

Mark Daniel, Digital, on Infinite Loops w Jim O'Shaughnessy

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<https://newsletter.osv.llc/p/how-to-find-a-kaleidoscopic-alien>

Sajith: I had never heard of Mark Daniel, founder of investment firm [Digital](#), before this podcast. Some great quotes here. My biggest takeaway was around how people want complex and easy (the best pushup variant, the best translation of a foreign book) instead of simple and hard (just keep doing the simple variant regularly, just get started on the book with any translation) etc.

Algorithms force people to create too much content

Mark Daniel: I think that maybe each person who creates content on the internet should be limited to 10 posts. I don't believe that someone has more than 10 things to say. You can't make 600 videos on working out, but that's the business model the internet pushes you to do. There's not 30 different bicep workouts that you need to record, right? There's probably one, right? **So I think finding the very best thing and ingesting that one thing very carefully is incredibly productive.**

Mark Daniel: My personal information diet consists of reading things that are timeless, very, very, very old, and then things that are very, very, very, very new.

Mark Daniel: I think one of the super skills of the future, or even of the present, is just going to be figuring out how to ignore the vast majority of things that are created.

Simple and Hard > Complex and Easy

4) I think that on the life advice stuff, on the career advice stuff, on anything that's advice driven, I think mostly the answer is simple and hard and people want complex and easy. And podcasts are great for complex and easy, but the answers are usually simple and hard and you just have to do the work.

5) Mark Daniel: Like marriage, health, building a business, building a great portfolio. All of those things are quite simple and quite hard. Whenever I find myself trying to over complicate something, it's usually because I know what the answer is. I don't want to accept what the answer is, because it's going to require me to sweat. **It is always the guy who's out of shape who's asking about push-up variations in the**

gym. It's always the guy who can't do one push up, he's like, "But do I put my hands here? And then do I do a jumping push-up? Or do I do underhand?" It's like, "No. **Just keep going until you can't anymore**" and I think that that tends to be correct in every stream of your life that's worth developing. You just have to do the simple, hard thing 90% of the days each year and then do it for 10 years and then look up and see where you're at, and that tends to work out pretty well. That's really, honestly, the only thing that I've seen work out well. That's not luck driven.

6) **Mark Daniel:** You just made a great point. The completion porn is really challenging also. So it's like, **I think it's much better to watch the 10 greatest films 10 times**, than to watch 100 films once. And again, that's just not the way that our culture is set up today.

Jim O'Shaughnessy: Indeed, they were. But I was going to demonstrate or illustrate with a different story, your point. I can always tell, **whenever I put anything up online about the Tao Te Ching, I have a universal rule. Anyone who comes back to me and says, "Which translation should I read?", A, is not going to ever read it seriously. And, B, if they do read it, they're not going to understand it.**

Founders as Kaleidoscopic Aliens

Mark Daniel: Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. I think with the best founders that we meet, we always are looking for these people that we call kaleidoscopic aliens. They've had some bizarre set of life experiences that have shown them the fourth dimension, and they also can thrive in the most adverse and ambiguous environment,

Young founders are getting robbed of their calligraphy years

When you look at really young founders, they're often now getting robbed of their calligraphy. So when you think about, could Jobs have done Apple without the calligraphy years, if from 16 you feel like you need to be X, Y or Z, you might not have the time to putter around, or feel like you have the time to putter around and explore your passions as much as maybe someone would have before there was the startup culture or founder culture that became in vogue. So this is something we think about a lot.

Question to ask while making an investment

15) Mark Daniel: Yeah. When we think about making an investment, there's this visceral feeling that is more powerful than all of our strategies and frameworks, which is that if I wasn't building our firm, would I go and beg the founder for a job?

Jim O'Shaughnessy: I love that.

Mark Daniel: Hundreds of questions that are baked into that question, and I have never had a counterfactual on that. So if the answer is no, I would not beg them for a job. The company, the investments never worked. If the answer is yes, there's all of these things that could be problematic. The market's too small, they're co-founders leaving, whatever the fuck it is. But if I would go and beg them on my hands and knees for a job, they've always done well.