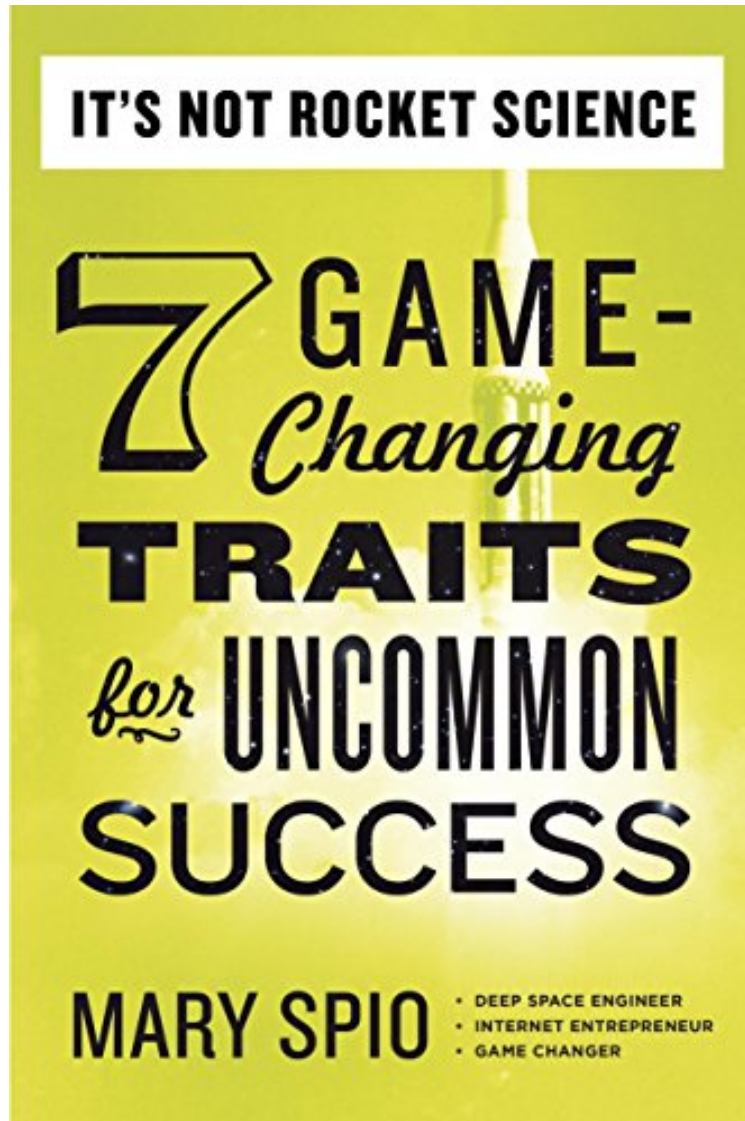


It's Not Rocket Science: 7 Game-Changing Traits for Uncommon Success

Mary Spio

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Mary Spio : It's Not Rocket Science: 7 Game-Changing Traits for Uncommon Success before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised It's Not Rocket Science: 7 Game-Changing Traits for Uncommon Success:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. The whole book is quotable....By Lee Hilton "Engineers love sharing spectacular failures on the way to surprising success, because they consider each failed experiment as a tool in their toolkit, something they now know not to do." Its "s Not Rocket Science is a no-nonsense look at how

grit, determination and focus live at the core of every story of success (and failure). I am an engineer and the above quotation really hits me as deeply insightful and demonstrates that Mary truly understands engineers and creators, which makes sense as she has been both for the majority of her life. I came away from these pages ready to make my dent in the universe, to go out and change the world.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Lakiem I'm loving every moment reading this book, it took a while but well worth the wait.⁰ of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Mario De La Hoz Excellent booster for self-motivation. Simple and proactive ideas to be implemented.

Rocket scientist, internet entrepreneur, and popular speaker Mary Spio presents practical advice for beating the odds, breaking the mold, and charting your own path to achieve true success. Mary Spio went from being a barefoot girl in Ghana to a rocket scientist with major patents with Boeing. Mary is also an internet entrepreneur who speaks throughout the world about how anyone with a dream and some tools can harness the digital world for success and prosperity. In *IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE*, she presents advice and empowering stories that will inspire readers to move beyond their comfort zones into mastery and empowerment. *IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE* reveals the habits and traits of people who defy convention, overcome limited thinking, and crush the odds to achieve breakthrough success—and shows readers how to strike their own uncommon path. It shares the secrets to cultivating curiosity, creativity, compassion, audacity, passion, obsessive focus and tenacity to attain their dreams and change the world. *It's not Rocket Science* is an inspiring and entertaining read for anyone who desires to be empowered with the mindset needed to propel their life to new heights. Learn how some of the world's most successful people shatter boundaries. Discover how your difference creates your relevance and your significance. Uncover your inner spark and learn how to fuel your own flame. Understand why a Defy-ing Moment is a defining moment. Find your path to success—however you define it. From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author Mary Spio is a lifelong game changer. Born in Syracuse, New York, to Ghanaian parents, she had humble beginnings growing up in Ghana, West Africa; Mary didn't see her first computer until she was seventeen. Yet she became a deep space engineer, designing and launching communication satellites. At Boeing, she helped pioneer digital technology that redefined how major motion pictures are distributed to movie theaters throughout the world. From there, she focused on her passion for matchmaking and founded One2One.com, a specialty media company dedicated to resources for singles. Mary also founded Gen2Media (now Vidaroo) an emerging leader in the digital media industry. Leveraging the power of online video, search and social media, Mary's companies provide engaging user experiences for consumers and delivers quantifiable results for some of the most iconic brands, high profile entertainers and events in the world, including Microsoft Xbox, WalMart, Toyota, Coca Cola, Justin Timberlake, Will Smith, Britney Spears and The Billboard Awards Show. She is currently CEO of Next Galaxy Media. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. INTRODUCTION There is no passion to be found playing small—in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living. - NELSON MANDELA - We are in a time in history like no other—an extraordinary moment when technology has given us amazing opportunities. What used to be the domain of only the privileged and connected is now accessible to all of us. Regardless of race, gender, education, age or circumstance, we all have access to the tools and resources needed to create the lifestyle that we desire. We live in a time when you can embrace your difference, do what you love and follow your passion. My own life is a testament to these times and just one example of the possibilities that abound for anyone with a dream and the willingness to work hard to achieve it. By way of introduction, I am Mary A. Spio—deep space engineer, Internet entrepreneur, Game Changer. I will be your guide on this incredible journey beyond your wildest dreams. Imagine a life with no limits. That is our destination. Through examples, observations and hard-won insights, I will help you to crystallize your path, to pursue your dreams until they become reality, encouraging you to reach your full potential. How can I be so confident? I have traveled this path a few times with remarkable success. Once a shoeless African child, I have had the opportunity to sell technology to companies such as Boeing, to sit at the table with leaders of some of the world's biggest companies and even to change the movie industry. Who does that? Game Changers do that! Game Changers are the ones who are bold enough and brash enough to believe we can achieve our dreams and change the world in the process. As a U.S. speaker and unofficial ambassador of innovation, I connect with thousands of people and see firsthand the pain and frustration they are experiencing in a rapidly and ever-changing world. I see it everywhere I go—from Job Corps seminars to the most prestigious university symposiums and business conferences. It is perhaps an underestimate that 50 percent of college graduates will not find jobs, and the majority of people are doing jobs they don't enjoy. These figures reflect not just an American phenomenon, but a global one. People see the world changing around them. They are experiencing a sense of lack in a time of plenty and are desperate to learn how to create the future they desire. This book is a manifesto for reversing this situation, empowering readers to find their true passion and purpose—and challenging each one to make a big difference by changing something for the better. In the past, you were told to get a

good job and work toward retirement. The new dream is achieving happiness in your own way—creating a lifestyle of freedom by defining success your way and doing meaningful, satisfying work. It's about purpose, not position. It's about creating your own game rather than simply accepting what someone else believes is possible for you. This book is my offering to the Game Changer Tribe—all of us who not only dream of a better tomorrow, but who are committed to doing what it takes to create it. I wrote this book to be a catalyst for change. I hope to be that catalyst for you to pursue your dreams, to move to the next level and to find the best possible use for your talents and skills. I believe that when each of us pursues the highest and best use of our unique gifts, we can change our lives, change our communities and even change the world. My motto is: "When you share your light, you live in a brighter world." Through this book, I hope to help you find and light your spark so that you can make our world even brighter. Being an entrepreneur is a pure exercise in self-mastery. It has tested and validated things I can now say I know to be true. This book is a collection of the discoveries, persuasions and resources that guided me in my journey. It is my playbook for a purposeful life. This is not a book about obtaining material wealth or about fearlessness and mindless rebellion. It is neither trendy nor sexy, just my truth and the guiding principles that have helped me find solace and more joy than I often feel deserving of. The currency for change is not money, youth or education. The currency for great change is applied knowledge. Knowledge is not genetically encoded. Anyone and everyone can acquire the knowledge necessary to change their lives. Becoming a Game Changer and achieving uncommon success isn't rocket science. My aim is to share with you the knowledge and practical insights I've gained, as well as firsthand wisdom, guidance and experience from people who are living their lives with passion while contributing in meaningful ways to their families, communities and the world at large. To be a real Game Changer, you need both cheerleaders and coaches. No team ever won on cheers alone. This book attempts to be coach as well as cheerleader. It aims to tell you the things you may not want to hear and to be that voice telling you to "suck it up" and "give me ten more" when things get tough. It's also a playbook by a coach who is also an athlete—someone who has been in the game for a long time (and has the scars to prove it) and continues to be in the game on a daily basis. This book is your starting point. So get ready to journey to the unknown, take risks, break boundaries, speak out, set new standards and achieve the meaningful success you've dreamed of. Get ready to change the game.

GAME CHANGERS The people who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world are the ones who do. - APPLE INC. - I come from very humble beginnings. As a child, I ran around barefoot, looking like a poster child for Feed the Children, playing with my only toy—a stick. I didn't see my first computer until I was seventeen. Yet within a decade, I was working on a NASA Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) project and, shortly after, designing and launching satellites into space as a deep space scientist. By age twenty-nine, I was head of a satellite communications team that pioneered digital cinema technology that changed the motion picture industry. Since then, I've launched an award-winning magazine, despite the fact that I don't have a degree in journalism or any publishing industry experience. I've also founded two multimillion-dollar companies and worked with clients such as Microsoft Xbox and the Coca-Cola Company. When people hear what I've been able to do, they assume I have some kind of special skills, maybe an extra twist on my DNA, massive frontal lobes in my brain or perhaps influential friends who pulled a few strings. That couldn't be further from the truth. What I have achieved is a testament to the opportunities and possibilities that abound for those who have a dream, are willing to work tirelessly and are crazy enough to believe they can change their corner of the world. So just how did I go from being a hungry child growing up in Ghana, West Africa, to deep space engineer, entrepreneur and Game Changer?

THE GAME CHANGER TRIBE I've never had any true mentors, so I've had to rely on myself and learn from afar by watching others. When I came to the United States at age sixteen, I was completely on my own in a foreign country. In search of success, I started looking for successful people to model. I began by studying the actions of innovating pioneers like Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, George Lucas and many other dreamers who possessed the heroic courage to do what their heart desired. Before long, a pattern emerged—their successes were traceable to distinct actions and attributes. These became the ethos, the blueprint from which I would model my life. I followed this blueprint and everything changed. I too began to have success. Through my journey, I also noticed that while many people achieve success at some level, a few break through to achieve truly uncommon success. These are the people who are able to change our world in some way. They change the game, so to speak, by altering the way we think, the way we work or the way we live. These Game Changers dare to paint outside the lines and have the courage to start new trends. They challenge old precepts and raise the standards. They choose to live life by their own rules rather than fit into a mold they are pushed into. They defy convention, disregard limits and ignore the odds to go beyond what most people perceive is possible. By allowing us to see our world in an entirely new light, they create greater value, understanding, joy and hope. Some of the greatest figures throughout history were Game Changers. Nicolaus Copernicus was the first person to theorize that the sun, rather than the earth, is at the center of our universe. Four hundred years later, Albert Einstein's theory of relativity once again changed how humans understood our world. Alexander Fleming's discovery of penicillin led to the development of antibiotics and saved millions of lives. Gandhi secured India's independence from Great Britain through mass, nonviolent civil disobedience and inspired other leaders around the world, including Martin Luther King Jr. I could go on. Lewis and Clark, the Wright

brothers, Henry Ford—the list of Game Changers is long. These people have become household names not simply because they achieved great personal success, but because they changed the game and moved the human race forward. There are plenty of modern-day Game Changers as well: Bill Gates (Microsoft), Steve Jobs (Apple), Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Ted Turner (CNN), Oprah Winfrey (media), Sara Blakely (Spanx) and Michael DeBakey (heart surgeon pioneer), to name just a few. Game Changers come in all races, creeds, ages, genders and socioeconomic levels. You can find them in all walks of life, from the cerebral to the physical, from medicine to junk hauling. From the doctor who started a Facebook page that grew into the largest church on the planet (twenty-five million people and counting), to the Pakistani teenage girl who stood up to speak out against the Taliban's rules preventing girls from getting an education. From the sixty-four-year-old woman who became the first person to swim from Cuba to Florida, to the executive who went to work one day, got a pink slip, decided to start his own company and changed his life in the process. All of these people changed their respective "game" forever. Of course, it's easy to identify Game Changers in hindsight. In retrospect, their achievements are obvious. But at the time, they often aren't recognized for their brilliance. They often must endure significant challenges, overcome obstacles and pass through the valley of the shadow of doubt again and again to reach the apex of unprecedented success.

CHANGING MY GAME

I was born in Syracuse, New York, to Ghanaian parents. A few years later, my parents returned to Ghana, West Africa. In 1981, the country was overtaken by military rogues and a new government came to power by coup. Soldiers roamed the streets with guns, and there was a national curfew of 6:00 p.m. I knew children whose parents were taken away and put to death by firing squad. We endured days without food, and I can remember many nights crying myself to sleep from hunger. There was one saving grace in the midst of the chaos and tragedy. We had a little black-and-white television set with one lone channel that came on at 6:00 p.m. and went off at midnight. There was no American Idol, Dancing with the Stars or Food Network. (It's still amazing to me that people watch other people cook, and that there are entire channels dedicated to fishing and golf.) Yet that little box was magic. It was our happy place, where we could escape reality and be entertained, informed and provoked into dialogue. It feels like yesterday that I sat at my mother's feet watching a TV show about space exploration. I remember feeling the vibration of pure joy activated within me when I caught glimpses of vast unknown worlds. It started the fires of hope burning inside of me. My dreams were calling, and I developed a sense of urgency to find out more about the life I had seen inside of the little box. As a teenager, I begged my parents to let me go back to America. They sold everything they could so that I could make this journey and find a better life. At age sixteen, I traveled alone from Ghana to America. Leaving my family and childhood behind was one of the most difficult things I've ever had to do. I arrived at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport on September 29, 1989, at 9:39 p.m. I remember that day vividly. I felt like I had landed on the moon—this vast, unexplored place filled with lights, cars, skyscrapers. I knew exactly what the first man in space, Yuri Gagarin, meant when he uttered the words, "I see Earth. It's so beautiful!" I lived with a host family in South Carolina while I completed high school. After graduation, my host family asked me to return to Ghana. But there was no way I was going back. I had other plans. While in Ghana, I had seen the movie *Coming to America* with Eddie Murphy, where young Prince Akeem goes to Queens, New York, in search of his bride. So the day after graduation, in the middle of the night, while everyone slept, I left for New York City in search of my own dreams and perhaps to bump into Prince Akeem. A bus and train ride later, I arrived at Grand Central Station. I played "eeny, meeny, miney, mo" and landed on the number three train—last stop New Lots, Brooklyn. New Lots became my home, where I joyfully lived in the heart of the ghetto surrounded by gang members, pimps and preachers. With that audacious move, I instantly became the ultimate latchkey kid—living on my own in New York while my parents were thousands of miles away. You realize what it means to be on your own the first time you have to use your own money to buy trivial things like toothpaste and toilet paper. I was 100 percent responsible for my well-being. Survival sparked my inner flame to succeed, and the engines began to rev. Not knowing where to start, I got a job at McDonald's to pay the rent. I knew I could flip burgers and mop floors. I endured the harsh prejudices that some people can pile upon those whose true selves are yet to be unmasked. Each day, I yearned for respect and dignity, not only for myself, but also for those who thought like me, looked like me and lived like me. The steel was being forged. My emotional hunger fed by the cold reality of my painful existence tossed and turned the dreamer inside of me. I knew then that the sleeper must awaken. Late one night while watching TV, I saw a commercial about doing more by 5:00 a.m. than most people do in a day. I thought, "Whatever it is, sign me up!" The next day, I went down to join the army. But fate intervened. In the hallway, I saw a mountain of a man with a big smile and even bigger biceps—the air force recruiter. With visions of me marching amid thousands of airmen just like him flooding my mind, he easily convinced me to join the air force. (At that age, your reasons for making life-changing decisions are not always rational. "Why did you join the air force?" "The recruiter was cute, duh!" I was a seventeen-year-old girl after all.) It was in the air force that I learned the inner workings of media and technology. I became a satellite communications and wideband technician. I was in Turkey during Desert Storm as part of the advent team that set up communications for the troops so they could communicate with one another and with base. One day, after I managed to repair a circuit board and some terminals, an engineer told me I should consider going back to school to study engineering. I applied for the

Scholarship for Outstanding Airmen and was the only person selected from all of the U.S. Forces in Europe that year. I was starting to hear words like brilliant, outstanding and awesome associated with my name, and I liked it. I liked it a lot! After the air force, I attended Syracuse University where I majored in engineering with a focus in deep space science and a minor in psychology. I've always been a child of two worlds. I love things and I love people, and I'm always seeking opportunities to connect both worlds. In fact, I put myself through college making connections as a matchmaker. I continued on to Georgia Tech for graduate studies in deep space communications. After grad school, the world opened up to me. I designed and sent satellites into space, including orbital design for the Iridium 77 satellite constellation. As a satellite applications engineer at PanAmSat, my expertise was designing television networks. I worked with every major network from HBO to Disney and designed the entire network for Japanese Fuji TV from a blank piece of paper. Then Boeing came calling. I was hand-selected to join two other people in creating Boeing Digital Cinema, where we engineered the technology to digitally deliver movies all over the globe. (Star Wars: Episode II was one of the first movies digitally delivered globally.) I was the sole inventor for several digital cinema technology patents. Today, I am the president and CEO of Next Galaxy Corp.—a leading consumer virtual reality technology and digital media company. I also founded Gen2Media, now Vidaroo, an emerging video technology and production company. Through my companies, I've had the opportunity to work with some of the largest media companies and entertainment personalities in the world (think Xbox and the Black Eyed Peas). Recently I was selected by the U.S. Department of State as a speaker and innovation evangelist. I've spoken in or visited China, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia and South Africa, spreading the goodwill of the American Dream, innovation and entrepreneurship. Not bad at all for a former "poster child" for world hunger. I don't tell you my story to flaunt my accomplishments. My story is my victory dance, my song of eternal gratitude to the spirit of defiance, compassion, focus and the power of the dreamer's spirit. And that is why I share it with you—it is my whisper of hope to the other dreamers out there who desperately yearn for more. I tell you my story to prove to you that if I can do it, you can too—no matter where you are in your life. I hope that momentarily viewing the world through my eyes will stoke the fire within you to pursue your own dreams, and achieve them. I have become courageous—although not fearless—in the course of my journey, and my goal with this book is to get you there too. If I can alter the course of my life, anyone can. My vision is to build a tribe of dreamers and Game Changers who will impact our world in a big way. I believe there is greatness in each of us. My mission is to wake that sleeper within you and help you find and create your path to a future that is beyond belief. **YOU ARE A CHANGER** If you have a vision, a passion or a dream within your heart, you are no different from Albert Einstein, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg or anyone else who has ever changed the game and achieved uncommon success. You may not have a vision to change the world, but neither did they in the beginning. They simply had a vision to change their little corner of the world. We all hold different keys for moving our world forward, and the beautiful thing is we do not know who holds which keys. Each and every one of us is a Game Changer in the making; we just may not realize it yet. What piece of the world or part of your circumstances do you want to change? The "game" is different for each person. Perhaps you want to be the first in your family to go to college. Or maybe you want to lose weight or live a healthier lifestyle. Do you want to break familial patterns of alcoholism or addiction or improve the relationships in your life? Do you have a big idea that could change the way business operates, or an initiative that will make a positive difference in your community? Maybe you just want to live life on your own terms. The game is whatever you want it to be, and you are the one who can change it. In fact, you may be the only one who can change it, and that is why the world needs you to step up and become a Game Changer. My father used to tell me, "Small hinges swing big doors." The smallest act, the smallest change, can start a chain reaction that eventually impacts the world. Almost every Game Changer started with the tiniest seed of an idea that grew into something big. I didn't set out to change anything except my circumstances. But in changing my circumstances, I eventually changed the movie distribution industry. You are one hinge that has the power to open big doors. You can break through to uncommon success and a limitless life. You are a Game Changer.

PART ONE 7 Key Traits That Fuel Game Changers

Success Many people think Game Changers have some kind of advantage, luck, extraordinary talent or privilege that separates them from the rest. There is, in fact, something that separates them from the rest, but it's not any of these things. As I've studied the highest achievers over the last twenty years, I've searched for the Game Changers' formula for success. As a scientist, I am intrigued by the lawfulness of the universe. Every phenomenon has a traceable formula for its existence and its duplication. My aim has been to come close to a formula for this uncommon achievement that could be duplicated by anyone, anywhere. Uncommon success is not reserved for the rich or the famous or the intellectuals. Uncommon success can be achieved by each of us. I believe the secret to becoming a Game Changer is a two-part formula. First, Game Changers possess certain characteristics that are the foundation of their success. The second part of the formula for game-changing success is to discover your greatness and live a life of design by working in the center of your passion, potential and purpose. In Part One, you will discover the seven key traits for achieving uncommon success:

- Unbridled Creativity
- Radical Passion
- Active Compassion
- Obsessive Focus
- Relentless

Hustle
Extreme Audacity
Pit Bull Tenacity

Although we are not necessarily born with all of these traits, each of us has the ability to cultivate them. The real capital for greatness is not money, but developing these traits. In the following chapters, we will take a closer look at each trait. You will meet inspiring Game Changers who exemplify that trait and learn practical tips for how you can enhance that trait within yourself. Cultivate these Game Changer traits by design, and soon they will become your default.

Unbridled Creativity

Creating a new theory is not like destroying an old barn and erecting a skyscraper in its place. It is rather like climbing a mountain, gaining new and wider views, discovering unexpected connections between our starting points and its rich environment.

- ALBERT EINSTEIN -If you've ever asked, "Why?" If you've ever wondered, "How?" If you've ever thought, "I can do it differently!" Then you have the prerequisite to become a Game Changer. Game Changers are creative innovators. They imagine the possibilities and then take action to transform ideas into reality.

There's a lot of talk today about creativity, about what it is and how to have more of it. Creativity comes from untethered imagination and curiosity. You start with a blank slate and imagine all the possibilities. Then you nurture those possibilities with curiosity and cultivate them with creativity until they become tangible. The result is innovation—new ideas and concepts of profound impact that literally change the game as we know it. We go up into the high country of the mind and breathe the thinner air to be truly creative. Creativity doesn't happen by accident. It is the result of high imagination, deep curiosity and intelligent direction. The goal of this chapter is to inspire the creative innovator in you, to fuel the mind-building revolution needed to develop the answers and solutions that our world desperately needs and eagerly awaits.

IMAGINATION IS THE BIRTHPLACE OF GAME-CHANGING IDEAS

Not having much as a child, I was forced to rely on my imagination. I enjoyed vivid flights of fancy—seeing, feeling, tasting, hearing, touching and experiencing every detail in my mind. I remember feeling the breeze and tasting the salty air as I read *The Old Man and the Sea*. Long before I ever set foot in America, I dreamed of the streets of America's great cities. On hot days in Ghana, I'd visit New York City in the winter, making snow angels in the fluffy snow in Central Park. When I finally arrived in the United States and saw all the great American icons that the world has come to know, I had a moment of insight: Everything we see in existence today started as simple thoughts and dreams in someone's mind. Imagination is the starting point of everything humankind has created, and it is what moves the world forward. Truly, life is what we imagine it to be! Imagination is the place where ideas are born, the seeds of vision are planted, problems are solved and change begins. Imagination creates a future not based on what is known, but what is possible. Many of my best inventions have come during my visualizations and flights of fancy. If you doubt the power of imagination, consider creative visionary Arthur C. Clarke. Most people know Clarke as a science fiction writer and author of one of the most influential novels and movies of our time, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. But Clarke also wrote scientific publications on space, energy and the oceans. In 1945, he wrote a scientific article about his vision of putting telecommunications satellites in geosynchronous orbit miles above the earth. Decades later, engineers made his vision a reality. (He once said in an interview that he didn't patent what, at the time, was an incredibly radical idea because he didn't think it would see the light of day in his lifetime.) The geosynchronous orbit is known as the Clarke Orbit in his honor, and the collection of satellites in these orbits is known as the Clarke Belt. Thanks to Clarke and his imagination, you can watch six hundred television channels through your satellite dish, your smartphone can direct you to the closest gas station and you can physically see just about any location on the planet with Google Earth. Clarke also imagined and predicted space shuttles, supercomputers, lightning-quick communications and that man would reach the moon. Science fiction became science fact—all because of one man's imagination. Science was Clarke's passion. Just like Clarke, your imagination can be a door to your passion. When your mind wanders, where it goes and what you imagine is a clue to your dreams and desires. The things you see are the true essence of what you want. Your imagination preplays what is possible. And in today's world, if you can imagine it, chances are you can make it happen. Technology has made available the tools and resources to turn dreams into reality for just about everyone. Anyone who has the courage to ask "What if?" can define a new vision for our time or change the way we live our lives. Imagination is a wide-open space where the possibilities are truly endless. With imagination, every single person has the ability to create their desired future, to express thoughts and ideas and to design a vision of the unknown. The beauty of imagination is that it is free, unrestricted and available to each and every one of us. Unlike IQ, which is fixed, imagination is infinite, limitless.

Dr. Patricia Bath is a Game Changer in the field of ophthalmology. "I am in my most natural state when I am simply imagining, thinking, dreaming. Being a dreamer frees the mind to have time to be creative," she said. Albert Einstein was also a dreamer who often took flights of imagination while in school, pondering things such as traveling at the speed of light, why the sky was blue and other topics that weren't taught in school. Einstein once said, "Knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand." That quote reminds me of a story my father tells of a little boy named Kwame. One day in Kwame's kindergarten class, the teacher asked the students to draw a picture of anything they wanted. Long after all the other children had completed their drawings, Kwame was still busily drawing away. Finally, his teacher asked him what he was drawing. Deep in

concentration, Kwame answered, "A picture of God." His teacher laughed, "But, Kwame, no one knows what God looks like." Kwame looked up, his eyes as wide as plates, beaming with excitement. "Then they'll know when I'm done with my picture!" Now, there is a Game Changer in the making!

Imagination is the blank sheet of paper on which Game Changers paint a picture of what is possible. You are a Game Changer. What picture will you paint for the world?

CURIOSITY DRIVES ACTION

Imagination is the fuel that drives curiosity—the quest for knowledge, the search for answers to the questions our imagination poses. Many people think of curiosity as an intellectual endeavor. Game Changers understand that curiosity involves action. Game Changers are not merely dreamers, they are also doers. "I've always been curious about the possibilities," and I was fortunate to have parents who encouraged this curiosity from a very early age. I remember as though it were yesterday, sitting at my mother's feet watching that program on space exploration. I was filled with so much excitement, and from that point on, I wanted to learn as much as I could about space. I read books. I dreamed of the stars and what it all meant. Throughout my life I have followed my curiosity, and it has served me well. As a child, I was fascinated with how information is transmitted from one point to another. How did someone far away get their voice or music to come out over the radio in my house? This curiosity led me to take apart our radios and, many years later, study engineering. While studying engineering, I became curious about how satellites stay in space and transmit information to earth. That led me to learn about deep space science, orbital mechanics and satellite communications. The more I indulged my curiosity, the more answers I gained. The more answers I gained, the more opportunities I created, which in turn led me to develop some game-changing technologies. Curiosity opens the aperture of life to allow more knowledge and understanding to enter. The curious mind is always learning, always looking for opportunities to acquire knowledge and a greater understanding of the world around us. From knowledge comes great insight. When you follow your curiosity, you acquire information, perspective and life experiences that lead to "lightbulb moments." All of this "data" is filed in your mental database for retrieval in the future. You never know when some mathematical equation, a strange custom from a different culture or a random piece of information that doesn't seem like it would be useful will turn out to be the very thing you need to know in order to solve a problem or develop a new idea.

As a little girl, I was curious about what lay beyond the world I knew. One of my favorite books was about a shepherd boy from Peru named Pedro and his life in the mountains near the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu. Decades later, I met a gentleman at an event, and he mentioned he was from Peru. I immediately perked up with interest and began talking about Machu Picchu. When he asked if I had visited, I just smiled and explained that I'd read about it in a book. We ultimately formed a friendship that led to my working with the Peru Tourism Association, and it all stemmed from a conversation based on a book I read when I was ten years old.

The key to creativity is having viable options, and this is why curiosity is a prerequisite for creativity. Options are a function of the breadth and depth of your knowledge and experience. If you don't exercise your curiosity, chances are you'll miss a lot of potential opportunities. Every piece of information, every life experience, is like a tool in your creativity toolbox. When a situation arises down the road, you have the tools to pull out and use. The more tools in your toolbox (that is, the more knowledge and experience you have), the more creative you will be.