

Good morning!

This week's profiles are honestly all "highly recommends." We've got a company selling psychic vampire repellent. We've got a crypto cult leader. We've got the woman who will take us to Mars. Grab a cup of coffee & clear your schedule for the day.

Also, you'll be receiving a second email from me later this afternoon. As a complement to The Profile, it will be a deep dive on an individual person. It's something I'm just testing, so please give me all your feedback after you have a chance to look through.

Here we go:

- [The celebrity selling fairy dust](#) (\*\*HIGHLY RECOMMEND\*\*)
- [SpaceX's secret weapon](#)
- [The American captive in North Korea](#)
- [The man who manipulates criminals](#)
- [The crypto cult leader](#)
- [The king of private equity](#)
- [The firm \(still\) trying to fix capitalism](#)

## PEOPLE TO KNOW.

**[The celebrity selling fairy dust](#):** Gwyneth Paltrow's controversial wellness company Goop is valued at \$250 million. On its site, you can find legitimate lifestyle tips alongside completely bonkers magical thinking: articles on body brushing, dieting, the afterlife, crystals, and something called "Psychic Vampire Repellent." Every time someone writes a takedown of her company, it only grows in popularity and sells more products. This one is a must-read.

*"Aspiration is suffering. Wellness is suffering. As soon as you level up, you greet how infinite the possibilities are, and it all becomes too awful to live without."*

**[SpaceX's secret weapon](#):** Gwynne Shotwell, the president of SpaceX, is responsible for launching spaceships, selling rockets, and dealing with Elon Musk. She translates her boss's far-out ideas into real businesses—whether it means selling customers on a rocket or telling them not to read too much into his tweets. She wants the public to look at SpaceX and think: "They do what they say they're going to do. Even when it sounds completely insane at the beginning."

*"Elon says let's go to Mars and she says, 'OK, what do we need to actually get to Mars?'"*

**[The American captive in North Korea](#):** There are many unknowns around what happened to Otto Warmbier, the American college student who was sent home brain-damaged from North Korea. A reporter spent six months trying to find out the truth, and it seems that Otto's injury

may not be as black-and-white as people believe. It's an incredibly heavy story in which a family's heartbreak clashes with geopolitical tensions.

*"What made an American college student go to Pyongyang? What kind of nightmare did he endure while in captivity? How did his brain damage occur?"*

**The man who manipulates criminals:** Spyros Enotiades is an actor for hire who specializes in the role of cartel boss, middleman, or money manager in sting operations for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. He prepares for the roles by obsessing over little things — from the deodorant he wears to conceal the smell of his fear to whether to gel his hair. This is a real-life thriller that digs into the intricacies of friendship, deception, and deadly risk.

*"It happens routinely that you get a frigging gun pointed at your head, and somebody starts asking some tough questions, and you better not fold."*

**The crypto cult leader:** This is the story of how Brock Pierce went from child actor to Bitcoin billionaire. His skyrocketing popularity has made him one of the most controversial figures in crypto. For one, he wants to turn Puerto Rico into a Burning Man-style utopia for other early crypto evangelists. This profile characterizes him as "visionary and madman, idealist and opportunist, entertainer and businessman, magician and hedonist, narcissist and community builder." There are many sides to the same (bit)coin.

*"You know the concept of compounding interest?" Pierce asks. "I'm into compounding impact."*

## **COMPANIES TO WATCH.**

**The king of private equity:** Billionaire investor Robert Smith believes corporate buyouts can be reduced to a formula. His firm Vista Equity Partners has codified that notion into an acronym-heavy playbook of operating standards. Employees take multiple cognitive assessments (ie: IQ tests) to determine which job is best suited for them. Low scorers aren't fired, but they are less likely to be promoted. I'm all about standardized mental models, but is this taking it too far?

*"Vista takes the tests very seriously, using proctors or observing test-takers by video to make sure no one cheats."*

**The firm (still) trying to fix capitalism:** Venture firm Social Capital set out to fix capitalism. Now, its employees keep leaving and investors are getting nervous, but CEO Chamath Palihapitiya says the firm hasn't wavered from its goals. As Social Capital bleeds people, Palihapitiya isn't willing to budge from his long-term vision. By 2045, he projects, the firm should employ at least 10 million people through the companies it backs ... Delusional, determined, or both?

*"I don't think we've broken anything at Social Capital," Palihapitiya said.*