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About the Author

Maxwell Vaughan taught children at a school during the day and mature-age students during evening classes.

As well as teaching, Maxwell helped many of them to improve their problem solving ability and develop ideas.

He said," This was an interest of mine and the students appreciated it."

"I found the children were very open-minded and willing to share ideas. But, that openness often reduced as they went through more years in the school system."

"Most of the adults had become focused on just getting through each day's problems and challenges and following the processes which they were taught."

"But, I helped them get in touch with their natural ability and rebuild their enthusiasm for developing their own ideas and exploring other people's."

"I worked for various companies in different fields and was exposed to a lot of different methods for doing things.

"This book will help you make better use of the ideas you have, get more of them and promote them to other people."

"I'll also help you learn some simple ways to recognize those ideas with the most potential and working out which have little real hope of success."

I will show you are really creative in some areas and how you can use that natural ability instead of continuing to limiting your potential.

When you give yourself permission to try something new, you get opportunities to grow, enjoy new experiences and help other people to develop and use their ideas as well.

"Everybody can find easier and quicker ways to develop and use their natural creative power, even if they don't think they really have any! It's useful for cooks, sales-people, fishermen and not just people like artists and writers who earn their living in creative ways. "

Introduction.

Ideas are everywhere.



This book will help you to find and develop more and better ideas.

If you have kids, you can encourage them to enjoy their time at school more by sharing the tips and methods which you get from "Your Better Ideas Guide".

You may think you are not creative.

But, whatever your background and your goals, reading and using the ideas and methods I share with you will have you adding creativity and enjoyment to every aspect of your life through all your years to come.

You have much more knowledge than you probably give yourself credit for. Almost everything you ever learned is still stored in that spongy mass between your ears. Your subconscious can recall it at times when it is significant.

Unfortunately, many of us lack the confidence to try recalling much of that information. When you have tried some of the tips here, you will be better prepared to discover and use the power within your own mind.

And, using the information here will help you to improve your ability to store and recall important and useful information you have learned in your past, even those readers who cannot find their car keys on some mornings.



You have all the creative powers which you used as a child to learn your way around your part of our World. They may have become cobwebbed through lack of use but most of us can still access them with minimum effort.

And, you can improve them when you start to use them regularly as I will show you in "Your Better Ideas Guide".

You don't need any special equipment for the suggestions I share except that which you carry between your ears and some way of recording your thoughts and progress!

Of course, it's well-known that not all ideas are valuable. My Dad used to say, "Ideas are worth about \$2 a bucketful unless you use them."

Of course, you've got to use them.

The other important fact is that there's rarely a new idea discovered.

Almost every advance we humans make is the result of sorting and combining "old" ideas in a way that is significantly different to what has been done before.

All this will be easier to understand and use in your own life when we get into the meat.

That starts on the next page!

Myths about Ideas.

Let's clear away a few myths about creativity and idea generation.

Some people can think of great ideas, but I can't!

This is a common belief. But, I have not met anyone that cannot come up with some great ideas when there is a need.

They may not have had any yet which will compare with Einstein's Theory of Relativity but that breakthrough was a result of years of study and thought related to the subject.

My goal with this book is that you will be on your way to improve your ideas and the use you make of them.

The Best Ideas come when we're under pressure!

When you are getting close to a deadline, your brain is less able to connect with the problem. The various systems of successful idea generation we explore in this book all need time to develop the basic ideas and then let them incubate before they can show their full worth.

So, cramming some study into the day before a major exam is not a good way to demonstrate your real ability. Another effect of this common mistake is that your effectiveness will continue to be lower than usual for a couple of days after the deadline, because of the stress which you put on yourself.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is not a myth but it is not always an effective way of getting great ideas. I'll give this its own section later in the book so that you can avoid the traps when you set up a brainstorming session.

You will also recognize the problems when you see them and still get good results.

How Your Health affects Your Creativity

While you are finding new ways to improve your home, business or even your community, the mental exercise gives other valuable benefits which are confirmed by lots of research.

These methods encourage your brain to release dopamine which makes you feel better.

But, that is temporary.

It is important that you always keep your health in mind or you will not be able to produce your best ideas or give the best expression to them.

Sleep: Most adults need about eight hours sleep each night.

Although many people think they can get along with less, they are building up a sleep debt which will catch up with them later on.

It is also very important to prepare your body and mind for sleep. If you read or watch TV after you are in bed, your mind stays active, trying to absorb the information or deal with the effects of what you have been watching or reading.

That may interfere with the ability of your subconscious to process the important material which you learned earlier in the day.

Let your mind and body relax. Make sure that you don't have much to eat or drink just before you try to sleep.

If your sleep is interrupted, your brain might not be able to store information properly and some of the important restorative functions may not be completed.

You also need to get sufficient exercise. That should be at least fifteen minutes a day. Don't think that you can make up for any lack by extra effort in weekly gym sessions or at the weekend.

Your body can only maintain and build its resources if you give it regular exercise.

Coffee and tea have their fans but you will find that the most health-friendly



liquid you can take is **clean water**.

In developed countries, we undervalue this potent drink.

Lack of hydration causes severe problems to the human body and the first organ to be affected is usually our brain!

Multitasking.

Some people have had success using a form of multi-tasking when faced with several problems which need to be resolved at the same time.

I believe that multitasking is not as useful as it is thought.

But, there is some support in the research I have seen for using it in noncritical situations by people that have considerable knowledge of the area.

For most people, the problem with multitasking is that we think we are handling the tasks at the same time, but our minds are actually handling each one separately and switching between them at a high rate.

This involves some down-time when each switch occurs. When the switch occurs, we need a measurable amount of time to recall the details of the next problem and then there is a small delay while we "get up to speed" on it. These delays are small but reduce the effectiveness of our efforts on all of the problems which we have under consideration at that time.

This becomes significant when the problems have a high importance and we are under severe pressure. The best advice at thse times is to give each problem our full attention separately and progress it to a conclusion.

The other tip is to try to involve someone else so that you not only have their reasoning and knowledge, you have their emotional support.

When to Use Multitasking.

I don't use multitasking for dealing with very important challenges.

But, I know people that use a form of it when faced with a test of their knowledge, like an examination.

They say that, if the facts they need to answer a particular question do not surface from their subconscious in a short time, they focus on the next question. They know that the subconscious will still devote some part of its power to locating the information needed for the earlier topic.

Their experience is that this division of labor gives them good results most of

the time.

You might want to try it if you feel stressed during that process, you can take a few minutes to relax and then start focusing on each question individually for length of time.

It is probable that this works better for some people than others.

Picture Prompts

One way to improve the processing of information and problems which you encounter is to use a variety of different inputs.

Most people can process visual images (pictures) much faster than they will usually be able to process text.

Words have multiple meanings which may also be affected by the conrtext (where and when it was said and who actually said it.

But, an orange, for instance, is just an orange.

That's how most of us learned to associate the name of each object to it, from books with pictures alongside the name, or by being told the name when we saw that item.

A picture of my friend Erica throwing a ball is absorbed faster than 250 words describing her, the ball and how she throws it.

When you strike a problem, do you write out your information or do you condense much of that data into diagrams?

If you usually stick to filling pages with text, you would almost certainly speed up the processing of your information using pictures.

They don't need ti be well-drawn, just concentrate on getting the idea across.

Avoid too much detail. Stan Freberg, a American advertising man, used radio to create mind pictures which stuck in listeners' minds long afterward

Later in the book, I will give you some basic information about making and using Mindmaps, which are very useful for organizing and getting a clearer understanding of information on almost any subject.





Even if you are already able to work out a reasonable solution to most of the challenges which confront you each day, you will gain a measurable advantage from using my suggestions to increase the number of ideas you work out for any problem.

If you usually stop with the first or second idea that seems to fit, it saves you some time but you limit the quality as well as the number of ideas you get to consider.

That choice will become a habit over time.

And, your mental processes are not exercised very much. They need to be stretched just like your physical muscles.

How to Get More GOOD Ideas

This is much easier than you may realize.

You just need to increase the amount of information you get and, at the same time, ensure that it is quality you are feeding into your brain.

The material should include some which is relevant to your major business and social interests so that you keep up to date.

But, you will find it worthwhile to give some attention to other topics as well, even though they may seem of little direct use to you.

One example is the development of Gutenberg's first printing press. The idea was developed from two items which had little to do with printing.

There was a lot of creativity displayed in that development.

Your ideas don't all have to be great breakthroughs.

They just have to fill a current, important need!

Mindmaps

Mindmaps are very useful for organizing and getting a clearer understanding of information on almost any subject.

Mindmaps start with the central topic written or represented by a picture in the center of a page or computer screen.

Then, you arrange the major factors which relate to that central item in their own boxes around the central one.

Now, you develop each of those subtopics, one at a time, by adding relevant items to boxes around them.

The mindmap allows you to see how each item relates to each of the others and decie which are the most significant.

When you have set out the various parts, start to look for relationships between the various areas.

This is when you will start to develop new ideas which can improve your understanding and use of the material.

Mindmaps are heavily used in advertising and many business areas.

But, the basic method is so easy to use that even young children can use them in their first years of schooling.

You can add pictures, colors and different styles for each set of boxes which relate to each other so that everyone can grasp and develop the relationships.

Using a large sheet of paper to create your mindmap makes it easy for



everybody to see and encourages more contributions to its development.

When you make your mindmap on your computer, the possibilities become much greater.

Mindmap programs are available for all

current types of computers and many good programs cost very little or are even free.

On a computer, you can copy a particular section of the map and either move it or duplicate it somewhere else on the diagram.

If you are using the mindmap to develop the outline for a book or report, some of the programs will produce an outline from your map which can be dropped straight into your word processing program.

Of course, you can also send a copy of your map to colleagues and clients for their input and use.

Free MindMap Software

The programs listed here are free to use.

They also have good feedback from people I know that have used them

But, please understand that some will not suit your particular needs, however well they have worked for other people.

Also, I cannot offer any support for any of the programs or guarantee of suitability or even safety. Scan everything with your up-to-date security software.

FreeMind

http://freemind.sourceforge.net/

From their website: "FreeMind is a premier free mind-mapping software written in Java. The recent development has hopefully turned it into high productivity tool. We are proud that the operation and navigation of FreeMind is faster than that of MindManager because of one-click "fold / unfold" and "follow link" operations."

XMind

http://www.xmind.net/

From their site: "The Most Popular Mind Mapping Tool

Millions of people use XMind to clarify thinking, manage complex information, run brainstorming and get work organized."

Where do Ideas Come From?

The best ideas come from a need to improve some part of your life or deal with a problem.

It's important to have a good knowledge of what methods are currently in use in the field you are studying.

You need that background knowledge so that you can understand the needs of the people involved in that area and so you don't waste time on ideas which are not likely to improve their situation.

But, the main reason for knowing what is being done is that most new developments come from improving old ideas.

If there are deficiencies of current equipment, people will pay for something which fills those gaps.



How do you find ways to improve current practises? Talk to the people who do them.

That sounds fairly easy and it can be.

But, you need to have an understanding of the special

needs and also the special terms which they use.

Don't try to find completely original ideas – use what they are comfortable with as a springboard for your new developments and it will be easier to get it tried when you have it ready.

The "It Works Alright" Trap.

Why don't the people doing this work develop these better ways themselves?

There are several reasons which reduce the amount of on-the-job improvements.



The pace of modern businesses and the pressure of deadlines and competition means there is little time for more than keeping up with the workflow.

Sometimes, people are told that:

- If it works, leave it alone.
- We've always done it that way.
- We can't afford to upgrade equipment, retrain staff, get customers to look at something different.
- Don't rock the boat!

If people won't consider suggestions, they are doomed to lose ground as their competitors improve their own products and methods.

How Can I Protect My Best Ideas?

This can be a big concern for some people. Many people do have their work misused or even stolen.

That should not stop you from developing your ability to produce better ideas. When you have the ability to produce lots of good ideas, you are more insulated from major damage if someone takes one or two.

This can occur inside an organization or be done by someone you have no connection with.

If it happens within an organization, I would think about planning to move out of that place for somewhere you can get better support.

Then, the organization will suffer and the benefit the thief gets will be limited when they cannot tap your mind for further developments to the idea.

Protecting your ideas from others within the same organization is almost as difficult as complaining about what they did while continuing to work there.

When you develop something on your own, you can follow the legal framework in your country to register the product and obtain protection under copyright, trademark or other schemes.

Some people try to keep costs down by writing out details of their project and posting it to themselves. They rely on the postmark on the envelope or package being proof that they were the originator. Unfortunately, most legal experts say that would not be sufficient protection against someone else producing something very similar.

Another important point is that people do often develop similar solutions to current problems. Thomas Edison was not the first person to produce a lightbulb which worked.

His was more reliable and efficient than those which preceded it. In fact, he probably learned some important information from other people's earlier attempts.

All inventors acknowledge that they often start their new projects by

combining or improving ideas which are already around..

Edison had more than a hundred globes produced before he found the one which was able to meet the demands of the market.

That shows we should not worry about producing some bad ideas, probably more than the number of good ideas we get!

The creative part of the process is important. Without it, we are likely to keep close to ideas which have some similarities to what is already out there.

How you can improve the creative level of your ideas is the subject of the next section of this ebook.

Get More Creative.

The first step in adding some more creativity to your ideas is to give yourself permission to step outside the established systems and guidelines.

I know many people who have the knowledge to produce great ideas but they cannot find the time or they don't feel they have enough imagination for that.

They will never know unless they try!



The next step is to find a reason for making the effort, investing the time and adjusting your schedule so you have time to produce good ideas consistently.

If you do some idea development without having settled on a goal or reward

which you can expect from it, your ideas are likely to be half-finished and quickly discarded when something else demands your attention.

The most pleasant part of the quest is when you start trying new experiences and meeting new people. You can quickly improve your creativity by connecting with other people that have the qualities you want to develop.

They don't have to be involved in the same areas of business or hobbies which you are. In fact, mixing with more people that have divergent interests is almost guaranteed to sharpen up your creativity skills. Keep your eyes open because drawing on methods from other areas is a very common way of introducing new ideas to your business or other activity.

Write Them Down

You must have some way to record your ideas and the ways which you think they could be used and improved.

I mentioned mindmaps earlier. That is one method for exploring and expanding the potential of your ideas.

But a simple filing system with index cards or an electronic version on your computer is probably more flexible and easier to carry around.

Brain Dump!

Before you start recording a lot of new ideas, set up your preferred system and make time to record as many of the ideas which you already have in your head and on random scraps of paper and old files before they are lost forever.

Harvesting those ideas , news items and old receipts will probably make your office a bit easier to navigate.

If you do a session of reasonable length, you will probably find that your mind will see connections between some of the notes you enter which had not ever occurred to you before.

Make sure you record those connections so that you can review them later on.

We've all had the experience of intending to clean out old books or magazines and spending most of the time reading instead of de-cluttering the area.

Don't get sidetracked in following up on some random idea at this time because you will benefit more from becoming better organized first.

Some of the material you want to discard may be of use to your local charities.

The First Question to Ask Every Time

As we go through the Idea System, keep one question in mind.

"Why?"

Being ready to challenge the common beliefs and practises will boost your readiness to find and try new ways of doing things and encourage others to do the same.

Always respect others feelings and goals but be ready to question them to help develop their ideas to produce greater benefits for everybody concerned.

Why is the most important word when we are looking for new possibilities.

Young children use "Why?" when they are learning their way around their world in their earliest years.

They use "Why Not?" when, at about age eleven, they start to find parental authority a little restrictive on their enthusiasm and curiosity.

If we want to improve our situation, keep asking "Why?" as long as you can!

The Idea System

This system was developed by an advertising man called James Young.

Don't let that put you off – it works, with a few changes, in any field of human interest.

Mr Young formalized the process which others had used and described in various ways over the previous many years.

I have adapted it to fit current trends and take advantage of some developments in the seventy years since Mr Young's breakthrough.

We have both used and modified other people's ideas and, I believe added to its value.

When you start to learn and use the system, please try it as written before you start making your own adaptions.

The sequence which I show has worked for thousands of people and using it to begin with means that you will learn all the steps without missing anything.

Then, you can adapt and even improve it to better fit your personal and business needs.

"Fuel for Your Mind"

The First step is to collect information, "Fuel for Your Mind"

This may come from almost any kind of resource, but focus on quality information which has been verified rather than blindly absorbing material from news broadcasts and infotainment shows.

Unfortunately, the demands of the medium mean that a lot of important information doesn't get aired in the News or other programs.

At best, they might give you some names and basic information which could be worth checking.

I was reading about a mine tragedy in the U.S.A. a couple of weeks ago. News reports said there was a collapse and an explosion which killed two people and injured twenty others.

There had not been any collapse or explosion. Unfortunately, the injuries and deaths did occur but the cause won't be known for another week. The misinformation did cause some extra aggravation for the rescue personnel and families involved.

Don't limit your trawling for information to those areas you are usually involved with.

Ideas which are common in other areas may have a significant impact if you recognize value in adapting them to your own situation.

Sometimes, unrelated ideas and methods can be combined because of developments in the technology or just because someone looks at them with a more open mind than before.

After you have used the system for a while, you will probably find ways that it can be adjusted to better fit you and your needs.

Proceed with Care!

I must warn you that the system is so simple that many will overlook its power.

Or, they will think that it can be done at a frantic pace.

But, the effectiveness of the method depends in large part on the review you do at various stages and the care with which you prepare and execute your new idea.

You will also need some courage to hold firm to your ideas and protect them from doubters.

At the same time, you should be considerate of others feelings rather than defensive, so that your suggestions are considered on their true merits.

Be happy to share the benefits and even the credit. The main thing is that the business and your part in it will benefit and a good result will help the acceptance of your later even better ideas.

When you've produced and executed one valued idea, it gets a little easier.

So, the sooner you start, the sooner you have a hundred improvements in place!

Welcome Helpful People

A common question is whether to produce an idea all by yourself or to get someone to share the load.



I always try to interest someone in working through at least aprt of the project with me.

I think we humans need domeone else around to smooth the edges off our ideas and provide support and advice when we hit the inevitable bumps.

But, you might find that some people

don't work out in this environment. You need to have someone that shares your work ethic and understands you at least a little bit.

A family member might be the best choice, but they may not be.

An accountability partner is someone that is involved in your project or a similar task. You talk with each other twice a day. In the morning, you tell each other, in broad detail what you expect to achieve that day.

In the evening, you report on progress and include anything which was not completed as expected.

This simple system has made a great difference to many people's level of achievement.

They don't face any penalty from the other person, but the need to account for their progress makes them more likely to achieve what they say or start making more realistic forecasts.

The other advantage is that they feel they are not carrying the full load by themselves. They are alone but not lonely.

When the projects are complete, they don't owe anything to the other person but sincere thanks. Be sure to acknowledge that your buddy has been an enormous help.

Connections

This is the next vital part of the process of creating new from of ideas and methods.

You need a level of knowledge and skill which lets you understand how various facts or systems might be successfully combined.

Sometimes, you might start with some part of a process which is a bottleneck or problematical in some way.

Then, start to consider what options there might be for removing the problem at minimum expense or, at least, in a way that doesn't cost too much.

For instance, are there devices or systems used elsewhere which can be adapted to improve that part of the process?

If there is not a significant problem to be dealt with, can you find something which could be added that would improve the outcome for the user or make the process more economical?

Many companies persist with systems which they have used for years but are overtaken by someone who looks for simple and effective ways to produce things more cheaply or faster.

If reviews are done continuously, they become a sort of insurance against early redundancy.

Sometimes, the improvement in the process may be small but becomes significant when the savings or improvement are calculated for a year or longer period.

Let it Mix

At this point, you may have some ideas you feel would be worth developing.

IBut, the best tactic let them and the rest of the information you have reviewed to settle into your subconscious.

That will start evaluating and searching for links to other information you have but may not remember.

This was part of the system which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle endowed Sherlock Holmes. The fictional great detective often stopped consciously thinking about the crime and went with Dr Watson to the theatre. The entertainment distracted his conscious mind and relaxed him wile his subconscious filtered and stirred all the information provided.

This was probably the way Sir Arthur worked on problems in his own work, because the method was proven even at that time.

After, say, at least s day has passed, you will find the ideas embellished and you will have more links which the subconscious has grafted on while you went about your regular routine.

Now, you can start to look for one project or idea to develop further.

The break from conscious thinking about all that material will have helped prepare you for the next step.

Sometimes, there may be few, if any, additions to the material you put into your subconscious.

That could mean that the subconscious may not have enough material stored about the topics you were working with or it may not have make the connections.

You will have some ideas from your own thinking during the first two steps.

If you start writing these down, other material will surface and your subconscious will start learning what new things you require it to look for as time goes on.

Remember that this process is probably a bit different from the procedures

you used previously.

Most education systems seem to still value students who retain information they have been fed more than those who actually produce something from that knowledge and skills.

Think about this when you look at the work your own children bring home from their schools.

What Do Others Think?

This is a step which many people fear and delay a much as possible.

But, it is essential and it's really unlikely that you will suffer permanent injury from expressing some ideas to others in your organization.

A lot often depends on your ability to put over your point of view while being considerate of others views and feelings or position.

If you have problems with getting heard or getting recognition for your contributions, this suggestion may be worthwhile for you.

Try Public Speaking training

If you have concerns about your skills in that area, I suggest that you get some experience of public speaking through an organization such as Toastmasters International.

There are several other groups but my experience is with their program.

I found it very helpful and the support from all the other Members at the various places I attended Toastmasters was a great help. Their program includes impromptu speaking on random subjects at every meeting as well as all the aspects of public speaking.

When you have a little experienc, you can find it much easier to develop an "elevator pitch" which is a short description of your idea or improvement to a process which you would give to someone while an elevator moved between floors in your building.

That means you would only have about thirty seconds. It can be done well and most speaking programs would be a great help to you, giving you both the skills and the confidence.

That training will also help make all your social and business interactions easier.

Non-Business Ideas

If your focus is outside of the general business area, you can still use the system.

That's whether you are, for instance, a cook, writer, educator, cleric or involved in any other field.

I will use writing as an example. It's obvious that Mr Young used it very successfully with his advertising.

But, any other writer will find the system worthwhile to adapt and use.

Gathering material is essential.

Keeping an open mind and avoid being limited where you get your raw material from or how far you take your ideas during the thinking stage are also easy enough to understand.

Combining ideas will take some people a lot more practise but all writers are used to using their imaginations.

Putting your ideas in front of others is a worry for many people but you know that most people, whether they are your family you prepared a new dish for or readers around the World will be inclined to give you a good reception.

And, the experience you gain will help you with each type of project you do in the future and expand your options for enjoyment and employment through the rest of your life.

More Tips

Waste Nothing.

Don't discard the other thoughts which occur to you as you progress through the stages of this process. They may not be as good as those you decide to use but they may become better options when you review your procedures late due to changes in technology or demands of your customers.

Don't Limit Yourself

I suggest that you keep an open mind when you are collecting and combining ideas from your files.

Try to capture the enthusiasm of your childhood and be prepared to think bigger than you might usually do.

Keeping within your current financial and oher limits is important for stability but it does not help you come up with ideas which might be achievable just a few months down the track.

My mentor said that her best projects started as ideas about what she felt her business would be doing a year or perhaps two into the future.

She said that it was too hard to predict what conditions might be like five years from now but you could imagine two years ahead.

Then, start developing that idea.

You might find that the necessary conditions, including new technology was available and within your budget much sooner than you thought it would be.

But, your careful study of the situation would give you a head-start in making use of the new breakthroughs.

The System in Simple Steps

This is a "cheat-sheet" for the basic system.

Read this for a quick overview of the system. That's all some readers may need to get started.

But, don't worry – you can find more detail about each step in the earlier sections.

Get as much information about the problem as possible.

Get the significance of the problem in mind and decide how much time is available to deal with it.

Gather related information.

That includes referring to your mental and physical files for older ideas and methods which may help.

When you have fuelled your mind with information, start looking for relationships between ideas.

Some people find this very hard but it will get easier and your results will improve if you let yourself join things which are not always combined.

Some information has specific relevance. Seeing the relevance of other material may take a little creative thought.

You will find this as tiring as physical exercise at first.

Stay with it as much as you can.

You are not only working on a problem. You are also creating a habit which will be invaluable for dealing with future challenges!

Then, you "go to the theatre or tackle a less demanding task and let your subconscious do its work.

Then, maybe hours later, your mind will start to produce almost finished ideas for you to mould to your needs.

Write down the ideas which you need and also the others which you don't need this time. They may be of even greater value later on.

Do You Feel more Creative already?

I hope you are feeling more ready to find and exploit more creative ideas now.

The final secret I want to share is that all the ideas and creativity are part of your own make-up.

You were creative as a child and I hope you have reconnected with those latent talents you always had.

That was guaranteed to make the rest of your life more productive and enjoyable.

How much that works is up to you!

Maxwell Vaughan

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