



# Up with DOWNTIME

**I**N 2011, ALAN RUSBRIDGER – VERY MUCH AN amateur pianist – decided to learn and perform in public one of the most notoriously difficult of piano pieces, Frédéric Chopin’s Ballade No. 1. At the time, Rusbridger had a very full-time job as Editor-in-Chief of *The Guardian* newspaper, which he described as a life of “low-level stress ... with periodic eruptions of great tension.” As chance would have it, 2011 also turned out to be one of the busiest years of his professional career – the phone-hacking scandal was roiling his profession and WikiLeaks was making its first appearance on the scene.

Nevertheless, he succeeded – and even found time to write and publish a diary about the experience. In *Play it Again: An Amateur Against the Impossible* Rusbridger describes his “experiment in how to use your spare time, how to relish – and revel in – being an amateur.” And he addresses the question so many of us ask: do

Activities  
outside of work  
are as important  
to success as  
work itself, says  
Brunswick’s  
**NICK  
LOVEGROVE**

we have the time, energy and commitment to do anything meaningful outside of work?

“Yes, there’s time,” he writes, “no matter how frantically busy one’s life. ... More than that, by making time, life improves: under the great pressure and stress of the year, I’ve discovered the value of having a small escape valve – something so absorbing, so different, so rebalancing.”

Most assume success comes from an obsessive focus on a singular professional objective – encapsulated in Malcolm Gladwell’s “10,000-hour rule,” and Peter Thiel’s even more compulsive philosophy, outlined in his book *Zero to One*.

Gladwell and Thiel are right – it does take sustained dedication to attain world-class expertise in any domain. But they imply that real success comes only from concentrating on one thing to the exclusion of all others. This logic underpins the increasingly pervasive obsession with the power of narrow specialist expertise.

In designing our lives, each of us has a choice: greater breadth or greater depth. If we always choose depth and narrow focus, then we all too easily become “one-trick ponies,” defined and contained by the limited parameters of our one trick – and we lose much that makes us special and distinctive. Rusbridger’s experience suggests a different and better way – that life, personally and professionally, is most fully lived as a mosaic, encompassing a rich set of diverse experiences that provide purpose, meaning, happiness and success. Research supports this broader approach with three important insights.

First, we are more likely to be happy if we have a broad range of personal interests and activities. In his book *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Jonathan Haidt offers the equation  $H=S+C+V$  – happiness (H) equals the sum of our genetic set-point (S) plus the conditions (C) of our lives plus the voluntary (V) activities that build upon our strengths and give us satisfaction. He shows that the factor we have the most control over, V, is also the one that will most positively influence our happiness equation.

Second, voluntary activities may not be just for fun – they may meaningfully enhance our capability and effectiveness. For instance, a study by Dr Michael Gazzaniga suggests that studying the performing arts improves one’s ability to learn anything else. As other studies have shown, both entrepreneurs and Nobel Prize-winning scientists are more likely to have leisure-time involvement in the arts. This is the cultural equivalent of cross-training. Just as runners enhance their physical performance through swimming, cycling and yoga, our intellectual and creative capabilities benefit from exercise outside the arena of the workplace.

Third, the digital age has sparked a renewed amateur or voluntary spirit, enabling the rise of a participatory culture and economy that seemed lost to us in the second half of the 20th century. Artistic product can be made and distributed easily; our passion can leap quickly from pure hobby to part-time income; we can transition from creative amateur to semi-professional.

There’s no pre-set formula for building a broader mosaic life – but there is a natural sequence from “baby steps” to full-on engagement. Initially, we may choose just to read and research about an interest – to learn something new each week, just as we used to do in high school and college. Then we may begin to network, seeking kindred spirits and the collaborative energy of shared enterprise. Ultimately, we may choose to

engage more fully with meaningful amounts of time by volunteering, studying and other forms of cross-training – even to the point of making our part-time hobby into our full-time job.

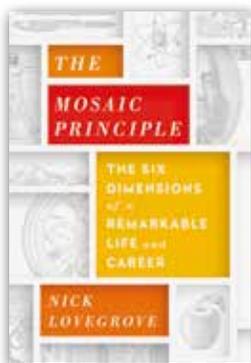
How much time do we actually have to pursue our wider interests? Well, as Rusbridger’s experiment illustrated, for most people the answer is “less than you would like, but more than you think.” British writer Arnold Bennett, in his 1910 treatise *How to Live on 24 Hours a Day*, observes that, “the supply of time is truly a daily miracle.” He suggests that outside of work, we should pursue a productive and engrossing hobby or passion, since that will “quicken the whole life of the week, add zest to it, and increase the interest which you feel in even the most banal occupations.”

But what about the 10,000-hour rule? Well in our working lives, we probably have more than 75,000 hours; and in our lives outside work and sleep, at least another 75,000 hours. That should be enough to do something meaningful with our “spare” time, and to design a fuller life.

**NICK LOVEGROVE** is US Managing Partner for Brunswick and the author of *THE MOSAIC PRINCIPLE: The Six Dimensions of a Remarkable Life and Career*, published by Public Affairs in November 2016.

## THE 6 DIMENSIONS OF THE MOSAIC PRINCIPLE

**LIFE is lived to the fullest as a mosaic, encompassing a rich set of personal and professional experiences. The 6 DIMENSIONS of the Mosaic Principle are:**



- 1 DEVELOP AND APPLY A MORAL COMPASS**  
A coherent purpose and set of motivations allows us to resolve complex moral and ethical conflicts
- 2 DEFINE AN INTELLECTUAL THREAD** The pursuit of breadth should have substantive focus and insight to avoid becoming random or quixotic
- 3 DEVELOP A SET OF TRANSFERABLE SKILLS**  
Our foundation of abilities should be common to all our pursuits
- 4 INVEST IN CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE**  
We need to be sensitive, responsive and adaptable to different contexts and operating conditions
- 5 BUILD EXTENDED NETWORKS** Diverse and authentic relationships across different walks of life can cultivate new experiences and outlooks
- 6 DEVELOP A PREPARED MIND** We should be ready to accept more varied and challenging opportunities when they present themselves

When we follow the Mosaic Principle, we choose breadth over depth and narrow focus; we observe through a wider lens; we enhance our specialist skills; and we adopt a broad-minded approach – tolerant, empathetic and understanding of those who differ from us. We intentionally design our lives to embody the colorful and multi-faceted unity of the mosaic.