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Date: July 23, 2019 at 1:00:15 PM

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Subject: Remember that the sun rose clear

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## In this letter:

- The thinking behind our [cold read assessment](#)
- What we learned from working with a consultant 6 months ago
- The line that is inspiring and encouraging me this week

Hey everyone,

We publicly released our [cold read assessment](#) last week. It's been making me think a lot about the biases we bring when we create products and services.

Initially, we launched our new direction 3 months ago with 3 different assessments—one for lead generation, one for sales conversions, and one for customer referrals. We got a few inquiries on our lead generation assessment, but none of them were a good fit (and honestly, I think the reason we got inquiries on that one rather than the others was because it was the first one listed).

Instead, as we were listening to our clients, we realized that they couldn't pinpoint one of those things as a priority over the others. They are all important and interconnected. And sometimes, they already had a project in mind they wanted help with, and they weren't sure which category it fit under.

So we never actually pitched any of those assessments. Instead, we created a new assessment where we look at the whole before diagnosing the parts that need attention and represent the most impactful opportunities for growth.

It's funny how obvious it is to me now that we should have been doing that from the start. But our biases are powerful. In my case, I've been working on our customer relationships framework for so long that I automatically designed our assessments to align neatly with the 3 different parts.

This is why getting fresh perspective from a thoughtful, knowledgeable third-

party is valuable. Because no matter how well you know your business and its problems and how confident you are in your ability to achieve your goals, you have deeply ingrained biases that limit the possibilities you're able to see.

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A few weeks ago, I was interviewing a CEO who had decided they were done hiring consultants to help with marketing and growth. They kept ending up with strategies and plans that were aligned with “best practices” but that weren't aligned with who they were as a company. As a result, even when they put a ton of energy into execution, those tactics never made an impact that was any better than anything else they'd tried.

I can understand it. We've hired our share of consultants who were really great at giving advice but not that great at listening and helping us come up with strategies that were unique to who we are and the problems we're trying to solve.

But we've also worked with some really fantastic consultants—people who not only help us think bigger and with more clarity, but inspire us to get better and better at our craft in consulting with our own clients. One of these is [Philip Morgan](#). He did some extremely valuable work on helping understand and define the market for [SimpleWebRTC](#) this year. He also has an incredible mailing list that several of us subscribe to.

One of the things about Philip that was so helpful for us is that he didn't bring his own assumptions to the conversation. He was even careful about the information he asked us for. He didn't want to adopt our biases before he started conducting his own research.

Now that I think about it, Philip's thoughtfulness in his approach undoubtedly influenced us as we were designing and iterating on our cold read assessment. (Thanks, Philip! Truly.) I often learn just as much from watching smart people work as I do in hearing what they have to say.

...

“When we consider what...is the chief end of man, and what are

the true necessities and means of life, it appears as if men had deliberately chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. Yet they honestly think there is no choice left. But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear. It is never too late to give up our prejudices. No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof. What everybody echoes or in silence passes by as true to-day may turn out to be falsehood to-morrow, mere smoke of opinion, which some had trusted for a cloud that would sprinkle fertilizing rain on their fields.”

[Walden](#), Henry David Thoreau

I'm reading Walden again for the second time. This is my very favorite line. Every time I read it, my heart swells and I want to raise my head a little higher.

*“...remember that the sun rose clear. It is never too late to give up our prejudices.”*

Man.

Sometimes we get so caught up in the complexity of executing our ideas that we forget the clarity we had in the beginning. Maybe it was a clarity of ignorance, but there is also deep truth in what motivated us to pursue the thing we're pursuing.

May the sun rise clear for you again this week.

<3,

Sarah

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