

From the author of three
internationally acclaimed books

BRUTAL TRUTHS

Surviving in a
world of LIES,
TABOOS &
BullSH#T!

SIMON HAMMOND

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WHAT IS YOUR TRUTH?

To truly know yourself is a quest few ever conquer. But to commit to a constant endeavour to try, is the secret to it all. For in trying, you move ever closer to awareness.

From the day my brother died way back in the '70s, I was intrigued by the reaction my actions got from others. In trying to understand this, I was forced onto a path of self-learning.

My wife would tell you it's just selfish! But you must accept a little narcissistic pursuit in the desire to be your most. I have come to realise that to change people or any given situation, my weapon is to inspire their thinking. My way is to use creative storytelling, emotive delivery and impact.

But there are other truths that support that central set. This was borne out the day I arrived at work with a new car. Admittedly, this wasn't just any car. It was a new Jaguar XK8 convertible. Hours

earlier, I had been out driving and went past a Jag dealer. My internal voice told me to drive in, as it can't hurt to look. It was really telling me it's time to do something crazy.

An hour later I had spent \$220,000 on a new car. We had just spent \$2 million on a building, we were mortgaged to the hilt, I'd risked the entire business on a new idea of an immersive creative centre and my three kids were starting to cost a lot of money in private school fees. The new Jag was the epitome of a crazy act.

I arrived at the office and drove into the car park, which sat under Robyn's office. She saw me get out of car and her face screamed 'Oh my god, what have you done now?'

Some days later, when she began speaking to me again, I tried to explain the truth of my action. I believed I needed to double down, not live in fear. Like the time I had been challenged on overinflated expense claims at the *Truth*, I couldn't retreat. Back then I doubled the expense claims the next week and nothing was ever said again. This time, I needed a daily ritualistic reminder of what was at stake. I needed a car that told me what I had to do. My truth was that I need high stakes.

The SEE business was in its infancy and I was scared. I knew that to achieve the massive vision I had set – to completely reset what a creative agency could be in the market – I would need enormous commitment, focus and discipline. So, I looked for ways around me to up the ante and create some pressure to focus. As strange as it sounds, my truth is that I need the odds to be stacked to be at my best. I need pressure, chaos and sometimes, fear. This is somewhat weird when you consider I spend all my waking hours trying to be fearless. I came to the conclusion that it's not about fearlessness, but rather learning to live with fear.

So put a mirror to your face.

What is your best? What situation puts you in your most powerful state? What do you want to go up against, or fight or take on?

Those questions help decide what you want to stand for and what you believe. Without your version of a Jag reminding you of what's at stake, and without some pressure in your cooker, the result will always be less.

With that in mind, I'm going to suggest a simple process to understand your best and in doing so, work out your truth and your belief. It's a process born out of the business IP that has worked globally for over twenty years and it's tried and tested on many people along the way.

It all comes down to the truth to you hold dear and while you probably can't answer that right now, that's fine, because I'm about to tell you how you find out.

As Hunter S. Thompson wrote: The tragedy of life is that we seek to understand the goal and not the man. Every man is the sum-total of his reactions to experience. As your experiences differ and multiply, you become a different man, and hence your perspective changes.

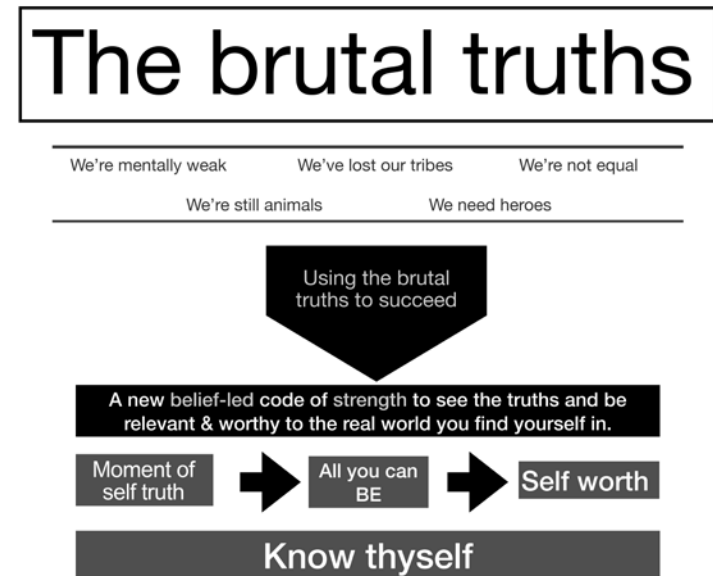
Every reaction is a learning process; every significant experience alters your perspective.

The answer, then, must not deal with goals at all, but in understanding what our experiences mean for us. We should not strive to be firemen, or bankers, or policemen, or doctors.

WE SHOULD SIMPLY STRIVE TO BE THE BEST POSSIBLE VERSION OF OURSELVES.

We need to function in such a way that life will be meaningful, where we feel a sense of worth in who we are. A person has to *be* something they feel comfortable with, on a path that will enable natural abilities to function at maximum efficiency toward the gratification of deep desires.

The simple antidote to the five brutal truths and to the crisis of 'borrowed beliefs' is to know thyself. **Do you know why you do the things you do and make the choices you make? Or are you a bit of a mystery to you?**



One thing's for sure, as the world lies, the brilliant truth-tellers rise. Armed with this clear understanding of who you are, you can be the most powerful version of yourself.

To create your own belief gives you swagger and plants your feet on the earth, enabling you to walk in the room with mojo and competent confidence. To know thyself is to attract others. Truth becomes your weapon and wisdom your bullets.

That was what SEE Life Differently was all about and what made it successful. We had swagger.

We refused to enter industry awards. Indeed, when we were voted Emerging Agency of the Year, we apologised to the industry, as it meant all other outdated ad agencies were surely dead in the water. We even took out a full-page ad in the *Australian Financial Review* to that effect.

Instead of vying for awards, we would attend industry awards nights and as the winners got pissed and left their new shiny awards



on tables, we gathered them all up and held them for ransom the following week, inviting the winners into our den to pick them up.

We were outlaws to an industry that we were trying to challenge and disrupt, existing only to reveal the truth for our clients and potential clients, not perpetuate the lies of our so-called peers.

We refused to pitch for business – an outdated and disrespectful process created by clients who wanted free ideas. We still refuse to this day.

At SEE, we wrote our manifesto and lived by it. We knew who we were – and who we weren't prepared to be.



A MOMENT OF SELF TRUTH (MOST)

SEE was full of characters who knew exactly who they were. We attracted colourful outsiders and we gave ourselves a very clear enemy; other agencies who we felt were doing wrong by the brands they served.

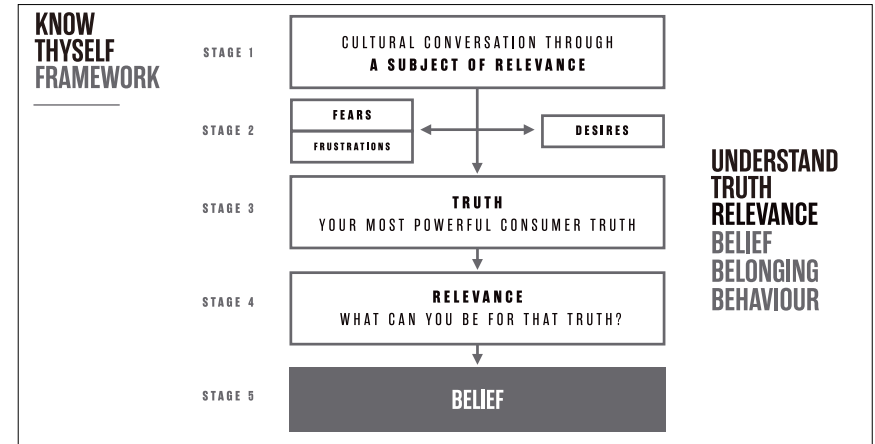
We declared war on them every day and I ensured the people inside SEE were the very MOST they could be by understanding their uniqueness and matching a collective belief to a hundred or more individual beliefs. This was the secret; merged beliefs.

As such, we only attracted similar beings who had done the hard yards and knew who they were and what they wanted to be. It was a feisty, wild and instinctive place bound by the rules set in our manifesto.

This is where the idea of knowing thyself, based on your own beliefs, delivered with mojo and charisma began. In my view, it was the single factor that has kept us relevant, exciting and profitable in SEE and other agencies.

To know thyself, it starts the same way for individuals as it does for brands – with framing up a moment in everyday culture where the brand in question is relevant. For brands, we do this by getting teams to work out the ‘subject of relevance’ – a simple conversation being had by two people that is most relevant to the business at hand. It’s a perplexing challenge for business execs to bring it down to such a basic premise but it’s crucial to understand your place in society, as only then can you work out the Stage 2 emotive drivers. These drivers of fear, frustration and desire, are contained with unconscious bias in these conversations.

The result is spectacular as teams uncover deep truths about the very people they seek to serve. These truths enable them to be relevant, not merely sell. This is where a belief comes from for business. It’s a belief in why a business matters for the truth of the culture it is in.



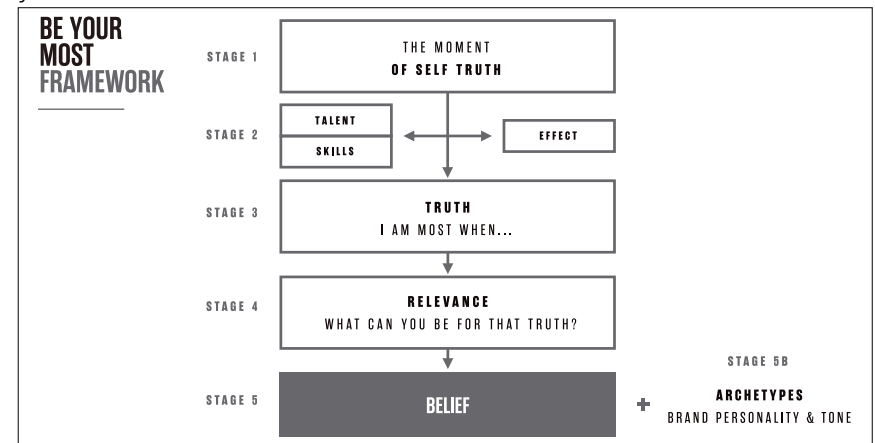
This is not new to you if you have read from the start of the book. But what IS new, is how you can use this on yourself.

Like the business model, the personal version must start with a framing exercise.

But this time it’s a moment of reflection you need to embrace.

It centres around a deep questioning, in your own mind’s eye, of when you are at your MOST.

MOST is an acronym for Moment of Self Truth. And it’s pivotal to your future.



THE CLICK

My thinking on this is simple; if everyone was acting to the perfect truth of all their natural talents, doing what they were born to do, society would click together beautifully, like the most complex jigsaw puzzle. I believe we are all part of a single jigsaw, born into the world with very different natural skills sets, DNA tendencies, strengths and talents. Over time we get drawn away from these natural ways by upbringing, societal cues, greed, envy, ego and awareness. In this new era of access and information, we can see what others have so we can be lured into ways that are not natural to our state.

The secret to fulfilment is to get back as close to our natural state as possible. It's also the secret to societal harmony. Imagine if every human in a community was doing tasks and jobs that were the perfect sum total of their natural talents and skills. Not only would people be great at what they do, but the effort needed would be less and sense of satisfaction greater. Yet, we are lured into other things that aren't our natural ways, mostly by mimetic greed and envy. We want what others have. So the most basic foot soldier, who is blessed with natural strength and coordination and deep fortitude, able to follow orders but use incredible judgement under fire, is thinking he'd like that bigger house that his school buddy has, so he tries to trade stocks or takes a job in management. He then wonders why he doesn't feel like he fits in the world.

Knowing thyself is also about knowing your place in society.

The Be Your MOST framework is designed to help people return to their natural most, where all is in harmony with natural talents and everyone knows their limits and their boundaries of potential.

HOW?

It all begins with a moment. Simply picture the time in your life when it all just clicked and things felt right. Your talents seemed to flow,

things weren't a forced effort, but rather a natural flow of you at your best. This can be a micro moment that was over in a second or it can be a time when you seemed to have everything coming together in such a way that made you feel powerful, harmonious and happy.

Musicians talk of this moment often as they cherish the ninety minutes on stage, connecting with an audience and being the most they can be.

For me, this goes back to the death of my brother and the necessity to sort out a crisis and emotively reach and connect with others to create a common lift.

For many this would be a horrifying thought. To me, it felt natural. I realised at that moment that I felt most alive when I could inspire people.

Later, standing in front of 800 people in a theatre delivering Lectern Rock, I could feel it all come together. This was my MOST. Every major talent I had was engaged in that moment and the delivery felt effortless. Most importantly, the effect of my efforts was large.

In your case, look for macro and micro moments. For you this may be a task you were given, a subject you studied, a time in a game or a role that seemed to feel right. To do this effectively, you must recall how you felt, not just what you did and certainly not when you had most to gain.

This is about a deep sense of being in your right zone.

So often, I'm asked by people how to be successful and I always go back to this simple idea that we have a finite set of natural gifts and talents and you need to understand what yours are there for. It's much like a vehicle. When you get into a Range Rover, you need to understand what all its inbuilt 'skills and talents' are. In the RR machine, these are capabilities built in by the engineers. They have built that vehicle to perform in the most extreme conditions. As a 4x4 tester, I got to see the MOST of a Range Rover and I can tell you, very few people who ever buy this beast use it in the way it's

intended or ever get close to finding its true potential.

It's the same for us humans.

We are built with great inherent capabilities. Most don't unlock these natural abilities as they never really properly assess what their natural optimum state is. More importantly, we don't teach people, young, middle-aged or old, how to look for that state. We more often than not frame future prospects through economic terms or through a security framework. Get a safe job that will earn good money. This is taking us further away from our natural states.

We must ask the right question: when am I living, working, existing at my most? When do I feel in sync with my natural abilities and values and interests? Of all the students I have taught and met, very few have any idea of their 'MOST'. They are heavily influenced by wise choices, often given to them by their parents or teachers, whose sole objective is for them to succeed – or worse still, make them proud. This is another selfish construct, with parents often more concerned about how their kids make them look, than whether their kids are happy.

At the heart of self-optimisation is the concept of a moment of self-truth (MOST). So, let's get back to your moment. I am asking you to recall when your natural traits were in play and you were feeling a buzz from the effect of your efforts. Consider a time when you thought you did well or felt in sync. Don't overthink this. Dig into the feelings you can recall.

When you get this moment or time period or event, hold it clearly in your head and write the answers to the following:

1. What skills were you using?
2. What talent was emerging?
3. What effect were you having?

These are your three drivers and the basis of a simple equation of skills + talent = effect. This may be an effect you are having on your own state of mind or mental sense of wellbeing. If the moment was surfing, that's fine, as we will test this later as we match it to your real world.

For now, it's vital you reflect on how that made you feel. If you can recall a glow or a surge in a deep sense of satisfaction or excitement, you're in the right ballpark. It's crucial you focus in on a genuine feeling of greatness and natural optimal strength.

My moment of self-truth, where I am at my MOST, when I'm performing Lectern Rock, really tests me and stretches me and turns my insides out – but also takes me to a pinnacle of abilities where my effect on others is at its most potent.

Herein lays a crucial point. This moment of self-truth is not always the easiest, most comfortable thing you do. Like the Range Rover, some people are blessed with extraordinary talents, which means they must embrace their MOST on a grander scale. Musicians or champion footballers often tell of vomiting on their way onto the stage or the ground. They are terrified of what's ahead. But they are about to unleash their MOST. This is also why being super-talented is a burden for these people and often leads to self-destruction. The MOST can often be difficult and a love-hate tension within you.

A very successful senior CEO friend of mine provides a good example of the power of MOST.

I met him in the height of his leadership powers. Feared by many, ruthless in his ability to turn companies around, he was talented as a leader of thousands. He turned two of Australia's biggest corporations into better versions of themselves but in each case, was let down by those around him, backstabbed by the board and undervalued for his vision. He was left a somewhat broken man. I worked with him through these times and always felt he wasn't working at his MOST.

We continued our friendship into life after corporations and I watched him do the hard yards, coming to terms with his demons and facing into the best version for himself. He realised the moment of self-truth was not about board rooms, or money or power – it was about enablement of others. He is at his best when pulling together complex and varied views and having them somehow unite in a collective better. He is a talented and natural diplomat who has the vision to see a worthy end goal and the acumen and skill to bring people to that – together. His actual moment, which I have had the pleasure of seeing over and over again since, is not a monetary win but rather a moment where so-called opposing parties suddenly realise a way forward together.

For someone I have begun working with more recently, a talented entrepreneur behind the Shine brand of nootropic drinks, Steve Chapman, his MOST is what he describes as ‘the ignition of a spark in someone’, which comes down to his uncanny ability to naturally lead others. He is a true leader, with a calm and depth that others are drawn to and he describes his MOST as this spark in others that he has lit.

It’s vital in this exercise to be very specific in your mind’s eye view of the moment.

Go to the moment that was vivid and live it out, feeling the senses and recalling what it felt like to be at your MOST. For me, on stage, delivering Lectern Rock, it was a feeling of absolute connection with other humans where my words and stories became powerful weapons of change for them. They had decided to open themselves up to my ideas and stories and I could feel a desire from them for something to make sense or click. This is a power of value to others and for me, it’s better than any and all drugs I have ever taken.

I recall my dear cousin coming to one of my sessions and afterwards, in tears, telling me she was now ready to change her life and leave her husband. Something I had said, had given her the final

push to act and change. She did just that and remarried soon after and to this day, lives happily. I’m proud of that.

A great example of a Moment of Self Truth is the young university student I have worked with, who struggles to embrace the traditional corporate world. He is talented and can do the work, but he came to the conclusion it is far from his MOST. I’ll let him tell it his way:

I believe that a Moment of Self Truth can only come when you’re truly out of your comfort zone. For me, this was when I was high in the Himalayas, hours away from civilisation in a village of no more than 100 people, surrounded by village elders in the flickering light of a candle-lit tent.

I was lost when I decided to travel to Nepal on an aid mission. I didn’t know what to do with my life, but I did know that I wanted my life to have meaning, so I signed up to two short weeks in a hands-on mission that took us fourteen hours into the rocky Himalayas to a little village called Singbandi. Our mission and philosophy was simple – throwing money at problems doesn’t solve them, but living amongst people in need, talking to them and identifying underlying issues in an impoverished community could help change lives forever.

So, after a few days of reconnaissance and creative thinking, I found myself the instigator and leader of a village-wide community meeting to address the lack of communication and prioritising of social needs. I was twenty-two, the youngest on our trip, I spoke no Nepali, and quite honestly I had no idea what I was doing. Yet under great pressure, diamonds are formed.

If I think back to this moment in my life, a few things become crystal clear when applied to the Moment of Self Truth framework. My natural talent came to the forefront almost as a self-defence mechanism – I was quick thinking, able to work with new information and spit out creative solutions. I was able to lead where I had no right to – so many people my senior surrounded me. Yet I sat at the centre determined to allow everyone their own voice and their own say. Most of all I was able to connect, to negotiate and to reason. This more than anything made me aware of my interpersonal skills.

The effect that I had was obvious, I identified the need for this meeting of elders and I set it up. I led the discussion and came away with a solid list that ordered the importance of our various tasks left to improve at this small village. I gave both the villagers and our team clarity where there was once indecision and selfishness. I helped unite and foster critical thinking and teamwork. I was at my MOST when I could control a room in a world so far removed from my own and guide others without providing all the answers.

Whether it's consciously or subconsciously, everyone knows what their moment is. But the hard part is finding what relevance your MOST has to the world around you. At the moment, my world doesn't reflect the me I saw when I was at my MOST, so something has to change. In order to be myself, I must form strong bonds and believe that what I'm doing is helping people or shaping lives in some small way. I know that I must be able to control my own destiny and I'm at my best when I can guide others too. I don't necessarily need to know what I'm doing – in fact I'm

far worse at preparation than I am at improvisation. I believe that to be my MOST, I have to stay nimble, help others and lead.

This is a wonderful self-evaluation using the process and now gives this person a framework and filter to assess his next move. He doesn't need a goal or a specific objective. He needs to move in the direction of the best version of himself.

But he does need a belief.

BELIEF THROUGH RELEVANCE

Belief is a complex construct. I have spent thirty years dealing with both the power and damage beliefs can bring about. In the wrong hands, an ignorant belief can kill. So, let's examine why we use belief at this stage and what context we must place over this concept.

First and foremost, the belief is not a passing interest. It is not enough to like something or think it's a good way to fill in your time or earn quick cash. A belief is an acceptance that something is true, without proof. It's a deep imagined reality you hold true. It is about faith and supreme confidence in something being true – to you.

This form of belief is not something you have been told is true by others. Your personal belief must be yours to hold true, defend, live for and even die for. It must be the most powerful source of your inner strength and energy, sometimes becoming your only companion when all others may have abandoned you.

For the heroes of our times such as Nelson Mandela, his belief was his saviour. It drove his resolve as it was formed on his self-truth and his inherent understanding of his power and reason for being. Inherently Mandela knew he must be the man who stood up to the apartheid regime because he had the natural set of talents

and skills to have the most effect for that issue at that time. His time had come.

Therein lies the next crucial aspect to forming a belief: it must be done in context to the time and place you find yourself in.

With the Moment of Self Truth (MOST) firmly in your psyche, it's crucial to work out where you need to apply your newfound understanding. For Mandela, he was the man for his times, bringing to the fore a unique set of talents and skills to do what no-one else could have achieved.

By using relevance and context you avoid the mistake of using this method to justify your love of a hobby or a meaningless pursuit. These are perfectly fine to have, but they are not what I'm talking about. You must be realistic and the way to do that is through relevance to the real world you exist in.

Take the person whose moment of self truth is surfing. For them, this is their blissful moment bringing together talent and skill. But it may not be having much of an effect on anyone else.

If they were to apply this moment to their real life it's likely this combination of talent and skill must be converted into a usable action and effect. Or perhaps they need to dig into the sorts of talents and skills that make surfing so meaningful for them and which apply to other career pursuits. Quite a few successful business owners I know use surfing as their place of sanctuary, to restore their sense of being. They later convert the skills and talents they employ on a surfboard to their careers, with moments of self truth around the freedom to be at one with nature, to have a balanced life in flow and to seize moments without overthinking things – just as they do when the wave emerges.

Understanding your self truth is not a literal thing. It's about looking for when you are at your MOST and using this understanding as a filter for decision-making throughout your life.

In applying this understanding, it's vital to apply it to your own unique circumstances.

So, follow these steps:

1. First and most importantly, when pondering what to do with your Moment of Self Truth, assess the world you're in. If you are a student, it's the subculture of a university or a school campus, with parents still a major force and teachers and lack of funds. If you're an accountant in a big firm, know the office, the bosses and the clients. If you're a graduate, you may have the necessity of being a job seeker. If you're a musician and want to earn a living from this, it's managers, record companies and venues.
2. Next, understand this environment in a deeper way by working out the emotional drivers of people you need to influence in that environment. What do they desire, what are they scared by and frustrated by. This will enable you to picture their psyches, so you can best apply your self truth into that. A common mistake is to 'be yourself' and not care about anyone else. That's fine if you plan to live in a cave. However, if you have desires to be successful in a modern day community, while being true to yourself, you need to understand those you must influence.
3. Finally, and most crucially, you must then match your MOST to that world. This means carefully examining what you have *for them*. This is the point of the process of relevance where you need to deeply consider how your MOST can deliver on their emotive drivers. If the answer is you can't match the two – then get the hell out and don't look back!!

This is the crucial order of discovery and application. You can't skip a step nor can you fool yourself. This is the way to honestly match your MOST with the world you find yourself in so as to create your ideal path or to show you the need to exit.

The understanding of environment is the lynchpin, as it cements

your potential into reality. In my world, I wanted a family with three kids, good schooling and lots of global adventures to ensure my kids learnt more than the three Rs. Robyn and I wanted more than a creative writing studio. So, our collective views of our MOST, with the world we chose to exist in. This meant compromise and clear choices of commerciality. But compromise is fine, if you are the one making those decisions.

The bottom line is that this exercise allows you to match your natural greatness and potential with the sort of place you need to be. In my world, it gave me a clear road map for how to run the six agencies and position them in such a way that was true to my MOST but was also in line with market needs and our family aspirations and values.

It directed my businesses away from marketing services into creative impact and thought leadership, driven by creative and fresh perspective that would not merely aim to sell more shit people don't need, but rather inspire teams to create great businesses of relevance and impact. This was my necessity and I had to find innovative ways to fuel my family needs and be at my MOST. It was a challenge worth taking.

This point of relevance was the secret sauce, as I could point my knowledge of my true self at the needs of the market. If I was wrong, it would be on my terms. As it turns out, I picked it right. It also meant I came across, even in the early years, as authentic and real. I was not pitching ideas and prostituting creativity. I was being something, for business leaders and teams, that injected creative thinking and changed fortunes.

Those four deconstructed truths from my Moment of Self Truth, became the four words that drive the culture of every agency I created.

CREATE INSPIRE THINK CHANGE

In my case I broke it down in the following way, based entirely on deconstructing my moment on stage during Lectern Rock:

1. **First and foremost, I must create the ideas, thoughts and written content that enable me to be the most in this moment. For me, this is about fresh ideas, great words, big moments of creative impact and theatre. This is the most fun of it all as I get to dream things up, write ideas and create stuff no-one else can.**
2. **Then, I have come to understand that for me, it's not enough to leave this in the top draw. I must do something with this created idea. I must deliver it in an inspiring way that is new, evocative and provocative. It must be a way that inspires others.**
3. **Most importantly, this creative offering that is designed to inspire people, must then lead to them thinking differently. It must be a step into something new. It can't just be entertainment; it must provoke thought – and new thought at that! It must be good enough to enter deep into people's heads and poke at their psyche for days to come.**
4. **And finally, this entire moment must lead to change for people. That is my objective; to change the way people think and act. To change their business, their views or their thoughts, so they in turn can create positive change in their lives.**

This is my deconstruction of a single moment which in turn changed my life.

Most pleasingly, over twenty years on from understanding my truth, I was able to go the full circle on this belief, taking the Be

WHAT IS YOUR TRUTH?

Counsel from Daniel and rebadging it 50 Crates. I worked with my team to rethink our single-minded focus, based on the belief of Create Inspire Think Change. It led us to a pure version of an agency that has resonated with a new breed of clients, hungry to gain inspired creative thinking in order to change their brand.