

SUMMARY

THE POWER OF STARTING SOMETHING STUPID

RICHIE NORTON



Summary of «The Power of Starting Something Stupid» by Richie Norton

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Turn your stupid idea into the next life-changing innovation through Richie Norton's motivational tips and actionable advice.



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Introduction

Download an app and fling some birds at pigs. That seems pretty stupid. But in 2011, the creators of Angry Birds saw a profit of \$106 million. Walt Disney was once fired from the newspaper he worked at, he lacked imagination. Elvis Presley was asked to leave the Grand Ole Opry after a single performance, saying he was “going nowhere.” Experts said nobody would listen to music on digital files and that people could never video chat halfway across the world. All these ideas were initially thought of as stupid, but as we have seen, stupid ideas might just be the best idea you’ve ever had.

Throughout Richie Norton’s *The Power of Starting Something Stupid*, Norton discusses how stupid ideas are the new smart. You may be sitting on an idea that could change the world, you just need the courage to start now. As you’ll learn, Norton stresses the importance of now, tomorrow is never promised. You’ll never have enough time, money, or education so learn how to take the next steps to bring your stupid ideas to life.

Stupid Ideas Are The New Smart

When you have an idea, you share it with your friends, and they immediately say “it’s stupid.” Don’t let it get you down! Stupid ideas have turned into some of the most innovative ideas in the world. When you have an idea for something new, you tend to be fearful and have doubts because you lack understanding and worry about what other people will think. Well, look at the idea for “Doggles.” Yes, that is, indeed, fashion sunglasses for dogs. I’m sure when the inventor came up with the idea, many friends and family members believed the idea to be “stupid.” Would you believe that Doggles is bringing in \$3 million per year? Or imagine wetting a clay structure, spreading black seeds all over it, and watching them grow into green fur all over the structure. It seems pretty stupid. Well, that’s a chia pet and they sell half a million units a year.

Many great inventions and successes are great surprises. For instance, Western Union initially rejected the idea of the telephone in 1876 based on the reason that “the device is inherently of no value to us.” This “stupid” idea has become a staple in society and hardly anyone can live without one!

It’s time to embrace the idea that “stupid is the new smart.” However, you must first distinguish between absolutely dumb ideas and the New Smart. What’s the New Smart? According to Norton, “Stupid as the New Smart infers that while an idea may appear to be inherently faulty, the idea is, in reality, sound and in your best interest to pursue.” In other words, even if everyone agrees that your idea is stupid, as long as you trust yourself, then you should stop worrying about what others think and just pursue it! Norton identifies New Smart as ideas that are: highly creative, counterintuitive, innovative, beyond your comfort zone, making a change, unconventional, leaning into fear, pushing through less than ideal circumstances, turning down the volume on critics, and trusting the voice inside your own head. So even if your friends believe that you have the stupidest idea in the world, your stupid idea is the new smart.

But how can you tell if your idea is worth something or if it's just plain stupid? Trust your gut. All you need to know is that you are deeply passionate and convinced that your idea has the power to be successful. You simply need to believe in yourself. The former CEO of General Electric, Jack Welch, believes "you know it when you feel it," so if you feel it, then go for it.

You'll Never Have Enough Time, Education, or Money

Dream of your retirement. As you're enjoying life without stress, what is it that you want to do? Even more, what do you wish you had done? As Norton was working in retirement counseling, he learned that almost every single person felt the same way. They all had waited their entire lives to start something they wanted to do. Norton considers this the T.E.M. Gap when you wait for more Time, more Education, and more Money to go after your dreams. However, once those people had finally retired, they were then forced to navigate new circumstances. For instance, many experienced the sudden loss of a spouse, a decline in health, or they realized they didn't have the money they thought they'd have. Waiting to start dreaming for the "smart time" is dangerous and right now (the present time) is the only time that we are guaranteed.

Norton states, "Here is the cold, hard fact of the matter. No matter how hard you work, no matter how hard you study, no matter how much money you earn and tuck away, no matter (insert your favorite excuse here), there is still no guarantee that the stars will eventually align in the way you're waiting for them to. And for most of you, it's actually highly improbable that they ever will." Unfortunately, the majority of people will never get rich. They'll find themselves chasing paychecks only to realize that life has been passing them by, and their dreams have passed along with it.

Norton introduces the idea of Gavin's Law, in which he states, "Live to start. Start to live." You see, Norton tragically lost his 21-year-old brother-in-law and 10-week-old son, both named Gavin, and made the realization that life is too short to not act on our most pressing thoughts for fear that they are "too stupid." Instead, Norton wants you to use the Bezos Test and ask yourself, "will I regret this when I'm 80?"

Jeff Bezos was working on Wall Street when he hatched the idea for Amazon. He wasn't hurting for money, instead, he truly believed he had a

great idea; however, when he explained his idea to sell books online to his boss, his boss replied that it “would be a better idea for somebody who didn’t already have a job.” Jeff ruminated over this and realized that if he didn’t give it a shot, he would regret it by the time he was eighty. So he quit his job in the middle of the year, a somewhat crazy idea considering he missed out on his impressive yearly bonus and started Amazon. The rest, you could say, is history.

Just START

So if you're now feeling inspired to start that project that you've been dreaming of for so long, where do you even start? The idea can seem impossible, how can you ensure that you're on the right path? The best place to begin is to S.T.A.R.T...Start. Standing for serve, thank, ask, receive, and trust when you genuinely START, you begin to build your network of success and lay the groundwork for creating something remarkable. START will help you connect with others, gain credibility and contribute to the world in significant ways.

Beginning with serving, Norton suggests you begin making strategic connections. If you think you can accomplish your goals on your own, well, you're only going to make things incredibly hard for yourself. You should surround yourself with knowledgeable people who you can trust to become your mentor. Essentially, work on building your network. Perhaps approach someone who has already been through what you're doing. For example, if you want to start a blog, then reach out to a successful blogger, or join a Facebook group for new bloggers to ask for advice. Nowadays, you don't even need to be in the same room to make a connection.

Next, you must thank and be grateful for those that do help you. People will be more likely to continue helping you if you express your gratitude for their advice and counseling. For instance, imagine a scenario where you give money to two homeless people. Immediately one simply grabs the money and runs while the other acknowledges you and expresses his gratitude. In this situation, who would you be more likely to give money to again?

The final steps of the acronym are simply to ask, receive, and trust. By asking others for what they are already willing to do anyway, you can build a mutual relationship where both parties benefit. Next, you must be open to receiving help and constructive criticism. You can choose to receive criticism and stop, or you can choose to receive and do something about it.

In addition to criticism, you will begin to receive gifts in the form of advice, experience, or money. Receive these gifts and know that you are deserving of every grateful gesture. And lastly, trust yourself. If you are confident with yourself, others will believe in you too. They will acknowledge your confidence and your worth and be more likely to trust you.

The Stupid Loop

Now it's time to start your project, but of course, you'll inevitably encounter obstacles along the way. There will be endless challenges and you may find yourself trying to follow the set standards, or rules, in the field that you choose. For instance, in the world of blogging, you may research how other bloggers succeeded and many of them will have taken similar paths to get where they are. These roadmaps are great resources! However, they can also serve as a roadblock to change and innovation. If you want to see success, constantly question those current standards. What works? What doesn't work? How can you make the process easier, better, faster? Only then will you discover a better way to do things. Once you begin to see success, you should continue to innovate through applying Norton's "stupid loop."

According to Norton, "If your stupid project becomes successful, it will likely become accepted, then considered smart, and then standardized, and eventually, normal." In other words, the stupid loop is when your idea goes from stupid to smart, then finally, to normal. Essentially, our stupid ideas are constantly at risk of becoming normal. Once you become comfortable with normal, you stop innovating and beginning new stupid ideas; therefore, normal is where innovation dies. Every brilliant idea in history as gone through this loop. For instance, the idea of the telephone. Imagine if society just accepted the world's first telephone, accepted it as a normal, and stopped innovating? We certainly wouldn't have the advancements that we see today.

In fact, Henry Ford fell victim to this stupid loop. After he had the "stupid" idea of the Model T, Ford refused to consider any idea that would have improved it even further. He believed it was too successful to be altered; therefore, the Model T eventually became normal. While people like and even accept normal, they love and crave something "new." Ford's critical mistake led to a significant downfall in the company's market share. So while you may have a stupid idea today, that idea has every chance to

become the new normal of tomorrow. However, you must put in the blood, sweat, and tears to prove to yourself and others that your idea was, in fact, not stupid at all.

Authenticity is Key

What holds you back from just starting? You may think that you lack the time, resources, or experience, but as mentioned earlier, you'll never have enough time, education, or money. You need to, as the acronym aptly suggests, START. But, undoubtedly there's one more obstacle getting in your way. Fear. You're afraid of failure, and that's normal! Everyone is worried their stupid idea will just become another stupid failure. You need courage and squashing your fear is the first step towards accomplishing your goals. The best way to gain the courage you need is to be authentic.

Norton suggests five ways to make authenticity a part of your life. First is by breaking free of fear, pride, and procrastination. Your impulse might be to do nothing because you are too scared to fail, or too prideful to admit failure. But as James A. Owen suggests, "If you really want to do something, no one can stop you. If you don't want to do something, no one can help you." Additionally, Norton suggests you find the courage to do things you are not ready to do. Upon hearing this phrase from Marissa Mayer, the new CEO of Yahoo!, at a commencement ceremony at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Norton recognized the importance of pushing through your uneasiness. If you ask any successful person when they were "ready" to commit to launching their success, you'll likely hear how the time was never right, they just did it. All it takes is a bit of courage and trust within yourself.

This leads to the next step to accomplish authenticity: trust yourself. Even if your life has been a series of mistakes and failures, you do not have to be defined by the things you have done. Your past mistakes are not who you are. Remember to forgive yourself and move on. Forgiveness may not change your past, but it sure does enlarge your future.

Next, you need to set standards, keep them, and get respect. To explain this further, Norton asks if you have ever seen the bumper sticker that states: Eddie Would Go? The sticker refers to a well-known lifeguard, Eddie Aikau,

who rescued countless lives and was just as respected for his skills as a big wave surfer. Now locals host a surfing competition in his honor, locally known as “The Eddie.” The competition is held when the conditions are “just right,” that is, when the waves are big, as in 20-foot waves or higher, which means the competition has only been held eight times in the past 27 years. Thousands of people gather in the hopes of shredding the biggest waves; however, each year the competition takes place, it is canceled. But why is that? Simply put, they set the standard based on Eddie, they keep that standard, and people respect them for it.

Finally, just start your stupid ideas. Imagine what your life would be like if you were completely uninhibited by fear, pride, or procrastination. What would you be capable of? The answer is anything!

Leverage For Success

How do you think successful people got where they are today? By sitting on the sidelines? No, they build a network of people around them, they don't focus on what they're missing, and they leverage their existing resources to get what they want. As you begin to build a network, your access to valuable advice, money, and experience begins to become more readily available. And while you may still think that you don't have enough, you must change your mindset and realize that you have everything you need to be successful.

Once you recognize that no one gets to the top on their own, you can begin to recognize the resources you do have and use them to your advantage. For instance, farmers certainly don't lay their own eggs, do they? Supermarkets don't create every product they sell and theaters obviously don't play movies they made themselves. Lastly, Google Search simply organizes information that is already on the internet. None of these companies reinvented the wheel, they simply used their resources as leverage to grow.

Of course, everyone has to start somewhere. If you're wondering where to start using your resources, turn to your computer or even your smartphone! Almost anything is possible through the power of the internet. For instance, YouTube and Instagram give you a platform to start your own entertainment channel or company account to reach out to potential customers. Etsy allows you to sell your own homemade products. Blogs allow you to create your own magazine or newspaper. Podcasts allow you to begin your own radio show. The possibilities are limitless, and anyone can utilize such platforms.

Remember, you'll never have enough time, education, or money but you can start your stupid idea right now. Focus on building relationships and finding a mentor that is willing to help you. Don't be afraid to ask for help, in fact, successful business people will admire your ambition and motivation to start something. For example, Bill Hewlett of Hewlett-

Packard mentored Steve Jobs when Jobs was just in eighth grade! Finally, go out and accomplish your goals. Remember Gavin's Law, tomorrow is not promised and there's no better time to start than now.

Final Summary

There is no time like the present to bring your stupid idea to life. In fact, stupid ideas are the new smart. Throughout history, many new innovative ideas were initially met with skepticism and doubt but you can't let the opinions of others stop you from reaching your goals. There is every excuse in the book to not go after your dreams: you don't have enough money, you don't have the time, you lack the experience necessary. News flash: No one is ever ready! If you never take action, you might find yourself at eighty-years-old looking back and regretting the steps you never took. Gavin's Law teaches us that life is not promised, so go after your dreams now even if others think they are stupid.



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