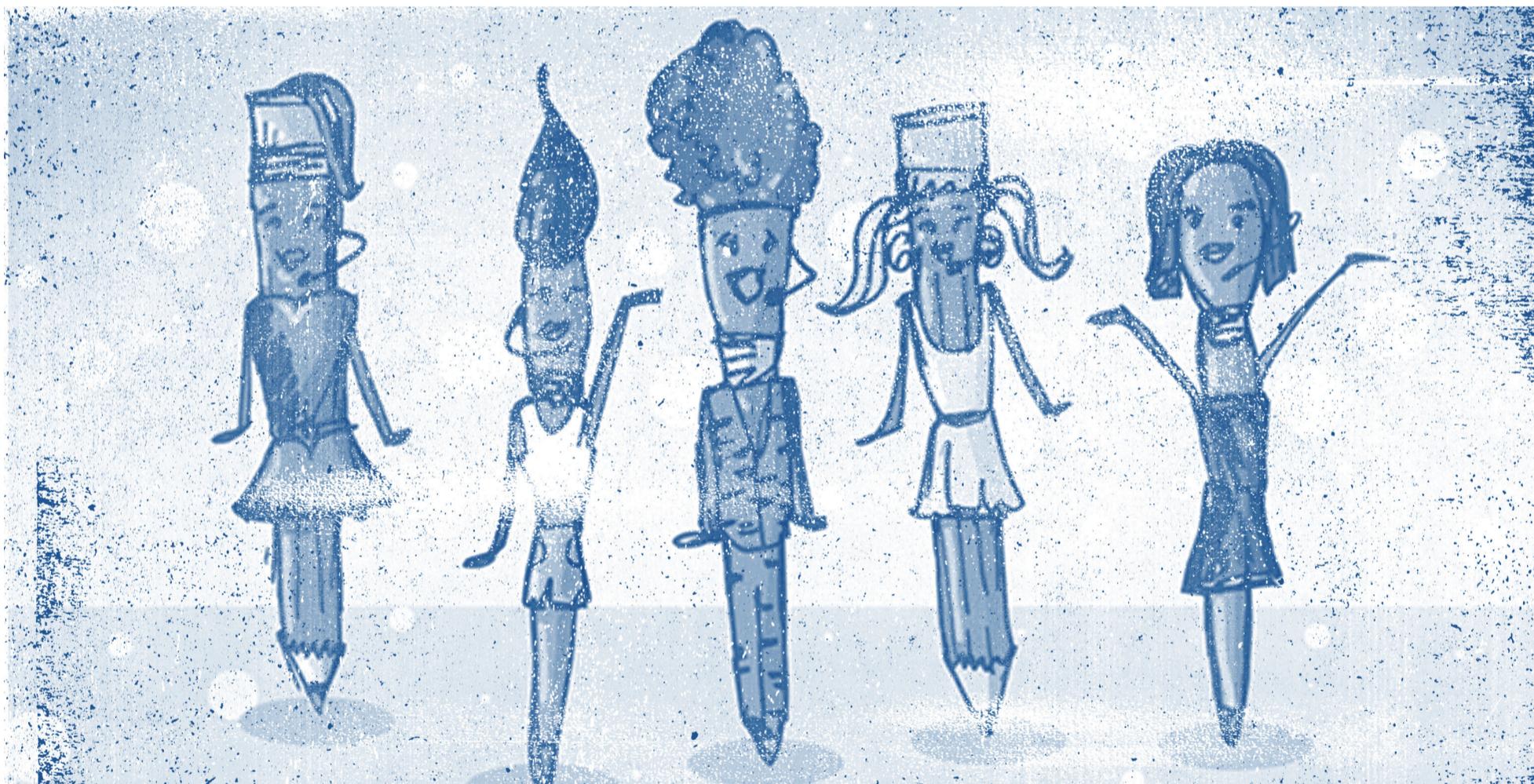


ILLUSTRATION STACY NGUYEN

And there are maybe a few hours each June when I'm lying in bed and biting my nails, because I am convinced these 22-year-olds are going to supplant my place in the professional world, making me destitute and forcing me to orphan my dogs because I can't afford dog food anymore.

And then I get over it!

Because I've figured something out — as you get older and more established in this field, it doesn't even matter if you know how to code or not. You can like, easily hire someone to do that work if you don't feel like learning (hollaaa!).

What matters way more are soft skills. And the biggest core soft skill of all in communications is knowing how to tell a story and knowing how to remove friction in the viewer's experience of a narrative. You can do this visually (design) or through text (writing). Increasingly, it is a hybrid of both.

Designers, writers — y'all need to reach across the aisle and adopt the skills the the other has. Doing so will make you better at your core job. I know! I know! The idea of suddenly specializing in an entirely different skillset might seem daunting, and for real, it is. But here are some idiot-proof tips to help you fake it until you make it.

WRITERS, START MAKING MORE CHARTS AND LISTS.

Writers have a tendency of wanting to spell out information in fat blocks of paragraphs, even when the information is stuff like a convoluted timeline of events.

That stuff is a bear to read and often boring. With content that is inherently kind of boring, it's good to make it skimmable. This is where charts and lists come in handy. If there is ever a list in which more than three commas are used, just bullet it.

When I am the writer on a project, I like to make pretty rudimentary charts in Excel that take very little time. And then I embed them into the copy and send it on its merry way to get nicely laid out by a designer. It's pretty easy!

DESIGNERS, MAKE MORE INFOGRAPHICS.

The first time I made an infographic for a client, I was shocked at how hard it was. Hilariously, it was because it forced me to read, learn, and study a complex subject — before undertaking the massive task of illustrating a complex topic into easy-to-digest visual bites.

That first experience made me realize just how deep designers can get into text, how good design can disseminate really thick information that would usually lie in an under-read report and make it palatable for mass consumption. That is powerful stuff. Designing infographics trains your brain to think in detail about information-giving.

WRITERS, PUT IN MORE SUBHEADINGS AND PARAGRAPH BREAKS.

I write with a lot of subheadings on purpose. I think voracious readers see a fat, dark block of text and they go, "Oh, boy! Goody!" But I'm a designer who has an attention deficit disorder, so I see a fat block of text and I get re-

ally discouraged and depressed about it, like, "Oh great, I have to read now?"

For delicate souls like me, I like to pop in lots of subheadings that convey specific information to serve as a visual outline for the content. Thinking about the visual hierarchy of information is doing a service for ADD folks and also really busy folks. It also takes into consideration that people don't read linearly. Sometimes we skip ahead to the end of the book to see how it works out before we go back to the beginning and commit to the journey.

Plenty of subheadings serve readers by giving the gist of what this piece is about at a glance.

DESIGNERS, CREATE INSTAGRAM BRAND STORIES.

A really good social media content creator is actually a hybrid of designer and writer because social media is so image- or graphics-forward, but still requires good copy to relay messaging.

Instagram stories, in particular, allow the opportunity to create narratives, with beginnings, middles, and ends. It's also a fairly low-pressure arena for designers to work on their writing chops. Plus they get immediate feedback and information on how people engage with the content through Instagram's built-in analytics tool.

WRITERS, PRACTICE WRITING SHORT COPY.

Oftentimes, the hardest thing to write is not the 1000-word body copy of an article — it is the headline or title of it. The title is the selling vehicle, the thing that convinces a reader whether or not to invest in the content you have created. It is a tough job, and yet many writers treat titles as afterthoughts.

As a designer, I've been frustrated when I have to lay out a title that manages to say nothing of importance and yet is way too long.

As a writer, I've messed up the design of a page when I've seen a shitty title in print and then asked the designer to redo the heading while I think of a better headline on the spot.

These days, I try to invest the time to

write good headlines before giving designers content. I think about what would be easy to stylize. My favorite brainless method when I'm in a hurry is the headline-subheadline combo:

STASH IT OR TRASH IT?

Six ways to clean your home quickly before the Lunar New Year

When you do this, the designer gets to have a short and jaunty bit of text to blow up and make look cool, and the subheadline underneath conveys the important bit of the sales pitch.

DESIGNERS, KEEP A RUNNING LIST OF COPY ISSUES YOU SPOT AS YOU DESIGN AND SHARE WITH CLIENT.

This is a good practice to get into. Always do it. Never just hand in long-form content and say, "Here you go! See attached!" There's no way that anything more than three pages was written so cleanly and so tightly there were no items to flag during layout.

You also don't have to be comprehensive. No one is asking you to be a proofreader. But the perk of sending a few bullet points is that it sounds to the client that you are well-rounded and you are engaging with their content. It affirms the partnership because it shows you care about content holistically, not just about making content pretty. And when you commit to always send in notes, you end up reading things all the time. It just becomes part of the workflow.

COMMON, EASY NOTES THAT I SEND A LOT:

- Asking for title or subtitles to be lengthened or shortened, for better copy fit
- Asking for excess content or repetitive content to be trimmed
- Information they forgot to write in — like contact info or their website
- Reminding client of the notes they leave to themselves in the copy, stuff like, "We earned \$x,xxx dollars this year."

That's it! Super easy, right? If you guys get these easy things covered, I swear, it will make a huge difference in your work, and your clients will definitely notice, too.

CLASSIFIEDS

RECRUITER SEEKS SAME

Looking for someone to split the rent (and commissions). I like to spend time on my phone, fielding client and candidate questions, scrolling through LinkedIn, and submitting candidates. Must love same.

DESIGNER SEEKS RECRUITER

I'd like to design things for brands while also being existentially fulfilled; think banner ads, presentation decks, and of course working off of other designers' files with unnamed layers.

CREATIVE AGENCY SEEKS PR AGENCY

We need help. Save us from ourselves.

OFFICE SEEKS SELF-LOADING DISHWASHER

Honestly, loading it ourselves (or heaven forbid, hand washing) is too taxing.

AGENCY EMPLOYEE SEEKS CLIENT TRANSLATOR

If you know what they want from me, I want to know you. I've read this brief 19 times and I'm still not sure.

CLIENT-SIDE EMPLOYEE SEEKS CREATIVE TRANSLATOR

Have you been a creative at an agency? Why do you always want to make such weird stuff? Help me understand, I'm drowning in stock imagery and wacky ideas.

OFFICE POTTED PLANT SEEKS WATER AND LIGHT

I don't ask for much. Please don't give me too much or too little of either. I am sensitive.

WRITER SEEKS DIGITAL AGENCY

I will only write in 280 or fewer characters.

STEVE POTESIO SEEKS DUCKS FAN

I would like more Ducks fans to work at my agency, spend time in my company, and take me to their superior seats at Autzen. In return, I'll provide excellent company, strong IPAs, and a really fun story about my cousin.

JACKIE MATHYS SEEKS RELIABLE SCOOTER

Will you promptly complete my ride so that I can run to catch my bus? Then you are the scooter for me.

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