HUSTLE
YOUR WAY
TO THE TOP

Flipping the Script:
How To Recognize, Reverse, and
Automate Invisible Scripts

BY RAMIT SETHI

NEGATIVE INVISIBLE SCRIPTS

There's a game going on around you that you don't even know about.

How many of us go through life without testing our theories? Here are a few of the most insidious:

SCRIPT: *"I could make $160,000/year if I just had a law degree."*

> **REALITY:** Going to law school is likely to leave the average student in crushing debt — and law schools are systematically deceiving students. This is why top performers know to only go to top 10 law schools, or they don't go at all. (The same is true of business school.)

SCRIPT: *"Why would anybody want to help me? What would they get out of it?"*

> **REALITY:** People LOVE to help people who take action. If some random emails me and tells me his delusional dreams, I'll probably ignore him. But if he says, "Here's my plan...I'll email you back in 2 weeks with results. Then I'm hoping to get some advice after I've showed you that I can take action." I'll always respond. Who would be willing to help you?

SCRIPT: *"I need to read more and more about investing before getting started."*

> **REALITY:** You could set up your investment accounts by the end of the week and contribute $50/month to it — and be better off than someone who spent the next year "researching" their investments. (Note that I'm not saying you should just

open up an account and dump your money anywhere. You need to do your re-search. But you can find out a basic place to invest, and "tune" your contribution amounts and asset allocation over time. I cover this in detail in chapters 3 and 7 of my book.)

Of COURSE there are exceptions to every one of these trends. There are huge suc-cesses that go to non-top-10 law schools and end up wildly successful, just as there are entrepreneurs who have hit it big without ever opening an investment account. But if you talk to most top performers, you'll notice these trends time after time.

Do you have any these negative scripts do you have in your life?

POSITIVE INVISIBLE SCRIPTS

Here are a few key positive scripts that top performers hold:

"People want to help me, so it's OK to ask them for advice"

"I have a larger network than I realize..including my friends, friends' friends, alumni, parents' friends, and even people on LinkedIn and people whose blogs I read"

"It's GOOD to be ambitious"

"I want to out-prepare the SHIT out of this interview/application"

See the difference?

Negative scripts are about holding you back. Often, they're so deep you don't even realize how they're constraining you.

Positive scripts dispense with the "Should I?" and get right to the "How can I…" part.

It's not "Should I apply to XYZ…?" it's "How can I get INTO XYZ? What would make me irresistible to them?"

ADVANCED STEP: AUTOMATING POSITIVE SCRIPTS

The first step is identifying and testing our assumptions, which are invisible scripts that prevent us from getting what we want.

But here's one more step: automating the solutions into your life so you're not dependent on willpower.

SCRIPT EXAMPLE: *"I want to contact 5 people per week to offer my freelance services to"*

BAD implementation: *"I should definitely do that. I'll get started some time next*

week. Yeah, 5 people/week would be good." (Notice loser language: "should" and "would.")

GOOD implementation: *"On Mondays, I do research on whom I should contact for the rest of the week. I write down the names and email addresses. Tues-Fri has 15 minutes blocked out each day on my calendar to contact and respond to my prospects."*

SCRIPT EXAMPLE: *"I want to find a better job"*

BAD implementation: *"I hate my job…I need to get something better…I should read some books on finding a job, and see what else is out there. I need to up-date my resume, too, and probably log into LinkedIn."*

- GOOD implentation: *"I want to find a better job — which means it pays $5,000 more and lets me focus on XYZ area that I love — within 60 days. This week, I'm going to make a 7-week plan for finding a new job. I'm guessing I need to re-search my field, figure out which industries I should be looking at, narrow down the target companies to 4-5, then figure out who I know at each company. I could probably do each of these things in 1 week, but I'm going to give myself a little more time in case I have to wait on other people. By Friday, I'll add a list of to-dos to my calendar for the next 7 weeks."*

See the difference?

Positive scripts are specific, measurable, and focused on HOW to do something...not if you SHOULD do something.

They don't depend on your willpower: As long as you honor your self-set calendar reminders, you will know precisely when to do something.

Now I want you to focus on turning your invisible scripts into constructive successes.

SOMETHING SUBTLE

There are subtle things you can notice about people if properly trained.

For example, people in debt have curious behaviors (they use a debit card -- any idea why?).

When people lie, they make detectable micro-expressions, as documented by psychologist Paul Ekman.

And when people "say" they are going to do something -- but really aren't -- they use codewords.

For example, I wrote a recent post where I challenged people to take action and leave a comment with their results. Check out the comments below -- what do you notice about people who said...

- "I WANT TO DO X" instead of "I WILL"

- "every morning I SHOULD" instead of "every morning I scheduled"

- "I"m going to TRY" instead of "I'm IMPLEMENTING"

- "I'm going to FIGURE OUT HOW TO" instead of "I will SET UP XYZ CONDITION"

Even these subtle comments can betray people's own barriers holding them back from action.

These are some of the extraordinarily subtle ways you can evaluate people...and even use them to change your own behavior.

3 CASE STUDIES: ORDINARY PEOPLE USING INVISIBLE SCRIPTS TO HUSTLE

It happened again last month.

One of my friends told me an interesting factoid — "Did you know that Victorian houses in SF used to be considered cheap models, but now everyone loves them? — and I said "Hmm, interesting" and continued chewing my sandwich.

FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

Two weeks later, I was walking with the same friend, and I said, "Hey, I heard something interesting...did you know that Victorian houses used to be —"

"GOD DAMNIT!" she said. "*I* told you that!"

Ah, yes. I forgot. Again.

It's become a running joke that I hear someone's idea, then 2 weeks later mention it to the SAME PERSON...which drives my friends crazy. But for some reason, it seems hilarious to me.

So today I'm delighted to be able to OPENLY take credit for one of my friends' ideas and tell you how it's improved my life.

I met Paul Singh a few years ago, and I was so impressed that I hired him for my last company, moving him and his wife to the Bay Area.

Little did I know that he was one of the world's premiere lifehackers.

After a few months of exchanging techniques, he shared a technique that I'd never heard.

"I put away $3,000 every year just to meet interesting people."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I just put it into a separate account and force myself to spend it."

"Interesting...." I said.

A little while later, I went to my 5-year college reunion. I met another friend, Steve, who was speaking on an alumni panel. He had moved to Seattle to work for Microsoft, but he had a particularly amazing strategy that I fell in love with.

"When I went to work for Microsoft, I knew I'd eventually want to move back to the Bay Area to start a company. So I made it a point of keeping my relationships warm."

How did he do that? Here's where it gets insanely awesome:

"I made a promise to myself that if anyone invited me to lunch, or even coffee, I'd fly to San Francisco to do it. I basically treated the plane flight like an hour-long car ride." How much did that cost him in a year? Maybe a few thousand dollars.

But guess what? Steve did start a tech company and, using his carefully cultivated relationships, he's gotten terrific press for his company, which is profitable and killing it.

By this point, you've learned about recognizing and banishing the negative scripts from your life...and automating the positive scripts. Paul and Steve both automated positive scripts — of investing in themselves.

And of course, since I love to take credit for my friends' ideas, I now set up a sub-savings account and force myself to spend on meeting interesting people.

Here's an actual email I sent to somebody who I want to meet:

> *[Initial email was the basics: Hi who I am, how I can help him, etc. We went back and forth. Then I wrote this:]*
>
> *"If there's anything more I can tell you, please let me know. If a phone call or even coffee in LA makes sense, just let me know and I'd be delighted to do it."*

I live in New York and San Francisco and it was important enough to meet him that I offered to fly to have coffee with him in LA. Even one meeting with him could change my business.

(Sidenote: He hasn't responded after our initial back-and-forth, so I added this to my "Failures" tag. But I continue to send him updates on my business and I know eventually he'll respond.)

If you read this and say, "Waa I can't afford $3,000 per year to travel around and meet people, you're missing the point. This is not about the amount of money — you could do the same with $20/month by taking 2 people out to coffee. The point is the mindset: **Investing in your friends and relationships pays off, hugely.**

We all claim relationships are important. But when you look at "objective" measures — your calendar (time) and spending (money) — are your actions really matching your claims?

THE CASE STUDIES

1. Jackie Schmidt

> **Backstory:** Jackie went from thinking she was horrible at business to creating a referral program that brought in so many clients she had a wait list a mile long that represented over $80,000 in revenue—and she did it in just 6 weeks

> **Old Script:** *"I'm terrible at business and can't think of ways to improve it."*

> **Automation:** Jackie used my Earn1k technique on "referral machines" to out-source her marketing. Most of the work was completed beforehand — as I teach in the course — and once she recognized the opportunity, it was a 5-minute email to seal the deal. I'll be sharing a detailed case study from Jackie on my Insider email list.

2. Adam Baker

> **Backstory:** Baker was a newly married family man accumulating debt upwards of $18,000. He made the decision to clean up his debt, sell everything he owned,

and spend a year living in Australia. He paid off $18,000 in debt and saved over $17,000 before living overseas in Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand.

New Script: *"The first step to living a life of passion...is to remove the barriers that hold you back."*

Automation: Baker's mantra: Sell Your Crap... Pay Off Your Debt... Do What You Love... In the year leading up to the trip he sold all of his possessions (down to two backpacks) and payed down $18,000 in consumer debt. In June 2009, they left for what was to be a year in Australia, but quickly turned into more mobile travels through Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and finally back to Indiana. And now he's added "earning more money" to that list through terrific products.

3. Eva Motch

Backstory: Eva is a designer who wanted to find a better job for 6 months. She not only quit her job and received a $12,000 raise, but found work on the side at a $4,000-a-year clip (with more to come).

Old Script: *"I hate my job and want to quit, but will wait until something better comes along."*

Automation: Eva implemented a plan to apply to leads on Craigslist systematically, and in so doing stumbled upon the full-time job and salary bump.

BY THE WAY, Jackie (#1) and Eva (#3) were members of Earn1k, my step-by-step on earning money on the side. Later this month, I'll be opening up Earn1k 2.0 — an updated version of the course with powerful techniques to turn your existing skills into side income. As Eva told me, "Your class honestly and truly helped me, and I will make many times more in my life because of it. "

BONUS: 3 MORE EXAMPLES OF REAL PEOPLE AUTOMATING POSITIVE SCRIPTS

Since you joined this Insider's List, here are 3 more private examples.

Each comes from graduates of my Earn1k course on hustling and earning money on the side.

1) John Meaney, Earn1k graduate

> **Backstory:** John went from being bed-ridden from a back injury, to successfully designing and launching a freelance business--teaching bouncers, police, and military how to fight (this seems outrageous but it's true)
>
> **Old Script:** *"I can't improve my situation because the pain is too much and I'm stuck here."*

Automation: John created a rehab system with set times and activities so that the "default habit" led to improving his physical condition.

2) Erin Peterson, Earn1k graduate

Backstory: Erin is a freelance journalist who had been freelance writing for years and had top-tier clients, but found herself spending time pursuing small deals with clients that didn't respect her. She wasn't sure how to take her income to the next level. She created a system to focus on high-value work, saving her time every month and leading to booking nearly $12K of work from really high quality clients in just three weeks.

Script: "I can make more money in less time if I had a few additional techniques to get new clients and get more from my existing clients"

Automation: She started thinking more strategically about her clients, like where they were coming from and how much they paying her. She implemented a system to eliminate low-value clients and instead significantly raise her rates with fewer valuable clients.

3) Hilary Gillespie, Earn1k graduate

Backstory: Hilary was a freelance web designer who increased her income dramatically. She could be making $12,000 a month, but chooses to work less so she can live a better lifestyle. She ended up with a waiting list of clients, including one $8k client and taking a month off.

Old Script: *"It's hard to get people to pay for web design"*

Automation: She automated an asshole tax so she wouldn't have to deal with penny pinching clients. It allowed her to focus her business on high value clients and get rid of the time suckers. Now she doesn't have to chase people for invoices or deal with those that are really excited in the beginning but end up pinching pennies at the end.

BONUS: THE SINGLE EMAIL THAT COST ME $75,000

There are 2 kinds of people: Those who operate as the world SHOULD be, and those who operate as the world ACTUALLY IS.

For example, people who operate as the world "SHOULD be" say things like:

"Just tell those kids not to have sex!"
"She really shouldn't spend so much on clothes"
"Keep a budget...duh"

These people feel good saying the above things that others "should" do, but does anyone actually listen? Rarely.

Compare this to people who operate as the world ACTUALLY is:

"Look, you're not going to keep a budget, so automate your money and get on with your life"

"It's not realistic for me to tell you to stop shopping, so let me instead show you how to earn enough to afford those John Varvatos pants you love"

"Here, if you decide to have sex, at least get educated" (NOTE I WILL SIMPLY LOCK MY CHILDREN IN A SUBTERRANEAN DUNGEON SO I CAN AVOID THIS CONVERSATION)

Between "should" or "actually is," you can probably guess which one I am.

From my years of studying psychology, social influence, and persuasion, I've realized how difficult it is to change behavior. So when I do try to change behavior, I focus on the BIGGEST WINS I can get.

FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

That's because we are cognitive misers -- we have limited attention and willpower. So if I tried to get you to save $3 on lattes every day, you'd (1) want to commit suicide every morning, (2) it wouldn't make much of a financial difference, and (3) you'd use up your limited willpower for a pointless task.

This is what so many personal-finance "experts" don't get. They believe that people can make an UNLIMITED number of changes. But if you look in your own life in the last 2 months, you know that's not true. Sure, we "should" improve our eating, gym attendance, networking, finances, relationships with friends, relationships with family, knowledge of the stars, abilities at work, etc etc etc.

Yes, we "should" do all these things. But we don't.

So I choose to focus on how the world ACTUALLY works instead of what people "should" do. That's why I focus on the BIGGEST WINS people can have...like automation, investing early and wisely, earning more, ethical networking, and of course, hanging with friends.

I genuinely believe this. And to prove it...

Look at the email I sent out recently, which embraced this approach....and (intentionally) cost me $75,000....

THE $75,000 EMAIL

Most people don't know about all the courses I run. At any given time, I'm launching and testing different ones for months -- or even a year -- before I mention them publicly. This way, when I do a public launch, I know my products are 100x better than anyone else's on the market.

For the last 12 months, I've been running a course called "Beyond 1K," a follow-on to my Earn1k course on earning money on the side.

It was generating several thousand dollars a month -- most of it pure profit -- but after a year of testing, I wasn't satisfied with the results I was getting, or the results I was generating for my students.

So even though students continued to pay me a LOT of money, I shut it down. Here's the email I sent:

> *I wanted to let you know that I've decided to discontinue Beyond 1K -- tonight will be the last Ass Kicking call -- and I wanted to share my reasons for doing so.*
>
> *My entire philosophy revolves around Big Wins -- focusing on the most important and highest-performing actions you can take.*
>
> *Not only do I apply this to my personal finances, I also apply it to my per-*

sonal life (my Tripod of Stability) and my business.

To be blunt, Beyond 1k is not performing to the levels I want it to. I only want to create the best products, and focus on the highest and best use of time -- for me AND for you.

I also want to take a minute to highlight the meta-lesson here. I've got a fully automatic system that is paying me lots of money each month with Beyond1k. It would be easy for me to coast and continue making several thousand dollars per month from Beyond 1K, but that's not what I want to do. That's not a Big Win for me or for you.

Sometimes you have to cut things out of your life that are performing well... just not as well as you WANT them to.

When I shared this news with a couple of friends (who don't know my business too well), they were shocked. "Why don't you just keep it running?" they asked.

They don't understand the idea of only focusing on things that are providing EXTREME value for my students and for my business. I can provide "good" value and be a mediocre performer. But I want to only provide EXTRAORDINARY value. I'd rather refund your money and focus on something that is going to take you 5 levels forward.

That's why Earn1k is so good (and costs so much).

And that's why I'm going to be working on several new products that are of such extraordinary quality, you've never seen something like it before.

I have a few additional details to add:

- *As usual, you put your trust in me, and I want to honor that. I'll be re-funding any un-used money for Beyond1K. Any amount paid for Beyond1k after 11/21/2010 will be refunded in full. If you purchased the annual subscription of Beyond1k, you will receive a refund as well. You will get an email with the exact amount from the B1k team in the next 2 days.*
- *All recurring payments have been cancelled*
- *If you received B1k as a bonus for purchasing "Find Your First Profitable Idea," Rachel will be in touch to let you know what you get instead.*
- *The Ning forum is staying up for right now*
- *You will retain access to the B1k section of earn1k.com until Feb. 1st*
- *We will still be doing some VERY limited coaching. If you are currently enrolled in coaching, your session will be completed. If you are inter-ested in coaching, email REDACTED@earn1k.com*

Thanks, and I appreciate your help, support, and trust.

-Ramit

That email cost me over $75,000.

But I truly believe in focusing on the MOST IMPORTANT things in life with the HIGHEST POTENTIAL.

That's what hustling is all about.

THERE'S MORE TO COME

To get more Hustle materials, keep your eye on The Hustle Bonus Index.

Talk to you soon,

-Ramit