



Every Time I Lie



I realize that I am not present.

“Be strictly accurate in your words.

Remember what lying really entails: giving someone else an impression of some object or event which does not strictly correspond to the impression that yourself have of this same thing.

So complete honesty in what you say is nothing less than assuring that the impression which your words leave on someone else matches the very impression you have in your mind.

— Roach, 2000, p. 103



The Surprisingly Large Cost of Telling Small Lies

By REBEKAH CAMPBELL

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“Recently, I caught up with one of our angel investors for lunch: Peter is a brilliant entrepreneur from England who has lived all over the world. He has built several businesses and now lives a dream life with a house on a harbor, a happy family and a broad smile.

As our conversation drifted from an update of my company to a deep discussion about life itself, I asked him what he thought was the secret to success. I expected the standard “never give up” or some other T-shirt slogan, but what he said took me by surprise. “The secret to success in business and in life is to never, ever, ever tell a lie,” he said.

That stumped me. I know that lying is bad and telling the truth is good — we learn that as children. But the secret to success? I looked at Peter, confused and skeptical. He nodded and assured me, “Complete honesty is the access to ultimate power.”

As we spoke, I started thinking about the little lies I tell every day — often without thinking about it, but not always. I have been guilty of exaggerating a metric here or there or omitting facts for my own advantage. Each time, there is a little voice inside my head that tells me it is the wrong thing to do. I have wondered whether everyone does this or whether it is just me. Could this be what has been holding me back?

I did some research and it seems most of us lie quite a bit. A [study by the University of Massachusetts](#) found that 60 percent of adults could not have a 10-minute conversation without lying at least once. The same study found that 40 percent of people lie on their résumés and a whopping 90 percent of those looking for a date online lie on their profiles. Teenage girls lie more than any other group, which is attributed to peer pressure and expectation. The study did not investigate the number of lies told by entrepreneurs looking for investment capital, but I fear we would top the chart.

Most people lie about little things to make them look good. A [study by a film rental company](#) found that 30 percent of respondents lied about having seen “The Godfather.” It’s



a classic film, we assume everyone has seen it, and we lie that we have too, because we want to fit in. People lie to stave off the consequences of making a mistake, to buy more time or to spare someone's feelings. Their hearts may be in the right place, but they are still telling lies.

Peter has invested in hundreds of businesses. Every time he sees a pitch, he waits until the end of the presentation before asking the entrepreneurs to go back through the deck and point out every lie they have just told. There are always plenty. As soon as the entrepreneurs open up with the truth, they can start managing what to do next.

Peter maintains that telling lies is the No. 1 reason entrepreneurs fail. Not because telling lies makes you a bad person but because the act of lying plucks you from the present, preventing you from facing what is really going on in your world. Every time you overreport a metric, underreport a cost, are less than honest with a client or a member of your team, you create a false reality and you start living in it.

You know the right path to take and choose another, and in so doing you lose control of the situation. Now, rather than tackling the problem head on, you have to manage the fallout from the lie. I know people who seem to have spent their entire careers inflating the truth and then fighting to meet the expectations they have set.

Like me, Peter reads Buddhist philosophy and applies it to business. One of its lessons is to remain in the present, a more peaceful, creative and productive place from which to operate. Every time I tell a lie, I know that I am no longer present. I feel a tightening in my chest and sweat on my palms — just a small amount because I only tell little lies. But lies they are. They place me in a false future, increase my level of stress and prevent me from being as creative as I can be when I'm fully present. Stress saps our energy and causes nasty consequences for our bodies. We know that lying creates stress; polygraph tests measuring blood pressure, perspiration, pulse and skin conductivity can pinpoint a lie with tremendous accuracy.

I recently discovered firsthand the corrosive effect of lying. For several years, I have worked as a director of a nonprofit organization. We do great work in the community but as a team we have always floundered. A few weeks ago, I caught the leader of our group lying — not



whoppers, but a series of tales about why he was late, why someone could not make a meeting or why emails had not been read. I confronted him and he justified his lying, saying that it avoided unpleasant consequences.

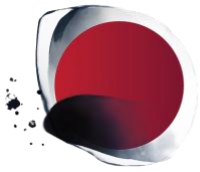
It was obvious why our team wasn't working: People didn't trust each other. The result was a culture of obfuscation and backstabbing in which we achieved less than we were capable of achieving. Staff members and volunteers became disheartened and eventually left. The leader's constant lies, no matter how insignificant they seemed to him, had caused a breakdown of integrity and trust in the organization, and without integrity and trust nothing worked.

Since my meeting with Peter a few months ago, I've thought about truth and its relationship to creativity, peace, and ultimately success. I decided to test his ideas by trying to be 100 percent honest and transparent all of the time, even when I did not have to be. It was harder and more frightening than I expected. It is embarrassing to admit that I caught myself telling many more lies than I realized, most to protect myself. Telling the truth can be a tough option, and it made me feel much more vulnerable.

But the results have been striking. In an investor pitch six months ago, when I ran through our financial model and budget, I was open about where money had been spent poorly because of mistakes I had made — even though there was no way the investor could have found this out on his own. I was nervous, but the majority of investors I pitch say no anyway. So I decided to try an experiment: the total truth. At the end of our conversation, he said, "I really appreciate how transparent you've been with me, Rebekah. Give me a day to think about it." The next day he called back and invested. I was stunned!

I've stuck with this philosophy ever since. It's transformed my sense of peace and coincided with our company's most productive period ever. Coincidence?

If you are reading this post and thinking, "This doesn't apply to me — I never lie," you are probably lying to yourself. If you try being honest and transparent about everything, I'm confident that you will find it both difficult and rewarding — and that it will make a measurable difference in your business."



Reference

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<https://archive.nytimes.com/boss.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/03/11/the-surprisingly-large-cost-of-telling-small-lies/>

Roach, Geshe Michael. (2000). *The diamond cutter: The Buddha on managing your business and your life*. New York: Doubleday.

Image (search “I Lie”) courtesy of: [Christina Langford-Miller @pinto45](#)

The Tim Dukes Method provides an opportunity for self-reflective individuals to cultivate the capacity to receive into consciousness hidden aspects of the self, claiming your unique gifts – ensuring that today’s brilliance successfully transitions into tomorrow’s wisdom. The Tim Dukes Method is designed and implemented by Dr. Timothy Dukes for determined creatives to ensure long-term viability — as a continuing investment in the well-being of yourself, family, organizations, culture, society, and the Earth itself.