



HONEYBEE CAPITAL

BONUS MINI-ISSUE: HIGHLIGHTS FROM TED2012 **MARCH 2012**

TOP TALKS FROM TED 2012

As many loyal Honeybee readers know, I've found the TED ecosystem to be a wonderful resource for all sorts of interesting ideas over time, from the highly technical to the deeply human (sometimes both at once). Surely a number of themes from this year's gathering will loop back to inform more complete Honeybee explorations over time, but in the meantime here is the short list of my favorites. They are gradually coming up for viewing on the TED website, and you can put yourself on their email list if you want to be notified of new postings as they occur.

I've listed these roughly in order from more science-focused to more personally-focused (though the distinction is sometimes not so obvious). Interestingly, audience reaction was strongest by far for the last few on our list (the most human-centric). This may surprise some, given the generally tech-y and executive-y crowd; at any rate, it gives me great hope that the specialized labels we all have for ourselves do not mean terribly much when compared to all we have in common.

REGINA DUGAN, HEAD OF DARPA

* *Dugan left DARPA for Google just after the conference.*

- Curiously, Dr. Dugan spoke quite a bit about fear: "When you're avoiding fear, great things cannot happen – good things, yes, but not great ones."
- She also talked a LOT about nature-inspired technology – gekko-toe-like fasteners, the hummingbird drone, and more.
- They really do work on some crazy stuff there, like hypersonic flight (Mach20 – from NY to CA in 11 minutes!) and a tiny hummingbird drone that weighs less than an AA battery. "There's no way to learn how to fly like a hummingbird, unless you fly."
- Who are these people at DARPA? "They are the nerds – and they are heroes among us. Be nice to nerds."
- Get in touch with your inner superhero! What would you attempt if you knew you could not fail? There isn't anyone else, there's just you.

- When asked about the terrifying potential for unintended consequences of their work – “there’s the tremendous lift of what’s possible – and the tremendous weight of what it means.”
- FastCompany also ran an interesting feature on Dr. Dugan and DARPA recently: <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/160/regina-dugan-darpa>
- Here is the link to her TED talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/regina_dugan_from_mach_20_glider_to_humming_bird_drone.html

DONALD SADOWAY, MATERIALS ENGINEER, MIT – BATTERIES FROM DIRT!

- Dr. Sadoway was one of the most riveting speakers, and his presentation technology of choice was..... a blackboard. With colored chalk. Awesome.
- On our search for energy: “we can’t bomb our way out, we can’t drill our way out... we’re gonna invent our way out.”
- “If you wanna make something dirt cheap, make it out of dirt.”
- Their technology is a combination of high salt & liquids – this allows super-high conductivity (got the idea from modern aluminum smelting).
- Layers of light metal (Mg), salt, dense metal (Sb – antimony). Alloy is formed by Mg and Sb... extra electrons flow out. Then reverse the current and the elements re-separate.
- LMBC – their company – expect to offer a 2MW storage product in a 40 foot shipping container. No, I don’t know where they’re going to get all that antimony.
- Silent, emissions-free, remotely controlled, designed to meet market price point WITHOUT SUBSIDY.
- Limits of specialization: he emphasized that grad students did this work – battery experts did not do this. Aside from the cool tech, he thinks they’ve provided a blueprint for inventing inventors.
- Here is the company website: <http://lmbcorporation.com/>
- And here is his talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/donald_sadoway_the_missing_link_to_renewable_energy.html

ATUL GAWANDE, SURGEON/JOURNALIST

- Many of you have probably read Dr. Gawande’s writings in the New Yorker, or his acclaimed book, The Checklist Manifesto. It strikes me that there are many parallels between the challenges in medicine and those in finance – more to come on this topic!
- “We’re all specialists now... we can’t know it all.”
- In 1970, for each hospital admission there were 2 professionals caring for a patient (usually a doctor and a nurse). Now there are 15 !

- You'd think this is great, all that additional expertise, but there is danger in fragmentation – **the sum of all the best parts does not make the best whole.**
- What's needed for this complex model to work: HUMILITY. DISCIPLINE. TEAMWORK. I don't know about you, but these are not the words that come to mind when I think of a typical surgeon.
- His checklist model for surgeries (and other processes) is hugely effective, but often so hard to implement – he did not discuss this part in depth, but it seems to me that it feels somehow demeaning to use a checklist, even when you know it saves lives. How important could your job be if it can be done (or done better) with a checklist? Of course this isn't reality, but we aren't talking about reality, we're talking about human motivation....
- Here is Dr. Gawande's website: <http://gawande.com/>
- And here is his talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/atul_gawande_how_do_we_heal_medicine.html

CHIP KIDD – GRAPHIC DESIGNER, AUTHOR

- This was the funniest talk by far, and still full of meaningful content.
- Also, Chip Kidd went to my high school! So I might be biased. But really, it was a small school - I never get to say that!
- Trio of responsibilities for a designer: to the reader, publisher, author.
- The key question is, "what do the stories look like?" (I do not think many book designers actually ask this question – but when you look at Kidd's books you can see he does. He did the water-soaked cover for Augusten Borrough's *Dry*, for example, and the partly-hidden portrait for the cover of Marukami's crazy *1Q84* novel. There is not a "Chip Kidd look"; rather you can see how each cover relates to the story inside.)
- The first rule of design – **tell or show**. Not both. You can have a picture of an apple, or the word apple. Unless you are teaching very small children.
- On his dislike of the TED rockstar-style microphones: "I strongly prefer a standing mike. It is the sensible shoe of public speaking."
- You can see an archive of Kidd covers here – this explains things better than anything else: http://bookcoverarchive.com/Chip_Kidd
- And here is his talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/chip_kidd_designing_books_is_no_laughing_matter_ok_it_is.html

FRANK WARREN, POST SECRET

- This review is short and sweet, just to say, if you haven't heard of Post Secret, check it out!
- People send him their secrets – in artsy form, in audio form, in plain old written form... and they are published online and in books.

- This exercise raises fascinating questions about the nature of secrecy – both personal and social. What is taboo? Why do we keep secrets? Some are funny, some are sweet, some are heartbreaking, some are awful...
- And the flip side, why are we so fascinated by other people's secrets? I picked up one of the books in the bookstore and didn't look up for an hour.
- Here is the site, with new entries published each Sunday:
<http://www.postsecret.com/>

SUSAN CAIN – THE POWER OF INTROVERTS!

- Are your books your friends? This is not so weird! Introverts just thrive in different sorts of social settings; they don't dislike society.
- Susan makes some important distinctions:
 - introvert does not equal shy
 - introvert does not equal isolated
 - introvert does not equal misanthrope
- And yet, schools and workplaces are mainly devised for extroverts, and creativity is presumed to be linked to gregarious group activity – though there is no evidence that this makes sense. **“There is zero correlation between the best talker and the best idea. I mean, zero.”**
- Suggestions:
 1. Stop the madness for group work in all situations – just stop it.
 2. Go to the wilderness once in a while – even if you're an extrovert.
 3. Look inside your own “suitcase” – what is there, and why?
- We see some powerful lessons here for business and finance, and are already working our way through Susan's recent book, Quiet.
- In the meantime, here are links to her site and her talk:
<http://www.thepowerofintroverts.com/>
http://www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts.html

BRENE BROWN, Vulnerability researcher

- Brene became a TED cult favorite after her talk in Houston last year – when you watch her talk, you'll see why this was a challenge for her.
- Dr. Brown's work – surprisingly, even to her – centers on vulnerability, imperfection, shame, and courage.
- On dreading her TED success -- “there was a part of me that was working very hard to stay small, just under the radar.”
- Her main message: **“vulnerability is not weakness”**.
- And yet, even after her big famous books and big famous talks, “lots of companies want me to speak, but they ask me not to talk about vulnerability – they want me to talk about creativity, innovation, and change. But vulnerability is the birthplace of creativity, innovation, and change.”

- “It wasn’t a breakdown, it was a frickin’ spiritual awakening!”
- Shame – it is not the same as guilt. Shame is about who we ARE, guilt is about what we DO.
- Shame needs secrecy, silence, and judgment to thrive. Therefore, “empathy is the antidote to shame”
- Here are links to her site and to both of her talks:
<http://www.brenebrown.com/>
http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html
http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame.html

BRYAN STEVENSON, Public interest lawyer – TOP SPEAKER BY FAR

- If you watch just one talk from this year, make it this one. Stevenson’s organization, the Equal Justice Initiative, works on issues around the death penalty, children in adult prisons, race and poverty, and prisons and sentencing reform.
- How compelling were his arguments? The audience rallied afterward (unbidden!) to summon over \$1m of immediate support for his work. *Everyone* leapt to their feet and would not stop applauding. I cannot properly convey it here; please watch the full talk as soon as it’s up.
- **“Our treatment of the rich and guilty is better than the poor and innocent... In too many places, the opposite of poverty is not wealth – it’s justice.”**
- Proximity – poverty in proximity to great wealth is traumatizing in a way that isolated poverty is not.
- In many cities, 50% of young men of color are incarcerated.
- In Alabama, 34% of all black men have permanently lost the right to vote due to convictions – worst % of voters since pre-Voting Rights Act.
- We ask, do they deserve to die – we should ask, do I deserve to kill?
- 1 in 9 death row convictions is overturned – a shocking error rate, and it’s not for widgets, its for lives.
- “If you lie, you’re not just a liar... Even if you kill someone, you’re not just a killer.”
- We have had no truth & reconciliation process for race in America – this seems normal to us, but on a global basis, it’s very unusual.
- Our current system doesn’t help victims either – everyone loses.
- Advice from Rosa Parks & her friends to him: **“It’s gonna be hard, hard, hard. That’s why you’ve got to be brave, brave, brave.”**
- Link to his group: www.eji.org
- And to his talk:
http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice.html

BONUS SECTION!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM TED FELLOWS AND SHORT TALKS:

All of these Fellows' talks can be found at <http://www.ted.com>.

AYAH BDEIR, LITTLE BITS

- Coolest product ever! Like electromechanical Legos.
- Get some for your kids, or the kid-like people in your life: <http://littlebits.cc>

GARY KOVACS, MOZILLA CEO – PRIVACY TRACKER, COLLUSION

- Kovacs gave a preview of Mozilla's new tracking product, Collusion.
- The design is really neat – it shows sites you directly visit, then who watches that, then who watches that.... It is super creepy, in no time at all there are groups gathering ALL of your internet data without any direct linking or consent on your part at all. So yes, pretty much everything you fear is true.
- <http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/collusion/>

SARAH PARCAK, SPACE ARCHEOLOGY

- Dr. Parcak has used infrared satellite imaging to discover 17 lost pyramids and huge settlements in the ancient (and buried) center of Egypt. Her work seems to show that only a tiny fraction of ancient Egypt has been explored.
- <http://www.sarahparcak.com/index2.php#/home/>

GREGORY GAGE, DIY NEUROSCIENCE

- Gage performed a live cockroach amputation and used his SpikerBox product to demonstrate the SOUND of neurons firing – totally mesmerizing, totally squirmy, totally unforgettable.
- <http://backyardbrains.com/Contact.aspx>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mKen7tCDCs>

ABIGAIL WASHBURN, BANJO

- Bluegrass player who sometimes sings in Chinese – need I say more?
- <http://www.abigailwashburn.com/website/>

ZENA EL KAHLIL, LEBANESE ARTIST

- "It's hard to find security, so I have to create my own."
- "Consumerism and war, they are one & the same"
- Zena has a striking series of photographs of herself in a pink glitter dress posing in the rubble around Beirut, amongst other works. She talked a lot about love versus fear, and managed to make her points global rather than

- very context-specific, which was not the easiest task.
- <http://ziggydoodle.com/page1.html>

CHRISTINE MARIE, SHADOW ARTIST

- “In Bali, the word for shadow is the same as the word for imagination.”
- Christine’s work is a cool sort of multi-media of shadow and dance; it was mesmerizing (and really interesting from a technical standpoint too!).
- http://www.cimimarie.com/christinemarie/christine_marie.html

MARC FORNES, COMPUTATIONAL ARCHITECT

- “I don’t write about space – I write space”
- Fornes writes code that then translates into these crazy sculptural shapes. I like that it’s very geeky and very beautiful at the same time.
- <http://theverymany.com/>

REUBEN MARGOLIN, KINETIC SCULPTOR

- “The earth is neither flat nor round– it’s wavy.” This reminds me of Benoit Mandelbrot describing his work: “most people like to study smooth things – I study roughness.”
- Margolin’s work is BEAUTIFUL. His first inspiration was to see if he could re-create the movement of an inchworm. He's also doing collaboration with Chunky Move dance troupe that’s on tour now, combining the sculpture (and light) with the dancers - pretty neat stuff.
- <http://reubenmargolin.com/>
- <http://chunkymove.com.au/our-works/current-productions/connected.aspx>