Hindsight is 20/20: 2024 Annotated Bibliography

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References

Alves de Castro, C., O'Reilly, I., & Carthy, A. (2022). Social Media Influencers (SMIs) in Context: A Literature Review. Irish Research Council. <u>https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1074&</u> <u>context=creaart</u>

This article outlines several ways that brands contract with Social Media Influencers (SMIs) to promote their products and services. Influencers do generate brand awareness, I discovered, but usually for a specific target audience. In most cases, according to this study, SMIs are popular with a younger audience. I found this disturbing, since adolescents are more susceptible to the harms of "switching," and negativity bias. For y white paper, I wanted to showcase influencers as a short-term Return on Investment (ROI) for businesses, rather than the long-term ROI that could be generated with branding. While the research goes much deeper than I needed for my white paper, I was able to quickly glean the thesis: Social Media Influencers have the potential to change the habits, attitudes, and behaviors of adolescents negatively through the language they use, the food they eat, and the lifestyle choices they make. The content was helpful to leverage as an example of brands using technology to interrupt and distract their audience.

Beirut, M. (2019). This is My Process. In Now You See It and Other Essays on Design (pp. 20–23). Princeton Architectural Press.

This is a wonderful collection of anecdotes from one of the design partners at global branding firm Pentagram. In, "This is my Process," Beirut pokes fun at the lack of strategy that goes into his design solutions. A quote from this essay reads, "Somewhere along the way an idea for the design pops into my head out of the blue." He also admits, "Now, if it's a good idea, I try to figure out some strategic justification for the solution..." Beirut was being facetious, which is how I wanted the idea of procrastination to come across in my blog post titled, "Confessions of a Professional Procrastinator." Facetious, to a certain degree — I also wanted to share the idea of procrastination as an excuse to let the mind wander.

Binet, L., & Field, P. (2017). *Media in Focus: Marketing Effectiveness in the Digital Era*. Institute of Practitioners in Advertising.

The diagram in my white paper title, "Sales Promotion vs. Brand-Building" was pulled from *Media in Focus*, though I was introduced to it in, "The ROI of Branding," an online article referenced below. (Lischer) I repurposed the diagram to share an example of how branding can potentially be a better investment than marketing activations that cause harm to their audience's focus and attention.

Bridges, J. (2018, June 4). 7 Work Habits You Need to Succeed - Project Management Training. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsLTDQ9H7-M

Jennifer Bridges, from ProjectManager.com, reviews seven work habits for a successful career. Habits include: 1. Be Coachable, 2. Don't Gossip or Blame, 3. Be a Problem Solver, 4. Be Dependable, 5. Build in a Buffer to Allow Time, and 6. Be Prepared Not to Know Everything. She also provides a few helpful career tips, including: 1. Treat as a Habit, 2. Use Checklists, 3. Track Tasks with Software, 4. Engage an

Accountability Partner, 5. Check-In, 6. Use Apps (like Breethe), and 7. Cancel Distractions. I recalled my personal interactions with professional project managers in my blog post, "Talk Designer to Me." I think, perhaps, if both designers and project managers were to follow Bridges suggested work habits, they would most likely work better together.

Center for Humane Technology. (n.d.). Module One: Intervening in the System.

https://app.participate.com/assignments/module-1-setting-the-stage/f7514ee2-1433-45b3-949c-2eb88077abb1#chapter-1

In "Module 1: Setting The Stage," the Center for Humane technology introduces the idea that technology is developing too fast to regulate. They provide a few examples of Artificial Intelligence's ability to manipulate fake content to seem incredibly real. This made me think of Moore's Law, which I had recently read about. In my white paper, I wanted to introduce my readers to the concept of "Information Overload." Moore's Law, combined with examples provided in "Module 1," allowed me to showcase the potential for rapid development of communication technology to harm our ability to collect and retain relevant information.

In, "Taking Stock of our Situation," Module 1 goes on to show the speed at which difficult challenges travel across the world. Globalization allows seemingly instant access to information, but also the ability for global threats such as cyberattacks, health problems, and misinformation. The call to action is for technologists to "Rise to the Moment," and create ethical solutions for our complex challenges.

From, "Intervening in the System," I referenced the "Leverage Points Framework" diagram, based on Dr. Donella Meadows' "12 Leverage Points to Intervene in a System." This section also outlines several paradigmatic assumptions guiding technology decisions. Among them, technologists must give users what they want – something that digital designers often take away from A/B testing. Growing at all costs and obsessing over metrics are also a few assumptions that I found to be instrumental in my blog posts and white paper.

Center for Humane Technology. (n.d.). Module 2: Respecting Human Nature.

https://app.participate.com/assignments/module-2-respecting-human-nature/676e4f41-a0da-4731-9824caf0eecf46ac#chapter-4

"Module 2: Respecting Human Nature," outlines, in further detail, some of the misguided assumptions of technology. Namely, user engagement is often used to determine what content is served online and in digital applications. Unfortunately, this approach usually exploits human vulnerabilities. Our "click" and "watch" preferences typically reveal just a small subset of our true intentions and desires. The key takeaway from this module is for technology designers to consider human vulnerabilities when designing digital or online products and experiences, rather than exploiting them.

In the "How You Can Help" section, the Center for Humane Technology suggests practical steps for technology designers to get started with humane solutions. First, we must stop "giving users what they want" and, instead, respect human vulnerabilities. Technology interprets user engagement as what we want, an unfortunate assumption. Next, we should design to "enable wise choices," rather than design for "conversions." Module 2 helped me consider potential solutions for brand designers in the benefits section of my white paper.

Duhigg, C. (2014). Keystone Habits, or the Ballad of Paul O'Neill: Which Habits Matter Most. In *The Power of Habit: Why we do what we do in life and business* (pp. 97–126). Random House.

If read casually, The Power of Habit is a self-help book. It provides compelling argument and rationale for starting simple, easy-to-achieve habits. Those habits often act as the foundation for aspirational life changes and acheivements. If read actively, though, Duhigg provides the blueprint for community and business leaders to change the way our society can achieve positive momentum. Throughout the book, the author shares many examples of inspiring success stories, and the changes in habit that allowed for those successes to happen. Chapter Four, "Keystone Habits, or the Ballad of Paul O'neill," focuses on the institutional

change that the CEO of the Aluminum Company of America, or Alcoa, was able to acheive with his singleminded approach to employee safety. One of the unexpected results of the employee's habit of sharing safety notes — through an early adoption of email — was the sharing of information and ideas. Previously, employees didn't share ideas to increase safety of productivity. Because they were encouraged to come up with new solutions for safety, a keystone habit was created, resulting in much bigger changes like increased efficiency. I leveraged the idea of keystone habits in my blog post, "Confessions of a Professional Procrastinator."

Hari, J. (2023). Stolen focus: Why you can't pay attention — and how to think deeply again. Crown.

Hari's book takes a deep look at the reasons why we, as both individuals and as a society in the Western World, continue to lose our ability to pay attention for prolonged periods of time. The author utilizes personal anecdotes in order to outline his theories, and elegantly weaves evidence — in the form of interviews with experts in the field — to form compelling arguments about the evil powers at play, and the specific ways in which our focus has been diminished. He specifically takes aim at the large social media companies, like Meta and TikTok, as well as the purveyors of personal date, like Amazon. Of particular interest to me was the introduction of Surveillance Capitalism, a term coined by social psychologist, Shoshana Zuboff. While I previously had a general understanding that some companies track personal data, I didn't fully realize the length to which companies will go to obtain it, nor their ability to sell it for a profit. While Hari discusses personal solutions to regain our collective focus, he devotes more time and emphasis to potential cultural and societal solutions, such as legislation. I referenced the following chapters in my blog posts and white paper.

Hari, J. (2023). Cause One: The Increase in Speed, Switching, and Filtering. In *Stolen focus: Why you can't pay attention — and how to think deeply again.* (pp. 19–45). Crown.

In Chapter One, Hari reminisces about his time in Provincetown, and how his anxiety is immediately reduced by not having to check his phone so often. He didn't bring a smartphone in order to avoid social media and the news. (Smartly, he acknowledges his privilege in this situation.) The increase in both the speed at which we receive information, as well as the different forms of media we consume, has resulting in "switching." Switching is a phenomenon where we jump from device to device, or task to task, with the misconception that we are multi-tasking. It turns out, multi-taking isn't possible. In addition to the increased stress it causes, we lose valuable time when we pause to re-focus on another subject. Our brains don't have the time to filter unnecessary thoughts, leading to anxiety and exhaustion. This was an incredibly eye-opening chapter that helps the reader understand the underlying reasons for so many of our attention problems.

Hari, J. (2023). Cause Two: The Crippling of Our Flow States. In *Stolen focus: Why you can't pay attention — and how to think deeply again.* (pp. 46–62). Crown.

Chapter Two, "Cause Two: The Crippling of Our Flow States," was particularly helpful for my blog post, "Less News is Good News." For example, I observed and reported on screentime usage among my family members, primarily with regards to social media. Hari mentions Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's 1980's discovery that "staring at a screen is one of the activities we take part in that on average provides the lowest amount of flow." In questioning my personal relationship with social media, the examples provided throughout this chapter provide reason to question the power of technology over my family's ability to focus.

Hari, J. (2023). Cause Three: The Rise of Physical and Mental Exhaustion. In *Stolen focus: Why you can't pay attention — and how to think deeply again. (pp. 63–78).* Crown.

This chapters focuses on the importance of sleep, and the detriment a lack of sleep causes to our attention, focus, and ability to function. Hari points out that a certain level of sleep deprivation is the equivalent to being intoxicated, prohibiting our ability to make sense of the world. Other side effects include the inability to concentrate and focus, as well as negative impacts to our mood and memory. Technology isn't helping,

either. For centuries people woke up with the rising sun and went to bed at sunset. Today, many people look at their mobile devices before bed, and the light tends to keep us up later at night.

Hari, J. (2023). Cause Four: The Collapse of Sustained Reading. In *Stolen focus: Why you can't pay attention — and how to think deeply again.* (pp. 79–90). Crown.

Having two children under the age of seven, I found this chapter to be incredibly revealing. In it, Hari discusses the fact that young people aren't reading as many books. The use of social media introduces short video content that encourages scrolling and "switching." I reference this chapter throughout my white paper, as well as my response to the Humane Tech Design Guide. Reading books develops more empathy because we put ourselves, figuratively, in the mind of the author and the characters. This is especially for young children. They learn to see the world from other people's perspectives. In many ways, Marshall McLuhan's, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, is relevant today. "Reading from screens trains us to read differently, in a manic skip and jump from one thing to another," Hari explains. I used this argument to help setup the attention problems we are facing today in the introduction of my white paper.

Hari, J. (2023). Cause Five: The Disruption of Mind-Wandering. In Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention — and How to Think Deeply Again (pp. 91–104). Crown.

Chapter Five, "Cause Five: The Disruption of Mind-Wandering," discusses the importance of having time to let your thoughts flow freely — to bounce from thought to thought without specific intention. Mind-wandering often produces unexpected solutions to challenging creative problems. Essentially, it is opposite of focus, which allows our brains to connect the dots. I mention this fact in my blog article, "Less News is Good News," as a personal reason to lose focus, every day.

Hari, J. (2023). Cause Six: The Rise of Technology That Can Track and Manipulate You (Part One). In Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention — and How to Think Deeply Again (pp. 105–123). Crown.

In Chapter Six, "Cause Six: The Rise of Technology That Can Track and Manipulate You (Part One)," Hari talks about Mike Kreiger and Kevin Systrom's application of principles from professsor B.F. Skinner to build in positive reinforcements to change behavior. They add hearts and likes to the app they developed together, Instagram. Hari discusses "negativity bias," or the tendendancy of humans to focus on something negative for longer than content that is positive or calm — a phenomenon I experienced with the Apple News app. We also learn about the Persuasive Technology Lab at Stanford University. Tristan Harris, among others, utilize "immediate reinforcements" to make apps more engaging. Harris also accepts blame for inventing the "infinite scroll," a browser feature that loads new content when the user has reached the bottom of the page.

Hari, J. (2023). Cause Six: The Rise of Technology That Can Track and Manipulate You (Part Two). In *Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention — and How to Think Deeply Again* (pp. 124–142). Crown.

In this chapter, Hari discusses his issue with personal solutions to distraction. The way I read it, Hari isn't satisfied with the suggestions by Israeli American tech designer, Nir Eyal. To overcome the process of becoming hooked on our apps and devices, Eyal believes that people need to develop individual skills to resist technology and distractions. The problem with this approach is that technology companies have become too smart. They can take advantage of psychological weaknesses, such as "negativity bias." People are often deceived by overly simplistic solutions for deeply rooted cultural problems. The specific term is called "cruel optimism," which is why Hari shifts his focus in the book to more long-term and sustainable solutions.

Hari, J. (2023). The First Glimpses of the Deeper Solution. In *Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention — and How to Think Deeply Again* (pp. 156–170). Crown.

In Chapter Nine, "The First Glimpses of the Deeper Solution," Aza Raskin discusses his belief that the best solution to invasive technologies' effect on our attention and focus is to ban surveillance capitalism. For the most part, Hari agrees with Raskin throughout the book, acknowledging that personal attempts to avoid

technology and social media don't go far enough for society. The real solution, as Hari and Raskin see it, will have to include legislation that shifts business models away from obtaining personal data. Economic models would have to change. Raskin also discusses design changes that can be made immediately. For example, browsers can remove "infinite scroll," (a feature he designed) and Facebook can batch notifications so that people aren't constantly distracted.

I found this chapter to be extremely insightful. It helped me to understand the extremely powerful forces at play, as well as the seemingly simple solutions that can help gain our focus back. I reference the solutions throughout my white paper as potential ways that brand designers can help businesses connect better with their audience.

Harris, M. (2018, February 9). *I have forgotten how to read*. The Globe and Mail. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/i-have-forgotten-how-toread/article37921379/

Harris supports his main argument, that we have lost our ability to read long-form because of the internet, with his own experience. He quotes and makes note of authors and researchers who corroborate his thesis, but the article doesn't dive deep into the science. Like Hari, Harris points out that our brains have been affected by the short pieces of information we are used to consuming on social media. It's more difficult to read long-form, because we're out of practice. I refence this article as a quick rebuttal in my blog post, "Confessions of a Professional Procrastinator." Reading, though helpful with regards to sustained focus, should not be used as a tactic when looking to make abstract connections through "flow." Creativity, it turns out, is better left to mind-wandering.

Ismail, K. (2024, October 3). Types of social media influencers: Mega, Macro, Nano and micro influencers. CMSWire.com. https://www.cmswire.com/digital-marketing/social-media-influencers-mega-macro-microor-nano/

This article defines the various levels of social media influencers: Mega-influencers, Macro-influencers, Micro-influencers, Nano-influencers. While written mostly for digital marketers, I was able to reference the high cost of social media influencers. I used this information as a potential example of low "Return on Investment" for brands. For example, "Mega-influencers are great for brand awareness campaigns, because they have a massive following and notably greater reach — but at a very high cost." The article provides information on the potential reach of each level, as well as the pros and cons of selecting one over the other, depending on the budget and business objectives.

Ledger of Harms. Center for Humane Technology. (n.d.). https://ledger.humanetech.com/

The Ledger of Harms, documented by the Center for Humane Technology, is an excellent source of data that researchers and journalists can reference for ways that technology is detrimental to society. I used several of the facts in my white paper to support my argument that brands have contributed to our collective loss of focus. The Ledger of Harms is divided into categories for easy perusal: 1. The Next Generations, 2. Making Sense of the World, 3. Attention and Cognition, 4. Physical and Mental Health, 5. Social Relationships, 6. Politics and Election, 7. Systemic Oppression, and 8. Do Unto Others. From a design standpoint, the data points also helped to visually break up the content in my white paper.

Lischer, B. (2019). The ROI of Branding. Ignyte. https://www.ignytebrands.com/roi-of-branding/

Brian Lischer, of Ignyte Brands, provides a well-referenced article about the Return on Investment for branding. Obviously, it should not go unnoticed that Fischer is the CEO of a branding agency — he's obviously biased. With that said, the charts and diagrams leveraged throughout are taken from credible sources. The diagram that I leveraged provides a great visual for the long-term value of branding versus the short-term returns of marketing activation. Lischer sourced this diagram from *Media in Focus: Marketing Effectiveness in the Digital Era.* (Binet, L., & Field, P., 2017.) I used it as an example of how branding would be a better investment for businesses than marketing activations that cause harm to their audience's focus and attention.

Meadows, D. (1999). Leverage points: Places to intervene in a system. The Academy for Systems Change. https://donellameadows.org/archives/leverage-points-places-to-intervene-in-a-system/

"Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System" is written from the perspective of a systems analyst. Though, author Donella Meadows uses plenty of metaphors that help to explain exactly what systems analysis is to the lay person, like me. The simplest example is that of a bathtub. A bathtub has inflows that increase the stock (water), and outflows that decrease it. From that starting point, there are plenty of leverage points from which to attain a desired level of water, and so on. Leverage points are places to control the amount of change in a system and can lead to significant impacts and transformations of a system. The author introduces 12 ways to intervene in a system, starting from the easiest and least influential — Constants parameters, numbers — to the most difficult and most influential — The power to transcend paradigms.

In my white paper, I referenced Leverage Point #7, the gain around driving positive feedback loops. Essentially, a positive feedback loop is self-reinforcing. "The more it works, the more it gains power to work some more," as Meadows explains. I wanted to explain how Brand Designers can use this starting point to intervene in the pervasive aspects of technology. For example, they can design and suggest that their clients focus humane technology solutions, rather than focuses on engagement. By educating and informing clients about the long-term benefits of humane solutions, my logic is that businesses would not only help their users, but also their brand's perception.

Meadows, D. (2014, January 20). *Dancing with systems*. The Academy for Systems Change. https://donellameadows.org/archives/dancing-with-systems/

What I found most intriguing about "Dancing with Systems" were the apparent similarities that Meadows outlines about Systems Analysis with the practice of Design Thinking. Quite striking. Meadows lays out 14 best practices to "Dance" with Systems Analysis that can be applied to a range of important topics such as politics, sustainability, or life. "Get the beat," one could argue, is the same approach used in Design Thinking for user research and observation. "Expose your mental models to the open air" is very similar to rapid prototyping. The list goes on. While Design Thinking is usually performed during product or technology development, it appears Systems Thinking can be applied to just about anything — from industrial programs and political systems to medical practices and social issues. My favorite piece of advice, "I would guess that 99 percent of what goes wrong in systems goes wrong because of faulty or missing information." So true.

Neumeier, M. (2007). Zag: The number-one strategy of high-performance brands: A whiteboard overview. AIGA : New Riders.

Neumeier's primary thesis in Zag is that great businesses find a way to create brands that are "radically different" than their competition. The author provides his definition of branding and outlines a process for businesses to develop their own unique brands. Through a series of insightful questions, strategic workshops, and real-life examples, Neumeier clearly shows what makes some brands successful. Businesses compete with more than just other brands, according to Neumeier. They also compete with the speed of technology. As an example, Neumeier introduces the reader to Moore's Law: a 1965 prediction that the number of transistors in a given space would double each year. I developed a similar analogy to Moore's Law in my white paper. I wanted readers to understand why some technologists believe that we often develop communications technology too fast. Since Moore's Law has been proven correct with many technological advancements, it helps to explain the fear that many users have with technology's effect on our focus and attention. Simply put, we often don't understand technology's influence until it's too late.

Pink, D. H. (2006). Symphony. In A Whole New Mind: Why Right-brainers Will Rule the Future (pp. 129–145). essay, Penguin Group.

In *A Whole New Mind*, Pink describes six unique senses that business leaders will need to thrive in what he refers to as, "The Conceptual Age." The entire book is worth reading twice, but Chapter Six introduces a concept that I was referred to in my white paper: Symphony. Put simply, Symphony is the ability to make

abstract connections. This aligns with my point that most brand designers need to have flexibility. They work across various industries, and this allows them to gain insights into many different business categories. Symphony is all about relationships. As such, brand designers can act as "Real Brand Influencers" by helping to design humane solutions and spreading information about harmful technologies.

Rhodes, M. (2015, October 19). *This guy obsessively recorded his private data for 10 years*. Wired. https://www.wired.com/2015/10/nicholas-felton-obsessively-recorded-his-private-data-for-10-years/

Nicholas Felton is a graphic designer that helped to develop the intitial timeline af Facebook, and became well-know for his yearly Annual Reports. In his Annual Reports, Felton designed beautiful charts and graphs that detailed his life's data. This article, featured in Wired Magazine, is a retrospective Q&A ten years after Felton decided to stop collecting and sharing personal information. For my blog post, "Less News is Good News," I noted two key takeaways: 1. Felton tried to collect data with the intent of having a positive influence on his life, and 2. His solutions made him become more mindful of his environment. Those two objectives help setup the framework of my own experiment to quit the News app.

Segijn, C. M., Kim, E., Sifaoui, A., & Boerman, S. C. (2021). When you realize that big brother is watching: How informing consumers affects synced advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 29(4), 317–338. <u>https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2021.2020149</u>

This article discusses digital advertising technologies that businesses use to deliver personalized message, primarily through "Synched Advertising." With synched advertising, messages on mobile devises are synced with consumers' concurrent media usage in real time. For example, consumers can receive a mobile ad while a specific topic is showing on TV. (Really scary stuff.) The authors raise man concerns with regards to consumers' privacy, as well as potential harm to adolescents. They conduct online experiments and share the results. Though I don't reference this piece in my white paper, it was helpful to gain a better understanding of alternative ways that businesses are tracking and using personal data.

Warren, J. (2021, April 9). Nano or Macro: How an Influencer's Follower Count Impacts Engagement Rate. Later Social Media Marketing. https://later.com/blog/influencer-engagement-rate/

Warren helps to define five social media influencer levels, their potential reach, as well as their engagement rate. I leveraged the "Influencer Follower Tiers" diagram to show the difference between a "Mega" influencer and a "Micro" Influencer. A key takeaway, for me, is that measurement is primarily about engagement. Though this is usually the case with advertising, I used this information to help provide rationale for brands to reallocate their marketing budgets. An investment in branding, I argue in my white paper, will be a better long-term Return on Investment than distracting social media influencers.

Wheeler, A., & Meyerson, R. (2024). *Designing brand identity: A comprehensive guide to the world of brands and Branding* (6th ed.). Wiley.

Designing Brand Identity is probably the best reference for any brand designer worth his or her salt. One can use it as a quick reference guide or as a comprehensive course outline. I read it to gain a better understanding of the business benefits of branding. Customer loyalty, engagement, sales, and awareness are all listed as reasons to invest in a unique brand identity system. I weaved these benefits throughout my white paper and weighed the positive effects of brand activations versus the negative effects of technological advancements of different forms of marketing and communications. There seems to be a fine line to walk, especially for someone that works with brands on their marketing strategy. Ultimately, I agreed that the attention and focus crises caused by technology is more important than most business objectives. I then referenced *Designing Brand Identity* for ways to define and align brand values with ethical standards in the use of invasive technology.

Whitt, J. (2013, July 29). *How to Work Smarter Not Harder*. YouTube. <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQx6L-EVJYM</u>

In this whiteboard session with Jennifer Whitt, Director at ProjectManager.com, she outlines ways to

improve productivity and how to prioritize better. She offers sound advice on achieving a better work-life balance. The five key points she reviews are: 1. Check Your Abilities, 2. Setting Personal Boundaries, 3. Creating a Calendar, 4. Having both Mentors and Mentees, and 5. Developing Processes. These were all important factors in planning my white paper while balancing work and family.

Whitt, J. (2013, February 11). Project Planning Process: 5 Steps To Project Management Planning. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Do8iykQKMfU

Jennifer Whitt, Director of ProjectManager.com, reviews five ways to plan a project. She outlines the importance of the initial objectives and talks about the course of action needed to complete an assignment. The five steps include: 1. Create Project Plan, 2. Breakdown Deliverables, 3. Determine Dependencies, Critical Path, Issues, Risks, and Resources, 4. Create Timeline, and 5. Assign Resources. As a business owner, I have the ability to hire freelance when there seems to be too much work. I often consider the benefits of working late versus spending more time with my family. It's not always an easy decision, but Whitt makes a fine point about delegating when it's in the best interest of your business or personal life.