

Contents

<i>About the author</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xv</i>
1 Personal value	
Identifying your <i>how, why, do</i> and <i>who</i>	1
2 Tangible value	
The value language of business	53
3 Emotional value	
Make me feel it	81
4 Service value	
Enrich other people's lives	111
5 Relationship value	
The substance of life	149
6 Tying it all together	
Personal and professional perspectives	195
<i>Epilogue: Aristotle to Audrey</i>	<i>207</i>
<i>A definition of value</i>	<i>209</i>
<i>The Add Value nursery rhyme</i>	<i>211</i>
<i>References</i>	<i>213</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>217</i>

4



Service value

Enrich other people's lives

The great Muhammad Ali said, 'Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth'.

A friend of mine, Natalie, was in Japan on a business trip in 2003. She decided to procure a unique personalised gift for me: kanji. She thought logographic symbols representing primary words epitomising the nature of my character would be a pleasant surprise. Plus it might match other personal décor in my home, a modest combination of quirky objets d'art symbolic of my life and travels.

She figured finding bespoke providers of kanji in Japan would prove straightforward. But apparently not. I'll share my memory of the story of her experience. Though some of the finer details of flashbacks may be a little flawed, the gist and feeling are fact.

After unsuccessfully finding any shop or even street artist who offered the service, Natalie turned to plan B. Hotel receptions are a handy go-to for local knowledge the world over. And even if they're not armed with immediate intelligence they have the advantage of speedy internet at their fingertips and fewer barriers like language.

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The lady at reception pointed out that while kanji is traditional—found everywhere from luminous signs to pamphlets—it's not a typical business people aspire to. Earning a living scribing symbols for visitors may be entrepreneurial but it is even less common than street art. Or certainly it was at the time.

The variety of phonebooks, business guides and Japanese equivalents of advertising directories grabbed from behind the reception booth, which doubled as an encyclopaedic counter, delivered no bites. Reinforcements were called in: she asked her more senior colleague.

They spent some time spitballing ideas. There was scratching of heads, moments of puzzled silence and occasional fits of giggles. You know, ridiculous ideas thrown into the fray to break stagnant dead ends to get things moving, being laughed off and shot down. It was time for the big guns. The concierge.

An experienced concierge is worth their weight in gold when it comes to local knowledge and getting stuff done, especially when the requests are somewhat off the beaten path of mainstream tourist enquiries. They've established a little black book of often-bizarre contacts, either front of mind or tucked in the pocket ready to go. If, for example, you found yourself in Russia and for some strange reason wanted to get your hands on a bright souvenir Contiki staff shirt from the 1990s or dodgy CDs with titles misspelt, I know a contact in Tver who'll be able to help. Yet on this occasion, even after street contacts were pressed and favours were called in, still she had no luck.

So it came to pass that the regional hotel manager was called in. Being in charge of multiple concierges and locations, perhaps casting a wider net would catch the fish.

We've now got two duty reception clerks, a concierge, a duty manager (who'd curiously joined in) and a regional manager working the case.

If that's not impressive enough, what comes next surely is, both in relation to service and quality leadership.

After listening to and discussing intently, in Japanese, the pickle at hand, along with the string of failed avenues ventured, this senior figure paused for a moment. He then offered a nougat of pay dirt, delivered directly in English for my friend to understand, that might overcome the dilemma:

'I believe one of the staff who works part time in our kitchen practises calligraphy in her art studies. I think she may also be working today. Let's ask.'

It turns out he was right. The junior kitchen hand working in service in the restaurant was undertaking courses studying art and design. She had a passion for calligraphy. She was on duty and she joined the rest of the gang. As the request was described, her nodding head indicated a solution had indeed been found. It turns out she also had the required materials. The high-quality rice papers and artistic pens were in her locker. The senior leader gave her permission to take further time from her duties to help Natalie secure the bespoke kanji she sought.

By this stage all the fuss had garnered the interest of other guests. Some thought what a wonderful gift idea this was. They too were then keen to get some kanji done. However, the kindness and permission given for the time of the kitchen hand extended only to Natalie in this instance.

If you know about Japanese traditions like the tea ceremony, you know attention to detail means such things may take up to four hours. So imagine the concentration and dedicated effort exhibited by the student to complete this over a period of some 45 minutes. Her attention to detail brought four bespoke kanji to life.

Three of them, for three specific words, were completed on the same set of beautifully, slightly speckled A4 paper. These are now

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a wonderful feature framed in my home. The fourth, a variation in kanji for one of the words, was completed on a separate quality sheet. I occasionally roll it out at talks to share as an anecdotal lesson for several themes.

One of the questions I'm commonly asked is, 'Which words do the kanji represent?' My answer here is, 'You may find out at some of my live events'. It's nice at times to be left wanting a little more, plus, in addition to being playful, I wonder whether Natalie would nominate the same traits? They may remain a core part of my character, yet layers of life experiences and personal value have developed over the years since, possibly making others more relevant to the man I am now.

Imagine the words to be your own. What might they be? Whatever the words, having them skilfully crafted and capturing the essence of one person's soul as seen through the eyes of another then generously gifted as a surprise is a treasured souvenir aligned with another element of value.

The thing I love most about the entire unfolding of this event is that neither the hotel nor the girl would accept any kind of payment for their service. They refused all insistence as the fine finished products were ceremoniously handed over. Natalie was visiting for a conference and wasn't even a guest staying in this hotel and they knew that. Yet none were deterred from helping find a solution. It's a reason I've continued to spruik or recommend the Yokohama Royal Park Hotel.

I'm frequently reminded, transfixed at times when staring at the kanji on my walls out of interest—not boredom—of Muhammad Ali's quote at the beginning of this chapter and his attitude towards service to others. The world would be a lonely place if we were stuck here all alone. Yet often we forget that.

Chefs you never meet working in kitchens your eyes never see feed you sustenance on trips for both business and

pleasure. The watch on your wrist, the craftsmanship of some stranger perhaps as far away as Switzerland, allows you to remain punctual.

Even the drivers of delayed public transport are souls doing the best they can to get you to your destination safely, even if sometimes a little late.

Many people will invest their precious time to write complaints or voice concerns over annoyances, disapproval or letdowns. Fewer will go out of their way to proactively invest equal or greater amounts of time with the same diligence to pay homage or show gratitude.

After working for so many years in travel, I can promise the service staff who some people feel compelled to yell abuse at have no desire either to be held up. That's why I'll happily be the annoying guy hollering 'thank you' from halfway down the crowded bus.

Yes, I do know too, there are some who work in fields of service who forget the nature of their roles. There are plenty of curmudgeons, both young and old, in a fast-paced consumerist world driven all too frequently by selfish, blinkered motivation. People may lose patience too quickly, react too harshly or judge unilaterally without thought. Perhaps we can remind them that gratitude and quality service may be tools to snap them from the grips of their grumpiness.

Maybe we can take a lesson from that student in Yokohama. I've found that many descriptions of what people perceive as most valuable fall into categories where we apply ourselves in very specific ways with dedicated effort. So like a pen to rice paper (or fingers to a keyboard in this digital era) consider the following four dichotomies, which constitute the essence of service value. Doing so may ensure the payments we make as rent are valuable attitudes and behaviours to the world.

Service value in a nutshell

The four dichotomies are questions to ask ourselves as a check-in to ensure we're paying our rent in service:

1. Problem–Solution
2. Possibilities–Consequences
3. Self–Others
4. The environment: to wreck or nurture

1. Problem–Solution

When people hear that my journey in human development began in travel, training frontline leaders for Contiki Holidays, I often hear comments along the lines of:

- ‘That’s cool! You were on holiday all the time then!’
- ‘What a lifestyle—I wish mine was like that.’
- ‘You must have had a ball.’

On occasion, rigid-thinking corporate types have pondered:

- ‘So how does that translate to leadership?’
- ‘That sounds fun, but what practical operational skills does that arm you with?’
- ‘Leading tour groups is not like business though, is it?’

Since those Contiki days, I’ve worked for more than two decades as an experienced practitioner in the field of training, learning and development. I’ve assisted global projects and a multitude of blue-chip businesses: hands-on involvement of establishment frameworks and capabilities in leadership, sales, operations, culture and much more, often from a standing start. I can unequivocally say I’m yet to face a single body of work with anywhere near the complexities or problem-solving skills

required as those demanded frontline on tours, no matter your perception of an environment like Contiki.

The brand has built an amazing reputation—good and bad, but mostly good—over the course of six decades. Founder John Anderson was also on the speaking circuit for many years, sharing fascinating stories of how this iconic touring company was founded.

Wishing to travel around Europe for free, Anderson positioned himself as a tour guide in spite of having no experience or credibility to speak of. He interviewed enough potential passengers to fill a mini bus. Having calculated the approximate total cost, he divided the required budget by the number of passengers, ensuring his own seat as organiser was free. Then he did it all again with two mini buses. The early ethos was more along the lines of ‘just follow me, even if I’m lost too’ rather than worrying too much about getting lost. The depth of knowledge and intricacies of logistics required for the polished product of Contiki would come years later.

Highly respected former long-serving ‘captain’ of Contiki, DDH (David) Hosking (a great man!) summed up the responsibility of being a tour operator: touring has to be a lot of fun, but it has to be done with diligence, compliance, a healthy dose of common sense and with both the safety and respect of all passengers in mind.

He’d bring these principles to life leveraging a single typical passenger persona (fact or fiction is still to be determined). ‘Meet Mary Wells from Wagga Wagga. She’s spent the past two years of her life working hard, simultaneously saving money and putting it aside as a travel kitty. She might persist with this habit for two years in order to save the approximately \$20k required for her big overseas adventure. And along with Mary you’re going to have 49 other people just like her. So that’s a million dollars invested, sitting behind you on a coach, excitedly ready for the experience of a lifetime. No pressure. Just don’t f*ck up. And if you do, fix it!’

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In other words, for every aspect of any role—say, for example, that of a trainee Contiki tour leader—consider that if it's not done properly, problems will arise. If logistics are not dealt with or set up appropriately, then the tour will come unstuck. If quality presentations are not delivered, or if you get lost due to a lack of planning, the customer experience will deteriorate—potentially along with the group dynamics. Solutions have to be pre-empted or delivered as needed.

Let's use 'James' as an example. He may have grown up on a farm or in a remote location in Australia. Perhaps even Wagga Wagga.

James held a desire, like John Anderson, to have a big overseas adventure and to do it for free or even be paid in the process. So James applied to be a Contiki tour leader.

Successfully navigating the group interviews showcasing his capabilities meant progression to the second stage amid a harsh selection process.

The second interview was intense and at times provocatively personal. It was one way to weed out talent that lacked the fundamental skills or initiative required, or that may be difficult to mould in order to handle the role.

James, now selected as a potential trainee for his 'easy' dream job, has about eight weeks to participate in and survive a live training tour—London to Istanbul and back to London—to show he's up for the task at hand. If he isn't, his training manager can eject him from his seat anywhere along the way and the \$500 bond he's put up as part of the condition for his place, will be forfeited.

As part of the training, James is expected to absorb a long list of information, including:

- learning every route and turn the coach must take and making sure you know what's required for tolls, fuel stops, toilet drops and legal parking every step of the way

- gaining intimate knowledge about every country and being prepared to deliver multiple talks on them without reading from notes
- learning about the history of every country, city or major site of interest you pass and making sure you bring each city to life with depth of stories and facts—all from memory
- finding out details about every major monument, museum and place of interest: where are they, what time they open or close and how much they cost
- knowing the cost of a cup of coffee, beer or wine—hell, even a Mars bar—in every location, as well as the cost of using public toilets...

You get the gist. Effectively, even if James makes it, he will be paid an abysmal amount to handle everyone else's problems and create solutions where needed.

The single most valuable lesson to learn on a training tour is the one I'll call 'what if'. What if...

- passports or tour funds get lost or stolen?
- your entire coach gets stolen in the Eastern Bloc or Russia?
- you lose passengers in a city or country?
- the coach catches fire in one of the longest road tunnels in Europe?
- passengers are arrested or detained by police?
- three passengers are run over by the same car in Venice: a city of water!
- your coach is involved in a minor accident, rolling over or significantly crashing?
- 17 passengers, along with a driver and three local guides, perish in a heart-breaking canyoning catastrophe?

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Arming trainees for these and a million other scenarios you wish never to happen or can't even fathom was perhaps the single most important lesson to instil.

The fiction of tour brochures, which build the illusion of this 'easy dream job', is the reason that some people then find it hard to connect relevance to leadership skills, operational efficiencies, selling or even critical problem solving.

In every tour brochure the sun is shining, there's never any scaffolding, the queues waiting in line aren't horrendous and everybody is smiling. It's like the fictional town where Truman Burbank lives, where nothing goes wrong and everything is friendly—lattés, cocktails and bliss. The reality can, of course, be eye-opening, testing, stressful and quite different.

Even for a company like Contiki (which specialises in 18–35-year-old tourists) the people who love the metrics of tangible value—such as statisticians—will attest that the law of probability doesn't work in your favour. When your business transports 50 000 passengers or so each year, the law of average dictates, sadly, you're going to have more than your fair share of daily problems or tragedies.

For me as a rep, leader and training manager, the Contiki environment cemented the importance of this first self-reflective dichotomy of service value.

Flip the switch

In anything you do, if you don't have your act together and aren't diligent with your efforts you'll likely be either a part or primary reason for problems that f*ck up anything, not just million-dollar experiences of a lifetime.

Anyone can throw their hands up in despair or holler and complain how bad everything is. Kids can berate adults for screwing up the world. It's noble to be passionate about highlighting problems or rallying support for worthy causes. But anyone—everyone—can do that. Being of service means

bringing depth of wisdom, ideas and solutions instead of just fighting or rebelling against the things we disapprove of.

The essence of Einstein's thinking captures well the importance of comprehension to both sides of the equation:

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them...If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.

Yes, we need to understand any problem in detail in order to identify the most valuable solution. But at some point we must flip the switch in our brain from problem analysis to solution thinking. It's literally a different part of your brain, with neurons and connections firing up that will tap the required precious insights and ideas.

Often people remain stuck in the problem. They may not realise the nature of their internal ramblings isn't helping—those silent downloads where we just can't for the life of us stop looking at the problem even when we think we've moved on. When I'm:

- talking about the problem, I'm looking at the problem
- describing causes for the problem, I'm still looking at the problem
- explaining what hasn't worked, I'm still looking at the problem
- explaining that others have similar challenges, I'm still looking at the problem.

All is fine when used for conscious problem analysis. It's when those conversations become shared repeatedly as ongoing status updates to tell 10, 20 or 100 people the same drama that we're stuck in the emotion of the problem itself. Asking for input from people you know have something credible to offer is more of a solution tact. When:

- asking what we've not yet tried, I'm searching for solutions

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- asking how others overcome similar challenges, I'm solution searching
- free-thinking creative, innovative ideas, I'm inviting doors to solutions
- open-mindedly inviting suggestions from others, I'm solution thinking.

Service value, personally or professionally, is asking this first self-reflective puzzling question more frequently: *Is what I'm doing creating or adding to problems or solutions?* Service value is identifying, then analysing, existing headaches or potential threats. Service value is also having a willingness and capability to find, in collaboration if need be, appropriate solutions. Service value is about being pre-emptive in our thinking: to elucidate solutions before the problem is even a problem.

2. Possibilities—Consequences

Paris night tour departing Palais de Chaillot, Trocadéro

As we crawl slowly along Avenue Kléber I have two choices of music to pick from. What music should I play for the ambiance?

Shall we go Dick Dale's *Misirlou*? You know, the pumping guitar riff made famous by the opening titles in the movie *Pulp Fiction*. Or shall we go classical? 'In the Hall of the Mountain King' from the *Peer Gynt Suite* by Edvard Grieg?

The challenge with Grieg is the timing. It's a best guess when creeping along Avenue Kléber as to when to hit <play>. It takes precisely 1 minute 45 seconds of gradual escalation in foot tapping rhythm before morphing into the frenzied, lofty, iconic culmination. If it drops at just the right time it will maximise the effect when we hoon hair rousingly onto the roundabout that lies ahead. While with *Misirlou* I just hit <play> and the effect on excitement is immediate.

Either soundtrack will elevate the atmosphere. It's the small touches such as this that compound to create that million-dollar experience. The impending roundabout in question is the one circling the magnificent Arc de Triomphe.

Once amid the fray—*Misirlou* or *Mountain King*—it's a hell of a buzz for first-time riders. After circling the arch a couple of times, usually amid a combination of cheering, laughter and screams, it's time to fade the music and let those storytelling skills kick in.

Napoleon's victory arch

The Arc de Triomphe is one of the largest triumphal arches in the world, standing 50 metres high and 45 metres wide. It's also one of the most celebrated and visited sites by tourists flocking to the city of lights.

Reliefs carved at the base of the four sturdy pillars represent battle scenes and victories from the Napoleonic era. One of them is the 'Departure of the Volunteers of 1792', which depicts the departure of a French revolutionary army, being led into battle by a sword-carrying warrior representing France. Most people more commonly know the relief under another name, that of the French national anthem *La Marseillaise*.

Other reliefs include trophies and friezes representing soldiers going into battle. On the inside walls of the monument are names of significant figures during the Napoleonic wars, including over 550 generals. If the commanders have their name underlined it means they died in battle. Any remaining spare space on the memorial is dedicated to slightly less important, though no less trivial, victories or recognition.

Paris is ripe, or perhaps rife depending how you look at it, with spectacular yet smug self-congratulatory trophies of so many of Napoleon Bonaparte's achievements. He was an interesting if somewhat egotistical character: small in stature yet large in presence.

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Born in Corsica in 1769, Napoleon rose rapidly through the military ranks to prominence after the French Revolution, becoming a general at the age of 24.

By 1799 he was the First Consul of the Republic. Being citizen number one amid the centralised republic still wasn't quite cutting the French mustard as a suitably splendid salutation for his business card. So in 1804 he changed it to 'Emperor of France'.

For all his smarts, it was Napoleon's dream of extending his empire that was to be his downfall. It was 1812 when Napoleon's Grande Armée—at over 650,000 strong potentially the largest gathered in history—crossed the Neman River. The plan in Napoleon's brain was to rapidly defeat and conquer the Russians. The pride of the Cossacks led them to equally cunning tactics. They drew the French forces, and Napoleon's ego, further into the vastness of their empire scorching the earth with each retreat.

While the French claimed another victory with a static battle at Borodino, west of Moscow, the French casualties numbered tens of thousands. The harsh Russian winter kicked in and the demoralised, declining numbers were forced to retreat. By the time the Grande Armée exited Russian soil close to 400,000 had perished in battle or due to the severe conditions.

Napoleon was exiled to Elba, off the coast of Tuscany, but he managed to escape for a little more than 100 days as a final 'hurrah' (or perhaps he was curious to see how the ongoing construction on the Arc de Triomphe was going). Austria, Russia, Prussia and Britain joined forces fighting Napoleon's French all stars. This single campaign was to be a winner-takes-all game of two halves. It was close! The British army alliance, under command of the Duke of Wellington, held ground until the Prussians, held up in a simultaneous battle, arrived as late substitutes to essentially save the day. 18 June 1815 was Napoleon's red card.

That final battlefield name became synonymous as a metaphor for anyone taking action where consequences haven't been fully thought through: everyone has their Waterloo.

He might have left his hopes in France but his hubris surely followed Napoleon to the location of his final exile: the bleak, remote, volcanic island of St Helena, 1900 kilometres from the nearest landmass off the west coast of Africa. He asked his jail keepers to acknowledge him by his self-proclaimed title as Emperor of France. They refused. He bickered over conditions of his prison home on St Helena until he finally persuaded the British Governor to sponsor an upgrade to Longwood House, which was also a far cry from the comforts and splendour of his beloved former residence, Fontainebleau Palace. All the while he might have been wondering if his Arc de Triomphe was finished yet. It wasn't. He died in 1821 waiting on modest renovations to his prison home to be finished.

Napoleon's final resting place at Les Invalides in Paris contains a purpose-built, gold-domed chapel holding his tomb. His captors may not have respected his wishes but in the end Napoleon had the last guffaw. He achieved his dying wish: to be buried on the banks of the Seine close to the people of France he loved, though not until 1940 as he was first buried on Saint Helena Island.

I'm sure beneath it all, those six long years on that remote island is where Napoleon finally had plenty of opportunity to feel the full impact of his choices and to reflect on many 'what ifs'. The apparently uninviting, rodent-infested, cold abode he found himself holed up in for his final days would have reminded him of the hardships of that catastrophic Russian winter. Where it all turned to custard and went horribly wrong.

Had Napoleon paused to understand the intensity of personal value magnified by the layers of his own character (dominant style preference, with a motivation that was individualistic and a strong ego) perhaps the story may have turned out differently. If only he'd been more adept at pausing to take stock or pondered advice from critical advisors for longer, he might have marvelled with his own eyes his wondrous Arc de Triomphe instead of being towed lifeless beneath it.

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His biggest regret may lie in his lack of skill in leveraging one of the strongest traits of his very own personal symbol and motif—the eagle. I like to think he might have stumbled on some enlightenment, thinking back to his aspirations when first glancing east. He was short sighted by only considering the possibility side of the equation. He misinterpreted the Russian psyche and wasn't willing to fathom the dire consequences of a decimated army. He only envisaged the possibility that the backyard Cossack farm mouse would surely be easy prey for his eagle.

History continually teaches consequences

There are many events and characters worthy of discussion as cautionary tales. By looking back into our collective past we may learn great lessons that reflect the critical importance of realising full consideration to both aspects of this specific dichotomy, possibilities and consequences: two peas in a pod in every daily choice.

So it's timely to now take a moment and expand a little on the man who helped turn the tide of that Great Depression we spoke of in the history of money. Franklin D Roosevelt (FDR) had a couple of things in common with Napoleon.

Like Napoleon, he was a man of far-reaching ambition. He had his sights set on a senior office from a young age.

Academics and historians alike often agree the single major setback in FDR's life, being crippled by polio in adulthood, potentially armed him with a fuller set of skills. He was forced, or learned, to sculpt the traits that are his enduring legacy: curious, resilient and armed with a healthy dose of temperance, calmness and empathy.

FDR leveraged the first of what was to become known as his 'fireside chats' via radio broadcast in his first presidential term, which began in 1933. The 15-minute broadcast and strategy settled hearts and minds amid the slump of the Great Depression.

During his fireside chats in World War II FDR encouraged people to buy world maps and have them at hand for each occasion. He'd then systematically walk listeners through simplified strategies and overviews of what was really happening in various locations of the global conflict. This highlights again the power of banking emotional value via instruments of storytelling and engaging people's senses. Invested, they would follow along visually and kinaesthetically to the calming auditory presidential commentary.

When asked and encouraged by aides to conduct these fireside chats daily, Roosevelt refused. He knew that in doing so they'd lose their potency, authenticity and power. He delivered about 35 in total during his three terms as president.

Damaging possibilities with propaganda

Compare this to Adolf Hitler, who engaged communication tactics, leveraging spin via his devious political machine, the Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, headed by Reich Minister Joseph Goebbels. The Nazi regime leveraged big lies deliberately: 'Große Lüge' – big lies – was a term used frequently by Hitler and his henchmen. They believed colossal mistruths would be seen as 'truth' because mass populations wouldn't believe anyone capable of such distortion or lies. Goebbels, a devil after Hitler's own black heart, insisted 'If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it'.

There's an interesting 'what if' we can ponder with FDR. Amid his curiosity, and against the advice of Fleet Admiral William Leahy, whom he deeply trusted, he sanctioned the Manhattan Project. This ultimately led to the creation of the atomic bomb.

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When Roosevelt died on 12 April 1945 they hadn't quite cracked the weapon design.

Harry Truman, FDR's elected vice president, consequently ascended to office by default, the same way Roosevelt had. Thereafter followed a series of consequences.

On 16 July 1945, the outputs of the Manhattan Project were tested in a device known as Trinity, against the advice and protests of scientists.

Truman gave executive orders for the *Enola Gay* and *Bockscar* bombers to conduct unique missions. The consequences of this action are summarised in this history of simple facts:

- Hiroshima: 6 August 1945, 8.14 am. It's a normal, sunny day. *Enola Gay* releases a bomb named 'Little Boy'.
- Hiroshima: 6 August 1945, 8.15 am. Hiroshima is obliterated after the first atomic bomb was dropped. An estimated 70000 people die within less than a single second. Some, completely incinerated, are vaporised so quickly their actual shadows are eerily preserved etched on concrete.
- Nagasaki: 9 August 1945, 11:01 am. An equally clear day. *Bockscar* releases 'Fat Man'.
- Nagasaki: 9 August 1945, 11:02 am. Nagasaki suffers a similar fate, also being annihilated in less than a minute, with a death toll of 80000. After Nagasaki, the world started to realise it was dealing with a completely new weapon, with horror stories of immediate after-effects emerging from survivors, such as melted skin and bleeding from all orifices, and others dying slowly of related illnesses.

Truman had been inflexible: he had the bomb and clearly demonstrated his willingness to use it.

What possibilities or consequences were the Japanese thinking about when they surrendered after the second bomb drop, I wonder?

And, even more pertinently, what if Roosevelt hadn't died? Or what if he'd been more transparent with his intentions? Would we have seen atomic actions and consequences?

The lie we're tempted to believe so often is that bombs in World War II were a necessary consequence to save lives. But only a few people had a prime seat to give perspective as to whether such consequences were a necessary evil. A single sentence documented in the pilot's log of the *Enola Gay*, written by co-pilot Robert Lewis, suggests not: *I honestly have the feeling of groping for words to explain this or I might say My God, what have we done?*

Advancement in weaponry or the personal values and morals of leaders in charge of such war machines continually teaches us unfathomable consequences.

The difference between the battles of the Napoleonic era and World War I was huge. At the Battle of Verdun, fought between France and Prussia over the course of a few days, combined casualties were estimated around 11 000. At the Battle of Verdun fought during World War I between France and Germany over the course of 303 days, combined casualties were estimated at around 750 000.

The step up from World War I to World War II was mammoth again. It's estimated that the total global casualties of World War II was roughly 3 per cent of the total global population.

We may find such history interesting while at the same time thinking 'What can we do to avoid a repeat of this?'

We don't have to be propagandists. The lies we tell, big or small, have consequences on the decisions and actions of others. When we engage in political spin, professionally or personally, or remain truly unbending in any position, there are consequences. When we operate with our egos untethered it may have dire consequences for others.

The fight-or-flight mechanism that makes us run from difficult conversations, or situations of an uncomfortable nature, heads

Add Value

in the sand, doesn't mean the drama or consequences disappear. Doing nothing often has the most severe consequences.

I've deliberately added a little more depth to these historical examples because often the depth is what allows us to feel the consequences. All too frequently we skim the details that allow us to feel the impact.

It's not uncommon to hear people reference hindsight. These tendencies to look backwards with feelings, even if only slight, are frequently described in degrees of regret, remorse or sorrow. Perhaps a lack of patience or empathy, hasty decisions or plain wrongdoing led to disappointing realisations such as:

- 'That's easy to say in hindsight.'
- 'I can see it now looking back.'
- 'I wish I knew back then what I know now.'

Hindsight is defined as wisdom after an event has developed or unfolded.

Wisdom is defined as the quality of experience, knowledge and good judgement, together with the power of using them.

Foresight is defined as an ability to predict what will happen or may be needed in the future.

So hindsight may be foresight when you learn to hit pause on habitual reactions (prior life experiences) and apply wisdom, playing it out to feel longer term possibilities and consequences before they unfold.

The danger looms when we become blind and forget that for every choice we make there is a possibility and a consequence. It's a bona fide scientific fact. Sir Isaac Newton's third law summed it up more than 100 years before Napoleon was born: 'For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction'.

Which is why Napoleon's experiences have also become a synonym for consequences—if you're not careful you too will come face to face with your very own Waterloo.

So, crawling slowly along Avenue Kléber, it's do or die. Which music track to hit <play> on? All this distracted thinking has killed the 1 minute and 45 second lead-in time I had for *Mountain King*. We're going with Pulp Fiction's *Misirlou!*

3. Self–Others

Self-care and selfishness aren't the same thing.

Self-care is putting on your own oxygen mask first, then helping others. Selfishness is putting on your own oxygen mask, then watching others. In extreme cases, it's putting on your own mask, then looking for opportunistic ways to further benefit yourself. Perhaps hoarding masks as spares or capitalising as others struggle.

Balanced Buddhist mantras say, 'May I be at peace. May I be joyful. May I be healthy. May I be happy'.

Or heed the words of American professor Joseph Campbell: 'Follow your bliss!' (Provided that bliss is finding the air of life through your own oxygen mask without impeding the rights of others.)

It's hard to offer service when you're below optimal or if essential elements in life's pyramid of needs are wrecked.

One of my favourite authors, Bryce Courtenay, shared nugats of wisdom relative for both sides of this third dichotomy in his illustrated coffee table book *A Recipe for Dreaming*.

The helping hands you ... need in life are located at the end of your arms. Put yourself into your own hands. Everybody has two. You can use them to get a hand out, sit on them and do nothing, or ...use them to get a serious grip on yourself.

For every problem there is a solution. All possibilities pursued simultaneously create consequences. The same is true with regard to self-care working in harmonious synergy with consideration

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of others. ('Self' relates to us and our inner circle. 'Others' relates to the broader community.)

In the documentary *Happy*, Sonja Lyubomirsky (PhD) suggests that three primary pillars impact our overall feeling of inner contentment and happiness:

- 50 per cent is attributed to a *set point range*, based on our personal genetic makeup
- 10 per cent is attributed to *circumstances*: income, social status, demographics, age
- 40 per cent is attributed to *intentional activities*—intentional things we do regularly.

Our circumstances needn't remain static. There are countless real-world Aladdins turning rags into riches who then pass the benefit onto others. Science doesn't suggest all adversity is bad. There can be no joy without knowing a little pain. Some of us are more optimistic: overestimating what might be achieved, especially in a short period of time, or having a preference for daydreaming. Others are perhaps more pessimistic: they may underestimate what could be achieved when we face challenges or tight timeframes. We all have a scaffolding of inner strength made sturdier with external encouragement. We find our way back to whatever that unique generic point may be.

In Bryce Courtenay's *Recipe for Dreaming* he describes how we can face and overcome personal challenges by taking the path less trodden. Doing so invariably means we may face the potential of feeling beaten down, pulled apart and terribly lost. And that's okay because once faced, any challenge becomes what he correctly calls 'experience'. Life experiences are fantastic when, as the 'meaning making machine' you now know you are, you take all of it on board as valuable lessons. What once seemed a rough track becomes a familiar and comfortable, less daunting one. And as an extra benefit the worst things we imagine when taking an unknown road frequently don't unravel or happen.

Realising we can address the combined 60 per cent of generic set point and circumstantial factors, we're left with a sizeable 40 per cent chunk inherent in self-worth through intentional activities. We're generally social creatures with a tendency to compete and collaborate, although when push comes to shove, as the documentary *Happy* shares, more frequently we lean in to cooperate.

Cooperation and collaboration are the simplest forms of philanthropy. The Latin and Greek origins of 'philanthropy' translate literally as meaning 'love of mankind' or 'love of humanity'.

Philanthropy was once primarily associated with the super rich. Wealthy patrons, having experienced or seen the plight of others, might bequeath fortunes, inheritances, scholarships, properties or other resources for the purpose of improving their health and lot. Many organisations born from this love of mankind endure.

Back in 1859 the last battle under the banners and personal command of the monarchs they represented was fought. Napoleon III (Bonaparte's nephew) fought the Sardinian forces under command of the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I. The Battle of Solferino was an especially bloody one. There were reports of injured soldiers being turned into fatalities, executed by shootings or bayoneted to death.

A Swiss businessman, Henry Dunant, happened to be in the area and witnessed the aftermath of over 20000 soldiers left wounded or dead. With his innate Swiss precision, he got to organising local civilian communities to provide appropriate care, with Dunant financing the resources required. He wrote about these experiences in *A Memory of Solferino*.

His memoirs incubated an idea of a neutral body dedicated to providing volunteer relief for all those wounded in battle, regardless of whose banner they represented. In 1863, a small, five-person committee, including Dunant, met for the first time,

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then began turning ideas into action. Dunant ultimately felt he had to resign from his position as a result of bankruptcy and questionable practices. However, the organisation endured.

Decades later, after the dust had settled, Dunant's rightful place as a chief instigator of the respectable humanitarian organisation was recognised and restored. He was honoured with the first ever Nobel Peace Prize. That early committee of five is now global and its logo is among the most distinctive humanitarian bodies on the planet: the International Red Cross.

Planting the seed of philanthropy

Thinking of an example of philanthropy a little closer to home leads me to Andrew Carnegie. The Scottish-American steel magnate was born in Dunfermline, albeit close to 150 years before I moved there as a punchbag. Carnegie spent the better part of his first 65 years amassing his fortune, although always with an eye looking to redirect surplus wealth with benevolence. He's even been quoted as saying 'the man who dies thus rich dies disgraced!' He spent the greater part of his last 20 years redirecting energy and resources to causes aligned with his own values, including the advancement of science and education. There are multiple institutions and trusts that continue to carry his name. It's estimated he founded over 3000 libraries scattered primarily across English-speaking countries including his native Dunfermline. You may have visited one of the many Carnegie Halls around the world to experience musicians or comedians.

More recently, as we already touched on in chapter 2 (Tangible value) Bill and Melinda Gates have leveraged tangible value to compound the service value they provide. The founder of Microsoft turned global philanthropist and humanitarian, Bill, and his wife Melinda, created one of the world's largest private charitable organisations. Launched in 2000, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation holds over \$50 billion in assets. Like Carnegie,

they focus on global issues aligned with their own concerns and values: health and the elimination of poverty. One of the foundation's most valuable assets must surely be the energy and minds of its founders. The docuseries *Inside Bill's Brain*, which highlights the problem-solving skills of geeks, is a great benefit to the world. It's possibly a reason why Warren Buffet, another legendary magnate with an eye on philanthropy, pledged a significant part of his own fortune to help the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation achieve their goals.

I also find Hamdi Ulukaya, founder of Chobani yoghurt, an inspiring figure. Back in 2005 he turned a former Kraft yard into a healthy Greek yoghurt production plant. Within five years the brand was a leader in the US market and has since expanded globally. A part of its mission since inception has been tithing a percentage of profits into the local communities where company employees live and work. The business also invests in and rewards its people with initiatives such as extended paid leave for new parents and allocation of employee shares, and it hires a significant number of legally resettled immigrants and refugees. Another common thread with Chobani, as with Carnegie, as with the Gates foundation, is the alignment to causes the brand and its leader are passionate about. You might expect the Chobani's feel-good factor to be about improving childhood nutrition through quality foods and total wellness.

There has been a significant shift in the perception blending tangible and service over the past few years. While the bottom line is always a consideration, it can't be at the expense of responsibilities or ethics. The acronym 'CSR' (Corporate/Community Social Responsibility) is now an essential key component to entice employees and customers to bond with brands, ultimately turning them into ambassadors or evangelists. In fact, many people in a consumer mindset describe this clearly. When asked to define value or what's valuable they lean towards products and services that are ethically sound even if more expensive. Adopting CSR (even personally) can be

Add Value

applied via various mechanisms, some traditional and some a little more contemporary:

- tithing, granting stipends or a regular nominated donation
- creation of sponsorships and trusts
- internal employee/department fundraising events
- fundraising matching
- automatic payroll contributions and deductions
- gratuities in the form of purposeful resources or goods
- community style grants
- product- and resource-based support programs
- gifting access to services and specialisations
- supporting local, grassroots communities and schemes
- creating key elements of local community operations
- providing education or health
- donation of property or access to work space
- access to extended influential networks and connections
- paid staff time for hands-on personal effort to support a cause
- the creation of a charity or .org from scratch.

The last couple of examples have perhaps been among the greatest shifts on the philanthropic landscape. Some businesses even allocate a regular amount of time each calendar year for their employees to spend time helping a cause of the employee's own choosing, thus aligned with their own personal value.

A hands-on approach towards philanthropy then is a clear example of where all five values of our Value Model collide: personal value, tangible value, service value, emotional value and relationship value (with the latter being the final value,

which we'll get to in the next chapter). We already experienced the power of personal effort engaging the senses. A hands-on approach says 'I care' more than a generous cheque arriving in the post alone.

CSR is among the most sizeable and sustainable ways total value is added to the world. Both corporate and government entities often have wider access to resources, recipients and reach. If they are pioneers, or brave enough, they can invest in better resources or make better choices available for their customers and consumers. Doing so means we are all playing our part in service value in consideration of others. They can also provide and offer the best considered long-term solutions or influence larger adoption through all-important continued education—hopefully shared through powerful stories requiring sensory submersion!

There are entire societies collaboratively experimenting with such concepts in mind. Denmark offers a high standard of living, free college, healthcare and a vast array of benefits for all. Taxes are high, given the funding must come from somewhere, yet so is the service value for the total community. Bhutan, a fledgling economy, prioritises its country's total value not just through traditional, tangible value metrics of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) or GNP (Gross National Product), it also considers and measures GNH: Gross National Happiness.

The path to fulfillment through collaboration is making sure you put your own oxygen mask on, then reach to assist others. Bryce Courtenay again alludes to this in *Recipe for Dreaming* by posing the self-reflective question: *What can we do to add to ourselves so we love ourselves more?* And the best way to answer that question is to do so without the limitations of being time poor or lacking any resources, intelligence or talent. To add value you must make yourself a top priority. By investing in yourself, by feeling good about yourself, you will double down on the reward! The additional self-respect, self-confidence and self-love you feel will radiate into the lives of all others. Everyone benefits more in the end.

Add Value

Philanthropy, perhaps once perceived as a mechanism reserved for the rich, is easily available at everyone's fingertips. Service value is a participation sport—it is being the best version of yourself in consideration of those possibilities and consequences for others.

4. The environment: to wreck or nurture?

Fifty years ago, 530 million global citizens shared in one of the greatest moments of human achievement as Neil Armstrong placed his foot on the moon. There were two perspectives at the time.

One was an enlivened belief that this event would change humanity forever, opening a future of innovation and excitement, and inspiring generations that they can do anything. Many thought the symbolic nature of this advancement into the heavens—a place we look when searching for answers to the most profound existential questions our life poses—would lead to a change in humankind forever.

The other—the dark side of the moon landing—is summed up best by Gil Scott-Heron in his poem *Whitey on the Moon*, in which he laments that while America is investing all this money into sending a (white) man to space, people are living in abject poverty.

It's a fair point. Should such innovation be a priority given that much of humanity in the one place we all collectively call home has an existential reality including poverty or dire circumstances?

Qualified scientists would explain with far more depth and accuracy the breakthroughs we made as a result of the Apollo missions culminating in achieving the goal of man walking on the moon. The concept of miniaturisation, making things lighter and more compact, has infiltrated every aspect of our lives. Water

purification processes have been improved. Even equipment in emergencies, breathing masks and the like, for fire-fighting, have all been made more robust.

Flipping the coin once more, the dark side devil's advocate, there are innovations, perhaps welcomed at the time, that now come under much heat. Polymers (polythene, polyvinyls) and many non-biodegradable substances are headliners these days for all the wrong reasons.

Yet, since this incredible moment of global unity, what have we achieved as humankind? There has been an explosion in innovation and technology, with our world closer together than ever, yet a significant percentage of the planet still lives in poverty. Environmentally, we're choking our planet with pollutants, while manmade evolutions interfere with the natural ecosystems of our planet and threats hang over our heads.

As for the stars, we ceded interest in exploring, more intent in looking at how we can commercialise space. Al Gore spent years endeavouring to get a satellite (DSCOVER) into space with detection equipment aboard that would help provide real, factual data on global climate issues and warnings that could impact everyone—but George W Bush killed the idea.

Such has been our disinterest in exploration, it has now been more than 40 years since a human being last set foot on the moon. The Cassini space probe was one of the most successful space missions of all time, taking some 20 years to reach Saturn and unlock the secrets of the planet, yet most of us are unlikely to have even heard of it.

The early space race was steeped in a genuine wonder for adventure, with a touch of overzealous national pride. There's a renewed interest. Yet the modern-day space race seems more an invitation for the big money and big ego capitalists, with billionaires wanting to have the ultimate joy ride in the experience economy we find ourselves in.

Add Value

Elon Musk may state his reasoning for wishing to populate Mars as an escape option for humankind. I don't find that particularly inspiring. If we can't collectively sort priorities and get our act together here on Earth, surely we're only likely to repeat the same mistakes on Mars. Migration to the red planet simply spreads any current flaws or human viruses across the universe.

Some countries or corporates are leading the charge by eliminating, reducing or even completely banning unnecessary pollutants and waste such as single-use plastic bags. This is great because, let's be honest, some folks may agree that so much plastic strangling our oceans or used as stuffing for landfill isn't great—yet would they always refuse the item when offered one at the shops?

The travel and tourism industry, one I'm clearly passionate about, is identified as being accountable for as much as 8 per cent of our global carbon emissions impact. Within that, aviation specifically accounts for 2 per cent. Yet when consumers are asked to voluntarily 'neutralise' their footprint, how many people opt in? One per cent. Some airlines perform far greater in this regard and, like companies across all industries, innovate efforts to make required changes. Waste-free flights from Qantas. Jetstar is encouraging passengers to bring their own headphones to reduce the 2.4 million sets of non-recyclable ones handed out in 2018. Air New Zealand announced in 2018 its intention to strip an array of single-use plastic items from its manifests, totalling more than 24 million items per year. This equated to over 50 million operational items in 2019!

Plastic bags, carbon footprints or any one of a multitude of other wasteful woes—take your pick! Corporate- and community-funded or driven initiatives have the ability and power to simplify consumer choices by making the best options available at affordable prices and simultaneously through robust programs of education and training.

If you want some inspiration for a broader list of where and how the world, our collective home, requires a helping hand with service value, look no further than the United Nations' (UN) 'Sustainable Development Goals'. The list of 17 aspirational themes, set for 2030, adopted by UN member states in 2015 is a great reference point. More than half of these address direct human impact on our shared environment—for example:

- clean water and sanitation
- affordable and clean energy
- industry innovation and infrastructure
- sustainable cities and communities
- responsible consumption and production
- climate action
- life below water.

One of these partners, Bill Gates, using his problem-solving mind, shared the surprising initiatives he's backing in his TED Talk, 'Innovating to zero!' They include an unexpected twist on repurposing nuclear waste in the space of affordable and clean global energy. Well worth a watch.

When we talk about the environment we don't need to be pro climate change to realise our choices have consequences. You'd be gutted if someone came around to your home and dumped all their trash. You'd also be out for blood if they hurt anyone or killed your family pet.

When we consider our environment, we can't ignore the threats to the fantastic animals and beasts we share the planet with. Many are so much smarter than us, like those cute baby elephants and dolphins. You'll find lists of creatures whose extinction has been caused by direct human influence: the flightless dodo, the passenger pigeon, the Western black rhinoceros and the thylacine (the latter being the Tasmanian

Add Value

tiger; Benjamin, suspected of being the last one in existence, died in captivity in 1936).

In the long history of humanity, over thousands of generations, there's an undeniable sequence. Wherever there's human evolution, settling new territories or expansion through economy and industry, extinctions seem to happen or ecosystems suffer. It's surely time to create a new pattern.

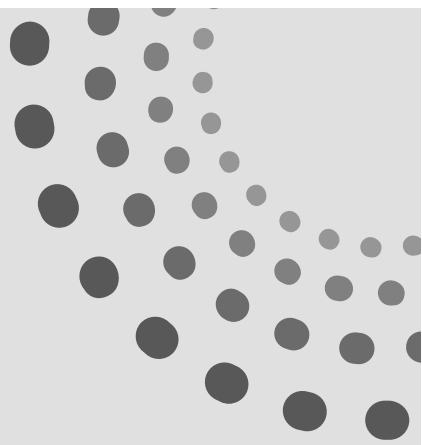
When I think about space, the space race or the legacy of all scientific advances, such as the moon landing, I find myself thinking it's the bit in the middle that's truly fascinating. By that I mean the inner space: the curiosity, vision and innovative advancement that opened the doorway to the heavens. And our ability to ask ourselves a Shakespearean-style question to keep ourselves in check: 'to wreck or not to wreck?' Sure, not everything that pours out from our innovations is perfect but we, as a species, have the potential to retain the best breakthroughs amid a continual evolution while putting the less desired to rest, as if lost in space, on permanent ice—if we've got any ice left to put them on, that is.

I think if there's a legacy we could take from the moon landing 50 years on, it's this quote from Neil Armstrong: 'I believe every human has a finite number of heartbeats. I don't intend to waste any of mine'.

That sounds like great advice from a great member of humanity and one of only 12 people to date who walked on the moon with a chance to glance back some 384000 kilometres to the pale blue dot of our collective home.

Adding service value without waste, aligned with this fourth dichotomy, is knowing which technologies, discoveries, breakthroughs or knowledge *not* to adopt as much as which to use. The disruptions packaged as extinction rebellions also don't apply!

Inner-space service value is thinking globally even when acting locally. One community's waste is every country's worry. For far too long too many people, including corporations, have treated the planet and its resources like a no-holds-barred, endless-supply profit party. If we keep treating our environment in this reckless manner, then—a little like the GFC greed mentality—it's akin to saying 'last one to leave the planet on one of Elon's rockets gets to switch off the lights!'



Service value

Tools, tips and self-reflEQtion

Take some time to ponder your impact in adding service value. For every choice and action taken (even at an individual level) with long-term solutions there is an equal reaction (somewhere in the world) playing out the possibilities and consequences for others, the environment and ourselves. Who knows, some momentum might impact a critical mass.

You may ignite a spark in your children to believe that anything is possible, that all they need is belief: a no-quit attitude combined with a dose of bravery to resolve, not merely complain about, inner-space global issues. If our future generations face the world radiating service value, imagine what could be achieved! (Although maybe no more extinction rebellions please.)

Complaining about things doesn't change them; consciously thought-out action does. To quote anthropologist Margaret Mead, 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has'.

Here are some ideas. And don't forget to ponder other ideas—no doubt there are plenty—from situations playing out in your own life.

Add Value

Process the problem differently

Catch the inner dialogues you're having. Where's your focus? Are you stuck on problem thinking? Analyse problems with the intent of understanding them, then 'flip the switch'. What are the purposeful, different questions you might ask?

Mastermind the problems

Who else can you ask for input in processing problems? Don't just rely on your friends—they will tell you what you want to hear. And make sure you ask people with credible input. Nobody is great at everything, so ask for quality input so you can get perspective on the root of problems in addition to quality solutions.

Love your job

Bryce Courtenay said, 'Superannuation is what we get paid for being bored for thirty years'. If that position, role or career is a countdown to superannuation, ticking essential boxes on the base steps of your needs pyramid, okay. But how can you find ways within the need to work to love what you do? Either love what you do or find a way to love elements of what you do. Our own happiness and the quality of the service we provide others significantly shift with this mindset alone.

Make amends

It's possible that parts of our past play on our minds. Yes, that one! Acknowledge it or, if possible, clean up your own mess. If you accidentally ran over someone, you would likely do your best to get them medical help rather than hit and run! The same is true in so many other, non-physical, situations. Taking responsibility and accountability frees you up.

Hit pause before you leap to decide

As a result of all those layers of human behaviour and personal value we may have a tendency to do one of two things: leap before we look or make choices based on preconceived ideas. Ponder a little longer the ongoing possibilities and consequences that may pan out.

Try walking in my shoes

Now imagine yourself in the shoes of the other party/parties impacted by your choices. What might have happened in their past to make them act or react to situations the way they do? How can you leave an indelible positive watermark rather than add an ugly stain?

Intentional activities for self and others

Find a hobby or participate in several with the only intention being that of finding your own bliss. What are some activities you've always wanted to try but have put off? Perhaps include them in the list. Then do the same to add to the joy of others.

Fingertip philanthropy: personal and professional

Identify causes you're passionate about or aligned with. How can you get involved? It may be offering some form of monetary or resource contribution, periodically volunteering, helping spread the word, or even just being a little more hands-on. Do the same with your own business or the business you work for.

Plant a tree, or adopt a pet

One of my mentors, Paolo Fortini—who has a chapter dedicated to him in my first book—gave me advice that there are three

Add Value

important things to do in a lifetime. One is to plant a tree. Trees are considered part of the functional lungs to our planet. So plant one, plant some or plant many. In this instance, planting a tree may be any initiative where environmental impacts are considered. It could be looking at your own footprint and waste, then finding ways to reduce them. It may also be to proactively cultivate a cause. And if you're going to get a pet, think about adopting a rescue!