

Stand Out in a Crowded Market

Transcript and 10 Point Checklist Sally Hogshead

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- Take Sally Hogshead's Fascination Advantage assessment, free for our listeners with the code "GEEK"
- Read about your Advantages and your Archetype.
- Identify your wellspring—work that energizes you—and quicksand—work that exhausts you.
- Stop wasting your time with quicksand work! Delegate, discipline, or delete.
- Find out your employees' Advantages and wellspring/quicksand in order to make the best use of their talents.
- Having trouble motivating yourself to complete certain tasks? Move them earlier in the day so that you haven't used up your self-discipline.
- Throw out the office candy jar; the willpower that you waste resisting it could be used to power through projects.
- Use *every* interaction with potential and current customers as a chance to differentiate yourself from your competitors.
- Upgrade to a complete Fascination Profile and Personal Brand Kit to take advantage of Sally's years of expertise in branding.
- When are you most productive and creative? Reserve those hours for work, not leisure.

Transcript

SS: Hello and welcome to The Optimized Geek. I'm your host, Stephan Spencer, and today I have the distinct pleasure of inviting onto the show Sally Hogshead. I'm a huge fan of Sally, ever since I heard her speak at Traffic & Conversion Summit last year. She just knocked it out of the park. She was an incredible speaker, and it shows. Literally, one of the world's best. She had been inducted into the National

“She's also the author of two New York Times bestselling books, *Fascinate*, and *How the World Sees You*.”

Speakers Association Hall of Fame, and that is no small feat. Another one of our previous guests, Steve Spangler, [is] also a Hall of Fame inductee. It's a big deal. She's also the author of two New York Times bestselling books, *Fascinate*, and *How the World Sees You*, she's won more awards than any other US writer in her second year of advertising, she's been named the most

successful junior copywriter of all time, she founded her own ad agency by the age of 27 and worked with clients like Nike, and Godiva, Aflac, Mini Cooper... Just a who's who of some of the world's biggest brands. After spending a decade studying the world's biggest brands, working with them, she decided to switch to studying individuals and to create a system called the Fascination Advantage System, where she studied over a million people and brought out what really made them fascinating,



and so there's a whole system that I've actually used myself. It's really impressive. The idea here is not how you see the world—that's how most personality assessments work—but this is how the world sees you. And so, at your best, you want to present your best self, and that's how the Fascination Advantage system works. So, we're going to learn a lot more about fascination, how to be fascinating, how to incorporate that, weave that into your marketing, your brand positioning, everything that you do. Welcome, Sally, it's such a pleasure to have you on.

SH: I am so happy to be here, especially after that fabulous introduction. Thank you. I can go home now knowing that I've done my day's work.

SS: Well, like I said, you are an incredible speaker and you are so knowledgeable, you have to be one of the very best speakers I have ever heard, and I've heard a lot of speakers. I mean, I'm a seminar junkie. I go to multiple seminars a month, at least two or three or four. In fact, you were just at one of the seminars I attended, a Dan Kennedy event.

SH: Oh right, yes! For GKIC, of course, in Jacksonville.

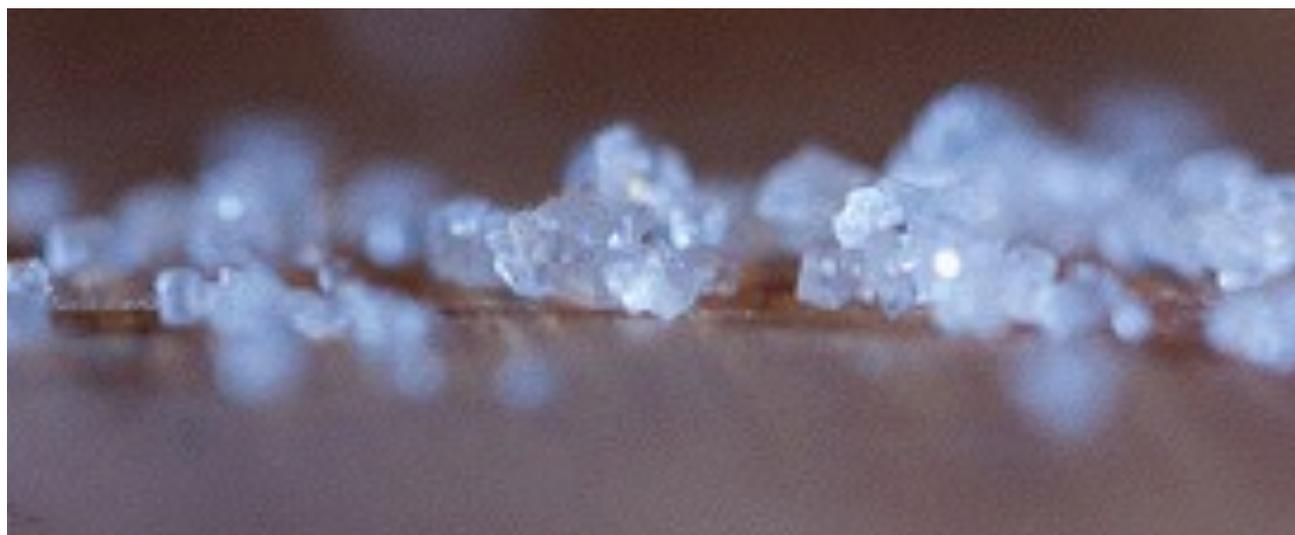
SS: Yep. Yep, and you crushed it there as well. Dan loves you, I mean the things that he said were so glowing about you, it was just really impressive. He doesn't say that about many people. I mean, I can't really recall...hardly...on one hand how many people he says such glowing comments about. Definitely well deserved. So let's jump in and talk about, first of all, what is a brand by your definition? I've heard many definitions. One of my favorites is that a brand is a promise, or a promise realized, so what is your definition of a brand and let's differentiate a brand for a company and a brand for a person.

SH: Excellent question. You know, it's so important to be able to start to make sure that we're using the same words, because a lot of times, if I'm using a word like "brand," and you're thinking about that as a marketing term and I'm thinking about it as a point of view on life, then we won't be able to be talking about the same stuff. Up until recently, brands were seen through the lens of classic marketing: your brand was your logo, the tone of voice that you used, the type of products that you had, but as the world became more complicated and more rich and more connected, now we think of brands as everything that the company stands for in terms of its tangible and intangible values. So, if you think of a company like AT&T, over the course of hundreds of years, they've invested billions of dollars in reinforcing very specific promises, and even though they introduce new products, it's all kind of based in the same goodie, the same essence. I'll give you a quick example: how much more do you think people would pay for one type of salt versus another type of salt if it was the exact same salt?

SS: Probably... ten times.

“After spending a decade studying the world's biggest brands, she decided to switch to studying individuals and to create a system called the Fascination Advantage System. The idea here is not how you see the world —that's how most personality assessments work—but this is how the world sees you.”

SH: Yeah, so here's what we learned: depending on the emotional attachment that you have to salt, people will pay an extraordinary amount more for a salt that they know versus a salt that they don't, even if the salt is the exact same, just on the basis of the logo. So, that's classic branding. But what's happening today is, we start thinking of ourselves, whether we're entrepreneurs or businesses or new products or start-ups or tech engineers or information marketers or search engine optimization consultants, for all of us, every single time we reach out and communicate and connect, we're either supporting or damaging our brand. Let me put it a different way: every time you communicate, you're doing one of two things—you are either adding value to your brand or you're taking up space and damaging your brand. And this isn't just true of advertising and marketing anymore. If you do a cold call, if you do a really crappy landing page, if you reach out to somebody in a flyer, a banner, even a prospecting call, and you just take up space without adding value, you have damaged your brand. Because today the expectation is that your brand is so much more than the color of your log and the way you shake hands when you walk in the room. And this is also the opportunity. You have so many touch points. A touch point is described as any time you interact with your consumer, your client, your customer, in *any* way, so if you can create a consistent experience in which



they come to expect certain qualities from you, and you can over-deliver consistently on those in a way that differentiates you, rises you above the fray so they're not stuck in the dog fight, the mud fight of how most communication works, it's going to be much easier for you to be able to succeed and move forward.

SS: Right, so what would, now you have some terminology that you incorporate, besides branding or brand, like "Archetype" and "Anthem." Let's define those for our listeners, too, because we're going to go into a deep dive around how to become more fascinating, so let's kind of define all the unique terminology up front, so that as we dig in, everyone's going to kind of be on the same page.

SH: Sure! Well, to start, why don't we begin with taking a look inside the golden

“why don't we begin with taking a look inside the golden hallways of high-end ad agencies? Like *Mad Men* c. 2005. It was during this amazing time in advertising that I had the chance to learn from the best of the best, but also to watch how does a brand create itself, how do people create a brand if you've got \$100,000,000 in two years?”

hallways of high-end ad agencies? Like *Mad Men* c. 2005. It was during this amazing time in advertising that I had the chance to learn from the best of the best, but also to watch how does a brand create itself, how do people create a brand if you've got \$100,000,000 in two years? So, it's not that advertising budgets aren't on a lean structure, but there's a lot more money to spend in an ad agency than there is if you're an entrepreneur or solopreneur. Usually, the process goes like this: we're advertising Mini Cooper, and we want to go find out who is the person most likely to buy a Mini Cooper. So you go all over the country and you do focus groups and you ask

people to give adjectives that describe what they think of the Mini Cooper, and you ask them to describe what kind of activities would you do with a Mini Cooper. And



the findings that came back were things like "It's cute. I want to hug it. It looks like a bulldog. I wouldn't want to go on a road trip. I'd want to have an adventure. I'd want to not worry about where I'm going but worry about the people that I'm with instead

while I'm going there..." And so it's through that kind of feedback that you can create a really good creative brief. And the creative brief gives everybody a very strong, specific, pointed view, almost like a North Star of what that brand should be. That's how it works in an ad agency. The problem is that, for most of us, we don't have an ad agency, and so I began to see that the world is split into these two different sides. There are the companies that can afford an ad agency, that are willing to spend a year and ten or hundreds of millions of dollars to get great work, and the rest of us, who can't afford somebody on Madison Avenue but still want great work, but we end up doing it ourselves and potentially damaging our brand. And so in the terms that you just described a moment ago, Stephan, what I'm doing is I'm taking the basic principles of world class ad agencies and deconstructing in a way that, even if you have never had a marketing class, even if you are not creative, you can still begin to apply the basic principles by having almost like a hack. You know, life hacks, growth hacks... You [can] almost think of this like a brand hack. It's a way to jump to the front of the line without having to go through all the expensive and laborious steps. And one example of that is the anthem. In advertising, the term "anthem" applies to the brand's very highest level, in other words, when Nike says, "Just do it," they are reflecting their anthem, and their anthem is "athletic empowerment," so they empower the athlete in all of us. Nike was the very first brand I ever worked on. My husband and I just bought a Tesla. Tesla's anthem is "breakthrough technology." So, when you have this shortcut, this kind of a two word phrase that everybody in the company can use as a filter to say, "Yes, that's on brand," or "No, that's going to confuse our consumer," it becomes really easy to make sure that everything moves forward in the same direction. But usually an anthem takes several creative directors, copywriters, strategic planners, media planners, account executives, and so on and so forth up the hierarchy. So I thought, *Well, what if I could take that and just sort of deconstruct the methodology that we were all using and make it available so that, in about three steps, anybody could create an anthem for any product or service or brand, even if it doesn't even have an advertising budget?*

SS: Right

SH: Well, pause there. So that's one example of the anthem.

SS: Yeah, so, one example that I can relate back to, before I even knew who you were, I had hired a PR agency for my previous [company] that I ended up selling. It was Netconcepts. And that agency had developed, for Cisco, the phrase "The human network—"

SH: Mm, I remember that!

SS: —which was really a great defining moment in their business, I think, because it humanized this giant faceless company that just didn't seem to have any kind of personality to it, for me [from] a consumer standpoint. So I loved, I got behind that phrase, "The human network," just as a consumer, before I knew the lady who

came up with that terminology. We'd hired her to help us with some PR as well, and that was kind of her claim to fame, that she had developed that brand anthem for Cisco. Pretty cool. I mean, it can really define a company over many, many years. Even, potentially, decades. So that's the brand anthem, and I am in the process of coming up with my own brand anthem for me personally as an SEO expert. I want to be known not just kind of the SEO guy, but I want to have a powerful brand anthem, so I purchased your program that you were offering at Jay Abraham's Power Practice event that you and I both spoke at.

“You can almost think of this like a brand hack. It’s a way to jump to the front of the line”

SH: Excellent!

SS: And I'm going through it, I'm just I think week three or week four, so I'm not through it yet, so I don't have my brand

anthem in hand, but I'm excited to have that, and then I'll be weaving that into all of my marketing and everything, and as you said earlier, it's really important to think of this not just as marketing but who you are in the world. If you as a person have at your best, you've defined your brand anthem, how you're going to add value to the world, not just in your business or in your career but also when you're donating your time in volunteer efforts or [...] creating a family, or [...] doing some sort of passion project, so important to have that brand anthem, because it really defines your path as well as who you are. So, we were going to also cover another term that is very related, and that's the Archetype, because that gives you insight into who you are, not from an [...] inside looking out perspective but from the outside looking in. So, other people see you at your best as this Archetype. If you could describe how that works, and I know what mine is: I'm the victor. It has two components, your primary and your secondary core attributes...I forget the exact word you used.

SH: Advantages.

SS: Advantages, thank you. So yeah, let's define the Archetype

SH: Sure, and we can also see how it begins to tie together. I do want to take a step back and say, for the first half of my career, I helped brands find the perfect words to describe themselves in the marketplace. That's what I love most, I mean it's just like a hot fudge sundae for me to be able to work with a brand on identifying what those differentiating qualities are, and so this whole system is built around what makes you different, so that you can stand out in a crowded environment,

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so that people listening can take action, so you can become most influential and not only make the first impression but sustain those relationships over time for loyalty and to be able to get those referrals, but the system is consistent between individuals and with brands. And now we'll begin to see how. When I first started studying brands about ten years ago after I left advertising and was getting ready to write my first book, I found through my research that all communication can be put into seven different categories. Every political speech, every novel, every advertisement. For example, a message that communicates with passion is

“A touch point is described as any time you interact with your consumer, your client, your customer, in *any* way, so if you can create a consistent experience in which they come to expect certain qualities from you, and you can over-deliver consistently on those in a way that differentiates you”

emotional, it grips us by our heart, it uses adjective, it tells stories, it doesn't use facts and figures, it doesn't use a rational play, and instead it brings people in and it has an advantage in making connections very quickly, getting people fired up, getting them to post online and getting them to take motion, it's almost like building a movement. Well that's very very different, that type of advantage, that passion, the language of relationship. Some brands fit that perfectly, like Nike for example. Other brands do not at all. Let's take a look at an Alert brand. Alert is the language of details. A good example would be an accounting firm. They're extremely focused on

precision, the budgets, the deadlines, the timelines, they don't use adjectives, they use nouns. They like to make sure that everything has been accounted for. Internally, these companies tend to have a structure in which there's a paper trail for everything, things are planned out far in advance, there's no ambiguity, creativity is an enemy. So if you look at these two polar opposites, and I've kind of intentionally made them polar opposites, you can see that the passion brand is ushy gushy chocolate chip pancakes on a Saturday morning, and that's why people gravitate towards those brands. On the other hand, the Alert brands keep us safe. So imagine you're going in for surgery, you don't necessarily want the surgeon who's going to give you a big old hug on the operating table, you want the one who's done his research, who's got an A in medical school, who has every single algorithm measured in his head, and what I began seeing is you can take any message and you can start to lay it out according to this criteria. And the more you understand what your brand's advantage is, in other words how your brand is going to most effectively captivate and inspire and attract and influence your listener, whether it's a consumer, a client, a customer, then you're going to be far more effective, so instead of spending more money on marketing, you can just hone in on

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this language that you naturally speak and find a way to not just interest people but to captivate them, to fascinate them so they're listening only about you.

SS: Great, so an example of a great Alert brand might be Lifelock. You don't need them to be all passionate and exciting and chocolate sundae sort of thing because you just don't want to have your identity stolen. That's pretty simple, and you don't



want any mistakes in terms of them dropping the ball—

SH: Excellent example.

SS: You want to make sure that you can completely trust 100% of the time, they're going to deliver.

SH: Yeah, exactly, that's a great example, that precision is the reason why you hire them, keeping you safe is the reason why you hire them, and the more that they exacerbate the problem of what happens when your identity is stolen, the more effective their marketing's going to be. But that would be probably not the best marketing language for, say, a water park or a yoga studio or a clothing brand. And so, here's the good news: there's seven different Advantages and it's very easy for you to establish what your brand is, but once somebody hands you those words, it's almost like being given a starting point, so when I started my research on individuals, I found that individuals—people—our personal brands, we have a primary Advantage and a secondary Advantage. The primary Advantage is the way in which you communicate at your most confident, when you're in the flow, when people are listening to you, so like Stephan, you have a primary Prestige Advantage. That means you want higher standards, you want people to rise to the next level, and when you communicate in that way, people are very likely to be impressed, to listen, and to take action. Well the same is true if you were a Prestige brand, if you were a brand that people wanted to hire because it was aspirational, a brand that people wanted to buy, people pay more for it, they show it off more, and it comes down to the language of excellence.

SS: Curiously, I've actually—one of my good friends in the industry thought, "Stephan, you might have Impostor Syndrome, because of this, that, and the other thing," and I'm thinking, Wow. I'm starting to read up on this, I'm like Wow, *if I do not present myself as my most confident, most kind of prestigious thought leader type self, if I kind of doubt myself [...]* I don't know how much our listeners know about Imposter Syndrome, I'm actually going to have an episode all about Imposter Syndrome with an expert on that topic, but it's interesting if you take the kind of you at your worst Imposter Syndrome, you don't show up powerfully because you feel like you're a poser a fake, and then you at your best where you're all Prestige and delivering from this powerful, confident place, so what would you recommend that somebody do to be their best self, so where they're in their primary Advantage, whatever it is, so for me it's Prestige, and kind of they're in the flow and so forth, that's great. They show up powerfully and they can create marketing that matches that advantage, and yet when you don't show up powerfully, and you're doubting yourself or you're just not in the best state, you're not in flow, kind of everything is a wreck. Do you have any recommendations, like any rituals or processes that you go through to step into that best self?

SH: Yes, absolutely. Great question. And we've all had this happen: we step into a situation in which we have one expectation and then we realize that what our listener or audience expects is something completely different, and it's, it can throw us off kilter and demoralize us, and I'll give you a quick example. I went to my, when I was an advertising creative director, I got a phone call from a fabulously cool use brand, we'll say, let's say it's like Mountain Dew. It wasn't Mountain Dew, but let's say it's like Mountain Dew. So they come in like "We would love to be able to learn how you could create our new advertising," so they flew me up to New York, and we had this huge meeting, and in my mind, based on everything that I knew about the brand, I thought that they wanted something that was going to be



revolutionary and ground-breaking and change the word. And so, I was building this initial pitch presentation around the concept of innovation. Innovation is one of the seven Advantages, just like Passion and Alert, which we just covered,

but Innovation is the language of creativity. It's all about change and being irreverent and finding new entrepreneurial ways of living in the world, so I went in, I started talking to them like "Wow, I can change everything for you," and I saw the look of fear in their eyes and I realized they were not actually an innovation brand. This brand was privately held, they all had great jobs, their sales had started to dip, they didn't want the world to change, they wanted the world to stay the same. So, there was something that was deeply incongruous between what the company was and what the brand was, and in order for me to work with them, I had to work with them as a trust brand, meaning "It's okay, we're going to stay on track, no surprises, we're going to keep doing things the same way," but at the same time deliver for their consumers, who were definitely innovation-based. So Stephan, the example that you asked me was what happens when there's a break, and what I got out of that experience was that, for two years, I had to work in a way that was totally inconsistent with what my ideal creative process is because I was being judged based on the spread sheets and Excel docs and, like super micromanaged, and that's simply not how I'm designed to perform and over-deliver. So I have three recommendations, because we watched high performers turn into underachievers when they're put in the same situation. The first thing that you need to do, if, say if I'm really good at creating emotion, I'm really good at speaking the language of creativity, but [...] for me, speaking the language of details is exhausting, it drains me, and it kind of ruins the possibility of me contributing in other areas, so it's really important for me to avoid getting sucked into the weeds of details. So the first thing that I could do in order to have a successful result, number one, is I could delegate. I could find a team member who excels in the area of details and is energized by them. I could partner with him or her or I might even outsource it by hiring a contractor. The second thing I could do is I could discipline myself, and by that I mean I could say, "Okay, details are very draining to me, it feels like moving through quicksand, but I have to do that in order to be successful in this, so I'm going to block off one hour a day or I'm just going to completely immerse myself so that I'm not going to allow my energy reserves and my capacity on this job to run out before the end of the day." The third thing that I could do is I could delete. So we've talked about delegate, and then discipline, and now delete. When you delete something, you take it off the table as something that's going to be part of the equation. As an example, as we know I abhor details. I loathe them. I will do anything to get around them, because when I'm involved in details, it puts me in a completely different thought space from actually contributing to things. And I know that other people can do it far better than I can. So when it comes to things like expense reports, I don't want to spend any time on expense reports at all because I find that it ruins the enthusiasm and connectedness of any type of client-vendor relationship. So instead of focusing on "Wow, that presentation was great!" or "Thank you for this amazing job you just did! We appreciate you worked over the weekend! Thank you for getting us a two % better return than we had hoped!" all of the sudden it becomes about the freaking expense report. So, do you know what I'm talking about?

SS: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

SH: Yeah! You spend two months talking about what it could be, what the vision could be, you spend a month in the vision, and then you spend a month after talking about, "Okay, where did you park? And where's the receipt?" So I decided that I was just going to, that...I don't want to burst the happy bubble, so I.. we don't do expense reports anymore. So I deleted it, meaning I took off the table



and we just do a flat fee. So just to review, the first thing you can do is you can delegate, either with a team member, bringing somebody in, asking somebody for whom that is their wellspring to do it, you can discipline by just putting your head down and knowing it's going to be tough but you get it done and give yourself the space to be in pain, because it sucks, and then third, to delete by finding a creative way to take it off the table.

SS: Well I totally relate to your story of the quote-unquote Mountain Dew client, because I had a client too who, let's just say that their name was Chanel. It might've been Chanel, actually it was Chanel...but... Super frustrating. Culturally they were very risk-averse. Trying to do SEO to a brand website where it's all imagery and there's no text and they don't want it any different is very difficult and I did not know what I was getting into when I signed up for that. It was frustrating. And yet their brand does not portray risk-averse right? Complete disconnect. So what I experienced culturally within the company, in their New York offices, and what I experienced out in the world, their brand...completely different. So I can see where that disconnect or that incongruity can lead to a lot of frustration with partners and vendors and so forth and those kind of relationships, it's certainly frustrating for me. So I totally relate, and let's dig deeper into this idea of the wellspring and the quicksand, because these are terms that probably our listeners are not using in their regular lexicon [...] These are terms that you use, though, in relation to your work, and one piece of advice that you had given me after your presentation at Jay Abraham's event, and listeners, by the way, there's a fantastic interview I did of Jay on Marketing Speak that is a must listen, so definitely go check out that episode. I'll put a link to it in the show notes. So, one thing you

gave, one piece of advice that was really valuable, Sally, was you said, "Ask your candidates that you're looking to hire what their wellspring is and what their quicksand is." And I had not used those terms before, and it just made a ton of sense when you [said that in] an interview, this is perhaps a contractor or an employee, doesn't matter, but you want to understand what their wellspring is and their quicksand is. What do those terms mean and why do we want to know that?

SH: Yeah, there's look, when your employees or partners or family members or kids or anybody that you're around, when they feel energized and they feel in the flow and they're confident and they're having fun and they want to sink their teeth into whatever they're doing, you know that they're going to have an awesome result and that's going to be a key part of you building an amazing culture. When—my husband and I are a blended family. We have eight kids between the two of us, so family dinners are really important to us. We have five kids in college. So when those five kids come home, we spend a lot of time thinking about how we can have the kind of conversation where it naturally rolls, everybody is self-expressed and there aren't awkward pauses or people feeling like they're excluded. So any type of great engagement, whether it's you with your hobby or your family around a dinner table, I call a wellspring. It's a situation that allows you to fully apply your natural advantages, so you're able to be the best you are. You're energized, you're focused, and in those moments, the tasks that you're designed to accomplish become very very easy. You probably know, there are those moments when you're sitting down at your computer or doing whatever you do in your work when all of a sudden the ideas start to flow and time goes by quickly and it feels like, "Wow, this is what I'm really meant to do." For me, when I'm sitting down and writing headlines, in other words short format copy, it draws upon that training that I had for ten years in advertising in which it wasn't stringing together 100,000 words, it was writing something that mm! mm! mm! was immediately going to communicate a concept in an extremely powerful way, so that feels like wellspring to me. On the other hand, when I was writing my last two books that were 80- and 100,000 words each, it was incredibly draining, it took so much discipline. Remember a moment ago, I was describing [...] if you have a task that you're not ideally suited for, you should delegate, delete, or discipline, and I had to do all three of those, mostly I had to discipline. It was one of the hardest things I ever did and I found that, as I was working in this format that was so unnatural for me and so, it was not unfamiliar, because I've written four books but it was just...my ADD mind doesn't put things together sequentially in chapter format the way Harper Collins tends to like. So what I learned was, I should not approach, I should not actively seek opportunities to do 80- or 100,000 word manuscripts because it's discouraging for me, I don't show up at my best, it takes a disproportionate amount of energy. So that's me. I think for all of us, we have certain areas that give wellspring. Let's take a completely different type of personality, let's take Dan Kennedy. Dan Kennedy, for those of you who don't know, he's one of the world's most respected copywriters, and he's sometimes affectionately nicknamed "the millionaire-maker" because he brings so many people into their ultimate potential. His wellspring is to be able to sit and think through concepts with intensity, all the

way through every single micro step of the strategy. His quicksand is any kind of emotional connection in which he has to fake interest and go up and give people hugs at cocktail parties, he hates hugging strangers more than anything. Jay Abraham, a wonderful mutual friend, and I adore the man, his wellspring is coming up with ideas very very rapidly in a nonlinear way. We've had calls where I would, I type very fast, or I would have the call transcribed, and I would just go through and capture everything that he said, and after the call what I did is I collected his ideas into almost like a mind map, and he said to me, "You know, I

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think so fast that I'm not able to create these connections. This was very helpful." On the other hand, quicksand for Jay is when he has to go through and micromanage his own thinking and go through a very formalized script and go through the details in a way that doesn't allow him any kind of creative freedom. So we've just talked about three different types of people. how about you, Stephan, what would you say is your wellspring and quicksand?

SS: Well, for me, wellspring, and let me just make a connection here that's going to be instructive for our listeners. You mentioned flow, well there's a book called

Flow by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi—Mihaly, did I say that right? That's a very hard—

SH: You did, you did, it's not an easy one!

SS: Yeah, it's a great book, and then there's another book that's also on the topic of getting into a flow state called The Rise of Superman by Steven Kotler, and both are excellent, but the idea of getting into that flow state where it just feels like you are, like time just is non-existent and you are able to perform at levels that are at least five times better than your normal. That's amazing. Like you can do a day's worth of work and it equals out a week's worth when you're in a flow state, so that wellspring for me includes creativity. So I've done StrengthsFinder, of course I've done the fascination test too, but what I found with the StrengthsFinder test, which I saw was mentioned on your website somewhere, I like that test too, and it was developed by the Gallup folks, my top five strengths—futuristic, input, which is basically I have a huge file cabinet for a brain, I can remember so much, number three is ideation and then four is strategic and fifth is learner. So I'm, I just absorb stuff like a sponge, I'm constantly learning, and I find ways to morph something

that's in the huge file cabinet of my brain, like a past campaign, into something that is relevant and powerful and strategic for a client. So, I'm in my flow like if I'm brainstorming, like I was just brainstorming podcast names and it came within ten minutes and the tag line. They would have, they would have just been caught in the weeds for hours upon hours if I wasn't there to help them. And it's a great name and it's really creative, so the brand that I've come up with in just ten minutes of brainstorming with them was "Dollars and Nonsense."

SH: Oh! That's awesome!

SS: And I checked to see, are there books or podcasts or whatever by that name? Nope. Boom.

SH: What did, you know, and this is really what marketers and entrepreneurs and thought leaders and visionaries do at their best: that wasn't ten minutes! That was your entire lifetime of training and inspiration that you're able to call it forth in a state of flow.

SS: Yeah, and also my unique God-given talents and attributes that I didn't have to earn, I was just born with a really big brain, and I'm very grateful for that, and I use that as much as I can for the betterment of humanity because I was gifted that. So. For me, the quicksand is similar to yours: details. Although I'm really good at spotting the details, and I get really annoyed by them, like I just discovered something with one of my websites just a few minutes ago and I'm like "Arg!" and nobody would have spotted that for months, so I can hone in and find these things, like I could be a really good grammar and typographical type spotter, editor, and it would drive me insane, because I hate finding all that stuff, but I'm really good at finding it. So, I don't know if that's a quicksand; it's draining to me, but I'm also good at it. So, I don't know. What would you think?

SH: The question is, is it your best and highest use?

SS: Oh heck no.

SH: Like I can take out the trash, that doesn't mean that doing that versus spending time with my kids is the best and highest use.]

SS: Yeah, but I also think there's this component where quicksand is draining for you, right? And, like willpower is a finite resource, and as the say wanes on, you are not well equipped to say no to things like the candy jar at the receptionist desk, so you need to be very cognizant about how you're using and wasting your willpower, like if you have a candy bowl in your office, throw the damn thing away because you are squandering precious will power that you could be using for really important things like getting that 80,000 word book finished.

SH: Now this to me is incredibly compelling, so can I ask you a question about

what you just described?

SS: Yeah.

SH: When we're working on a project or an assignment or in a relationship in which it requires a tremendous amount of willpower, and by that I mean the opposite of flow, where we have to actually push ourselves and engage, it's not happening quickly and easily, do you think that then leaves us open to, for example, not work out when we should, or not reach out to people who can replenish us...unhealthy behaviors?

SS: Oh for sure, for sure. I mean, we need to be strategic about our whole lives and how we allocate not just our time but which are our most valuable blocks of time, like if we wait to work out until the end of the day and we know that's an area where we need willpower because we're just not going to do it on our own, do it in the morning then. right? Otherwise it's too easy to drop that off and it's like, "Oh, I'll work out another day." So you need to be really strategic about not just allocation of time but allocation of willpower.

SH: When are you most productive, like let's take working out?

SS: I'm most productive, like I'm most in a flow state in the evenings.

SH: Interesting, okay so then would it be important to you to not schedule social events or other things that would distract you? In other words, is that prime time that you have to protect?

SS: Yeah, it is prime time I have to protect. And one thing I've done to protect it is we cancelled Netflix, we haven't had like quote-unquote TV, like cable for... ever. I can't remember the last time I had cable.

SH: Is that because that's the candy jar?

SS: Mmhmm, yep. Well, that and also... So candy literally was a big problem for me because I was addicted to sugar, so I went off sugar completely. So either you're an abstainer, or you are a moderator, I don't know if that's the right word. But "abstainer" I remember because that's me. Either it's on or off. It's binary. Either I'm eating sugar or I'm not eating sugar and there's no moderation for me.

SH: And so, if you have sugar around, like say you're in a conference room, is it harder for you to stay disciplined on other tasks that are completely not food related but that are like "Okay, I gotta do those details"?

SS: Not if I've switched into this identity of I'm a guy who doesn't eat sugar, which I did. I got there by, and this is a whole other conversation that involves, like, Kabbalah and stuff like that, the idea of moving into restriction instead of

suppression, so it actually isn't hard and painful and uncomfortable to say no to sugar, it is actually empowering and it brings me energy and excitement and a sense of mastery to know that I'm a guy who doesn't eat sugar, that's part of my identity now, and I'm restricting. And when you restrict instead of suppress, there's a whole world of opportunity available to you, so yeah, I know we're kind of going down the rabbit warren here but it's powerful stuff, some of the Kabbalistic ideas are so incredibly powerful and applicable to how we show up in the world

“it's not about strengths or weaknesses. We don't believe in weaknesses.”

as much today as thousands of years ago when the Zohar was created, so, definitely some cool concepts here but let's kind of circle back here to this idea that if we are going to be strategic in our use of willpower and our application of discipline and so forth, then we need to identify what our wellsprings are and our

quicksands, and we need to identify what our support people's wellsprings and quicksands are, so getting back to that questions of what's a good hiring process or interviewing process, if you ask people, "Hey, tell me about your wellspring, which means this, this, and this, and tell me what your quicksand is," and you're looking for somebody who's really detail-oriented, sure you could ask them leading questions like "Tell me about some of the projects you've worked on that required a lot of detail" or whatever, but they can kind of fake that, whereas if you give them kind of a blank state to say, "Tell me all about your wellspring, tell me all about your quicksand," and you haven't tipped your hand yet to say that "I'm really looking for a detail-oriented person," it gives you a lot of insight into is this person right for the role. Right?

SH: Definitely, and as an example, imagine if you're hiring a project manager. There are many different types of project manager and there is not one type that's necessarily better than another, because on certain types of assignments, if you want—if it's a start-up and you have a rapidly evolving technology, you don't necessarily want somebody who's a nitty gritty shepherd taking things through the process, you may want somebody who's big picture, so it's important to not just define it by job description. Here's what I recommend: I recommend having people take the Fascination Advantage assessment, and we're going to be giving a code that you'll be able to use for a month that people can use with potential hires with their own teams, and the assessment is not a value judgement, it's not about strengths or weaknesses. We don't believe in weaknesses because the fact that I'm not great at details doesn't make that a weakness. The reason why is because I'm good at big picture problem solving. And in the same way, when

“when you have people on your team, if you've been judging them by weaknesses, it's possible that you've been missing their greatest value that they can contribute because there's a flip side to it.”

you have people on your team, if you've been judging them by weaknesses, it's possible that you've been missing their greatest value that they can contribute, because there's a flip side to it. And I'm going to send you, I'm looking at a pdf that I'm going to send you, and it's wellspring and quicksand examples that, once you've done the assessment and you found out your top two Advantages, it becomes really clear why you or the people you work with tend to effortlessly excel in certain areas and then struggle and become demoralized in others. And once you know [...] how someone is most likely to struggle and become discouraged and start to feel bad about themselves, you can come to it with a place of compassion because you can predict it. For example, when I have somebody, if I have somebody on my team who has dormant power, meaning it's very uncomfortable for them to be in a dominating position, they don't necessarily want to be the leader at the front of the room pounding on the table, they're uncomfortable controlling, and they're much more comfortable kind of leading from behind, if I ask that person to go lead an initiative, even if it's the company picnic, but I'm pushing them to the front of the room, and then they feel uncomfortable and they probably aren't going to do a good job because it's not how they're naturally suited to succeed, then well of course! I put them in a position in which they weren't going to be able to over-deliver for me. Similarly, because I'm bad with details, I make a point to look ahead to any project that's going to require details and say, "It's not that I can't do it, but this is seriously going to distract me from the stuff where I can deliver so much more value," and so I try to delegate, discipline, or delete on those.

SS: Yeah, makes a lot of sense. So, listeners, definitely have any staff or perspective staff person take the Fascination test. That's one of the things I always do when I'm looking to hire somebody. I have them take StrengthsFinder and DISC and then, as we've been talking about here, the Fascination test so that we can, I as an employer or potential employer can understand what their Archetype is, what their primary and secondary Advantages are, and then see if they're a good fit for the role that I'm looking for. So, this is going to be a really helpful thing, this free code that you guys are going to be able to utilize, which we'll mention in just a moment, but just to wrap up on a couple of points here, Sally. One is, it strikes me that, I remember Robert Allen telling me this. Bob is a friend and he's many many times a book bestseller, sold millions of books. He says, "Either you're a writer who speaks or a speaker who writes." So I'm a speaker who writes, and it is definitely quicksand to have a blank sheet of paper or a blank screen and then I have to fill it with a 2,000 word article. That is painful beyond belief, so I would have a staff person take dictation and write up a draft blog post from me just riffing about a topic, and then I have a starting point, which is a lot easier, because I'm a speaker who writes. Are you a speaker who writes? It sounds like you are.

SH: What an interesting question! I used to be a writer who speaks because writing for me felt the most natural, but in advertising, in order for you to have your idea see the light of day, in other words not just die in the trashcan, have to be able to sell them, and so at the same time that I was learning to write, I was

learning how to present and sell those ideas, because it doesn't matter if you have the best idea in the world if nobody notices or cares. And so I think those two things came up side by side, but my professional success skyrocketed far faster for writing, but now I think it's flipped, because... Have you ever found over the course of your career that if you don't exercise a professional muscle, it withers and so the writing muscle of doing the really inspirational big writing, you know, the big chunky manifesto writing, I haven't had the opportunity to do for a couple years because of writing books and speaking, and so just last night, I turned to my husband and said, "God, I'd love to not take a sabbatical but just have some time to re-explore my own voice," and not just in the context of speaking, which is speaking to an audience, or writing a book, which is a massive kind of daunting thesis, and so I think it's good to give ourselves permission to change and the market changes too, doesn't it? The demand changes.

SS: Right! And what I've found is I get more joy out of speaking than writing, so even though I have three books under my belt, two I co-authored and one I authored myself, it's a lot of anguish and pain to sit down and write that. And I've written hundreds of articles too, so I'm certainly a very adept writer and eloquent and all that, but it's painful, it's really hard work, and so I've definitely migrated over to speaking versus writing and then kind of transforming my speeches into textual content, so it seems like you're more just—this is my outside perspective, is that you're more a speaker who writes, because I mean, to get inducted into the National Speakers Association Hall of Fame and everything, and I've heard you speak, and...wow. And I'm sure you're an amazing writer, and I haven't read your books yet, so I can't really comment too much on that, but I know from your background you had all these awards from copywriting, but I do think that maybe it's shifted for you.

SH: Well, let me ask you one quick question: what if writing is simply about developing a concept, and you put the concept, you originate the concept... I'll give you an example. What if I said to you, "There are two modes of work you can recognize so that you can know which one you are in at any moment. There's a wellspring and a quicksand. If you thrive on creativity, then your wellspring is going to be about solving new problems, but your quicksand will be doing the same tasks every day." That's more, I think of that as more conceptual writing, rather than writing writing writing. Which one of those do you think you're better at?

SS: Conceptual writing is more my thing. Like if I can dream up something that's a big idea and document that in an article, that's more interesting to me and I'm more in a flow state.

SH: See, I completely agree with you about your writing, and sometimes I think that isn't that why the listicle was invented? So that we can, we do a lot of charts because I don't like writing ad nauseam; I'd rather just put the concept in there and then let people refer back to it sort of as an at-a-glance, and I noticed that you do

some of the same thing.

SS: Yeah, of course the irony here is I have a 1,000 page book, which is the antithesis of where I get my joy from, and thankfully I have co-authors on that, that's *The Art of SEO*, so I didn't have to do all the work myself, but it's a gargantuan chore to...

SH: Well and I've had the opportunity to hug that book.

SS: Ah, yes, I gave you a copy, that's right. I think you had to check it in your luggage because it's too heavy to carry.

SH: It's, it needs its own suitcase, but well worth it.

SS: Yeah, yeah, and that's how SEO is, is you cannot just gloss over the stuff, there's so many details. So, anyways, I know we're at the end of our time here, so I want to make sure that our listeners get this incredible free gift that you had promised, and that is the code where they'll go to howtofascinate.com/you, and they're going to put in a code "GEEK".

SH: Whoo!

SS: Yes, it is going to be amazing! And you guys are all going to go and take that Fascination test, and then there's something that you did that was really amazing, Sally, I really appreciate it, is, after taking the test, then you created all these videos. So there are how many Archetypes?

SH: There are 42 different Archetypes, and so [...] it's scoring you in a very very very customized way, and so when you take the assessment, it's 28 questions, takes about three minutes, this is the express version of the assessment so it's crazy fast, and you immediately find out how the world sees you at your best, with a video that you can almost think of like a television commercial from me. Imagine if I drew upon all my advertising background and personal branding background and gave you the actual words you need to use in your website or when you're introducing yourself or on your LinkedIn profile and that you can kind of just plagiarize it, then it gives you a huge head start to stand out in a distracted world.

SS: And that was a great marketing initiative that you created with this, I mean the whole thing [...] and also you really leveraged the virality of the internet with creating these codes over the, I think it was December that you did this, and so I signed up and sent off the code to all of my followers and everything. Just really great execution. I know you're not about the details, and yet you see to the details getting done by having the right people who have the wellspring in that area doing the work, and those videos that you created. 42 of them. The ones that I saw—amazing. I mean, just amazing, it's like a Cliff Notes of how to present yourself in the most powerful way. And then listeners, you can sign up for the more in-depth

assessment, which is, I think it's under \$100, from memory, so that's a no brainer to go ahead and take the next step with that, and then I would recommend doing the training programs that Sally offers in how to develop your brand anthem and not only do you have a training program on how to develop your personal brand, but also your company's brand, if I recall correctly.

SH: Yeah, yeah exactly. The original research was done with brands, and then about five years ago, we evolved it over to individuals. But now we're seeing it's becoming so much more competitive, especially for small businesses to find a way to market themselves, that we created almost like a done-for-you marketing system that we do, we assess the brand, so it's essentially like a focus group, and then we put you on the path to knowing how you're going to be most compelling for your ideal customers.

“it doesn't matter if you have the best idea in the world if nobody notices or cares.”

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SS: So do you want to mention that URL? And I'll also make sure to include it in the show notes. Like, for that, the bigger program where they sign up for the online training.

SH: Sure, yeah, "Fascination Business System." And I will give you the links. And the purpose of that is for people who don't have the budget to hire the agency but understand they need to highly differentiate themselves in a crowded or distracted market, but they don't want to have to do the whole thing from scratch.

SS: Awesome. So for me I think the bottom line here is that the more authentic we can be, and the more we can show up powerfully in not just the workplace or in the business world but also just in our lives, the better we're going to be, the more we're going to be in our gift, the more we're going to share our gift with the world and make a difference. So this system that Sally has put so much time, effort, and her own gift into creating is a no-brainer for you guys that you should definitely explore and utilize it. With that, Sally, I want to really thank you so much for sharing your brilliant and insights and wisdom with our listeners, and is there a final parting thought you want to share with listeners?

“now we're seeing it's becoming so much more competitive, especially for small businesses to find a way to market themselves, that we created almost like a done-for-you marketing system”

SH: Yes! There's, I'm inspired by what you said just a moment ago about the fact that [...] this isn't just about building a business, it's about creating a life that matters and a message that matters, and so to close on that, I believe the

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world isn't changed by people who sort of care. You can't sort of care, because the world needs you to more than sort of care. You have to irrationally care, passionately care, and so the importance of finding something that fascinates you and allows you to become fascinating and allows you to fascinate your ideal customer is so much more than just commerce. It's about creating something in the world that has meaning and that's real for people so that they can use it to create better lives. So the world isn't changed by people or companies or brands that sort of care, but when you follow what Stephan's saying, it is very much about more than sort of caring.

SS: Yeah, beautifully said. Thank you so much again Sally, and thank you listeners. Be sure to go to the website for the show to get the transcript and show notes of course, and also we'll make a checklist of actions to take from this episode so that you can apply what you've learned in this episode into your life, into your business, and get amazing returns. We'll catch you on the next episode. I'm your host, Stephan Spencer, signing off.