



THE **MEANING** MANIFESTO

Six Foundational Truths
for Work Worth Doing

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for Work Worth Doing

by Dan Cumberland

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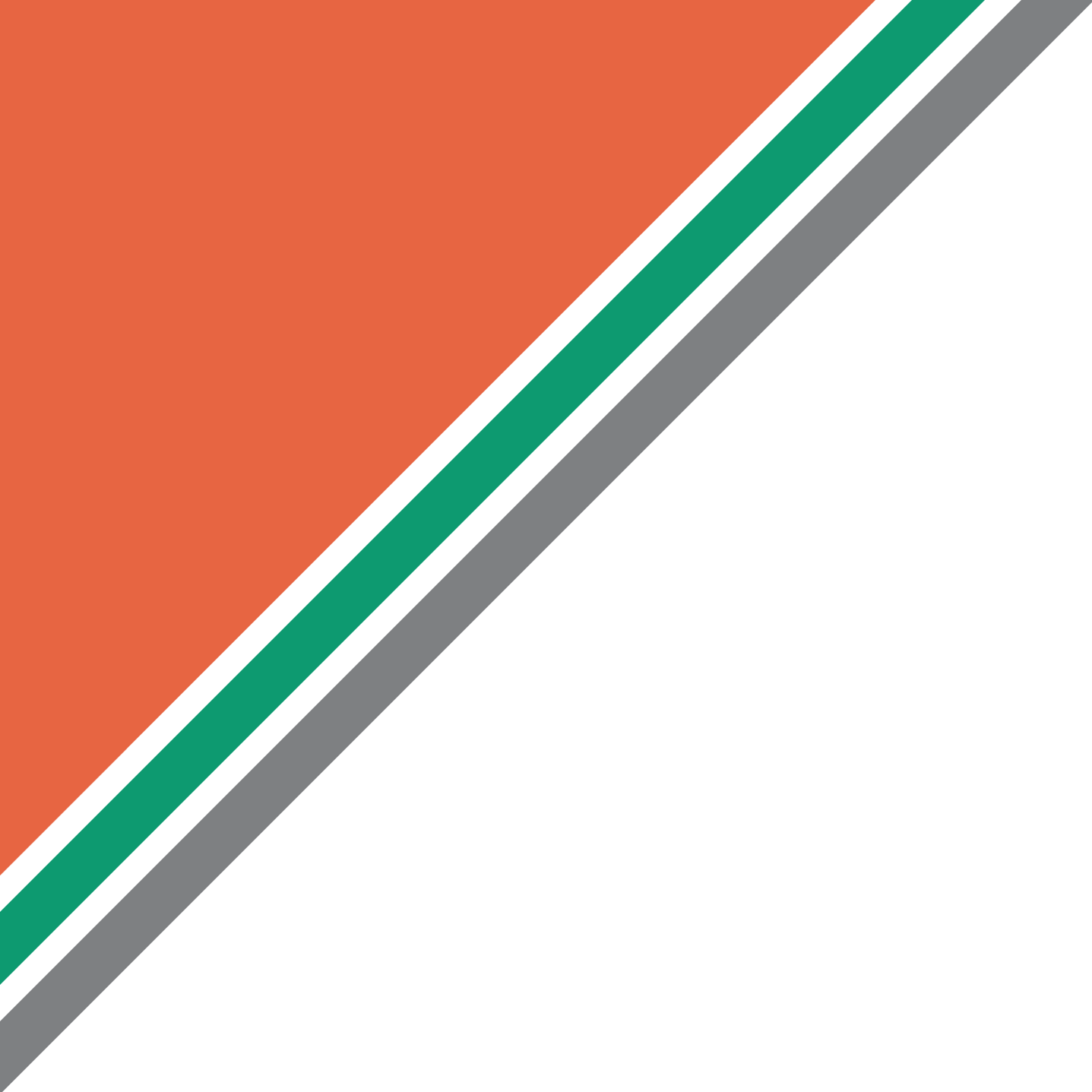
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PROLOGUE

This is for the **NOISE-MAKERS** and the **COUCH BURNERS**,
and for everyone who was told to quiet down and sit still.

This is for the **DREAMERS**,
for the ones who were just too lost in their imagination
to find their place.

This is for the left-outs,
the passed by,
the screw-ups,
the let downs,
the underdogs,
the dodgeball targets,
the artists,
the scientists,
the imagineers,
the pacifists,
and the stubborn fighters
who **WOULDN'T GIVE UP.**




**THIS IS FOR
ALL OF YOU.**

Listen close–

(I mean this when I say it, and live to convince you of it):

You have something to say.

You have something that we need to
HEAR, READ, SEE, EXPERIENCE,
and be taught.



ONE
YOUR WORK IS PART
OF YOUR
IDENTITY
(you are not a cog)

IT'S TIME TO CHANGE HOW WE THINK ABOUT WORK.

Centuries ago, family occupations mattered enough that family names were based on them (Smith, Farmer, Shoemaker, etc.). A person's work was part of their identity.

Then, advancements in technology allowed for the Industrial Revolution to alter manufacturing. This changed everything.

Family professions began to matter less. "Work" became a job at a factory, a giant machine with people as the moving parts.

It was about getting paid and making the means to survive, not about making meaning.

The factory has become the model for all kinds of work.

Even if the work is in an office, the office structure is similar: everyone has their specific job to do.¹ The factory changed everything down to the way we think about work. No longer was work about the family business. No longer was it about creating something connected to who you are.

This industrial mentality shapes the way you think about work.

1. Seth Godin will tell you about the factory mindset and so much more. Read everything by him (which is quite a lot): sethgodin.typepad.com.

**THINK ABOUT THE
MESSAGES YOU CARRY:**

“

Work is not about who you are. It is about making money.

You have to make ends meet so it does not matter what you do.

Just get a job that pays well.

Put in the time now. Fun is for the weekends and retirement.

You don't have to love your job.

Work hard and you'll come home happy.

Work is a necessary evil.

”



IT'S TIME TO CHANGE ALL OF THIS.

It's time for new messages.

It's time to stop holding back all the parts of yourself that being a cog won't allow.

YOU ARE NOT A COG.

You have more to give than the factory mentality can allow.

You have something to **DO**, **GIVE**, and **CREATE** that is connected to who you are and we're ready for you to do it.



TWO
YOU HAVE
SOMETHING TO OFFER
(even when you feel like you don't)

Many of us have been systematically taught that we don't have anything more to offer than simply doing our job. The education system often feeds the factory mentality in this way.

We hear ideas like:

Don't stand out too much.

Don't be too loud.

Don't start fires.

Don't break the norm.

Stand in line.

Draw inside the lines.

As much as these are helpful for maintaining order in a school (and society),

**THEY DON'T HELP YOU FIND THE GOOD STUFF
THAT BRINGS YOU LIFE.**

Drawing inside the lines makes for pretty pictures, but it doesn't make real art. (If everyone drew inside the lines there would be no Rothko, or Haring, and especially no Banksy or Shepard Fairey.)

The class clown is told to stop being so silly, ornery, and loud. Those things she is asked to stop doing are the very things that are connected to what she uniquely brings to the world. The class clowns of today are the culture shapers of tomorrow. Maybe you can make her conform, maybe you make her settle down, maybe you can put her on medication, but you cannot take that energy out of her.

**YOU CAN PUT OUT HER FIRE,
BUT YOU CAN'T STOP THE EMBERS FROM GLOWING.**

You've been told not to bring too much of yourself. You've been told not to start fires and cause a ruckus. Some of us have heard this long enough and loud enough that we don't know what it would feel like to do otherwise. We've been quieted down so often that we've forgotten that we have something that we want to say.

Here's what you need to know:



**IT'S STILL
SOMEWHERE
IN YOU.**

Even if it's just a memory or a feeling,

IT'S IN YOU.

There's a voice that is wanting to be heard. There's something wanting to be expressed. There's something trying to be created. There's something trying to get out.

IT'S TIME TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY.

It's time to remember what it's like to draw outside the lines.

YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY.

IT'S TIME TO TAKE
THE RISK:

Stand up for something.

Protest something.

Write something.

Make something.

Dream something.

Cook something.

Organize something.

Design something.

Engineer something.

Break something.

**YOU HAVE
SOMETHING
TO SAY.**

Go make a mess of something.



THREE

YOUR JOB TITLE

IS TOO SMALL

(you have more to give)

You have more to offer than your job title (likely) tells us. You're much more interesting than the generality of this or that given title. Some people choose to deal with this by changing their title into something with more cool points: instead of "workshop leader," it's "transformation experience architect and guide."

What's more interesting than a sexy job title is an articulation of the impact that you want to have on the world.

Let people hear your **HEART** and your **SOUL** as you talk about what you do. When this happens, all of a sudden your work begins to take on a dimensionality that it didn't have before. The job title is just the surface of the work you do, and that work has meaning that reaches deep into the recesses of a person's heart and soul.

"What do you do?" is the question that starts conversation with new acquaintances. It's time to stop selling yourself short as you answer. It's time to name the impact that you're trying to make in the world. If that impact is not what you do in your day job (yet), then don't talk about your job.

**WE WANT TO HEAR WHAT
REALLY MATTERS.**



JUST TRY THIS:

The next time someone asks “What do you do?” give them an answer that they won’t forget. Who knows? You might find a new client, partner, collaborator, evangelist, or advocate.

You might also find a contender, protestor, hijacker, or skeptic as well. That’s a risk you must take.

(A quick tip before we move on: an easy indicator that you are doing work with meaning is that you know it’s worth facing the critic.)



FOUR
DON'T WASTE
YOUR LIFE

(you don't have to choose money first)

Money matters, but does it matter as much as you've been told?

Is it worth suffering through 30-40 years of a soul-sucking job so that you can live your last 20 or so with nothing worthwhile to do? This is not to say that retirement is wrong or that you should not rest, play, and enjoy life. What I intend for you to hear is that you should not wait until the end of your life to do so. Culture tells us to value money first. You simply do not have to buy that (there's a pun in there).

YOU CHOOSE WHAT MATTERS MOST.

You have one life to live; how will you invest it? You can lose your soul to gain a soulless "good-life," or you can spend your life making an impact that matters.

If you ask me

(which you may or may not be),

making an impact on people and making a meaningful difference in the world matters more than money.

**LIVING A LIFE OF
MEANING IS MORE
IMPORTANT THAN
HAVING A LOT OF
MATERIAL THINGS**

and then taking it easy on a golf course somewhere.

REST is important.

PLAY is important.

And

**MAKING A
MEANINGFUL
IMPACT**

is very important.



FIVE

YOU ARE A CREATIVE

(even if you're not)

Even if you don't think of yourself as an "artist," you are a creative.

It's time to start thinking of yourself that way. There is something that you do that you put more of yourself into than other things. Maybe it's the way you ask questions of new people you meet. Maybe it's in the way you do back-end development. Maybe it's your ability to arrange furniture to create a cozy space.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS THAT YOU DO, BUT I KNOW THAT YOU DO SOMETHING THAT MATTERS TO YOU.

There's something that feels natural and fun to you that others can't do. There's a way you do certain things that has life in it and flair that is unmatched. There's something that you do that makes you, and those around you, come alive.

When I say that you're a creative,



**THIS IS WHAT
I'M TALKING
ABOUT.**

You find and make meaning in a particular way. You bring together things to make new possibilities. You make art— even when it's not “Art.” Maybe your medium is a sauce pan and a chef's knife is your paintbrush. Maybe your medium is a room full of rowdy preschoolers and your lesson plans are your tools. Maybe your medium is the blinking cursor of an empty document and your computer keyboard is how you create.

I don't know where your creativity comes out, but I know that it does. I don't know where the extra flair and spirit leaks out of the container that you've been taught to put it in, but I know it does. You just can't hide who you are forever. You can't escape the work you're made to do.

Often we have stories of shame, embarrassment, or neglect that keep us from embracing these parts of ourselves and the work we long to do. And though those experiences have power, your essence cannot be taken away.

You are a
CREATOR.

You are a
CREATIVE.

You have something to create.



SIX

**YOU WERE MADE TO
MAKE AN IMPACT**
(and deep down you want that)

Your creativity is connected to making an impact on others. It is about bringing to the world what you most desire. You long to make an impact on people and there are reasons that it often feels too deep and too risky to share those desires with anyone. The risk in creating—the risk in speaking those desires into existence—is that there is deep, personal meaning attached to them. You were made for impact and that impact is part of who you are and how you have come to be.

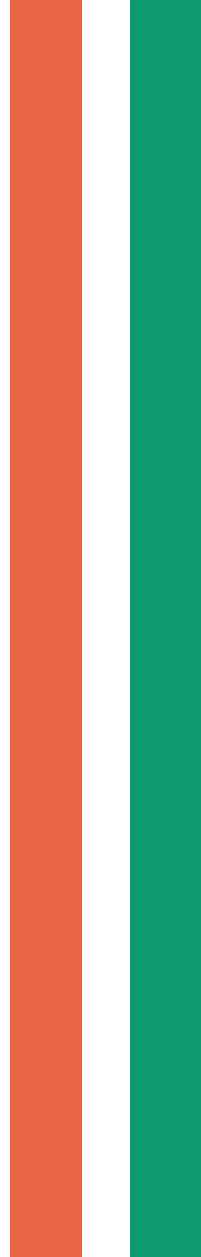
This is what you were made to share. This is what you most long to see made right in the world. This is your work, your calling, your place, your passion.

YOUR CREATIVITY IS ABOUT IMPACTING OTHERS.

Owning your desires and then extending them to others is what making meaning is all about.

THE BEST TIME TO START WAS YESTERDAY.

**GO.
START.**



NOW.



EPILOGUE

I don't know who you are and I don't know where you are, but I do know this:

YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER THE WORLD.

You have an impact to leave and you have something good that you want to gift to us

(even if you don't know it yet).

May you dig deeper into **WHO YOU ARE** and (continue to) take risks to make a **MEANINGFUL IMPACT.**



POST SCRIPT



**I BELIEVE
IN YOU.**

And others do too.
We're here to help.

Don't stop now!

**NONE OF THIS MATTERS UNLESS YOU
DO SOMETHING WITH IT.**

Here are some places to start:

JOIN THE MOVEMENT. Add your name to the manifesto:
themeaningmovement.com/meaning-manifesto

SHARE THIS WITH EVERYONE who needs to hear it. Give them this
link: themeaningmovement.com/meaning-manifesto

TWEET YOUR RESPONSE with the hashtag #themeaningmovement

FOLLOW THE MEANING MOVEMENT on Facebook:
facebook.com/themeaningmovement

SUBSCRIBE TO THE MEANING MOVEMENT if you haven't
already: themeaningmovement.com/subscribe

THANK YOU,
deeply and sincerely, for being a part of this.

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