



40 Ideas

FOR GREAT GROWTH

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An AlwaysInspiring
guide to real estate
sales success

40 Ideas for Great Growth

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— Welcome to YOUR New Year!

Here are 40 Ideas for Unlocking Sales Success!



Hello, it's Matthew. To kick off your year with inspiration, here's a printed copy of my **"40 Ideas for Great Growth"** guide, filled with strategies, data, insights and tips for helping your organization grow.

Inside these pages are some of my favorite ways to help salespeople, managers and staff take simple, smart steps to accelerate their performance, both personally and professionally.

I hope you use these pages to inspire your upcoming meetings, trainings and coaching session at your company.

If you'd like additional copies of this guide, you can download the free PDF version at <http://mferrara.substack.com/p/growth40>

You can also order full-size printed copies (\$25 each, includes shipping) by emailing me at matthew@mflearn.com

I'm including 25 "booklet" sized printed copies - free! - with every webinar booked, too.

So, welcome to the New Year! Now turn the page and let's get started on growth!

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Ultimately, you'll find that the secret to your success has always been **you**.

Data and statistics referenced are sourced from the National Association of REALTORS (NAR) 2023 Buyers & Sellers Report and Member Profile.

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Focus

Focus on the Right Business

Avoid burnout by adopting a 70/30 listing ratio. More listings equals more control over your success!

Effective growth starts with focusing on the right work.

Too many salespeople lack focus. They jump around, grasp every lead, trendy idea or social media fad. They spend hours recreating things their broker already created. They prospect consumers who aren't ready, willing or able to buy or sell - or pay.

Getting focused on the right business is the difference between 40 ideas that help you grow, and 40 things that burn you out.

So, before you read further:
Are you working the right business, in the right market, at the right time, for the right compensation?

If yes, great! **If not, what can you do?**

The most powerful answer is: Spend more time with sellers, and less with buyers.

Turn the page to find out why...

— Tips 1-7

Get Listings

In every market, inventory rules the day. Need revenue? Get a listing. Need buyers? Get a listing!

- **Listings generate cash flow.** You have to pay your bills every month and only a listing-centric strategy can drive revenue reliably. 90-95% of properly-priced listings **sell within 1-3 months.** That's cash flow. Buyers can take weeks to "look" at homes before making (or winning) an offer.
- **Every listing creates months of offline, online, MLS and social media marketing.** Listings attract listings. Prospects, neighbors and past clients see you selling homes and it gets their attention.
- **Listings and listing agents show up on portals and search engines.** Consumers look for homes, and your listings have your photo on them. Less than 1% of buyers found their agent on Zillow, REALTOR.COM or social media.
- **A seller is a pre-paying buyer.** Over 50% of the time you'll generate a **second transaction** from sellers who ask for your help to buy, too. The cost to acquire that deal is near-zero.
- **Listings create paid time off.** Colleagues will cover your listings in hopes of capturing a buyer; but nobody wants to drive your buyers around town while you're on vacation.
- **Listing agents only compete with 10-20% of agents.** Most agents in a market are buyer-centric; Listing agents narrow the competitive field, competing with only those similarly focused on getting inventory every day.
- If you need more inventory in the market, spending time with buyers won't help. **Only prospecting and listing sellers creates the inventory you seek.**

— Checklist

Find More Listings

Here's a quick list of the most productive places to find more listings in your marketplace!

- **More than 75% of sellers find their agents by referral, friends, family or the agent they worked with the last time.** So the greatest source of your listing business will be your exclusive resource - your sphere of influence. Talk to three people in your sphere daily to discover opportunities.
- **88% of For Sale by Owners ultimately list with a real estate professional.** So contacting new FSBOs in your marketplace is critical. Use portals like Zillow, ByOwner.com and other websites to keep a fresh list of listing leads in your inbox.
- **Keep an eye on short-term rental rules in your marketplace.** Many cities nationwide have changed their laws, making it harder for small investors to make their one or two rental properties payoff. Use websites like AirBnB for a fast list of potential listings if conditions change fast.
- **Expired listings in your MLS are another excellent source of new listings.** Be prepared with a fresh marketing plan, updated copy and your unique service offerings to encourage the owners back into the marketplace.
- **Neighbors of new listings - even if they're not your listing - are curious about their home's value, too.** Don't think every agent automatically contacts the local neighborhood: Be ready to send mail, email and stop by with updated market stats for every new listing in your target marketplace.

— You Make the Difference

We're all a little obsessed with data these days. But it's only when YOU show up that data becomes valuable. Here's why...

Most information lasts a minute but a misunderstanding lasts much longer.

When headlines say the “market is down,” they love to reference scary numbers. But remember: Most reports forget to factor in something very important, often on purpose, because:

“Data” can’t do anything. It has no perspective.

Action comes from someone adding perspective, telling the audience **what to do**, not just to absorb information.

When a datapoint says housing has become “unaffordable” to a twenty-something, it’s only one point in a much larger landscape; a pundit calls a certain price point “unaffordable” and it creates headlines.

They conveniently forget to mention a different group of consumers - say, Baby Boomers - are capable of selling and buying in the same conditions.

Same for the social media post decrying “rising rents” while omitting how those rents provide income and employment for property managers, owners and retirement accounts. As mortgage rates rise due to inflation, so does home appreciation and owner equity.

See the point?

Too often, what gets shared causes misunderstanding. Or at the very least, hesitation. What gets lost is the **opportunity for action** that comes from a fuller perspective.

Years ago I enjoyed a wonderful little book called *How to Lie with Statistics*, by Darrell Huff, who noted **big data is always a matter of perspective** and the objective of the data-giver should always be questioned:

“The secret language of statistics, so appealing in a fact-minded culture, is employed to sensationalize, inflate, confuse, and oversimplify....”

That’s why your job is to gather data and **develop a perspective** that overcomes hesitation. Starting with yourself.

Because only you can go beyond data, and help people take action!

Assess

Study the Consumer

If you want to attract, convert and close more deals, don't just study market trends.

Smart salespeople **spend time studying demographics, consumption trends and group behavior**. An effective sales plan continuously adjusts its message, marketing and service model to match their demands and dreams.

Studying the consumer requires significant effort. You'll need to purchase and analyze a variety of reports and data sources. Plus your personal and your company's performance.

And don't forget conversations, surveys and observations to spot changes in consumer preferences as soon as possible.



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Get reports from the National Association of REALTORS, State Association and growth market groups like NAHREP, AREEA, LGBTQ+ Real Estate Alliance and NAREB. Each delivers updated insights into consumer demographics and real estate needs.

Tips 8-12

Did you know...

- **The typical home seller in 2022 was age 60.** Consider that when designing your value proposition, marketing message and tactics (i.e. text or TikTok?)
- **The typical buyer (70%) had no children** under the age of 18 at home. Adjust your marketing to emphasize topics that matter, perhaps less about schools and playgrounds and more about commute times, entertainment, health care and community involvement.
- The typical seller had a **household income of US \$111,000** and 42% had household income greater than \$142,000. Adjust marketing to emphasize building wealth and cash offers and less about every little interest rate fluctuation.
- Consumers anticipated **remaining in their home for 10-15 years** - nearly twice the historical averages. Over 53% expected to stay in their home over 15 years. Develop farming strategies that can sustain relationships much longer, with messages that are durable and timeless.
- Consumers moved an average of **20 miles last year (up from 15 miles historically)**, driven by work-from-anywhere and increased retirements. Adjust your marketing distribution to reach a larger real market geography and expand sales volume.

Get Ready to Add Value

Speak to Their Needs

After studying current seller demographics for your marketplace, **design a specific, high-value conversation** for your prospecting discussions using these key questions:

What are the **top reasons** local sellers in your target market are likely to be moving? Get specific. Don't rely upon assumptions or cliches.

What are the **biggest concerns** this audience has about selling today? Think about current finance, convenience, timing, inventory and other issues, and have clear answers for each one.

Which of your **unique** service propositions will resonate the most with this audience? Focus on the ones that are different enough from competitors to discuss.

Which stories featuring similar sellers you've helped can you tell? Practice emphasizing the positive emotional outcomes, too.

What are **three approaches you can discuss** to demonstrate options for selling in current conditions? One size does not fit all.

What to Say

Make Someone's Day

We're awfully concerned about marketing. Getting our message out. Being seen. Traffic. Influencing others. We're saturated with ads promising the best ways to inundate the audience with "the" message that will bring fame and fortune. Developing "personal brands" has become a new career type - replacing teacher, astronaut, salesperson, parent. Makes you think going viral was the key to the meaning of life.

Which is ironic, because for most of my 33-year career **I haven't even had a logo**. Nor letterhead. And certainly not an SEO strategy.

I've just tried to have a message.

Some time ago, I was reminded of how our smallest actions can send the most effective message.

I was boarding a plane that was running late. People were squeezing things into the overhead compartments while the flight attendants did a dozen things before takeoff - including asking if we'd like a drink (this was 2019, after all).

After I fastened my seatbelt, the flight attendant handed me a glass of water, and moved on.

Once boarding was complete, the attendant reappeared with another drink.

"You asked for ginger ale, didn't you? I handed you a water. Sorry about that," she smiled.

"I wasn't going to say anything," I replied. "You were busy and I wasn't going to be 'that passenger' today."

"Well, thanks," she whispered to me. "Some days you'd think I'd handed someone dirty dishwater if I handed them the wrong drink!"

"I'm glad I could make your day a little easier, then," I toasted her with my ginger ale.

I talk to a lot of people worried about visibility. They spend a lot of money hand-wringing over the copy, the make-up, the calls to action. They buy everything that promises to setup keywords, fool LinkedIn, and spread their marketing across every search engine.

And yet, in so many cases, they're working against themselves. They're focused on being seen before they have understood the essence of marketing:

You have to have something to say.

And not just a snazzy slogan. Or the latest market stats. Or even your production charts (arrows go up, arrows go down). **Your message is bigger: It's in everything you do. Everything you are.** Which is why the little things you do get noticed far more than the big noises you make attract attention.

Be nice. Say thanks. Make eye contact. Be kind. Don't cut the line. Don't cut corners, either. Make the least likely person you meet feel like the most important in the world. Keep your word. Deliver your best.

Nobody will even think of checking your ranking if you do those things, first.

Which You is the Message?

As the plane took off, the stranger seated next to me said, "That was nice of you."

"Well, it really isn't my goal to make her day tougher than it has to be," I nodded.

"What is your goal, then?"

"Mostly to make people's day," I said. "And believe it or not, I sometimes get paid to do it." I introduced myself, and he asked if I had a card.

"No logo?" he said, looking at the plain white card with name and title and a picture on the back from a previous window seat.

"I just spent my entire marketing budget on being nice to that flight attendant," I said.

Nudge

A little more

Growth-driven salespeople do “a little more” than the norm. They build a plan that moves performance slightly higher. They **don’t go overboard**. Often the next level requires **a slight but purposeful nudge**.

Consider this picture of Thomas Edison’s laboratory below. When I toured his factory, the other tourists walked by the building because it said “closed” on the door. I had a sense there was a great photo within. So I peered through the glass. A security guard approached and asked if I’d like to step inside. “Just for a minute,” he said. “I only need a minute,” I replied.

A little more is all you need to succeed, if everyone else walks by.



— Tips 13–22

What Others Won't Do

- Less than $\frac{1}{3}$ of **REALTORS work relocation** consumers, a \$14B market. A little training and practice is all you need.
- The average agent worked **30 hours** a week; show up for a normal 40-hour week and see what happens.
- 49% of agents generated **less than 25%** of business from past clients. Do more with your own sphere of influence - and consider reaching out to competitors' past clients going under-served.
- 81% of REALTORS reported **no business from open houses**. Either they aren't doing them, or they aren't doing them well.
- The average REALTOR spent **less than \$660** on professional training. Imagine your skills if you budgeted a mere \$100 a month.
- The average REALTOR spent **less than \$570** on technology. That's two fancy coffees a week. It won't take much to widen the gap.
- 64% spent **ZERO DOLLARS on lead generation**. Just \$20 weekly for ads and social media promotions exceeds the competition.
- 49% of REALTORS **never use video technology**. Producing a 2-minute video with your smartphone is a Monday morning priority.
- 35% of REALTORS **had no website**. At minimum, get your profile onto major portals, your company page and association directory.
- 33% of REALTORS **did not use Facebook** for professional reasons. Since over 75% of your business will come from your sphere of influence, be sure to engage them where they are daily, as well as networking with other agents who can share referrals and fresh ideas.

— Give Yourself a Push

Establish Your Plan

Considering the data about your competition on the previous pages, develop a specific and committed action plan using this checklist.

List three things you can do each month to generate business from your past clients and contacts.

What is your budget for professional training or coaching? Which classes do you intend to take in the next three months?

What is your monthly budget for generating leads and which sources are most effective for your target business?

—— The Little Extra

Mayonnaise and the Art of Excellence

Let me tell you about a moment of excellence that has stuck with me over the years. It's the story of a small gesture that showed me how to break away from the attention-mania that most marketers get caught up in - *by realizing the power of **paying attention**.*

Rather than trying to *get attention*.

I love diners. They're little laboratories of entrepreneurship, customer experience and service excellence. I have learned more from eating in diners than semesters of business classes.

Especially since the best often look so opposite to what I find in many industries today: people working at a fast-pace, on shoestring budgets, for long hours, and most of all, consistently delivering great results.

One of my favorite diners is the Nautilus in Madison, NJ. Sitting at the counter is always like being center stage in a perfectly choreographed play. On one memorable visit, I found myself the subject of a superb service lesson.

I barely sat down and said "Coffee, please," before the waitress filled a cup to the steaming top. "I can tell you don't need to see the menu," she said.

"Turkey club on white, toasted. With fries, please," I said, unravelling the silverware from the paper napkin.

"Already on its way," she said handing the slip through the window.

(continued on next page)

— The Little Extra

The waitress didn't know me. But she engaged with me as if I were a regular at that counter every day. She wasn't seeing a stranger, but a friend whose seat was reserved. Three sips into my coffee, the bell rang and my sandwich appeared in the window. The waitress reached through, turned like a baseball pitcher, and whisked the plate in front of me. With her other hand she refilled my coffee cup from a foot above, pouring with flourish.

"Anything else?" she asked. Before I could say, "Some extra mayo on the side," she plopped a little cup of mayonnaise next to my plate.

"How did you know?" I asked. "Of course you want extra mayo," she grinned. "Everybody wants extra mayo with the club and fries. Why make you ask?"

She smiled proudly at anticipating my needs. I knew without a doubt that she took her job seriously - and her customer care deep to heart. Being one step ahead wasn't something extra: It was par for her performance. And I was surprised at how impressed I was by that gesture. It made me so happy, so little a thing.

Anticipating the mayonnaise made a big impact - while being the exact opposite of everything we hear from gurus about "being disruptive" these days to get attention. Which is also why, at the Nautilus, they don't make me scan a QR code for the menu and they still accept cash. Paying attention is so simple!

Isn't that all we want, really, when we go to a store, board a plane or visit the doctor's office? An authentic greeting; a feeling that we're not an interruption; that we belong there; and that people have been thinking about us - even expecting us - before we place our order.

"That's some wonderful service," I said, reaching out to shake her hand. "I supply and you apply," she winked. "Who trained you to do that?" "Nobody," she said, "I pay attention." "Not try to get attention," I smiled in agreement.

Before leaving I asked one last question. "What if I had asked for mustard?"

"Leave the surprises for court, honey," she drawled, sliding down the counter to refill more coffee cups.

Learn

Train early and frequently

The business of the business of real estate is one of the most fast-paced innovation sectors in the economy. Exciting developments in sales, technology, marketing and service models offer powerful paths for growth.

All of which require a commitment to learning.

There are abundant sources of learning all around you. This book. Office meetings. The company trainer. Your manager. Conventions and events. Plus a constant stream of tips, techniques and videos on social media.

To maximize your growth potential, you must commit to consistently developing your skills. Discovering fresh ideas. And practicing them frequently enough to get really good.

Smart salespeople establish a learning plan at the beginning of their career and refresh it every year. They budget the money, time and energy to actively participate in classes, travel to significant events and regularly learn online.

As my mentor likes to say: For things to get better, you have to get better. Make learning a growth priority.

— Tips 23-27

Get Smart

- **Subscribe** to industry news, annual reports, and newsletters. Pay once a year and make time daily to keep updated with the flow of ideas and information.
- **Book** early-bird prices to key conferences. Attend events that provide opportunities to learn new skills, try products and network.
- **Take advantage** of free content. Listen to podcasts and watch interviews of industry leaders, speakers, trainers and colleagues who share lessons and innovative ideas. Make their insights part of your personal “brain trust.”



- **Evaluate and find a coach.** Take assessments to identify growth needs. Get committed to coaching from a manager, colleague or mentor. Make accountability a time to celebrate progress.
- **Listen to clients' advice.** Read your testimonials for ideas on what you are doing well. Review feedback from recent sales. Identify gaps, and double-down on strengths to accelerate growth. During down-time, book calls with clients to learn what else they think you should be learning.

— Too many people are waiting for a sign

You're Ready for Anything

If I had a single message for friends these days, it's this: You, by your very nature, your preparation, persistence and professionalism are ready for **anything** - with no need to be ready for **everything**.

Stop waiting for a sign from the market. Or someone else - the Federal Reserve, customers, competitors? They won't tell you when it's time to proceed. Why? Because that time is now. Millions of sales are happening right now. And you are ready for your share of all of them.

Millions of people will take action this year. No need to put yourself on hold, or wait until someone has it all figured out. Whatever happens, there's a way to navigate it. Even things you've never experienced before, because you know someone who can help: a friend, colleague, manager, even a client.

Does every transaction you do go perfectly by the book? Of course not. They're all exercises in controlled chaos! That's what you do: You deal with it successfully. And that's all you need.

Tell yourself every day, managing change is your job description.

Let it lower your stress, and send worries packing.

You can't control the market any more than the weather.

You can't determine whether every buyer or seller will take action today.

But *you* can still take action. And that's all that matters.

Does *anyone* in your office have a listing today? That's a sign; see it!

Did *any* buyers close a deal? Things are happening; all around you!

Those are the signs to get attuned to every day.

And share them with clients, in an encouraging way:

Mr. and Mrs. Smith, I know you're worried about everything these days, but all you need to know is that I'm ready for anything that comes our way.

So let's get started!

— Tips 28–32

Know the Market

Study key market trends to guide strategy precisely. Combine key metrics in recent sales, competitor performance and external influencers to refine growth plans.

- **Study MLS data carefully.** Break down aggregate numbers by price, property type and neighborhoods that match your model. Find the particular sub-segments, like luxury or first-time buyers and drill deeper into the data.
- **Analyze your competition.** Objectively compare your results for list-to-sale ratios, days on market, price reductions and expired inventory. Run scenarios to see if gaps are worth closing profitably.
- **Know who's creating inventory.** Monitor builders, attend public meetings, talk to investors and commercial developers. Connect employment and relocation trends to the geographic, demographic and property-price segments you're focused on.
- **Identify sources of demand.** Know the local volume and feeder markets sending out-of-area consumers. Then allocate some targeted marketing to those zones - and agents for referrals.
- **Identify market influencers.** Talk to lawmakers and regulators. Follow issues like short-term rentals rules. Monitor tax changes and legal influences by engaging government, legal and financial experts to fine-tune your marketing and value proposition.

Tips 33-36

Master Technology

- **Master your technology.** Train regularly, upgrade on schedule and allocate time to learn new features to maximize results.
- **Review online subscriptions.** Compare features with newer offerings. Update to the latest versions. Measure return on investment and adjust your budget before they auto-renew.
- **Analyze marketing results.** Read lead generation reports and conversion rates. Focus on quality, and consistency, not volume. Know closing ratios, best sources, and cost per lead. Cut sporadic results and adjust strategy to emphasize *seller* leads.
- **Clean up social media.** Review profiles, friends and followers. Prune distractions or unpleasant relationships. Update bios and rewrite copy. Develop a consistent message. Know which networks bring good engagement, and which to avoid.

— Tips 37-40

Recharge Yourself

Make it a priority to rest, recharge and be ready for business. Integrate wellness into your career strategy.

- **Get checkups.** Schedule physicals, catch up with your therapist and enjoy a day at the dentist. The best professional plan is worthless if you break down. ***You are the most important part of your plan.***
- **Call in specialists.** Start with your accountant. Crunch taxes early. Talk to a consultant about cash flow and budgets. Build wealth, not just revenue.
- **Get Un-busy.** Hustle often leads to burnout. Treat your creative side to some TLC. Lock in family time. Go see art, a movie, take a walk, sleep late. Replenish to maintain an advantage every day.
- **Make phone calls.** Talk with friends, colleagues and people who refresh you. Make time weekly to have significant conversations - in person, phone or video - rather than rush to catch up over the holidays.



— The key ingredient for growth

To Be and not To Do

Whenever I talk to people about personal or organizational growth, the conversation usually starts with activities. What can I *do* to spark growth? What should we implement, execute, train, produce - every manner of thing that ends up on someone's To-Do List.

But to-do lists are one of the great gimmicks of the modern mind. Most of their items never get done. They linger; waiting for something else to happen first: training, money, technology, time, anything!

To achieve growth, we must start somewhere else.

Before we take action, we must know where it will take us. How will we show up, if we actually grow? That's the hard question to answer, first.

Once, a CEO called me: "What can I do to help my people succeed?" "Throw away your to-do lists," I replied, "This isn't a problem for actions." "Shouldn't we tell them to do the basics, prospect or use AI?" she asked. "That's not their problem," I answered. "**Your people are having a crisis of confidence, not lack of competence.** Some are stalling with every tool at their fingertips. You must focus *less* on changing their tasks, and more on changing *their minds.*"

Before someone can sell more, they must see themselves as *someone who sells more*. Before a manager can recruit more, they must envision themselves as an effective talent-attractor. We must believe ourselves as the next version of ourselves first. More training, tools or money create activity; but don't sustain lasting growth.

People will only act once they believe in who they can *Become*.

It's the basis of every sales pitch: Get someone to imagine their future state, not the product itself. Every diet starts with a picture of a better body. Every purchase shows us wearing, using, enjoying the solution. We scrimp and save to buy our dream house: Not to get two sinks in the bathroom but to launch the next chapter in our lives.

We'll do almost anything:
Once we see who it helps us **become**.

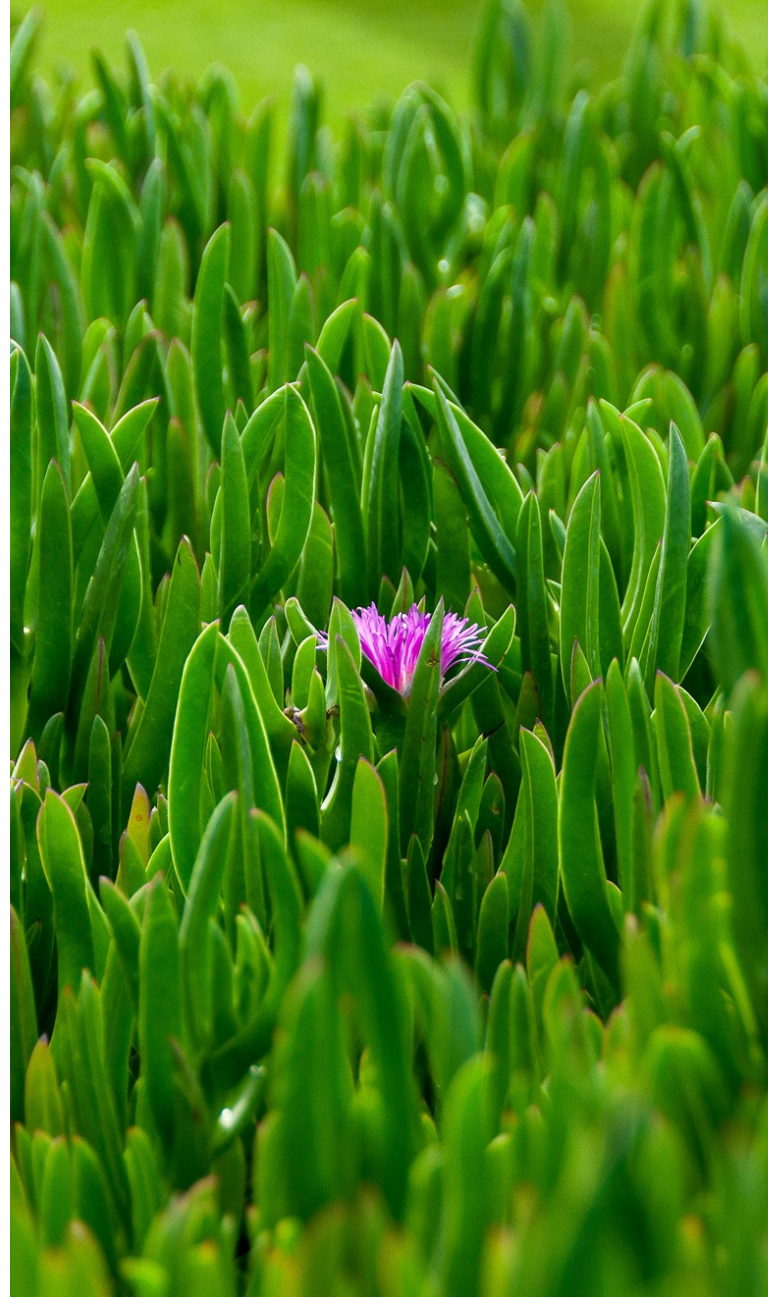
***Success starts by
believing you're
worth it!***

With these 40 ideas, insights and data points in mind, achieving success is now in your hands.

Try one or two; don't rush to do them all. Be a serial success implementer, and momentum will take over.

Most of all, give yourself permission to do things differently than everyone else. Your growth plan is unique.

Just like you!



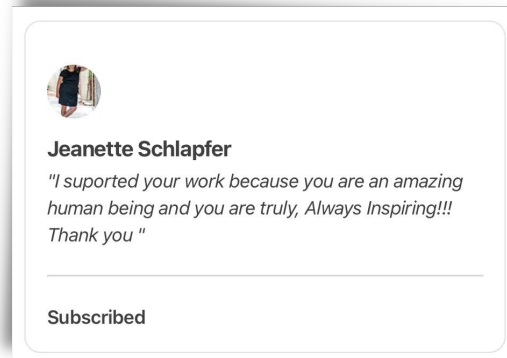
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