

Bluefishing

By Steve Sims

Key Takeaways

1. Create more value for others than yourself.
2. Avoid paralysis by analysis at *ALL* costs.
3. Embrace uncertainty.
4. Execute. Do what you say you will and *more*.
5. Be afraid of stagnation.
6. Be raw. Be authentic. Be genuine.
7. Be selective about what you say yes to.
8. Continually learn from those smarter than you.

Notes & Thoughts

- Thank you, Colin, for the book rec!
- Great life reinforcement book. Rehashes many great teachings that I have learned across several different books. *Bluefishing* does a great job using stories to better illustrate these lessons and does an exceptional job funneling them into one book.
- I'd recommend this to anyone looking for a review on how to handle professional relationships, folks wanting inspiration to get back on track, or even looking for a useful book to read. This book is really for anyone who wants to *get shit done*.

- Great Quotes:

"Throw away the thought, 'That could never be me.' Instead ask, 'Why can't it be me?'"

"Don't be easy to understand. Be *impossible* to *misunderstand*."

"Things that *happen* to you are not in your obituary."

"Give people enough rope to climb or hang themselves."

"There's a thin line between patience and complacency."

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Summary

Intro

Sims quite literally introduces himself and what he does: he gets things done for clients that no one else can. Steve quite literally is an experience concierge – people ask him to create wild experiences around the world: perform live on stage at a Journey concert (*with Journey*), drive an F1 in Monaco, VIP access to post Super Bowl party, etc... He explains that just as he did, anyone can make seemingly out of reach experiences come to fruition; it's all about honing the skill, honing the mindset.

Chapter 1: Knocking Down Walls

Steve grew up as the son of a brick layer. Whenever he would walk through town, he would peer into stores, often seeing things he thought he could never afford because his parents refrained from even stepping foot in the shops. He grew up thinking this would be the rest of his life because, well, it was the same life everyone else in his family had. He one day realized he wanted to break from the tradition, he wanted to break through a wall instead of building one.

Everyone is told “no” and everyone has failures. Do you let the “no” or the failure stop you? Well, those are walls, and you have options when you find walls. You can let it block your desired course. Or you can climb over it, dig under it, walk around it, or break through it.

Chapter 2: Power of the Passwords

Having transplanted to Hong Kong in search of another job, Sims was at a loss when he couldn't secure the job he had moved there for. With experience as a bouncer at local bars back in England, he picked up a job at a night club. After getting into the swing of things, he began to realize only certain nights would be popular at his club, some nights across the street, and other nights next store. Instead of being the typical bouncer checking IDs and letting people in, he would refuse entry on nights when the club was dry, and instead be honest and direct patrons to the clubs that *were* happening on a given night. What he realized was that if he admitted customers and they had a lousy time, they would never come back. He realized what they truly wanted: a good time. So, without thinking twice, he began sharing codes for patrons to come by another night when he guaranteed the scene would be livelier and fun filled (bluefish was his first password). Sure enough, the exclusivity and the pent-up demand to enter the club would in turn create more buzz on fewer nights for the club. But, because the club was filled with patrons, the partygoers would have a much better time. Soon enough, because locals began to become familiar with Steve's authenticity and ability to conjure up excitement for parties at the club, they began asking if he would be able to help host XYZ party or event.

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Chapter 3: Something for Everyone

You can't expect to get repeat business if you're taking all the value out of an interaction. This is where the concept of "win-win" comes in: if you share the created value, you will have a higher likelihood of generating additional value with the same person in the future. (An aside – I believe we, as a society, should strive to do even better than this. The idea of win-win-win, or creating positive external/surplus value, is essential in creating a better world for the generations to come. It's also well within reach, see ESG investments) When looking for something from someone, see how you can bring value to *them*. Don't initiate a relationship looking to generate value solely on your own behalf. Find out how you can bring them value so you can make the relationship a win-win. Often, the best way to do this is to find what *truly* makes someone tick. What makes them light up? Ask why and keep asking why until you get to the kernel of their reasoning. The objective is no quid pro quo (tit for tat), instead, look to generate more value for *them* than you do for yourself. That is how you become truly successful.

Chapter 4: Be the Real Deal

Make. Things. Happen. (Get. Shit. Done.) Don't only stick to your word. Go the extra mile to do something extra special for someone else. Steve's example: a client asked to have a special dinner at Palazzo de Vecchio in Florence, Italy. Not only did he get to do that, but the dinner was at the foot of the *David* statue whilst Andrea Bocelli serenaded the dinner party of six. He didn't have to pull extra strings to reserve the area by *David*, he didn't have to go the extra mile to find out how Andrea Bocelli could be flown in for the event. But he *did*. He made it happen. It's all about the small stuff, doing the detective work to find out how one donation here or one call there might convince the decision makers to grant a certain wish.

Chapter 5: No Passion, No Point

People are moved into action when there is passion. Take Steve Jobs or Elon Musk. Why are their companies so powerful? Because they have true passion, everyone on their team has a true passion. That type of passion is infectious and tapping into that is essential in creating valuable relationships. In order to get to that kernel of passion, keep asking why, determine what makes the person get up every day.

Chapter 6: Failure is Just More Discovery

Get out there and *try* to do something. Even if you think you can't, give it a shot. Inaction doesn't even allow you to learn. By doing something and discovering the results, you can learn how to improve the outcome next time. Most people, however, are blinded by overplanning, thinking that planning to a t and thinking everything out *is in fact* action. That is wrong. This overthinking is paralysis by analysis.

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Chapter 7: Seventh Inning Stretch

In this small section, Sims references several classic examples of extremely successful individuals who had hundreds if not thousands of failures before their breakthrough. Just to name a few: James Dyson's 5,126 prototypes of unsuccessful bagless vacuums, Henry Ford going broke five times in pursuit of breaking into auto industry, Dr. Suess's 27 rejections on publishing his first book.

Chapter 8: Be Afraid of Standing Still

This chapter resonated BIG with me. Sims suggests that falling into a complacent rhythm should be every individual's greatest fear. The worst possible thing that could happen to you is if you are in the same exact position in exactly one year from now. Get comfortable with being *uncomfortable*.

Chapter 9: Ugly Works

Be authentic. Be ugly. Don't try to over polish or sugar coat things. Perfect is sending out preprinted, clean-cut, well-designed forms or letters to your clients. Being ugly is writing a note to a client who likes whiskey on your receipt at a bar where you just had a nice whiskey and sending it to him. Be raw. Picking up on small aspects of a client or friend's personality and using that to communicate with them not only improves your effectiveness in communicating with them, but also your relationship overall. Be unpolished and prove your authenticity.

Chapter 10: Personal Branding is Personal

Everything you do is being watched. Every small gesture and action is part of your personal brand. Trying to replicate someone else's personality usually results in inauthenticity. Embrace your own weirdness, personality, and quirks. Be you. Only then will others be able to adopt you for who you really are, rather than someone you are trying to be.

Exercise: Self-audit. Sims recommends building two lists to find your true self. One being things in life that you like and things in life that you don't like (i.e. foods, experiences, people, etc...). The other being things that you do and don't like about yourself. Comparing and contrasting the lists, you'll find things that you don't necessarily like, but you do them anyway. To get to your true self, you'll need to start focusing on those weak links: the chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

Exercise: "The Chug Test." This test is used to find others that are truly worth your while, whether it be a romantic partner, business associate, prospective client, etc. The test goes like this: you see said person walking in front of you and they can't

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see you. Are they the type of person you would run to catch up to and go ask them to chug a beer and catch up?

Chapter 11: The Power to Say No

Early in their career, successful individuals tend to say yes to everything. This is a big mistake. The more you bring into your life, the more you dilute what you already have; therefore, it's essential to filter the things you say yes to. Get rid of the time vampires in your life: friends, clients, employees, anyone from whom you do not receive proportionate value to the time you spend with them. Audit your inner circle: you are the composite of the top five people you spend your most time with.

Chapter 12: The Art of Delegation

Every individual has 5% of themselves that is entirely unique. Everyone has a specific set of skills/traits they bring to the table, and often those combinations are so vastly unique from the others at the table that they become necessary to the smooth operation of the whole. When you realize that you cannot micromanage *everything* and understand that delegating certain responsibilities to others will increase *your* value, then you will be able to grow as an individual, team, or business. If you are at the helm, then maybe you sometimes take the time to oversee a specific operation before final delivery but being involved in every step of the process prevents growth.

Exercise: Take 30 minutes to write down in detail the top 10 stressors in your life. How can you outsource or avoid these? When you figure that out, you naturally gain more time in your day.

Chapter 13: What Makes a Brand Great?

Constant improvement. There is no level of "great." You never achieve a market value of "greatness." The only thing you can realistically control is your effort in best positioning your business to improve upon itself each day. What are you today to become better tomorrow? Once you've built up all of your weaknesses so that they are at a point which won't lead to the demise of your business, ignore the weaknesses to focus solely on the strengths.

Chapter 14: The Art of Speaking Human

How many communications do you receive a day? Maybe a few phone calls, couple hundred texts, maybe a hundred emails. It's hard to keep up with everything and everyone. What if you received a physical piece of mail? A selfie video from someplace cool via text? Make it personal. Be authentic to you and your brand and remember the goal is to generate value for the other person. Don't build the largest list of clients or

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followers. Find your niche and focus on that small number to create a truly personal and value-filled experience.

Chapter 15: Give Them a Reason to Believe

If you send out email blasts and one of your many clients opens an email from you, are they going to share the fact they got an email with their friends? Now if you focus on providing a top tier experience for a small number of clients, what are the odds that client recommends you to a friend of theirs?

How much does it cost to truly listen to your client? Especially if you have a small number of clients, you will be able to home in on each one and truly understand each of their backgrounds. If you're able to do that, you can give them the true client experience they deserve.

Exercise: For a client or a friend, pick up on a small piece of a recent or future conversation with them. See what you might be able to get (in person, not online) for under \$10 that pertains to the conversation. Send it or drop it off with them along with a small note saying it reminded you of your conversation with them.

Chapter 16: Sponge it Up

Embrace uncertainty. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Understand that you know nothing. Walk into rooms where you *know* you're the least knowledgeable on the given subject and *learn* from the others. The simple act of trying to learn is instrumental in growth and developing expertise in an area. Don't be a victim to inaction – just do it. Usually, inaction is a result of overplanning (as mentioned above) or fear of failure/embarrassment.

Part of breaking down some of the walls we unintentionally put up between ourselves and our desires is simply putting ourselves into uncomfortable situations. For example, if your future involves staying in ultra-nice hotels, get dressed up in nice clothes, walk into a lobby and tell them you are just leaving town and will need to be back in a few weeks and had a bad experience at your last hotel and that you'd like to see a room. Get used to the life you will live; you don't have to own it to experience it.

Chapter 17: Live with Passion, Move with Persistence

The combination of passion and persistence is unstoppable. There is a large difference between patience and complacency. Sims suggests 48 business hours is the limit for patience. Don't wait.

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Chapter 18: Actually Give a Damn

You don't want clients. You want relationships. Clients only come to you when they need something. Relationships are there in good times and bad, regardless of whether they are paying you or not. Do your homework on prospective relationships – be genuine and truly care about your counterpart. Listen so you can truly understand their situation.

When laying out client expectations, be reserved so you can overdeliver (be poised to over deliver in every relationship).

Don't waste your own time: when you are working whether it be with yourself, your team, a client, etc., be prepared to be laser focused. Don't let distractions dilute your time.

Chapter 19: Don't Count Your Losses

Tallying up your losses is a stressor. Why count your losses when you can count your wins. Especially in businesses that involve sales, whether in real estate, venture capital, or retail, you are likely to have fewer wins than losses; that's part of the business. When you count your wins, you can better focus on the things you did right. Positive reinforcement has time and again proven to be more successful than negative.

Couple habits and accountability to become efficient and minimize losses. Adhering to set habits will increase the odds of achieving goals.

Be selfish in time allocation. Ensure you have proper time to focus, but also ensure you have time to rest, both mentally and physically.

Chapter 20: The Bluefishing Playbook

Stars don't align and ducks are never in a perfect row. Successful individuals are not the result of pure luck. Successful individuals are the result of work ethic, structure, digging for authenticity, and craving perpetual growth.

“Be as selfish as you have to be. You have the right to recharge yourself. Take it and defend it. That's the only way you can harness the energy you need to make things happen.”