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Discover 'The Magic of Thinking Big'

## Revisiting a Classic

### 'THE MAGIC OF THINKING BIG'

In this issue we're diving into an old classic that helped define the modern personal development genre and has helped millions of readers improve their lives. "The Magic of Thinking Big" flew off shelves when it was first published in 1959, propelling author David J. Schwartz from university professor to foremost authority on motivation. But does his seminal work still hold true 60 years later? Is there still magic in letting yourself think big in the 21st century?

In a word, yes. The lessons in "Thinking Big" are broad, but their wide applicability is also what makes them timeless. While today, many authors and motivational coaches — from "influencer"

culture to "growth hacking" — focus on whatever is new and shiny, Schwartz focuses on the fundamentals.

This can make the opening chapters in "Thinking Big" feel excessively familiar to those who have read other personal development books. The power of positivity and self-confidence may have been groundbreaking ideas back when Eisenhower was president, but today they're a given. While this may make some of Schwartz's ideas feel old hat to modern audiences, the essence of what he wrote in 1959 still rings true today.

In fact, one could argue that several core concepts of this decades-old work are even more applicable today. A

running theme in Schwartz's book is the incomparable benefit of treating people like people. While many personal and business dealings hinge on the power of a handshake, there's something refreshing about the common human decency of Schwartz's outlook. So many motivational works today focus solely on personal reflection — "Thinking Big" reminds us that there is great power in simply being good to other people.

Perhaps the largest takeaway today's readers can find here is to take on more and think bigger. "Thinking Big" is replete with real-world success stories of people doing precisely that, from students collaborating to solve supposedly impossible problems to wounded paratroopers making their way across the mountains of Burma toward safety. Whether you're dusting off an old copy or picking it up for the first time, this classic is still worth a read in 2019.



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## BUILDING AIR QUALITY For Building Owners and Facility Managers

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# Secret Agent IAQ Man

## THE PROBLEM WITH HIDDEN IAQ PROBLEMS

There are two kinds of calls I can get when a client hires me to investigate indoor air quality complaints in their building.

I estimated that 99 percent of the time when I get a call from a building owner or property manager, they ask me to come investigate the building, run the tests, and talk to the people who have been complaining. Their goal is to address any possible problems quickly, and they want the building occupants to know they take complaints seriously. This is what I call the "best approach."

Then there's the odd 1 percent of clients who want me to become James Bond — but without revealing my identity to every super villain or damsel in distress.

Recently, a facility manager of a large building contacted me about doing some testing. There had been some complaints from one of their department supervisors, and they wanted to tackle the problem quickly. However, he asked me to come in on Saturday, or after hours during the week, when the building was empty. They didn't want any of the occupants to know they were having the IAQ tested.

Now, I can come into a building after hours, no problem, but if I come in on a Saturday, then the building won't have been occupied for at least 12 hours. Having people in a space affects the general IAQ. If people are complaining about IAQ when there are people in the space, I should be testing when people are around. When I told the facility manager this, he went back to discuss it with his boss.

Ultimately, they decided to have me come out on a Friday afternoon, while the building was still occupied, but I could not talk to the woman who'd complained. She was worried that if the people in her department learned she was complaining, they'd have a psychosocial problem on their hands. They didn't want to risk the staff thinking they don't feel good because their supervisors aren't feeling good.

“... when clients decide they have to keep an investigation under wraps, I end up going into the job with blinders on.”

This isn't the ideal scenario for investigating a complaint, but I'm not in the habit of turning down work and leaving clients to go to someone else who might not do their best job. I went out to the building, conducted the tests, and wrote up the report. After delivering the report, the company asked me to make changes to the paperwork, removing the any specific details about the problem, including the gender of the person who had complained and name of the person whose office I tested. At this point, you would have thought I was working for the CIA, with all the secrecy they wanted.

There are understandable reasons as to why building owners or property managers wouldn't want to advertise that they've brought in someone to test the IAQ of a building, especially if there's only been on person complaining. They're afraid people might assume there's something unsafe about the building. However, when clients decide they have to keep an investigation under wraps, I end up going into the job with blinders on.

In this situation, I only got secondhand knowledge about what this woman was experiencing. Without being able to ask for finer details, like what time of day she was experiencing the problem, and I could talk about spatial patterns. I had no idea if the problem was just in her office or if the adjoining offices were also having problems. Fortunately, based on the information I did have, the problem sounded like something we already tested for. Even with limited information, I was still able to go in and get the job done. That said, it would have been a lot more thorough had I been able to get all the information I needed.

There are a lot of merits to being open and upfront when a complaint occurs versus trying to hide it. For one, occupants are usually much happier to know the building owner and manager will take complaints and safety seriously by seeking professional help. Additionally, when there's a possible problem in your building, you want all the information you can get to make sure it's solved right.

*Travis West*



## Is Transparent Separation Right for Your Company?

Getting fired is a horrible experience. Losing a job is hard on an employee, and terminating an employee can create a whole mess of grief for a company. In a 2018 article for Harvard Business Review, Investopedia CEO David Siegel laid out his strategy to avoid the troubles of termination by offering a more considerate approach to firing: transparent separation.

In a transparent separation, when underperforming employees are informed that their tenure with the company is coming to an end, they are given a time frame to look for a new job before their last day. Employees are asked to keep the arrangement confidential and are expected to maintain job performance. Siegel states that employees who abuse the goodwill of transparent separation should be let go immediately.

Transparent separation is a wild departure from the traditional termination playbook, but Siegel insists that the strategy offers some incredible benefits, such as the following:

- Departing employees avoid the struggle of trying to find a new job while unemployed.
- There's reduced legal risk that the company might be sued by an angry employee.
- Managers are not cast in an adversarial role for abrupt firings.
- The company has time to find a suitable replacement, resulting in a smoother transition.
- Remaining employees feel more comfortable when they don't have to worry about "disappearing" overnight.

Even with all these positives, Siegel notes that transparent separation may not be the best course of action for every employee termination. For example, if the soon-to-be-ex-employee is a manager whose toxic behavior is harming the work environment, they need to be shown the door immediately. Siegel claims that in two-thirds of cases, transparent separations offered the best outcome both for the company and the former employee.

There are potential drawbacks to transparent separation. Opponents to this strategy note the potential damage a disgruntled employee can cause after being told they are losing their job. Some employees may even prefer to collect severance and leave so they can fully focus on the job search.

Is transparent solution the answer to all your termination woes? The jury's still out; there's no one-size-fits-all solution to any business problem. What works great for one company might not be best for another. But if you think the pros outweigh the cons, transparent separation might be worth considering the next time your company has to say goodbye.

# Feeling the Heat

## When Wildfires Threaten Indoor Air Quality

No, you're not imagining things. It really is getting hotter out there.

There's been an increase in the number of Texas wildfires over the last few years. Last year, there were over 900 wildfires in the state of Texas alone. Rising temperatures and droughts will likely only make these blazes worse. The biggest threats these fires pose is the loss of human life and immense property damage. However, even if you or your building are far enough away from the flames, wildfires can still cause lasting damage.

Soot and carbon contamination in the indoor air and on surfaces inside buildings are a real and often overlooked problem after wildfires burn through. This contamination can get inside buildings thanks to smoke, which can travel great distances very quickly. Smoke that gets caught in the high atmosphere can even travel thousands of miles before gravity pulls the particles back down. Last summer, smoke from the California wildfires reached New York City, over 3,000 miles away. Keep in mind that smoke can linger well after a fire is put out, which means smoke can get inside your building for days after the wildfire has been extinguished.

Due to the size of smoke and soot particles — which can be less than 2.5 picometers in diameter — simply closing the door and windows won't keep them out of your building. Many commercial buildings draw air from the outside, and the ultra-fine particles of smoke and soot are too small to be removed by standard air filters. Buildings with HEPA filters aren't automatically safe, either. Building occupants can bring in ash and soot particles on their clothing and through foot traffic.



When smoke particles enter an indoor environment, they can threaten the health of people in that environment. When breathed in, these particles can penetrate the lungs and may lead to coronary heart disease, asthma, bronchitis, or other respiratory illnesses. Soot exposure can also irritate a person's skin. Depending on the nature of the fire, it is possible that soot may also contain certain metals or chemicals that may pose a health risk.

Soot can also damage property if left unchecked. The fine particles can easily stain carpets, drapes, and other items throughout a building. Additionally, the sharp odor from smoke may permeate furniture and walls, lingering for years. These effects are not just aesthetically unpleasant; they can trigger health problems in building occupants down the road.

If your building has been exposed to smoke and soot, whether due to distant wildfires, a nearby residential fire, or a fire within your own building, it is crucial to respond appropriately. It's not enough to assign the janitorial crew to scrub black soot stains off the wall and call it a day. If you suspect your building may be suffering from soot and carbon contamination, contact a fire restoration company with experience in cleaning commercial buildings and perform follow-up tests on the IAQ to make sure the job was done right.

Texas wildfire season will soon reach its peak. Make sure your building is protected from all the damage those flames can do.

## HAVE A LAUGH WITH TRAVIS



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## Companies That Participate in April Fools' Day

### 3 Hilarious Pranks Played by Businesses

April Fools' Day might be the only appropriate time of year for you to prank your friends or coworkers with gags like dipping an onion in caramel and offering it as a candy apple or loosening the tops of the salt and pepper shakers. It's also the one day of the year when big companies get to join in the mischief as well. Check out these company-wide April Fools' jokes that left millions of people scratching their heads.

#### Netflix's PSA

In 2015, everyone's favorite online streaming company issued a PSA that warned binge-watchers all over the world of the social, physical, and psychological dangers of watching too much TV. In fact, if viewers watched more than two consecutive episodes of a show on April 1, they were greeted with a PSA from popular actors, like Michael Kelly from "House of Cards" or Taylor Schilling from "Orange Is the New Black." Some stars even told Netflix users to "Turn off the TV and take a shower. You stink!"

#### Burger King's Chocolate Whopper

Just last year, Burger King fooled hungry customers by creating the Chocolate Whopper. The imaginary fast-food treat is made with chocolate cake buns, a chocolate "beef" patty, raspberry syrup as the ketchup, rings of white chocolate as the onions, milk chocolate as the lettuce, vanilla frosting as mayo, and candied blood oranges as the tomatoes. This prank was quite a creative feat of Burger King staff, and merely watching the advertisement spiked glucose levels everywhere.

#### eHarmony's 'FURever Love' Dating Service for Dogs

Perhaps the most wholesome prank that's ever been peddled to the masses was the launching of eHarmony's FURever Love: Canine Compatibility Companion Service. The dating website claimed that based on the algorithms they use for creating compatible human relationships, they built this service to "create robust profiles for dogs based on key dimensions of their personality." The biographies they created for the pups' profiles included canine mate preferences, like "Looking for a tug-o-war partner," "Must love squirrels," and "It's been ruff finding a quality stud to go on walks with."

While these April Fools' Day jokes were all made in jest, the pranks certainly kept audiences guessing long after April 1 had passed, and it's not hard to see why.

