You are ambitious and filled with curiosity. You have harnessed your creative energy to the service of your goals. You are open to the future. You’ve even begun to explore the building blocks you will use in the design of your new business architecture. Brilliant! But there’s another important factor in your mental preparation that we haven’t yet discussed. We cannot just be an advocate for our future. We need to inquire about the future. We need to be reflective, to listen to the world. After all, what is our curiosity and creativity for? It is to learn new things. Yes, to learn. Think of how much you may have learned so far in this book. Just because we’ve looked at some business building blocks
doesn’t mean that the learning is done and it’s time to be “doing.” There’s no “time to learn” and “time to do.” We are always learning (if we’re growing and our business is growing). We are always doing. That’s working on yourself, while working in and on your business.

But how do we learn? We can come to the threshold of learning new things from different directions. I’m going to suggest one that I think is the most effective. Approach new things (everything new is a learning experience) with openness and with full knowledge of your own assets and limitations as a discloser.

Who or what is a discloser? Everyone is. You are. I am. Does it mean I have to pour my heart out to everyone? Disclose my deepest secrets to my business colleagues? No. Don’t worry. Let me explain.

Be a Conscious Discloser

Using language that is often impenetrable by even the brightest of thinkers, Charles Spinosa, Fernando Flores, and Hubert L. Dreyfus in Disclosing New Worlds: Entrepreneurship, Democratic Action, and the Cultivation of Solidarity, suggest that “massive changes in style generally occur when there is cross-appropriation among subworlds.” Huh? Yes, that’s the first thing I said, too. But it’s an incredibly important concept and not actually as tricky as it sounds, so hang in there. For our purposes, cross-appropriation just means taking an idea from one area (a subworld) and using it in another area. Gee, this mill wheel really grinds up the wheat but, boy, it rolls nicely, too. Maybe there’s an idea here for a two-wheeled machine I could ride into town on. Wheel-shaped things existed for a long time before anyone thought to cross-appropriate them for bicycles.

Cross-appropriation requires that we overcome historical attitudes or ideas, that we understand that what we think of as paradigms (as “givens”) are most often our own creation and much more fluid than we imagined. It is about questioning our beliefs of how it is and how it should be. Instead, we should ask, “What is possible?”
According to Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus, “Cross-appropriation takes place when one disclosive space takes over from another disclosive space a practice that it could not generate on its own but that it finds useful.” See what I mean about impenetrable language? Before you start lamenting, “What on earth is a disclosive space?” know that we all have our own disclosive space. Essentially it means the way each one of us sees the world as we operate in that world. It is our personal perspective, only more. It is our way of understanding how complex structures are interrelated and fit together. Children can rarely understand things outside their disclosive space. But as we mature and our thinking becomes more sophisticated, we begin to see things outside our disclosive space, to understand things outside our own direct experience.

Yet, even adults can have very narrow disclosive spaces. Here’s another way of thinking of it. We are all disclosers, operating in our individual disclosive spaces; we are people operating from our unique perspectives. It’s the reason why two people can witness the same thing in the same place at the same time and see two different events unfold. I’m sure you’ve heard the stories about witnesses at trials who describe something as simple as a car accident in vastly different ways. Think about arguments you’ve had with your lover or spouse or someone else close to you. And you just can’t understand why they don’t see things your way or why they seem to deliberately misremember what you said yesterday. It’s because each person has different distinctions, different perspectives, and different points of reference. It’s why Akira Kurosawa’s film *Rashomon*, which tells the story of a man’s murder from the perspective of all the different characters, each of whom has a completely different view of what happened, is so brilliant that it is considered a classic and is often imitated.

The actions we take reflect our way of seeing and being in the world. When people give different reports of the same incident, we often think that they are lying or not paying attention. Neither explains the phenomenon completely. As Hal puts it, “Our intentions and commitments brighten aspects of the world,” like when you decide to buy...
a new car and suddenly the make of car you’re considering buying is
everywhere on the road, though you’d never noticed that make before;
likewise, say you decide to franchise, and suddenly you notice different
franchise businesses everywhere.

Our disclosive space changes, too. Our mood, for example, has
an enormous effect on what we are able to “see” in the world. I’m
sure you’ve experienced how a bad mood can get in the way of your
noticing the wonderful world around you. Fortunately, the opposite
holds true, too. A good mood can lift you up through the less-than-
good times. High spirits can help you face challenges. Once we are
conscious of ourselves as disclosers, as people who each exist in our
unique disclosive spaces, then we can begin to see and act with better
intentionality. Knowing and understanding the limits of our world-
view will automatically begin to open us up to new ways of seeing
things, new ways of being. It will enable us to see things as others see
them (sometimes). In designing a new architecture for your business,
you need to be able to understand and to move outside your cur-
rent disclosive space. What’s inside you will affect how well you will
execute the strategies and the techniques in this book.

Do you want to go beyond booked solid? Then recognize your-
self as a discloser. Everyone is a discloser, whether they know it or
not. The important thing is to develop an awareness of your discloser
qualities, to become a conscious discloser. You’ll notice this theme of
identifying qualities you already possess recurring throughout the
book—creativity, curiosity, discloser, and so on. Sure, you may be a
discloser already, but you need to know it. What’s the big deal?, you
may be thinking. If I’m already a discloser (or ambitious, or cre-
ative), why do I need to read this? Because we can’t fully benefit from
what we have until we are conscious of it. We already know we need to
be conscious of our weaknesses—to steer clear of them. We forget
that we need to be conscious of our strengths, too—to allow them
to fuel us. Only by being tuned in to our strengths can we truly
exploit them.
This is all a fancy way of saying that you need to be open to learning and incorporating new ideas, new methods, new systems, and new experiences. And I’m making it one level fancier by offering you a term to use—conscious discloser. A conscious discloser is someone who can see, understand, and adopt things from outside his or her disclosive space. Okay, so it’s not so fancy after all.

Being a conscious discloser is not just about how you learn; it is also about how you apply that learning. After all, a person could read 10 books a week on a variety of topics outside her disclosive space; but if she never applies any of what she gleans from the books, then so what. Being a know-it-all is not the same thing as being a conscious discloser, nor is being a critic—“Oh, I know that already; my way is better.” In the end it is what you do with what you learn that matters, and this is where productive disclosers excel. They are people who learn and apply constantly. And their goals are more important than their current way of doing or seeing things. You need to be a conscious discloser to build a bigger, better business.

**Be Ahistorical**

Because being a conscious discloser is so important, I’m going to come at the definition again from another angle offered by Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus: A conscious discloser is someone who can be ahistorical. People who are ahistorical are not prisoners of their past. When we are not prisoners of our past, then we can change our future, regardless of our history. In a way, it’s how people think about the classic American dream—a person who comes from an unlikely background making it big. That might be ahistorical. The alternative is to be constantly and utterly shaped by your past without relief—to be, in a sense, a victim of your past. My father did such and such; therefore, I’ll do such and such because it’s all I know. Not that there is necessarily anything wrong with following in your family’s footsteps, but do it...
intentionally, not by default. You can’t escape your past, and you will
inevitably be shaped by your past, but you are in control of whether
your past is forcing you down a certain path or whether you have
chosen it. To be ahistorical is a way of approaching the world. It
describes how you are in the world, your way of being.

Apolo Anton Ohno is a two-time Olympic Gold medal winner
for short-track speed skating. Apolo reached the pinnacle of a sport
based on tucking yourself into the smallest, most aerodynamic ball
and skating as fast as possible around an oval. Now that takes a certain
kind of focus inside a very specific disclosive space. So, it was all the
more amazing when Apolo competed in an entirely different field on
the TV show *Dancing with the Stars* and won. When he was asked after
the competition what he’d learned, other than how to do the paso
dooble, jive, and samba, he said, “I’ve seen a whole new way of being.”
Wow! Now that’s someone who is open to new things.

The rebellious son, for example, is not ahistorical. Rebellion is
essentially acting out in the present against the past. The rebellious
son doesn’t appreciate himself or his future. Rather his future is an
expression of the loathing he has for his past. He is not a conscious
discloser. Imagine, by contrast, a farmer’s daughter who goes off
to study advertising at a big university in the city. She meets a city
doctor, falls in love, and convinces him to come back and live on
the farm with her. Back on the farm, the daughter reconfigures the
operations of the farm, cross-appropriating practices and concepts
she learned while she was away. She is ahistorical, shaped by her
past, but not imprisoned by her past. She chooses to come back
to the farm, but she brings with her new ideas from other disclo-
sive spaces. She is ahistorical. She might just as well have stayed in
the city with her doctor husband, so long as her decision was a
choice for a different future and not a choice against her past. We
can all be ahistorical. It’s a matter of creating new history that is not
governed by our past.
To make history, we need to escape the confines of history. Conscious disclosers are the history makers. So what exactly is it that history makers do that is ahistorical?

- **They articulate.** They give language to something that hasn’t been said before. Naming something is an innovation in itself. Luke Howard, a British Quaker in the nineteenth century, was the first person to name the cloud types—cumulus, stratus, and cirrus. Articulation is innovation, and it is the necessary precursor to further innovation. Our farmer’s daughter articulated her desire to return to the farm on her own terms. Because she did, the doctor followed her there. Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon.com, articulated the idea of an online bookstore. Venture capitalists offered him money to create it.

- **They reconfigure.** They take what they already have and do something different and new with it. The farmer’s daughter was a master reconfigurer. Bezos reconfigured the concept of a bricks-and-mortar bookstore into a virtual bookstore to serve his, and his new customer’s, needs and desires.

- **They cross-appropriate.** They take ideas, concepts, mechanisms, models, and so on from one industry/society/community/ or other source outside their disclosive space and use the new ideas to create a new world for themselves. It wasn’t the same old farm when the daughter got done with it. And it certainly wasn’t the same old bookstore (or Internet, for that matter) when Bezos got done. Actually, Bezos isn’t done yet. Amazon.com keeps creating new “subworlds.”

Being a conscious discloser and understanding its implications will help you to act more intentionally—to open up bigger and bigger spaces (subworlds). Intentionality is one of the hallmarks of success. Brandon Hartsell knew exactly where he wanted to go with Sunstone
Yoga from the beginning, and he knew how he wanted to get there. Even when he was teaching at his first small studio, he had a vision of the teacher-training program he would develop and the franchised studios he would grow into. Where do you want to go? And how do you intend to get there?

**Exercise 1**

Articulate your objectives. Be as specific as you can, but write down everything, even if it seems vague. Put your objectives on a time line:

In one year, I want my business to ____________.

In three years, I’d like to achieve ____________ in my personal life.

You will find that the very process of writing down and articulating your dreams will open up new ideas.

**Exercise 2**

Make a list of what you will need to reconfigure in your life or business to achieve your objectives.

**Exercise 3**

Make a list of what you can cross-appropriate to better serve your objectives and reconfiguration. Start by thinking of good ideas you think other people have. Then see how or if those ideas might be put to use for your own ends.
Learning Methods

Now that you know what a discloser is and (surprise, surprise!) that you are one (I know you are, but what am I? Saying that was irresistible), you understand better how you learn and apply what you learn—as a discloser, of course. In order to go beyond booked solid, there’s a lot to learn. There are many theories about how we learn things, most of which are, in my opinion, just a lot of . . .

Yes, we each have affinities for certain learning styles. But if we don’t have a range of learning styles, then we’ll never be someone who learns well. “I can’t learn that way. Show me a different way.” In the end, those can be excuses. It’s okay not to figure things out. We can’t figure everything out all the time. But we still need to try, no matter what the style. After all, how we learn is just another disclosive space. A conscious discloser is someone who can learn in different environments.

Yet, despite all the theories on learning, fundamentally, we all learn in the same basic way. Virtually all of what we learn in the world is through copying. We learn from seeing how others do something or think about something, and then we imitate them. To learn new things, we need to consciously place ourselves in circumstances where there is an opportunity to learn how others think and how they act. We need to be constant observers (of others and ourselves) to accelerate our learning.

The Training Within Industry (TWI) learning method is one of the best examples of the point I’m making. TWI was developed during World War II to train the flood of women who would be entering the workforce when the men went off to war (think Rosie the Riveter). It was a teaching method that provided rapid and constant training based on three related programs: developing (1) skill in instruction, (2) skill in work methods, and (3) skill in leading other people. The program was presented in four steps: preparation, presentation, application, and testing. The method was so successful that it was introduced in Japan during postwar rebuilding efforts. The basic framework
Beyond Booked Solid

of TWI exists in Toyota Motor Corporation’s lean manufacturing model to this day (by the way, lean means most efficient, least wasteful). The company’s manufacturing model is seen as foundational to Toyota’s phenomenal success in continuous improvement and, more importantly, in its ability to sustain those improvements. At Toyota, job instruction is described in five parts:

1. Identify the important steps in the process (this could be any business or manufacturing process).
2. For each important step, identify the key issues to pay attention to.
3. Clarify why it’s a key issue.
4. Apply what you’ve learned.
5. Test, if possible, to demonstrate competence.

At the beginning of World War II, the first job the new American workforce needed to tackle was making lenses (for use in industrial processes and for industrial products, as well as for things like gun sights). Typically, teaching people how to make lenses took five years. Using the TWI approach, that time was reduced to five months. Impressive results! After a few years, they went back to see if they could shorten the process. This time they got it down to five days. How do you like them apples? Oh, I know what you may be thinking. But no, there weren’t any significant changes in technology. They just taught the workers differently—simplified the learning process. Simplified the teaching process. Do both for the purpose of the pursuit of mastery. In the process, you’ll discover an entirely new way of being.

When in doubt, think of Apolo Anton Ohno. And while you likely have no plans to compete on Dancing with the Stars anytime soon, it is that kind of openness to learning new things, learning a whole new way of being, that you need to have to successfully build a bigger, better business. And if you need to wind down at night after a challenging day, learning the paso doble could be a great way to relieve stress and take your mind off business worries at the same time.