Introduction

This past year, I had the opportunity to visit the land of my birthplace, South Korea. I knew that blogging and being active on social media would be nearly impossible for me, so I asked a group of close friends to do some guest posting on my blog. This turned out to be one of the best projects of the year and one I'm very glad I did, so much so that I'm working on figuring out where I can disappear to for a week in the upcoming year.

What follows, then, is a short holiday gift from me and my community to you, a wrapup of these special guest posts about awakening your superhero. May it light your way in the coming year and help you find your own superhero abilities and cause to fight for. If you enjoy these posts, if you enjoy what these individuals have brought to your life, please support them by checking out their bios at the end of each post and where appropriate, supporting their works as well.

Happy holidays,
Crisis and Motivation, by John Wall

I’m pleased and honored to guest post over here at Awaken Your Superhero. Chris and I have worked together for years on the Marketing Over Coffee podcast, which has allowed us to hang out with cool kids like Chris Brogan, Mitch Joel, Seth Godin, and David Meerman Scott, as well as the thousands of members in the MoC LinkedIn group. I’m happy to help him out with a bit of writing, and to have a chance to chat with you, loyal reader.

In my efforts to maintain an image of professionalism I normally avoid referring to Super Heroes in my daily work. The image of comic book fanboy as adolescent doofus is a powerful one, and perhaps one day it will go through the same transition that blogging has gone through – from that of basement dwelling dork to the latest application of technology to writing and storytelling. But I’m not holding my breath.

As a reader here, you have already moved beyond the Superhero stigma, so I thank you for the chance to speak freely. By virtue of nothing more than the number of years I have followed the comic industry I’ve amassed a broad knowledge of the genre, a use of time I rank as better than watching television, but not as worthwhile as traveling or exercising.

The concept of the superhero meshes nicely into both mythology and religion. The tales of heroes, the brave and the bold, performing incredible feats is universal and an excellent way to educate. But it’s not enough that our heroes have the power to accomplish great things, the stories are only interesting if there is conflict. The ability to survive crisis (a term with an extensive history to those who know DC), challenges on a larger stage, is often the cornerstone of a great tale of adventure.

The benefit of these stories is that they define what makes us all heroes, that fire in our core that keeps us motivated. They give solid examples of the determination in your heart that tells you to go one more round when your body says “stay down”. We look to the heroes as the people we want to be, those who stand up when duty calls. Reading about, or better yet meeting heroes who have the courage to do what is necessary can inspire you to do the same.

Chris and I have been able to work together through the uncanny coincidence that we live very close to each other. Both of us are along the race course for the Boston Marathon that will be held this Monday. I ran the marathon in 2002 and there’s one moment that was (literally) the darkest hour of that adventure.

A big problem with me running Boston is that I am a big fat bastard (BFB), and
when the temperature goes up, my ability to stay cool and maintain pace drops off rapidly. With this race so early in the season, the majority of training is done in the winter and then race day is a roll of the dice. You can get snow or sleet, or you could get over 70 degrees and a sunburn (my Perfect Storm scenario, which played out perfectly, much to my chagrin).

Another problem of being a BFB is that many will argue that this is the most prestigious marathon in the world, attended by the World’s Finest, so the organizers are able to set qualifying times that an average athlete (never mind a donut chowing bozo like myself) will never get to. In a wonderfully inspired bit of marketing, many charities have taken advantage of the hubris of would be runners, and offer a race number if you agree to a fund raising threshold (now usually around $3,000).

![Image](image.png)

The Franciscan Hospital for Children had thrown a number of events for young professionals in Boston, and this was how I was notified that they had numbers. I signed up in December and began upping my mileage from my max of 10 to 26.2. As part of the program I took a tour of the hospital and the day care facility they run there for children that have medical needs that make it impossible for them to attend any other day care program. I met a young lady I’ll call Dee, to preserve her privacy, who had the voice of an angel, and we had a picture taken that was liked enough to be used in the Annual Report for the hospital that year (in the full size photo you can see that I am actually still sweating, my metabolism cranked up from doing 12 miles around the Charles River that morning).
By the end of February I was falling apart, not only was I feeling a twinge in my knee, just finding the time and energy for both work and the additional workouts was taking its toll. As the alarm went off at 5:30 am and I faced a run of 10 miles in the dark, over ice, I finally broke, ranting and raving in the dark. Only half jokingly I said “F— this. I’m not doing this, f— the marathon”. My (then not yet) wife asked “What about the hospital? You’ve committed this to them.” I said “F— them, they suckered me into doing this, and worse yet I need to get them $2,500 for the right to do it.” She paused and asked “What about Dee?”

This stopped me completely. Even on my worst day, standing there in the dark, I could not say anything bad about a young lady that faces more challenges just getting to school than I face on what I consider a bad day. My dear wife had invoked one of my own heroes. I took a deep breath, wiped my eyes, kissed my wife, and went out to do my miles.

John J. Wall (@johnjwall) is the co-host of Marketing Over Coffee and writes about his life at Ronin Marketeer. He harbors no illusion that he is a runner as he still qualifies for the fat guy division (commonly called Clydesdale). In May he will be running the Run To Home Base, an event that raises funds for veterans dealing with traumatic brain injuries and post traumatic stress disorder. If you would like to support those who have fought for your freedom, please consider donating. Thanks true believers!
Stop Being the Green Lantern of Business, by Justin Kownacki

In Chris’s flagship post about how we’ve all become modern superheroes at business, he points out how common some “super powers” (infinite knowledge, instant communication) have become. In a way, that means the barrier to entry for becoming a workplace superhero is getting dangerously low — and that opens the door for lame superheroes.

And you probably are one… but you don’t have to be.

Why I Would Kill for a Weakness to Kryptonite

Quick: what’s Aquaman’s weakness?

He needs to be in contact with water at least once a day.

But wait… don’t we all? That’s not a very “super” weakness, is it? Sure, he can talk to fish, but he has to do it from the water cooler. And that makes him about as “super” as your district manager.

But it could be worse.

Quick: what’s Green Lantern’s weakness?

Yellow.

That’s right: yellow. Green Lantern’s ring is powerless against a color *that also happens to be a component OF green.* (Go figure THAT one out…)

Meanwhile, what’s Superman’s weakness?

Kryptonite.

That’s right: aside from magic (which doesn’t really exist) and lead (which has felled better men than Clark Kent over the past century), Superman’s main weakness is being exposed to radioactive asteroid chunks of his exploded home planet.

And how many of THOSE do you think people find on the side of the road? Not many.

Which is why Superman is Superman, and why Aquaman is the guy the Justice League usually asks to wait by the phone while they handle the REAL emergencies.
What the Hell Does This Have to Do With YOUR Job?

Everything.

If we’re all superheroes, then we need GOOD super-weaknesses. We can’t be flummoxed by dehydration and primary colors. And yet, most gurus I know fail completely when it comes to simple skills like:

* time management
* financial planning
* customer service
* self-awareness
* spelling

If the power of the Internet gives each of us an honorary membership in the Justice League of Business, we owe it to the people we’re supposed to be helping (e.g., your clients or, if you’re a nonprofit, the whole of humanity) to not be rendered useless by basic tasks. We should be improving our basic skills AND our “super” powers at all times, so the services we provide truly ARE unparalleled. And we need to identify the bad habits and external pressures that are capable of derailing our workflow (and our careers) so we can work around them, learn to disable them, and eventually overcome them.

So… what’s YOUR Kryptonite?

(Are you sure it’s not just yellow?)

HINT: If there’s a flaw in your work approach that you just can’t fix, team up with someone who’s really good at the things you do horribly. As the Wonder Twins taught us all, there’s strength in numbers – especially when one of you can transform into a dinosaur. So work on that.
Justin Kownacki is a writer, videographer, brand strategist and media consultant. Since 2003, he’s created and produced the web sitcoms Something to Be Desired and The Baristas. He also tweets far, far too much. You can find Justin on the web here:

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Teaching the Pebbles, by Bryce Moore

When Mr. Penn approached me, as he had others, with the opportunity to create a guest post for him in his absence, I was initially and naturally quite honored. That feeling, however, turned like spring weather in the Midwest often does to a horrible feeling of dread. How could I, far from a professional or even remotely consistent blogger of letters, possibly hold a candle burning at both ends to the likes of Mr. Wall, Ms. Hoffman, Mr. Kownacki, or even Mr. Penn himself?

It took me a few days of fighting a Xanax-resistant strain of seizing panic to finally realize what he did here: not only was this an opportunity to fill space on Mr. Penn’s website while he racked up more frequent flyer miles than Clark Kent, it was a teaching moment directed squarely at me, and that’s a superpower we all possess.

Despite the reflexive reach for a gas mask that the term “life coach” compels out of me, we all possess some knowledge of some subject we can convey to someone else in the world. It could be a mechanical, philosophical, intellectual, or an artistic skill or talent, but the unrealized superpower in all of us is this: No matter the pursuit and how much you think you know or don’t know about it, there is always someone who knows less about that subject than you. These people are your target, your audience, and your unrealized opportunities.

It’s important to remember that whatever your subject or level of expertise, your students will almost never be blank slates. Like pebbles on a mountaintop, each student will behave differently in accordance with their natural gifts, needs, and their own unique imperfections. Some of these pebbles will stubbornly refuse to move, fighting the push of external force and the pull of gravity and in doing so deny themselves their own innate potential, accepting a destiny of forever remaining where they lie. Some will veer off too soon, impulsive and without direction, and tumble off the mountain, never to be heard from again. Some only seem to move when forcefully motivated by the boot of the teacher. Many will sadly slide down the smoothest path available, avoiding friction and resistance at every possible turn, safely landing at the goal of the bottom without so much as a scratch, but at the same time unnoticed and with little fanfare — they will have traded away their potential for an easy victory but are left with nothing to build on of their own.

The best students, however, will be the ones that show patience. They recognize their flaws and they wait — waiting to be shaped by the teacher’s tools — however limited those tools may seem — and allowing the experience and the environment to smooth away the imperfections. They’re the last pebbles to leave the mountaintop. Once these pebbles are ready and set down the path of the
mountain, however, they become immense, awe-inspiring forces unto themselves that even the teacher dares not stand in the way of. They command a following of the very environment around them they once waited unassumingly in — water, ice, wind, boulders the size of cities — and transform it all into a **crushing, unconquerable force of an avalanche that changes the landscape of the world.**

What about the teacher, you ask? Of course the teacher is a pebble himself influenced by his own teacher until set free to become the foundation of his own mountain. Turn enough pebbles into unstoppable waves of energy, however, and you will be seen as the real definition of a superhero — something everyone will fear and respect for your ability as a kingmaker to unleash the power of the pebbles under your care.

My own pebble is the girl in the picture above, and my shaping tool is a camera. She’s ever the patient student and has taken well to learning my photographic philosophy of being part of the world she imagines inside the camera — as opposed to being simply on the world with a camera in hand. You can see the rounding of the corners and the smoothing of the jagged edges of this pebble with every new photograph she captures. Should it continue to be her pursuit, it
will not be long before she is ready to be set upon a world that will never see her coming — and I will take great joy in watching the elements at her command rush past me and form something more amazing than I could ever imagine for myself.

It’s one of the many open secrets of the universe that we all possess this ability — most of us simply fail to realize it. We are content to be our own unassuming pebbles gliding down the easiest route possible on someone else’s mountain.

Your challenge and biggest reward as a teacher is to find these pebbles of opportunity on your own mountaintop and set them upon the unsuspecting world below, transforming them from a humble start into something unimaginatively powerful. These pebbles do not necessarily need to be children or relatives — we are surrounded by potential pebbles of all ages in nearly every interactive aspect of our daily lives.

**Be a superhero: Find a pebble and teach it to become its own mountain.**

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*Bryce Moore (@abiteofsanity) is an IT professional by day, a photographer by love, and one of Christopher Penn’s many pebbles by grace and choice. While trying to duck out of the way of boots thrown in the area of his cranium, he photoblogs daily and writes not nearly enough according to some people at abiteofsanity.com.*
We All Have It In Us, by C.C. Chapman

It is your fault. That is the simple and blunt answer that far too many of you will never embrace as the truth.

We want more. We crave better. We Lust after what we don’t have but someone near does. We are full of excuses and yet we fail to discover the answer.

I’ve known my whole life that I am cut from a different cloth. I seek out the road less traveled and rise every morning eager to attack the day head on.

I know this because a long time ago I realized that everything I ever wanted was out there for the taking. There are always obstacles, distractions and curves you never see coming. That is the comedy of life.

But, EACH of us has it within ourselves to have all we crave. The trick is turning off the little voice of doubt, the lizard brain that says we can not do it.

Sit down today and pick one goal. A tangible end that can only be reached or not without any gray maybe in it’s success.

Now determine what you will do today towards that goal. What will you spend the next week doing to get closer? Finally, in the next month will you reach it or have established new items to get you closer.

Write these down and find people that will nag, poke and push you to insure you are working towards them. Every time that voice of doubt creeps up in you reach out to one of them to squash it. Can’t reach them? Find a mirror and tell yourself.

We DO in fact have it inside each of us. Even the greatest of people doubt themselves. The best of us train, learn and master how to push beyond, bend the rules in our favor and achieve our dreams.

I am sick of all the doubt in the world because I know you have it in you. I know you can do whatever you desire with enough drive and hard work.

Life will NEVER be easy, so stop your complaining, find your cape and soar to whatever sunset you crave.
C.C. Chapman is an entrepreneur, speaker and author. His first book *Content Rules* was released last year and he is the Founder of [DigitalDads.com](http://DigitalDads.com), where a Dad can be a Guy. He writes, speaks and consults with companies of all sizes to empower them to do better with their marketing dollars.
Making the Jump, by Tamsen McMahon

I’ll admit to some bias where Chris Penn is concerned. He and I share a similar purpose in life, I think, even though we approach it from two totally different directions.

I’ve always believed in the superhero idea, and this idea of Chris’s rings particularly true: we have superhero powers, but we don’t necessary have superhero awareness.

Which brings me to ask this question: What makes a superhero?

And my answer: The belief you already are one.

We so often keep our eyes focused on what’s next, on where we want to be. On who we wish we were, or on what we wish we were doing. But the path between here and there has to built, and it has to built on something.

That something is you.

My friend Matt Ridings talks about change in terms of building a bridge. Between where you are and where you’re going is the path, the bridge, to get from here to there. But what a lot of us forget is that to build a bridge, you need solid ground on both sides: not only do we need to have at least a directional idea of where we want to go (the other side) and a clear idea of how to get there (the bridge itself), we also need solid ground to build on – right now.

We forget the importance of finding our current bedrock. Of knowing — and valuing — the person that we are, right now. It’s that appreciation, that valuation, that gives us the confidence, and the courage, to step out over the chasm and onto the bridge we’ve built.

To me, that’s what awakening your superhero is all about: it’s about understanding where your bedrock is, and what it’s made of. It’s about finding your footing where you are, so that you have a steady base from which to step.

Without that firm footing we’re literally leaping out at the unknown, with no purpose, and no purchase to our grip.

It’s counterintuitive, I know: since we want to change, doesn’t that mean, by definition, we dislike where we are now? Or, at least, doesn’t that mean there’s something about us, right now, that warrants change? After all, if we were happy where we are, change wouldn’t be necessary, right?
But change, real change (as any superhero-awakening is) requires enormous strength. And ignoring — or worse, degrading or denying — some part of yourself you consider unworthy, weakens your position right off the bat.

It’s like starting with half a you — because that is, in essence, what you’re doing. **You’re trying to make a whole change with only part of you.**

And that never works.

No, the answer lies in taking yourself, warts and all. Of being honest with yourself, about yourself. In finding how to turn your weaknesses into strengths (or at least in figuring out how the strengths you already have are well-suited to mitigating your faults), and in starting in a position of comfort — of confidence.

So how do you do that?

**Find something you’re proud of.** No, really. There’s something about you that you like. Or at least, don’t actively dislike. What is that? How can you build on it?

**Find the Force to your Dark Side.** Also really. For those of us used to beating ourselves up, sometimes it’s easier to start from the negative. I’m not suggesting you stay there, but for each of us, we often have the antidote to our particular brand of poison within ourselves. So figure out what you don’t like, and then look for the thing you already have that balances it out. It’s there. Trust me.

**Find a cheerleader.** Our internal tape loops get worn out after a while, and we need to hear an outside voice. Find someone who believes in you. Unflinchingly. But someone who can give you straight-up honest feedback — in a way that you’ll actually hear it. They’re the ones who can help set your course, but remind you, too, of how fun where you are right now can be.

**Find your purpose.** Yes, this one dives a little deeper, but: What are you here for? What ties all that you do together? What do you really care about? We all do better when we have something to work towards. What is that for you?

**Find your beliefs and values.** There’s where you want to go... and then there’s how you want to get there. So know, going in, what you hold dear. What’s most important to you? What assumptions guide your thoughts? **What price are you willing to pay?** And, perhaps most important what price is too high?

You can only make a leap by pushing off the ground you’re standing on, so you better know what that is.
It’s time to fly, superheroes.

So go on. Grab your cape (or not). And go.

Tamsen McMahon helps people and organizations get from where they are to where they’re going. She’s the Vice President of Digital Strategy at Allen-Gerriksen. She writes on individual change at PersonalCartography.com. Reach her at tamsen@personalcartography.com, and follow her on Twitter (@tamadear).
Superheroes are Where You Find Them, by Helena Bouchez

When I saw human resources’ number come up on my phone display, I knew I’d gotten it, too. After the brief and awkward meeting and requisite paper signing, I headed back to my office, packed up my stuff and took one last look out the 38th floor window at a deserted Burnham Harbor. It was a good run, I thought. Great people. Visible position. Nice paycheck, good benefits. I’ll miss this view. Who will adopt my orchids? I’ll miss this office chair.

Then – choking back tears – What now?

I sought refuge at my then boyfriend’s rustic West Loop loft, assuaging my sorrows with old movies, bologna sandwiches (a symbol of my new pauperism) and a fair number of tears, while my beau, Tom, worked away in the other room.

While Tom (not his real name), a musician, had been employed by others on and off over the years, he made his main living by hustling clients for a half dozen different concerns ranging from website development to graphic design to sound engineering, seasoned with a smattering of paying music gigs.

Tom was not particularly organized or ambitious, but he usually managed to keep enough dough rolling in to keep the lights on and food in the refrigerator. Sometimes just barely. And sometimes the lights got turned off. Inconvenient and uncomfortable? Yes. But somehow, he lived.

While ruminating on my situation during the movie marathon, I realized something. Not only did Tom always seem to always figure out a way make things work, by my definition at least, he also was free. As were many of my other creative, self-employed friends. They all were in control of their own destiny. Looking back, I’m pretty sure that’s not how they saw it, but at the time that’s what I perceived. And I realized I wanted that. I wanted to be free and in control. More than anything.

I half-heartedly scanned ads looking to replace or maybe even upgrade my lost gig. A small severance provided some financial cushion, but my pride had hit the floor, hard. And the recent awareness of my deep desire to be free and in control made the idea of going back to work for someone else pretty repulsive. I was screwed.

Classic movie number 37 playing in the background and my ego still smarting, I thought again about Tom and company. I was 100 times more organized and ambitious than almost all of them. Then this thought: “Hmmh. You know, if they can make it on their own, I bet I can, too.”

Holy eureka-beam-of-light-streaming-through-the-clouds-angels-singing
moment. I bet I can, too.

I shifted my focus from looking for a job to spinning up skills I’d honed at the agency as a business offering. The result was my first business, Lenalinks, which provided tech writing and project management for some big corporate clients. It was lucrative work but unfortunately it also was (to me) excruciatingly boring, which is what led me back to the marketing industry. But that’s another story, titled something like, “Why an arguably sane person would close a perfectly profitable business, take a 60 percent pay cut and agree to go captive again to hone another craft.” But I digress.

Actually, the thought – I can, too – was not as important as what came immediate after it, which was the realization. Dictionary definition: An act of becoming fully aware of something as a fact. Also known as an “Ah-ha!”

Realizations differ from understanding. You can totally understand something intellectually, but still not really understand viscerally the truth of it – what “it” means. To me, “I can, too” meant that there was a completely new set of choices available to me. Bear in mind, nothing in my external world had changed. The realization caused my perception of what was available to me in the external world to change. Same world, yet different world. (Hello, M.C. Escher.)

Often, one realization sets off a chain reaction that leads to a series of realizations. For instance, the realization that I wanted to be in charge of my own destiny freed my mind to reshuffle my worldview and deliver the realization that it was completely within my power to make it so.

Realizations can seem to occur completely randomly, but there are ways to condition yourself to have them more reliably. Here are three:

1. Make being present a priority. Awareness cannot exist in the past or future. Unless you become aware that you’re thinking about the past or future, in which case, you’re actually back in the present. (M.C. Escher reprise.) Some ways to practice being present and strengthen awareness are meditation, yoga and martial arts. The objective of all these disciplines is to get you back in your body, to bring you back to now because now is where all the power is.

2. Be open to changing your mind. Because I was open to believing something new, or in this case, at least not opposed to the idea of having my own business, my subconscious was free to serve up the realizations I needed to move forward.

3. Demand insight from discomfort. Being present can be uncomfortable, especially if you’re in a tight spot. It’s natural to want kill the pain. But if you always give into the impulse to drown your sorrows, you may be missing an opportunity to
experience a big shift. If instead you can manage to stay present and stare down pain such as fear, embarrassment or grief, you usually will be rewarded with insight. In fact, you should demand that it be so. Said writer, lecturer and mythologist Joseph Campbell, “The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.”

The point of this story is (actually, there are three):

1. Sometimes SuperHeros are unwitting, and thus, are where you find them. Don’t be snobbish about who delivers the catalyst message or models a new paradigm.

2. A single shift in your internal world can change your perception of the available choices even if nothing in your external world has changed. Be open to new thoughts.

3. Rather than waiting around for realizations, create the conditions that will allow your mind to more easily present you with them. A hidden pathway to your bold new future may be revealed.

Helena Bouchez is a writer, artist, connector and alchemist who makes a living as a purveyor of public relations and communications for marketing and marketing technology firms. To connect with Helena, follow her on Twitter @helenabouchez
or email her at helena at helenabouchez dot com.
4 Steps to Awaken Your Superhero Power, by DJ Waldow

You are a superhero.

My bet is that you can’t leap buildings in a single bound. I have a feeling that you can’t fly. It’s unlikely that you can make yourself invisible. You may have 20/20 vision (or better), but chances are it’s not X-ray vision.

But, you are a superhero.

Comic book superheroes possess a some type of super-human strength or power, often used to protect and/or “save the day.” (at least the good ones do). Real life superheroes have a unique power or strength that drives them to happiness and/or success. I guarantee there is something you know, something you do, a skill you have that is incredible. Something that is awesome. Something that makes you rise to the top, stand above the rest.

The challenge, of course, is to awaken your superhero power.

4 Steps To Awaken Your Superhero Power

Below are 4 suggested steps to awaken the superhero that lives within you.

1. Determine what drives you.

Take out a piece of paper and a pen (or the online equivalent). Write down the 10 things that you could not live without. These can be material (i.e., iPhone) and/or intangible (i.e., your family).

***It is important that you do not read ahead. I know it’s tempting, but write down that list of 10 before continuing.***

Ok. Now, take that list and eliminate half of it. What remains are the 5 things you can not live without.

Now, the hardest part: Remove 2 more. If you’ve followed the directions, you’ll have a list of 3 things/people you can’t live without. Look at this list. Study it. These 3 things are the most important things in your life. They are what drive you. My bet is there is a person (family, friend, significant other, etc) on that list. Be sure that whatever you do in life, the things &/or people on this list play a critical role.

2. Uncover, then play to your strengths.

The first part of this is a blog post, eBook, novel in and of itself. However, once
you’ve determined what you are good at, focus on it. Craft your skill. Work on improving it. **Don’t waste your time on stuff you are not good at.** To be clear, I’m not suggesting that you don’t try to learn new things; I’m saying that your time may be better spent going good to great instead of crappy to better than crappy. Make sense? With the incredible amount of information that is available today and the ease at which one can access it, it can be very easy – even tempting – to try and learn everything. Trust me. I struggle with this too. However, once you’ve figured out what’s important to you (see #1) and what you’re good at, work on becoming the best you can be.

3. **Someone will always be smarter than you.**

If you are competitive – with others and yourself – and a perfectionist, this one is tough to swallow. I’ve been thinking, eating, breathing, and sometimes sleeping email marketing for nearly 6 years. I think I know quite a bit; however, there are tons of email folks out there who are way smarter than me; others who are better writers, better speakers, better with clients, etc. We are all always learning, but will never 100% perfect our strengths (#3). Someone will always be better. Accept it. Move on.

Also, “smart” is relative. My wife is an Ob/Gyn. She knows a ton about medicine; a ton about women’s health, pregnancy, babies, etc. She is way smarter than me when it comes to this stuff. Is she the smartest Ob/Gyn on the planet? Unlikely. It’s all relative.

4. **Have fun.**

Let’s face it. Not everyone loves their job. Some of us have things going on in our personal lives that would not fall into the “fun” category. We all have days (weeks?) that suck – both at work and at home. But if you are not having fun, why bother? It may be time to stop and figure out what is missing in your life – in your control – that is preventing you from enjoying it. Life’s too short. **Are you really having fun?** (Note: There is a video in that blog post showing my wife & I in a wedding “Baby Got Back” dance off. Only watch if you want to smile).
**DJ Waldow** is a knowledge craver, a sponge, and a lover of beer, coffee & people (in no particular order). He is the owner and founder of Waldow Social and lives in Salt Lake City with his wife (K-Dawg) and 1 year old (@babywaldow). DJ is not only a U of Michigan, alum, but also a raving fan. He blogs on Social Butterfly Guy.
With Great Challenge Comes Great Adaptability, by Chel Wolverton

“Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change.” - Stephen Hawking

Most of my life I’ve faced one challenge or another. Nothing special, plenty of people have faced darker roads. A host of them came from making bad choices in the midst of the challenges I faced which lead me not so elegantly to another bad situation. As a result of each challenges, I learned to adapt quickly and you can too.

Whether you need to adapt because of the decisions you’ve made or because of the decisions someone else made or a situation that nature caused, the first lesson to learn is that change is inevitable. There is no way to avoid change and the chaos that comes with it. Don’t try sticking your head in the sand. It doesn’t work.

You want to quit your job and do something that makes you happy. But you live in fear. You’re tired of what you’ve been doing the past decade and want to try something new. But you stall on taking the steps to make it happen. A competitor came up with that innovative new idea faster than you. But you dismiss the concerns of your smartest employees pointing out the signs until it’s too late.

Instead of ignoring what’s happening or running around in a panic-induced purple haze with flying invisible pink monkeys, here are three ways you become more adaptable so such things don’t throw you entirely off your game.

- Just make the f—king choice already. There’s only so much you can debate before you can do before making a choice. Yes, give yourself time to enter the witness state, but then choose a path.
- Do not underestimate kind, loyal, and punch-you-in-the-face-with-the-truth friends to keep you straight. They’ll keep you from making foolhardy decisions out of snap judgement.

Don’t make the excuse that you can’t handle what’s happening. All of the life challenges you’ve experienced up until this moment have conditioned you to be able to handle whatever may come with more grace than you think is possible.

Don’t make the mistake of fighting with reality. The faster you accept whatever change has happened, the more quickly you can adapt.

Lastly, adaptability also requires an understanding of parts at a granular level. If you understand all the parts, you can rearrange them much faster and achieve a
better outcome.

Even though developing adaptability takes much strength, courage and fearlessness, paradoxically, the more adaptable we are, the stronger, more courageous and fearless we will become. And when we learn to adapt we gain the ability to face anything, a superhero’s strength that will allow us to fight off the real villains when they come calling.

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**What’s Obvious to You, by Ann Handley**

When C.C. Chapman and I were writing our book *Content Rules*, I kept asking him, “Does this have any value?” “Isn’t this stuff that everyone already knows?” And ultimately, “Isn’t this obvious?”

Well guess what? It wasn’t obvious. And thousands of book sales and tons of positive reviews later, I finally grok that.

**Derek Sivers**, the founder of CD Baby, calls this “Obvious to You. Amazing to Others.” In a video he released the other day, based on an earlier blog post, he says, “Any creator of anything knows this feeling: You experience someone else’s innovative work. It’s beautiful, brilliant, breath-taking. You’re stunned…..

“Afterwards, you think, ‘My ideas are so obvious. I’ll never be as inventive as that.’”

But in his own work, Sivers discovered something surprisingly profound, he says, “Everybody’s ideas seem obvious to them.” Great musicians or artists struggle with this too. But the key is to remember one thing: What’s obvious to you is amazing to someone else.

Why is it that we are terrible judges of our own creative value? It’s because we stand too close to our own selves. It’s impossible to maintain any perspective; our purview is inherently limited.

I see this all the time when I talk to companies about the content they are producing as part of their business: They think that their blog post ideas are silly, or ridiculous, or so painfully obvious that it’s not worth talking about, because their customers already know whatever it is that they consider sharing. (Hint: No, they don’t.)

That lack of perspective limits companies in other ways, too, when they rely on insider-y language, corporate-ese or “Frankenspeak” (as we call it in Content Rules) to get their messages across. They forget that the language they use inside their industries or companies isn’t the most effective language with which to communicate with customers. Again, they’re standing too close.

So what about you: Are you holding back something that seems too obvious to share? How do you try to gain perspective on your own work?
Ann Handley is the Chief Content Officer of MarketingProfs and the co-author of Content Rules. People seem to like her writing. She’s a huge deal on Twitter, a point which might make her family proud, if only they knew what that meant.
Taking the Vow of Super Heroism, by Whitney Hoffman

I , (insert name here), also known as (insert Super hero Name here) promise to always use my SuperHero powers for good. I promise I will use the items I've purchased here today safely and in the name of Justice. I promise to remain ever vigilant, ever true.

-Required Oath before any purchase at The Brooklyn Superhero Supply Store

When Chris refers to his blog as Awakening Your Superhero, I always think of this as a collection of messages to remind us to be a bit better than we are every day, and to do a bit more for others. Dave Eggers and his 826 project, which provides free tutoring and writing coaching for kids in eight centers across the Country embodies the spirit of this heroism in all of its locations, especially in the center located behind the secret wall in the Brooklyn Superhero Supply Store. Anyone wishing to make a purchase of their excellent Superhero supplies must take the Vow of Heroism, complete with hand over heart. As silly as it may seem, I felt special as I recited the vow, and I hope by reading this blog, you will consider taking a similar vow as well.

Vows and slogans are ideals to live up to. The tough part, as we all know too well, is taking those broad statements of good intention, and making them operational- making them work every day. To help you with that, here is my list of every day action items that help me live up to my Vow of Heroism (my Super Hero To Do List):

1. **Do something for someone else without any expectation of return, at least once a week.** This means starting to look out for others as you look out for yourself. It may mean helping someone spontaneously without being asked. It may mean making a special snack for your kids. It may mean heading off trouble for a friend. It could be anything, but it should be something that’s done just to be a good human being, without any thought of pay back. Maybe it’s doing a volunteer job, or going that extra mile for a customer- anything that requires you do more than the average. The secret here is that you do get a return, whether it’s karmic or just the warm feeling you get inside, but the act of doing something just because is a super power to everyone you interact with.

2. **Be Brave.** Try something that’s out of your comfort zone, or confront a fear you have, and deconstruct why it scares you so much. Whenever I feel myself resisting or avoiding something, I know that’s often fear-based. Once I start tearing the thing apart, I find out I’m afraid of failing, of being wrong, of feeling stupid or humiliated or admitting a mistake. In the end, fessing up to myself and owning whatever it is helps me get rid of the fear and move forward. It’s not easy, but trust me, facing your fear in the eye is the most important skill you can have to awaken
your own Super Hero powers. (Everyone has a weakness to their own version of Kryptonite.)

3. **Be Loyal.** This means looking out for friends, colleagues, and clients. It means warning friends of pending trouble, and also looking out for opportunities they can use even if you can’t. If you see a job advertisement, for example, that’s not right for you, is there anyone in your network who could use it? Can you tweet it out and see if it gets to the right person? Can you offer someone help or pointers without sounding like you are secretly trying to diss them or seem superior? Can you offer them helpful advice? These little acts of looking out for others and having their back will make you the best friend anyone has ever had, and that’s value beyond measure.

4. **Be Reverent.** This means being respectful of others and their powers, and maybe even looking for ways you can all work together for the greater good of your community and/or your business. Respect the talents of others, and look for ways they compliment your own. By knowing your own strengths and those of others, you can overcome any of those pesky weaknesses as a joint force.

5. **Remember that Today’s Side Kick is Tomorrow’s Super Hero.** For goodness sakes, don’t tear apart other super heroes or their side kicks and minions just because their talents are not yet as evolved as yours. Everyone starts on a different point of the path, so help nurture those sidekicks and minions into true independent heroes of their own.

6. **And remember.** Villians who have a change of heart will be welcomed and not be referred to as “on a short leash”. Even those who have spent time on the Dark Side can have a change of heart at any time. It’s often hard to regain trust once its lost, but we’ll be better off if we assume that everyone is well-meaning and trying their best. For the few times I guess incorrectly at someone’s motive or purpose, I gain more from expecting people to live up to high expectations than I ever do lowering the bar or assuming the worst. It’s a risk we Super Heroes have to take.

I hope these pointers help you channel your Super Hero. I know Chris helps me find mine, and challenges me to do my best every day, and I hope collectively, we can help you do the same.
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You’re already a superhero.

You have only to realize it, to awaken it within yourself.

Consider this: from where you sit reading this right now, you have access to streams of real-time information from all over the world, knowledge spread the moment it’s created. You can watch far-off places, have immediate or near-immediate access to the sum of publicly available human knowledge, communicate with thousands, if not millions of people with just a few clicks of a mouse, influence and affect people next door and thousands of miles away.

In another time, in another place, these would have been powers reserved only for the greatest of superheroes. Comic books would have been written about such a person with these powers…

... and that person is you, here and now. You have superpowers that a generation ago would have been not only legendary, but even absurd. Comic books of years past would have called infinite knowledge an amazing feat; we call it Google. Action hero movies of yesteryear would have called global mindreading an astonishing power; we call it Twitter.

Here’s the snag: we have superhero powers, but we don’t necessary have superhero awareness. We don’t necessarily know what we’re capable of, don’t necessarily understand all of the different ways we can use our powers.

You’ve now heard from 10 very smart, very insightful people about how and why you should awaken your superhero powers. All that is left is for you to do it. Find your telephone booth, leave behind your Clark Kent, and take off.

Thanks for reading.
Christopher S. Penn
http://twitter.com/cspenn
http://www.christopherspenn.com
Support the Authors

Did you enjoy this free eBook? You can (and should) support the authors of Awaken Your Superhero in these easy ways:

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Chel Wolverton: Hire Chel to help you with competitive intelligence, Wordpress deployment, and more.

Whitney Hoffman: Purchase The Differentiated Instruction Book of Lists from the Amazon bookstore.

Christopher S. Penn: Purchase Marketing White Belt from the Amazon bookstore.

In addition, virtually all of the authors listed speak publicly. Engage them for your next event!