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2021 Uncharted Insiders

April 2021

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the April edition of the Uncharted Insider. Do you know of someone who would enjoy this monthly letter? Forward this email to them and they can subscribe [here](#).

Uncharted Update

- **Accelerator on sustainable agriculture:** Today we launch applications for our next cohort with Chipotle focused on accelerating ventures that are reimagining the food system. Do you know of ventures who should apply? Direct them [here](#).
- **Accelerator on solutions to economic inequality.** On May 10th, we're announcing our program focused on radical solutions to economic inequality. Do you know of a venture working on this topic? Direct them [here](#), and they can sign up for notifications.
- **We are hiring for an External Relationships Manager.** Forward this email and [job description](#) to someone who would be a great fit!

On Patience

Progress is speeding up. We live in an age of going big and going fast; just look at the COVID vaccine: the fastest vaccine ever to come to market. In less than a year, we went from sequencing the disease, developing the vaccine, testing it, producing it, distributing it, and getting it into millions of arms. I received my first vaccine dose on March 12th, 2021, exactly 365 days since the NBA shut down their season and the world changed overnight. But as often is the case, when we dig into the chronology of social, racial, cultural, or scientific change, it becomes clear that change doesn't just occur overnight, but instead germinates slowly for years before bursting onto the scene in an apparent epiphany of innovation and ingenuity. The story of our COVID vaccine is a story of slow, plodding research, numerous failures, and 40 years of experiments to determine if and how mRNA technology might have the potential to be the base code for vaccines. In fact, the "breakthrough innovation" of our vaccine was [the product of the meandering career of Dr. Katalin Kariko](#), a

Hungarian scientist in the US, who struggled to receive research grants, bounced between research labs, and ran into numerous obstacles, dead ends, and the sound of crickets after being published in obscure scientific journals. Her conviction in mRNA technology is decades old, even though the vaccine is brand new and truly innovative. Reading about her story and the [immense potential for mRNA technology in future vaccines](#) is inspiring, but it also is instructive: it's time we stop expecting transformation over night. It's time we stop holding social impact organizations who are doing big, audacious work to measurable, transformational results within 6 months. Patience is a virtue, they say, but it is also a necessary ingredient if we're looking beyond incremental change to major breakthroughs. Sometimes the status quo is perpetuated by those in power who reinforce their power, but other times, the status quo marches forward simply because we're not patient enough with the risky ideas whose time just hasn't yet come.

On Intelligence

I recently listened to an outstanding [podcast featuring Tressie Cottom](#) on the idea of status and how it connects to intelligence. We have been conditioned to believe that intelligence is something intrinsic to us, something we possess in ourselves, something fixed about us. But Cottom takes a different view, suggesting that intelligence is more a correspondence between us and the world around us. A person's intelligence is not a fixed ability *within* themselves but rather a relationship *between* us and the technologies and norms popular at a specific moment in time. We tend to think that a genius in one era would be a genius in the next, but Cottom argues that our intelligence is contextual. By using the example of her grandmother (a Black sharecropper in the South), she reveals how society today is far more able to perceive her, a Black woman, as intelligent than it was to perceive her grandmother as intelligent, despite them being quite similar in intellectual ability and breadth. Perceived intelligence, and, in turn, status, are very much contextual to the mores, norms, and technologies of a given time. Ezra Klein, the podcast host, points out that disabilities are similar: someone's disability is not something *about* them, but rather a relationship *between* a person and the built world they navigate. Klein, a respected public intellectual by many modern standards and someone with extremely poor eyesight since childhood, is perceived as intelligent now because he lives in a world where the technology of reading glasses exists; Klein says "in another context, I am completely useless." Had he been born 400 years earlier, his status and his intelligence would surely have been less obvious, embraced, and nurtured because, quite plainly, he couldn't see. When we let go of smart being something about a person and embrace smart being something between a person and the world, we don't have to rely on the rare once-in-a-lifetime genius who is compatible with that specific moment in time, but instead can nurture intelligence by creating the conditions where more people can interact with the world in a way that makes them intelligent, and therefore confers status (both to them, and to the groups they represent).

On censorship

The company Basecamp recently [announced that it is banning all social and political conversations at work](#). They've been regarded as a progressive, well-run tech company making unconventional, human-first decisions for years, but their recent decision has been roundly criticized by employees, by Twitter pundits, and by those of us who believe that becoming a-political is itself a political decision. It's easy to criticize this decision as tone-deaf, and in a time when it seems like companies are becoming more political and activist, it's surprising and anachronistic, but censorship is simply avoidance with power behind it, and many of us avoid hard conversations because they're uncomfortable, distracting, and unproductive. In 2021 and beyond, we need more skillful leadership in more conversations, not blanket censorship that produces fewer conversations. If anyone has been a leader or facilitator, they've encountered the challenge of trying to align a group of people with different interests, beliefs, stories, and wounds to achieve something together. This is the neverending work of leadership. Censorship (or avoidance) is the blunt tool we use when we are too tired or intimidated to navigate these critical conversations and truly lead. Leadership is the fine scalpel we use when we recognize that leading a team, a company, or a movement requires the delicate work of achieving results and staying focused, while also embracing and creating space for the messy beauty of multiple human lives colliding together in close spaces. We are at a juncture of leadership: either we choose to use the easy-escape, blunt

tools of censorship, autocratic decision-making, and progress-at-all-costs relentlessness, or we choose to use the fine scalpels of courageous facilitation, deep listening, and informed, thoughtful decision-making. The future of leadership requires embracing the messiness of bringing our whole selves to work, of understanding that everything is political, of navigating the collapsing of categories, of cultivating the respect for difference, all while moving things forward by aligning teams and people towards common goals. The table stakes are changing, and censorship is folding your hand.

New Section! Compound Insight

What big trends are you seeing? What insights have you had? What are some major learnings in the last month in your work?

One of the most powerful ways we can learn is by 1) gleaning the insights from those around us, and then 2) compounding those learnings over time. And so I'm announcing a new section to the Uncharted Insider called Compound Insight, which will share key learnings, patterns, trends, or insights from the community of readers of this monthly letter. Simply share any big ideas or learning [using this link](#), and I'll select a few to publish in the next Insider so this community can continue to compound learnings from each other.

Can you help?

- Can anyone connect us to someone Y Combinator so we can learn how they accelerate both for-profits and nonprofits?
- Do you know of early-stage organizations (non-profit and for-profit) who are working on addressing wealth gaps, economic inequality, or thinking about the future of economic mobility? We want to know about them!
- Do you have advice (or know of articles) on how to design a hybrid, equitable working culture that both embraces remote work and also reimagines the purpose of in-office time and space?
- Does anyone know Elizabeth Warren and would be willing to make an introduction? We would love her to give a fireside chat to our cohort of entrepreneurs working on economic inequality. I can offer that it will be in the top 5% of her working hours in a given week, as measured by impact return / investment of her time.

What I am reading

- The long fight to take the weekend off. The history of the workweek and the revolution of the 4-day workweek. [Here](#).
- The fascinating story of the gen-Z revolution in professional sports. How this startup is reinventing basketball, and what other industries can learn from the new laws of the creator economy. [Here](#).
- The tender humanity and brave poise of Amanda Gorman. [Here](#).
- Maslow got it wrong. How a true hierarchy of needs is inverted and informed by the Blackfeet Nation's worldview (from which Maslow developed his pyramid). [Here](#). Written by Teju Ravilochan, Uncharted Co-founder and now Founder of GatherFor.
- How Crypto billionaires are changing philanthropy: [Here](#).

Something Personal

Earlier this month, I took a four-week online course on wildfires in the American west. Nothing to do with Uncharted, but as a Colorado denizen and western-state enthusiast, I wanted to learn from experts on how our approach to firefighting is evolving in an age of climate change. I learned many things (for example, 1. We put out 98% of fires within 24 hours, and it is the 2% that turn into "major events." 2. There are actually more wildfires in the Eastern US than in the Western US.). But my biggest takeaway from this course was the idea that our relationship to fire is the biggest problem. Our posture towards wildfire is one of antagonism: we

literally call them “*firefighters*,” and we are in the business of fighting, protecting, and defending against wildfires. Numerous experts advised that we need to reset our relationship to wildfires by embracing fire and using it to our advantage. How might we use the 98% of fires that don’t turn into major events to manage the forest and mitigate larger conflagrations? This mitigation approach borrows from the Indigenous relationship to fire, which didn’t take an antagonistic approach, but instead found cultural and environmental value in letting the forest burn. When fire is respected and embraced, it has the potential to be a positive influence on forest ecology. [Fire suppression practices are shifting](#) to embrace a more symbiotic relationship, but we’re still largely stuck in an antagonistic posture. We don’t think of Carl Jung as an expert in wildfires, but his psychological axiom applies to fires too: “Whatever you resist will not only persist, but will grow in size.”

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With patience,

Banks

March 2021

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the March edition of the Uncharted Insider.

One year ago, the pandemic swept across the US in its first wave. In preparing for this Insider, I went back and reread the [March 2020 Insider](#) and my reflections at the outset of the pandemic. Quite simply, I’m grateful to be alive 12 months later and grateful for the opportunity to write you all this letter each month. Collectively, we’ve come a long way in the last 12 Uncharted Insiders. I’m humbled by your responses, your encouragement, and your offers to help. If you know of someone who should subscribe to this list, they can do so [here](#).

Uncharted Update

- **Upcoming Program:** We are preparing for our [signature program](#), which will support eight early-stage solutions to economic inequality. See below for how you can help.
- **Antiracist Journey:** We have been publishing a series of [articles](#) and [podcasts](#) with a behind-the-scenes look into our journey to becoming an antiracist organization. From inclusion to hard conversations to hiring, we’re sharing our challenges, progress, and questions.

Genealogies of social change

In the [January Insider](#), I proposed that going earlier and going wider represent the two pillars of a differentiated and long-term strategy for identifying and supporting emerging social solutions and innovations. They represent competitive frontiers in our sector, and they are the first principles propelling Uncharted’s new strategy. In that January Insider, I focused on going early. This month, I’m discussing the merits of accelerating a more diverse range of solutions.

After 10 years of vetting and selecting early-stage social ventures, one meta-learning is just how similar so many social ventures look. The business models, the growth plans, and the operational structures are often similar. It seems like social ventures follow some unwritten playbook, partially stemming from funders’ dictates, partially informed by the success stories that have been heralded, partially driven by the limited options for customers and payers. In biological taxonomy terms, I would say that >90% of applied ventures are of the same *genus* and *species*; they share the same social impact genealogy. While there have been great

successes and outstanding impact created from these models, we're missing out on genealogical intermingling and cross-breeding. Research says that the most "innovative" ideas and the most "breakthrough" innovations have diverse genealogies and non-linear origins. (See [this article](#) on where "new" ideas come from and why African masks and Spanish indigenous art informed Picasso's work, and why Henry Ford said of his assembly line, "I invented nothing new. I simply assembled into a car the discoveries of other men behind whom were centuries of work.")

What does genealogical mixing look like in early-stage social ventures? Here are two examples:

- **Bridging policy and implementation.** [Palak Shah](#), the Social Innovations Director at the [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#), says that the biggest opportunities for impact in her space are working to bridge policy and implementation. One of the best examples of an organization doing this is [FreeFrom](#), a 2018 Uncharted venture working to dismantle the nexus between intimate partner violence and financial insecurity. They do this through their policy platform, programs, tech tools, and funds. They're blending approaches, and they represent a unique blended genealogy of approaches.
- **Youth-led, tech-powered social movements.** Many of our social entrepreneurs are building or harnessing technology, but few are building tech-based social movements and campaigns in the ways that youth activists are: decentralizing power and leveraging social media. [Jaclyn Corin](#), a Parkland student who has been one of the many faces and leaders of the movement against gun violence, has said: "People always say, 'Get off your phones,' but social media is our weapon. Without it, the movement wouldn't have spread this fast." The student-led movement to end gun violence inspired Greta Thunberg to launch her own climate movement, which has spread largely via technology and social media. The decentralized, activist-led, tech-powered social movement is a genealogy of social change we need to learn from and graft into more social ventures.

On Surprises

When we ask co-founders about how they communicate with each other, many have good answers. They share how they give feedback in one-on-ones, weekly meetings, and during quarterly reviews. They talk about how they plan out times to express gratitude and how they have specially-designed rituals for appreciation every week. Often, we're impressed with how intentional and planned they are. But the more structured we become, the harder it is to meaningfully connect with our peers.

There is a coffee shop one block from my house called [Rivers and Road Coffee](#). It's owned by a couple named Mike and Desiree, and they roast their own coffee and bake their own cakes, muffins, and breads, all right there. Before COVID, from time to time they would heat up a few of their banana chocolate-chip muffins, cut them into quarters, and walk around to those of us working in their space and offer free samples. It didn't happen every day, or every week, or even every month. There was no way to plan for it or expect it. Just on some days you would show up and they would be giving out a quadrant of a warm, gooey banana chocolate-chip muffin. The surprise and unexpectedness of it was utterly delightful. It is stuck in my memory and somehow it speaks to their spirit of generosity and hospitality more than if free samples were a planned, regular event. All of this has me wondering if we're over-engineering and over-scheduling our times for connecting with the people we work with every day. Instead of your co-founder or direct report knowing that it is the Wednesday meeting and this is the time when everyone goes around and expresses gratitude to one another, is there a more unexpected way to recognize someone, to have them feel seen, for them to feel like they're deeply valued? The call out of the blue, the handwritten card, the affirmation when they least expect it. When so many are burnt out, worn down, and tired of the Zoom screen and the homebound routine, the smallest unexpected delight can be the grandest gesture.

Can you help?

- In preparation for our next program on economic inequality, we are looking for social entrepreneurs, movement builders, and nonprofit innovators working to address economic inequality. Who should we be talking to?
- Does anyone know [Alicia Garza](#)? We want her to be a mentor for our next accelerator. How about [Van Jones](#)?

What I am reading

- The AI revolution and a radical (and technocratic) plan by Sam Altman, the President of Y Combinator, to address economic inequality. [Here](#).
- 41% of workers are considering leaving their jobs, and leadership is out of touch. A [new study](#) surveying 30,000 workers on burnout and turnover. More positively, here are [21 approaches](#) to bringing women back into the workforce.
- Why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainers and consultants are more focused on people than power. [How the DEI movement has lost its way](#).
- **Book:** [Caste](#) by Isabel Wilkerson. A poetic and comprehensive telling of America's caste system, through comparison with Nazi Germany and India's caste hierarchy.

Something Personal

For three years in the early days of the Unreasonable Institute, I lived one block from the King Soopers in Boulder, where last week's shooting took place. I went to that store multiple times a week and knew its layout like the back of my hand: which aisle had the pasta sauce, where my favorite yogurt lived, the exact location of the Double-Stuf Oreos. The images from last week's mass murder in that store, in my store, were particularly startling for me because everything was so familiar. I knew that parking lot, I knew those mountains, that was my home.

Whether it's the invisible virus that has killed 550,000 people in our country, or it's the randomness of a mass shooting in Georgia, or the AR-15 killing machine inside a grocery store known for Girl Scout cookie drives and chance encounters with neighbors, we're being reminded that we are more vulnerable than we once thought. As Mat Kearney, the Nashville musician, intones in one of his songs, "I guess we're all one phone call from our knees." Somehow we've told ourselves that our safety, security, and privileged lives are set apart from the severity and trauma of this world, but it only takes one phone call to put us on our knees in disorienting, stunning grief. If we let it, this "consciousness of fragility" can send us into a small life governed by fear and avoidance. But appreciating our human fragility can also make us live bigger, braver lives. It can push us into the arms of those around us. It can invite us to hold hands at the dinner table and go around to speak the simple words of quotidian gratitude (as my friend Sam does with his family every night). It can decenter the self and center this moment's heartbeat. Being reminded that we are one phone call from our knees asks us to answer the question that poet Mary Oliver poses when she writes, "What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

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Signed,

Banks

February 2021

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the February edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update

- **New Partnership:** We secured a partnership with Chipotle for a third year to accelerate a cohort of early-stage ventures working on sustainable agriculture and next-generation American farming.
- **Integrating technology:** We're piloting new online platforms to make our accelerators more transformational and intimate in a fully remote/digital format.

The messy middle of our antiracist journey

Like many of our peers, Uncharted is taking steps to become a more antiracist organization. We are determined to rise to the responsibility we have to fight systems of oppression, but we are also struggling. This work is complex, nuanced, and slow, and there have been times when we haven't known what to do. So to ask for help and transparently share our journey, we're inviting our community into the messy middle by publishing a series of posts over the next ten weeks that reveal the behind-the-scenes challenges we're facing, the progress we're making, and the questions we're asking. Ultimately, we see transparency both as a tool for learning and a force for advancing equity. As Audre Lorde says: "There is no liberation without community..."

Later today we're publishing the second post on the topic of inclusion in our series (two weeks ago we introduced the series [here](#)). Going forward, we'll highlight other topics where diversity, equity, and inclusion intersect with hiring, hard conversations, culture, strategy, governance, power, and more. We earnestly hope that these posts invite conversations and engagement, and I welcome any feedback you have.

On a personal level, I am in the middle of some wrestling, searching, and confusion about what it *really* means to be a White ally, especially as someone who is in a place of positional power as a CEO. I'm attending an anti-oppression course on White allyship and exploring the ways oppression and allyship show up at the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels ([the four I's of oppression](#)).

On uncommon execution

In his book *How to be an Antiracist*, Ibram X. Kendi advances the empirical argument that we should evaluate racism through the lens of outcomes, not intentions: people with antiracist beliefs and intentions can still produce racist outcomes and racist policies. Ultimately, it is the outcomes from our actions and our policies that tell us if we have been racist or not. For those of us who care deeply about shared values, alignment, and integrity of process, it's both a startling and refreshing viewpoint that basically says: "yeah, yeah, yeah, but show me the outcomes." It might be tempting to focus on shared values and common beliefs as being sufficient to guarantee a good outcome, but often the path to something becoming mainstream is more a function of *uncommon execution* than it is merely a function of common beliefs. For example, racist ideas didn't predate racist policies or actions. The execution and perpetuation of an economic system of oppression and enslavement required the subsequent formation of racist ideas, values, and the invented concept of "race" for the system to be justified. As Ta-Nehisi Coates writes in *Between the World and Me*, "Race is the child of racism, not the father." To use a different (and positive) example of where execution expands the popularity of a belief or value, emerging workplace *policies* like working remotely, the 4-day workweek, and the growing momentum for a \$15 minimum wage have all been powerful forces to socialize workplace *values* that embrace a human-first, parent-flexible, livable, and dignified relationship between work and life.

Maybe we have the order wrong: it is not ideas and values that spark action as much as it is actions and precedents that spark latent ideas and values. Maybe we're spending too much time getting extra precise on our shared values, and we're not spending enough time on the uncommon, radical execution of those values. Perhaps it's time to invert our order of operations and let our actions help us understand what we believe.

Can you help?

- **Social impact CEOs wrestling with race, allyship, and their role:** As I mentioned above, I'm doing a deep dive into White allyship and I'd love to connect with other CEOs (who identify as people of color or white) to learn from them, ask questions, and explore paths forward.
- **Case-studies:** We are embarking on a study of the history of radical ideas and how they became mainstream, how they died, who led them, and what the conditions were that enabled their creation. We'll be publishing our learnings later this year. What are some case studies we should be researching?
- **Referrals:** Do you know of an early-stage organization working to address economic inequality? We want to know about them!

What I am reading

- The racial wealth gap hasn't changed since researchers started collecting related data more than 50 years ago. Why our current approach isn't working and [why baby bonds might be a solution](#).
- One year ago, before the pandemic, more women were employed than men for the first time in history. But in the last year, the number of women in the labor force dropped to 1980s levels. [The crisis amongst American mothers](#).
- How to persuade the unpersuadable. Tips from the organizational psychologist Adam Grant for managing up to stubborn, disagreeable, or overconfident bosses. [Here](#).
- Where new ideas come from. The fitness, magic, and mystery of the eureka moment. [Here](#).
- Buffer is moving to 4-day workweeks after a trial period. Check out their data, research, and announcement [here](#).

Something Personal

For the past few Sundays, I've had the privilege of attending a poetry workshop hosted by the poet, David Whyte. The title of the three-Sunday series was *Start Close In: Shaping A Creative Life Equal To The Challenge Of Our Times*. Each Sunday, I would settle in with a ceramic cup of tea and my warm wool socks pulled high to listen to David as he recited his own poetry and the poetry of his favorite poets, all by heart. The series explored the relationship between the latent creativity we wish to channel into the world and the deep soul-surgery that is sometimes needed to manifest our art... whether that is co-building a company's culture, writing a penned letter, posting a filtered Instagram photo, or experimenting with an iteration of a French mother sauce by adding just a bit more white wine, garlic, and sage. The most profound creative acts start close in with us exploring the connection between our interior landscape and the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. On week two, David said, "being at work is not passive; you are practicing the becoming of someone. Who are you becoming?"

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From Montana,

Banks

January 2021

Hi everyone,

Happy 2021! Welcome to the January edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update

- **Current Programs:** We are in the middle of supporting our cohort of mobile tech nonprofits (with Visible), and we're wrapping up our accelerator focused on supporting ventures working in next-generation farming (with Chipotle).
- **Wealth Inequality Focus Groups:** We have been hosting a series of focus groups with entrepreneurs working on wealth inequality to help us design our upcoming initiative on the topic, which is launching later this year.

On Patience

I've been thinking about the idea of patience recently.

Patience as an obstacle: On one hand, I resonate with what John Lewis once said about patience being a “dirty and nasty word.” He said, “we do not want our freedom gradually” because patience was invoked to slow civil rights progress. Radical change has often faced headwinds that masquerade as exhortations to be patient, but I'm curious if the events of 2020 have influenced our appreciation of *impatience* and the possibilities that come when we dare to believe that necessary change doesn't need to be waited on. Our brains are being rewired with new code about the pace of change: what was once perceived as impossible has quickly become inevitable. At Uncharted, our new focus on finding, funding, and accelerating radical solutions is born out of a swelling impatience with so much of the nibbling-around-the-edges and busy work that defines the social sector.

Patience as critical: On the other hand, at times I find our collective impatience to be a symptom of our vanity and obsession to see immediate results. For example, the behavior of investors and philanthropic funders who apply pressure to see quick wins, fast growth, and transformational change is forcing social ventures to contort themselves into producing results that might be distracting or counterproductive to the long-term change they seek. Our impatience for results makes us shortsighted about what true change requires, and this, in its own way, is our self-created headwind. One of the biggest drivers of an organization's design is the impatience for its results. I've been asking myself this question: if the impatience of results didn't deform organizations, how might they be designed? How might they look different?

To reference John Lewis again, are we okay with the pace of “good trouble?” Somewhere in the nuance between impatience and patience, between audacious goals and early wins, there is a reverence for the work itself: the time it takes, the unrelenting focus on the ultimate goal, and the multi-generational faith that the real work carries forward before us, beyond us, without us.

On going early

In the early-stage social venture ecosystem, I see two competitive frontiers that Uncharted and our peers will need to push into in order to remain relevant by 2025:

- *Going earlier:* Sourcing and recruiting even earlier-stage organizations and leaders. The pressure will be increasingly on finding the up-and-coming talent that hasn't been believed in and credentialed yet.

- *Going wider*: Supporting organizations with non-traditional organizational structures: working with social movements, advocacy groups, and others that depart from the traditional social venture playbook. The pressure will be to leave behind this playbook that we have borrowed from venture capital and instead focus on organizations that build and distribute power.

In future *Insiders*, I'll cover the topic of going wider. Today, I want to talk about going earlier. I've been increasingly fascinated by emerging research and models that are premised on the idea that betting on people is a better predictor of long-term success than betting on their specific models, products, or ideas. Here is a quick sampling:

- **Democratic Lotteries**: This is a concept where candidates are elected via a simple lottery system where names of people who opt-in are drawn from a hat. It sounds crazy, but there is some fascinating research about how democratic lotteries increase access to leadership opportunity and build unlikely but more capable leaders. Start with [this podcast](#), and then check out [this org](#) and [this org](#).
- **Funding scientific research**: There is new thinking on why it's nearly impossible to pick out the best scientific research proposals from a pool that meets a certain threshold. One argument is that our ego makes us think we can pick winners but that funding more randomly will yield less biased and more successful scientific research. Further reading [here](#) and [here](#).
- **Focusing pre-company or pre-campaign**: I've been closely tracking two organizations with different models but share a common throughline: betting on people before they launch their thing. [Entrepreneur First](#) is a cross between an entrepreneurial accelerator and a talent scout. They match co-founders together and fund them pre-idea and pre-company to figure something out. [Justice Democrats](#) is an organization that recruits people to challenge out-of-touch congressional Democrats in vulnerable primaries. They were the organization that identified and recruited AOC and then helped her win.

The implications for our work are intriguing:

- There are so many promising and capable leaders who never make it to the level of working full-time on their social venture. Under-representation starts before the organization launches.
- The size of our ego about our ability to pick winners is as big as the size of our blind spots. Maybe we don't need to think as hard and perhaps simply select and fund more.
- Solutions might be more interesting when you stop funding the usual suspects. Matt Clifford, founder of Entrepreneur First says, "If you give people who might not otherwise start a company time and space to do so, you (should) get companies that otherwise wouldn't exist at all."

Can you help?

- We are embarking on a study of the history of radical ideas and how they became mainstream, how they died, who led them, and what the conditions were that enabled their creation. We'll be publishing our learnings later this year. Who should we be talking to?
- We are looking for an introduction to Dalio Philanthropies
- We are looking to be introduced to [Isabel Wilkerson](#), the author of *Caste*
- We are looking to be introduced to Ai-Jen Poo, Director of the [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#)

What I am reading

- The Inside story of Mackenzie Scott (ex-wife of Jeff Bezos). One of the wealthiest women in the world and how she is redefining philanthropy. [Here](#).
- The battle over Cancel Culture and the need to widen the space for hard conversations. [Here](#).

- When Wall Street discovered the profitability of water scarcity. [The future story of water in the American West.](#)
- The biggest technology breakthroughs and innovations of 2021, from ARK Invest, a fund that invests in everything from crypto currency to delivery drones to artificial intelligence to cell and gene therapy. [Here.](#)
- *Podcast:* The food ecosystem, food technology, the future of restaurants and ghost kitchens, and why Domino's Pizza is one of the most impressive companies in the last 20 years. [Here.](#)

Something Personal

I am spending more time backcountry skiing (outside of resort boundaries), so I took an avalanche safety course recently to make sure I was skilled at both navigating avalanche terrain and participating in rescue efforts should I ever be involved in an avalanche. If anyone is interested in avalanche safety, I have become a full-blown nerd on the topic, but what I found most powerful about the experience was how skiing avalanche terrain put me into the most intimate relationship with nature I have ever experienced. You're reading weather reports from out-of-the-way weather stations before the sun rises. You're testing the snow chemistry by peering closely at the size and complexion of snow crystals. You're measuring the angle of slopes (avalanches only run on slopes between 30 and 45 degrees) and determining which slopes are wind-loaded with snow. You're forced to take in the trees, rocks, cornices, and terrain to spot signs for avalanche activity. You're constantly checking your topographical map, ascribing the smooth black lines on the map to the harsh topography before you. And you're in relationship with the sky, its looming clouds, its quickening pace.

Whether it's with nature or with a person, intimacy is a hard concept to articulate. It is defined more by the distance that's missing between two things than it is defined by something that exists between them, and I have been humbled to witness the shrinking distance between the magnitude of a mountain and the fragility of this small human life.

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With patience and pluck,

Banks

2020 Uncharted Insiders

December 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the December edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Similar to past [December editions](#), I am taking a different approach with this final Insider of 2020.

Close-In vs. Far-Out

2020 has created a dual consciousness in us. On one hand, we've never been more aware of the big things far greater than our immediate sphere of influence: an invisible and deadly virus that moves silently and swiftly, 400 years of institutional racism, the specter of climate change. But on the other hand, we've zoomed into our immediate spheres of influence and focused on the small and the tangible: we baked bread, we built raised-bed

gardens, we used our hands to work on projects around the house, we placed ourselves in a tight web of family and friends. I've noticed how I've shifted between this dual consciousness, rising and dropping between elevations: at one moment trying to grasp my own place and complicity in systemic white supremacy, and then the next doing extensive research into why the cauliflower in my vegetable garden remained stunted and small all season. I've thought about this at Uncharted as well. There is so much to do at the highest level, but I've also never been more curious about the close-in work: the way we relate, how we coordinate, the daily methods of showing up for each other, the routines of celebration, the rhythms of feedback, our collective relationship to discomfort. But ultimately this might be a false dichotomy: the close-in and the far-out are one and the same. Audre Lorde once said, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."

On Inputs and Outputs

I've been thinking recently about the (obvious) idea that the quality of our outputs is entirely dependent on the quality of our inputs. It's irrational to think our outputs will be extraordinary if our inputs are ordinary. From the quality of our sleep to the food we eat to those we follow on our Instagram feed to the diversity of news sources we consume, nothing dictates what we produce and how we see the world like what we put into our minds and bodies. I am struck by how many different years existed in 2020: the year of COVID, another year of police brutality and systemic racism, an election year rife with division, a year of crazy tech (gargantuan IPOs, antitrust lawsuits, and streaming wars), a year of surging Bitcoin and bullish public markets, a year of historic forest fires, a year of less travel and more home time. The stories we believe are the stories we're close to. Our outlook is more a function of our input choices than it is a function of what's actually going on externally. And if this is true, then maybe the path out of the deep divisions and disunity we're experiencing is less focused on endpoints and more focused on starting points. It's less focused on changing minds and more focused on changing inputs. It's less focused on big goals and more focused on daily choices.

On Patience

We did deep surgery on the business in 2020. We didn't waste this crisis because we realized there would be no future for our organization unless we adapted:

- We repositioned the organization with a focused strategy and a new business/funding model
- We restructured the mechanics of how we deliver value for our entrepreneurs and restructured the org-chart with new departments and reporting lines
- We decided to abandon what had been an emerging area of focus for us: collective impact
- We hired people in different markets outside of Colorado, establishing ourselves in two east coast states
- We made the decision to go to 32-hour workweeks at 100% pay
- We turned down funding this year in the midst of the pandemic
- We went to the ends of the earth to care for our team and cultivate a culture of brave togetherness over the video screen

I believe we're about halfway through this organizational pivot. The seeds we have planted in 2020 will begin to sprout in 2021. But when you're in the messy middle, it's hard to tell if you're doing it right or if the strategy will play out the way you've planned. There are many books and articles and consultants who will tell you the mechanics and frameworks and SWOTS of the best strategy, but so few acknowledge that the secret to any good strategy is the patience to see it through. Sometimes the most audacious thing we can do is be patient and trust the process. Sometimes resilience is nothing more than patience, and sometimes vision is nothing more than returning to what we've always known to be true.

Looking Forward: The future of Uncharted

If there is any connection between kindness and radical change, it is to believe in people and unproven ideas before others do. It is to make bold bets on those deemed by the establishment to be too crazy or too early or too unfamiliar. I hadn't made this connection between kindness and radical change until I came across [this podcast](#), where the host asks each guest (a leader in business, investing, or entrepreneurship) the same final question: *What is the kindest thing anyone has ever done for you?* The most common response from guests is a variation of the same theme: "someone took a chance on me when no one else would."

Not only is taking a chance on someone an act of kindness, but I believe, in the context of Uncharted, that working earlier-stage than our peers and betting on more radical solutions (including a new focus in 2021 on 501c4s and decentralized social movements) is differentiated and relevant positioning for our business in a world that has 1) lost its taste for incremental change, 2) is skeptical of the usual suspects, but 3) doesn't actually have the risk-appetite to fund the crazy stuff.

A crisp focus on radical change is not unfamiliar to us: it was the driving ethos of the early days of our work as Unreasonable Institute 10 years ago, but as we matured, we drifted and sought a similar maturity and reasonableness in our work. We traded in being radical for aspiring to be credible. But what was radical yesterday has the tendency to become credible today, so we're doubling down on a strategy rooted in believing in people before others do. Into the uncharted we go, honored to walk alongside you all.

Some poems to close the year:

- On intellectual humility: "[The Place Where We Are Right](#)" by Yehuda Amichai
- On believing in people: "[won't you celebrate with me](#)" by Lucille Clifton
- On patience: "[I Am Waiting](#)" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

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Full of rest and ambition,

Banks

November 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the November edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update

- **New Mobile Tech Ventures:** Our team has selected the third cohort of Visible Connect ventures. From a mobile lifeline to support the trans community to technology used to connect incarcerated people with their families, we're very excited about [this group of extraordinary entrepreneurs](#).
- **Book Club:** The Uncharted Board is reading [The Revolution Will Not Be Funded](#) in a Board Book Club for the next few months and exploring how power and money influence Uncharted's mission.
- **New Values:** As our organization grows and matures, and as our team evolves, so do our values. For only the second time since our founding, we've refreshed our company's values. Check them out [here](#).

On Systems versus Goals

We're in a strategic planning season where all the talk is around setting ambitious objectives and goals for 2021. But it seems like there is something illogical about setting an ambitious goal but not changing anything else about your daily routines to get there. Some of the most successful people (by goal standards) are surprisingly unfocused on outcomes. Octavia Butler, the prolific Black science fiction writer, recognized that the key to writing was to "write every day no matter what."* Another example of how small, daily investments on the margins compound into exponential results is the story of the British cycling team, who had been notorious losers for years. But under new coaching, they registered five Tour de France victories in six years [by looking for 1% improvements everywhere](#). James Clear, the author of [Atomic Habits](#), writes that "winners and losers have the same goals" and that "if you want better results, forget about setting goals. Focus on your system instead. You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems." One of *Uncharted's* weekly "systems" is the 4-day workweek, which has shifted how we think about prioritizing and de-prioritizing. What are the daily or weekly routines, practices, and systems you will bring into 2021?

*Check out the daily rituals and routines of successful women in [these very cool infographics](#).

On being slightly wrong in public

Would you rather be a fast learner in a learning-scarce environment, or a slow learner in a learning-rich environment? I think I'd choose the learning-rich environment, which has me thinking about how to create the conditions where learning is inevitable, regardless of innate ability. Business and investing podcast host Patrick O'Shaughnessy once said, "The fastest way to learn is to be slightly wrong in public." Too wrong, and people will write you off as crazy. But slightly wrong, and people will correct you and point out your blind spots. His comment about being slightly wrong in public was in the context of [interviewing Cathie Wood](#), an investor of longshot innovations in the public markets. Her firm, [ARK Invest](#), has pioneered the concept of crowdsourced research where they heavily leverage social media to distribute all of their investing research in the hopes that people will battle-test it and improve it. She's been credited with bringing an open-source ethos to Wall Street. When it comes to betting on long-term innovation, Cathie argues there is a premium on not being wrong: "If we make an incorrect assumption and then carry it out, we're going to make an exponential mistake." Whether it's betting on the next technology or advancing in our antiracist journey, there is perhaps no greater learning environment than being slightly wrong in public.

Can you help?

We are looking for introductions to wealth advisors, family offices, and individual funders who are interested in working to address economic inequality and advance economic justice with our new initiative on closing wealth gaps launching in 2021 (we've raised \$3.5+ million so far). If you know of people, please reach out directly and we can share more details.

What I am reading

- Is inequality inevitable? Bill Gates and Rashida Jones's second episode on their new podcast discusses inequality in the US. [They interview Raj Chetty, Harvard economist, and Aja Brown, Mayor of Compton, CA.](#)
- The COVID vaccine's impact on our ecological habitat. How horseshoe crab blood is a vital ingredient in the COVID vaccines and why it will destabilize the Red Knot bird population. [Here.](#)
- We are at a crossroads for gender equality in the workplace. [McKinsey's data-rich report on Women in the Workplace in 2020.](#)
- Charles Koch has regrets about how his philanthropy fueled partisanship. [Here.](#)
- To the victor goes the responsibility to tear down the system. [The story of the trust fund kids dismantling the capitalist system.](#)
- *Uncharted Press*: Greg McKeown, author of *Essentialism*, [interviewed me for his podcast on Uncharted's 4-day workweek.](#)

Something Personal

When we shifted to a 4-day workweek, I decided to learn Spanish. Despite my Puerto Rican heritage, I chose French instead of Spanish in school, which has meant I've often felt like an imposter with a last name like Benitez. But 2020 was my year. Through a friend, I found an outstanding Spanish teacher based in Mendoza, Argentina, and we have a 30-minute lesson from 7:30 am - 8 am every day before work, with an hour every Friday and sometimes an hour on Sundays. One of life's great joys is to be a beginner at something: the learning curve is steep, the progress is fast, and the mistakes are many. There is no time for ego and all the time for curiosity.

Un abrazo,

Banks

October 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the October edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update

- **Fundraising for Wealth Gaps Initiative:** In the last six weeks, we've raised over \$3.3 million for our new initiative focused on closing wealth gaps in the US. We're continuing to fundraise for a 2021 launch.
- **Team Mental Health:** We've been thinking a lot about how to support the collective mental health of our team during the firestorm that is 2020. So earlier this month, we designed an "Election Month Care Package" that focuses on 1) care through information and activism, and 2) care through restoration and relaxation. Check it out [here](#), and join us today at 3:30pm MDT for a free [Zoom](#) restorative yoga session. There will be a second session again next week on November 5th at 8:30am using the same Zoom link.

On Corporate Activism

We are officially in [weird times](#) when it comes to how corporations are exploring their political activism. We're in the voice-cracking adolescent phase, replete with everything from peacocking to tone-deaf behavior from companies trying to find their voice and political identity. As one example, Expensify, an expense software company, sent [an email](#) to its 10 million subscribers last week urging them to vote for Joe Biden saying, "Anything less than a vote for Biden is a vote against democracy." In contrast, Coinbase, a cryptocurrency trading platform, roused ire from many when its CEO told staff that they should leave the company if they disagreed with the stated position that Coinbase should not engage in broader social issues or politics because they were distractions. One can find fault with both approaches: neutrality is a fiction, every action is a political action in one way or another, and companies like Coinbase who bury their heads in the sand by proclaiming apolitical neutrality will struggle to quell employee insurrections and manage the bad optics of perceived tone-deafness. But Expensify's email pleading its customers to vote for Biden also appears like a desperate, awkward attempt to test the reaches and methods of its newly-discovered desire not to sit idly by. Such sensational and public statements might also [convince companies they're off the hook](#) from doing more long-term structural work. But on the whole, adolescence is a critical stage in any formation, and it requires bravery, experimentation, and awkwardness. What examples are you seeing of corporate triumphs and fumbles?

On Stories

One of my mentors told me once, “Don’t tell me about what you believe. Just tell me your stories, and I’ll learn everything I need to know about what you believe.” Listening deeply to someone’s story is a lost art in the present-day cacophony where we’re all clamoring for the space to air out our vindicating beliefs and interesting opinions. The trading of stories is the communicative equivalent of sipping down some chicken noodle soup when you’re sick, a salve for a year like 2020...salutary, intimate, human. Separated by screens and time zones, we’re trying out a new storytelling technique at Uncharted where our group of Directors is meeting on Monday afternoons for six weeks to listen to each other’s most formative stories. Each week a different Director has the floor, sharing moments from childhood, unexpected turns in their life, how their stories have shaped themselves, and how they show up at Uncharted. We’re not trying to heal any major divides internally, but we recognize that it’s so easy to work day-in, day-out with someone for years and never really know them.

On Intellectualism versus Bravery

We’re an organization that is on a journey to become more antiracist. We’ve been doing the expected things: reading books as a team, holding weekly space for discussion, partnering with an external Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) consultant, taking implicit bias tests. But I’m learning that while we’re growing in our intellectual education around topics of systemic oppression and structural racism, I don’t think we’re making as much progress in embracing the discomfort of making mistakes and getting it “wrong” in front of each other. It’s no problem to do a deep-dive into all the books and resources, but when it comes to saying that thing that might recast my own reputation with hues of ignorance and complicity, it’s easier to stop short. Ibram Kendi, the author of *How to Be an Antiracist*, says that it is self-interest, not ignorance, that perpetuates racism and maintains the power of white supremacy. As a leader at Uncharted, I realize I have more to do to model this vulnerable, open-hearted behavior, and I’m curious to learn from others who have navigated this similar stage on their DEI journeys.

Can you help?

- Our marketing team is in the final stages of rebuilding the Uncharted website, and needs help with a few basic data entry tasks. If you know someone who might be interested in a short-term contract position, please have them get in touch with our Marketing Manager Anthony Verducci at anthony@uncharted.org.
- We are looking for early-stage for-profits, nonprofits, and advocacy groups working to close wealth gaps in the US (race, gender, generational, and class). Who should we be talking to?
- We are looking to be connected to someone at the Kresge Foundation, especially in the “American Cities” or the “Social Investment” practices. Do you know anyone?
- Do you know anyone at Prudential Financial in their impact/CSR space?

What I am reading

- This recession is unlike any other. Check out the [graphs halfway down this article](#) about how this recession compares to past ones and how the recovery is not available to everyone. We thought income inequality was bad before.
- 50% of nonprofits have one month of operating reserves and less than six months of cash to keep them running. Read the [fascinating report](#) on the trends shaping the future of philanthropic giving, published in partnership with the Morgridge Family Foundation and sparks & honey.
- In the last 100 years, the world has lost more than one-third of its old-growth forests. [The death of our oldest trees and what it means for our future](#).
- Indonesia is relocating its country’s capital because Jakarta is sinking. [The radical moves that will become commonplace to address rising sea levels](#).
- *Uncharted Press*: We were featured in this month’s Men’s Health Magazine on the 4-day workweek. Coming to a doctor’s office waiting room near you (and [also linked here](#)).

Something personal

Every year, two of my closest friends (Sam, a filmmaker, and Bryant, a first-generation organic farmer) and I go on a week-long stand-up paddleboard trip down a river in the American west. This year, we ran a 60-mile stretch of the San Juan river in southern Utah before it emptied into Lake Powell, paddling through Class III and IV rapids with our gear strapped in drybags to our boards, breaking for peanut butter-banana sandwiches on banks at the base of leaning sandstone cliffs, and staring into outer space at night, tracking shooting stars and orbiting satellites. We tried to make sense of this unprecedented year, we sang aloud in canyons with ricocheting echoes, we transcribed intentions for our friendship into our dusty journals, and I've never felt more filled up by the austere beauty of the desert and by the richness that comes from decade-long friendships. Sam made a one-minute [video of the trip with his drone here](#).

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To our democracy,

Banks

September 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the September edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update

- **4-Day Workweek:** We are making the 4-day workweek Uncharted company policy. You can read our series of posts and updates on Medium [here](#).
- **New Addition to the Uncharted Team:** [Xaira Ferrara](#) has joined our team as our VP of Growth and Development. She will be establishing Uncharted's New York presence. She comes to us from the Acumen Fund.
- **Current Programs:** We're actively running accelerators with [Chipotle](#) and [Facebook](#), and we're in the process of selecting our next cohort of [Visible Connect 3.0](#) ventures.
- **Wealth Gaps:** We've raised anchor funding for our major new initiative focused on closing four interrelated wealth gaps (racial, gender, generational, and class) in the US.

On Wealth Gaps

Uncharted is launching a three-year initiative focused on finding, accelerating, and funding early-stage ventures with bold solutions to advancing economic justice in the US by closing wealth gaps (race, gender, generation, and class). From highly scalable social ventures to policy experiments to universal basic income models to racial reparations pilots to new technologies, we are targeting *very early* for-profit and nonprofit ventures steered by BIPOC- and women-led teams that are building wealth, growing wages, increasing economic mobility, and leveraging systems. We're raising \$13M of philanthropic capital to support 90 ventures over the next three years via our accelerator/fund/network, and we've already secured anchor funding to launch in 2021. We're seeking a small handful of audacious funders (individuals, foundations, and corporations) who are looking to partner with us. If you know of people we should be talking to, I'd be grateful, and I can share more context and materials.

On Peers and Mentors

When I lived in Sydney, Australia, I had a mentor who told me once that humans know how to relate "up" to our mentors and teachers, and we know how to relate "down" to people we consider as protégés, but we're not

good at relating across: few of us know how to be true peers to each other. Comparison tempts us to situate ourselves on a vertical ladder of relationships, where we instinctively play the role of either teacher or student based on the unspoken dynamics embedded in interpersonal psychology. Uncharted's model espouses this andragogical framework: we've witnessed the transformative power of mentors to shape entrepreneurs and companies. But personally, I've found that it is not the sage mentors I am most drawn to, but rather the people who are still in the trenches searching and stumbling and finding and conquering and falling once more. In a world awash in insight and best practice, maybe we're starved for the kind of locked-elbows solidarity from peers who exhale empathetically and then say: "oh yeah...I'm going through that too, and I don't have any quick answers."

On Grasping for Control

I've recently been wondering if the pandemic (a world-changing event that was 1) unexpected, 2) invisible, and 3) lethal) influences how we collectively recognize our sense of control, our ideas about what is certain, and our beliefs about our own physical and intellectual vulnerability. If we consider 2020 a lesson in all the things we can't control or be certain about, the pandemic might lead to an ideological softening and an expansion of intellectual humility. We'll accept that there are forces we can't understand and therefore must show up with a posture of openness and vulnerability. But, on the other hand, if we regard the pandemic as something that disrupted the narratives of control and certainty we've built our lives around, then we might find ourselves attempting to overcompensate elsewhere, asserting any remaining sense of control by being *more* dogmatic, ideologically righteous, and uncompromising. Of course, our political polarization predated the pandemic, but is it possible that our divisiveness is itself a symptom of our need to control something in a world that seems to be increasingly out of control? Will the pandemic make us believe we are more right than ever or less certain than ever?

Can you help?

We are looking for connections to the following organizations. Do you know of anyone?

- [Dalio Philanthropies](#)
- [CitiGroup](#) - Racial Equity Initiative
- [JP Morgan Foundation](#)
- [MetLife Foundation](#)

What I am reading

- A love story: the story of Ruth and Marty Ginsburg and what true partnership can look like. [Vogue](#).
- Over the course of seven years, the average person loses touch with 50% of their closest friends. The salubrious power of friendships and how to make and keep them as an adult. [Psyche](#).
- The launch of the [Long Term Stock Exchange](#), one of three new stock exchanges hatched recently. Perhaps one of the least-talked about big stories of 2020. [Quartz](#).
- Camping while Black. The racism against Black people in national parks, on hiking trails, and throughout the great outdoors. [Outside Magazine](#).
- *Podcast*: "If you can act your way out of it, it's class. If you can't act your way out of it, it's caste." A podcast featuring Elizabeth Wilkerson, the author of [Caste](#), a book chronicling America's unspoken caste system, interviewed by Ezra Klein. [Vox](#).
- *Uncharted in the news*: We were featured in the Financial Times on the 4-day workweek (they sent a photographer to my house). [Financial Times](#).

Something personal

I am midway into a 5-week working road trip through Utah, California, and Arizona. I've planned a backcountry adventure for most weekends, and I've found the best places to work during the weeks: a tiny home near Zion

National Park in Utah, a restored farmhouse just south of the Grand Canyon in Arizona, and my dear friend Nicholas's minimalist-modern beach house in Orange County. While I have a very relational role at Uncharted, I'm by nature an introvert, and I've been escaping into the vast expanse of the desert to draw nourishment from wide skies pinned with stars and luxurious afternoons spent with pen and journal watching the sun ignite the sandstone cliffs in resplendent red and navy hues. Staring at a rock formation 150,000,000 years in the making has a way of easing anxieties about Q4 OKRs.

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All the feels,

Banks

August 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the August edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update

- **Launched applications for mobile tech ventures:** We launched applications for our third year of Visible Connect, an accelerator program for nonprofits changing their communities using mobile tech in partnership with [Visible](#). [Learn more about the initiative](#).
- **Kicking off our accelerator with Chipotle:** We launched our first fully-remote accelerator for the Chipotle Aluminaries Project 2.0, a program supporting ventures that are advancing innovative solutions that empower the next generation of farmers. [Learn more about the initiative](#).
- **4-day workweek:** We concluded our 3-month experiment on the 4-day workweek. We're reviewing the data from the third-party evaluator and will be making a decision in the next week. [Check out our most recent blog on the topic](#).

On taking the long view

One of our organizational values is to "take the long view," but like many, I often find it hard to generate enough escape velocity to get above the gravitational pull of the day-to-day. A reasonable critique of my leadership of Uncharted over the last three years would be an over-indexing on decisions that optimized for short-term benefit and cash flow. But thinking/acting on a longer-term time horizon is one of those things that is more a test of courage than intellect, more an exercise in discipline than vision. And I'm quite driven to grow in my ability to do things that require courage and discipline, especially when the benefits of taking the long view are so numerous, as this [article](#)* suggests. It makes a few key points:

- So few people are operating on long-term time horizons that doing so elevates you into a realm where you find less competition.
- Time horizons are one of the most under-considered factors that dictate decision-making, and the analyses of a decision change when the time horizon changes (see this [cartoon](#)).
- The power of compound interest means that daily actions in service of long-term goals have exponential impact. There are few investments that yield as extraordinary a return as an investment in our own deep, long-term learning.

*The patriarchal, gendered nature of this article is not lost on me: not only are the article's subjects themselves privileged men, but presumably so is its author, and many of the suggestions outlined therein are only possible to those with such gender-race-class privilege. Nevertheless, some good points remain.

On radical ideas

One of my meta-learnings from 2020 is how fast things can move from being perceived as impossible to being perceived as inevitable. We've seen it with government bailouts, societal behavior, and public perception of social movements (like Black Lives Matter). Progress happens in leaps; what was once considered radical and fringe can quickly become mainstream. The ever-shifting spectrum of what's perceived to be "mainstream" is called the [Overton Window](#), a window of policies perceived to be politically acceptable. Outside the window, there are those policies that are considered increasingly radical and unthinkable. (The Overton Window concerns itself with policies, but the concept is relevant to ideas, technologies, business models, and movements.) 2020 is a lesson in how quickly the Overton Window can expand and shift, and it has me thinking about three questions:

- Are there certain characteristics that radical ideas, policies, and approaches inherently have that increase the chances they will go mainstream?
- What surrounding pre-conditions exist that signal a radical idea is at a tipping point?
- What helps accelerate the transition from radical to mainstream?

The word "radical" is fraught with negative connotations, but its definition, I recently learned, is "[of, relating to, or proceeding from a root.](#)" For those of us interested in addressing root causes of social problems and for those of us dedicated to operating in the uncharted territory outside of the Overton Window, an emerging curiosity for us as an organization is this question: how can we help to mainstream the radical?

Can you help?

- We are looking for connections at the following organizations to explore a new initiative we're launching focused on closing wealth gaps in the US. If you're able to make a connection, I can share more context.
 - [Paypal](#)
 - [Bloomberg Beta](#)
 - [Dalio Philanthropies](#)
 - [Inherent Foundation](#)
 - [Woodcock Foundation](#)
- We're looking for a pro bono lawyer that can spend 2-3 hours reviewing our venture grant agreements / grant reporting to ensure we're legally compliant as we begin providing more grant funding to for-profit and 501c4 organizations (Note: we are a 501c3 ourselves). Know anyone who can help?

What I am reading

- "Because of danger, there's this wonderful human response, which is to think in a new way." [Lessons from Europe's bubonic plague, and how it instigated the Italian renaissance.](#)
- Ta-Nehisi Coates writes: "the question is not will the protesters get out and vote, it's will the voters continue to protest?" [Contemplations about racism and democracy in 2020.](#)
- The spiritual revolution taking place inside the office, and the rise of the "ritual" consultant transforming the office into a place of worship. [Here.](#)
- *Podcast:* This is an exceptionally lucid and practical interview of Kat Cole, President of Focus Brands, on management, branding, and leadership. [Here.](#)

Something personal

I've spent a number of weekends this summer in the forests of our Colorado mountains, hiking about, reading poetry, and thinking about the Milky Way. Maybe it's been the looming fear of our own mortality with COVID, or perhaps it is the way things have a habit of showing up everywhere once you've just discovered them somewhere, but I began to regularly see fallen pine trees who were gently releasing themselves back into the soil, nestling into the forest mulch like a skeletal shipwreck becoming part of the seabed itself. They were transmuting themselves from dead into alive, from tree into soil, from vertical into horizontal as they crumbled and decayed into hundreds of richly-colored caramel pieces of wood until only the long, stretching silhouette of the trunk remained, a faint outline of what once was, and what will be again. Trees are so brave in how still they stand when the storms come, so patient in their faith that a flowering spring follows every denuding winter, and so dignified in their surrendering back into the earth when they know it's their time.

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With patience and vigor,

Banks

July 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the July edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update

- **New Uncharted board and team members:** [Tracey Stewart](#) has joined as an Uncharted Board member and [Emily Mochizuki Lutyens](#) has joined as a Program Manager.
- **Impact Report:** We [published our Impact Report](#) this week. For every dollar that goes to Uncharted, our ventures generate \$8.12 in funding within two years that they directly attribute to Uncharted's support.
- **Partnership with Facebook:** We kicked off the [Community Accelerator with Facebook](#), where we're focusing on equipping impactful online communities with the training, mentorship, and funding to grow.
- **Hiring for a Managing Director:** We are hiring a Managing Director. Referrals requested (see below).
- **4-day workweek:** We are 2/3rds of the way through our [4-day workweek experiment](#), and it has gone well so far. Next month, we'll be wrapping up our three-month experiment and working with our external evaluator to determine next steps.

On Accountability

In 2019, we moved to an OKR-based performance and strategic planning structure. Since then, I've been thinking about accountability and its philosophical underpinnings. It seems like there are two possible philosophical roots to accountability. The first says: "I believe that without accountability, people will stray and be unfocused." The second says: "I believe that with accountability, people can achieve far more than they thought possible." In other words, we either think accountability is a medicine or a vitamin. For the person being held accountable, these underpinnings show up as either feeling so distrusted that accountability is a form of oppression, or feeling so trusted that accountability is an invitation to step into power they didn't know they had. I'd guess that those being held accountable are far more aware of which philosophical underpinning is being employed than the one employing it. Perhaps that manager's choice of which type of accountability has everything to do with the presence of fear in their own lives.

On Male Fragility

I've been noticing my own white fragility these last few months after the murder of George Floyd, and it has been an education long overdue for me: to see myself in racial terms, to understand how I benefit from a culture of white supremacy, to reckon with my complicity. But white fragility is just one of many interconnected fragilities: there is also *male* fragility. I was reminded of how pervasive that fragility is after hearing [Congresswoman AOC's speech](#) last week where she eloquently and powerfully spoke about representative Ted Yoho's verbal abuse aimed at her and his non-apology apology. From his initial abuse to his subsequent deflections, his behavior has strikingly similar origins to much of the behavior characterized as white fragility. We can't look at a culture of white supremacy without understanding its interconnectedness with a culture of patriarchy, and both cultures orbit around the need for preserving power and control. White and male fragility are anchored in fears about preserving power. These fragilities rest on questions of "Is power zero-sum or positive-sum?" And "Is my claim on that power under threat?"

On Good Soldiers vs. Lucky Soldiers

The culture of entrepreneurship often makes the mistake of celebrating the individual and neglecting the collective. We lionize the sole founder and their skill and forget about how each of us, and how each organization, is the product of so many privileges, people, access, history, and luck. While one school of thought says that the greatest entrepreneurs are those in possession of a rare genius or superhuman skill, another school of thought argues that the surrounding conditions have more to do with making entrepreneurs great than some innate ability within them. In [this podcast \(minute 14:55\)](#), Charlie Songhurst, former head of strategy at Microsoft and a prolific angel investor who has invested in 483 startups, argues that we shouldn't study what makes people successful, but rather study what makes people fail and then simply try to avoid those mistakes. He suggests that it is survival that begets greatness, not greatness that begets survival. Surviving long enough puts someone "up the experience curve" where their environment refines them by training and retraining their minds to be continuously optimized. Songhurst cites a quotation from a military general who said: "It's not that good soldiers become veterans, it's that lucky soldiers become veterans, but veterans are good soldiers." So what? This is an argument rooted in equity. It advocates for betting on more people earlier and believing in them longer.

Can you help?

- We're hiring a [Managing Director](#). Do you know anyone who would be a great fit? Just forward this email.
- Do you know of family foundations/family offices that are working to close the wealth gap?
- Does anyone have a contact at the [Fund II Foundation](#)?

What I am reading

- The typical home in a redlined neighborhood gained \$212,023 or 52 percent less than one in a "greenlined" neighborhood over the past 40 years. [How racist housing policy is widening the racial wealth gap](#).
- The history of remote work and why, even with the technology, we are compelled to work together in person. [What needs to change to make the future or remote work work](#).
- The former Mayor of Minneapolis on how the police are forced to stand in the breach created by bad policies from White liberals. [Here](#).
- An interview with Ben and Jerry from Ben & Jerry's about the social justice roots of their ice cream company. [Here](#).
- The elegant poetry and prose of [Yung Pueblo](#). Shared with me by my friend and Uncharted champion, Nicholas Pardon.

- *Uncharted press*: Uncharted was featured in this [Wall Street Journal article](#) about building culture and connection outdoors during the pandemic

Something personal

I am not a particularly handy person, and I've felt insecure about my inability to do everyday home repairs, so when I do manage to repair, build, or figure something out, I'm on top of the world. An unexpected achievement on a Saturday morning is enough to put a spring in my step all the way to Sunday night. So I must tell you that July 2020 will go down as the month with one of my greatest accomplishments to date: I set up a drip irrigation system to automatically water my raised-bed vegetable gardens. It involved Youtube videos, the most complex addition and subtraction equations I've done since college, and five separate trips to Home Depot which gave me five opportunities to practice beginner plumbing vocab words and phrases with Nathan, their plumbing aisle expert. I'll spare you any more details, but the entire thing very much followed the storytelling arc of the "Hero's Journey." Anyway, I planted three basil plants, and now I have too much, so come on by if you have plans to make pesto.

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May we aspire to make "good trouble,"

Banks

June 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the June edition of the Uncharted Insider. The months of 2020 feel so dense in their living, in their dying, in their marching, in their solitude, in their questions, in their masks.

Uncharted Update

- **Committing to a DEI strategy**: Like many, we are embarking on a more intentional and strategic investment in Uncharted's approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion. With the help of experts we've hired, weekly conversations with our team, and a commitment from our board, we'll be sharing our commitments in the coming months.
- **Program Related Investment**: We have raised a \$248,000 Program Related Investment (PRI) from the [Morgridge Family Foundation](#) to fund our growth and impact in the next three years. It's been one of the best funding partnership experiences we've had in years.
- **We've been hiring!** We are in the middle of hiring three roles right now, including a [Managing Director](#). See below for details. Also, if you're looking for the best recruiting agency we've ever worked with, check out [Formidable](#).
- **4-Day Workweek**: We are one month into our 4-day workweek experiment, and it's going well so far. We recently [published an update](#) on our progress and were [featured in Fast Company](#).

Sara Rodriguez

After almost six years at Uncharted, this is [Sara Rodriguez](#)'s last week. Sara joined the team in 2014 and has served in several roles, most recently as Uncharted's Chief Strategy Officer. For three years, she and I have been business partners, steering Uncharted together (with the help of many others on our team and board). Sara has brought powerful leadership, strong voice, timely tenderness, and pointed questions as we've

doubled our budget, tripled our team, navigated through difficult seasons, and done it all with a culture that aspires to put humans first. Sara's impact on me has been powerful; I've often told people that I feel 5x stronger as a leader knowing I lead alongside Sara. She has this rare ability to believe in you, challenge you, and poke fun at you, all at the same time.

On those days when the impact felt distant, when the headwinds were strong, when I didn't know what to do, I would simply remind myself to do everything I could just to make Sara proud. Every time, that was enough to propel me forward. Uncharted wouldn't be what it is today without her, and it will go to far greater heights because of her. She is cc'd above.

Education as Unlearning

In Tara Westover's piercing memoir [Educated](#), she suggests a question: is education more about learning new things and adding new knowledge, or is it about unlearning old stories and once-certain truths? Our understanding of an education has big implications for our comfort and for our growth. If we choose to believe that an education is simply adding knowledge where there was none before, then our approach to learning will be inherently academic and de-personalized. But if we believe that an education has the potential to dispossess us of our current operating truth, our comfortable worldview, our curated identities, then we won't be surprised when education deconstructs us. Westover might suggest that the depth of our learning has everything to do with what we are willing to give up. She might offer that an education is equal parts staring into a mirror as it is studying books. She might remind us that it has the risk of estranging us from those we love and distancing us from the safe, destined life we've been conditioned to accept. Her memoir is a study of the costs of her education. To read it is to understand what's at stake.

So when it comes to racist policies, white supremacy, the oppression of Black people, and the complex, winding history of exploitation, privilege, and justice, what will our approach be to our education? I've been wondering this for myself; how much self-protection stands in the way of my education? As Ibram Kendi writes in [How to be an Antiracist](#), the root of racism is not ignorance, it is self-interest.

Are you doing enough?

When confronted with COVID-19, with George Floyd's murder, with 400 years of racism stitched into our history, many seem to be asking: "What can I do?" and "Am I doing enough?" These questions are the subtext to many of our conversations, they have the potential to shape our guilt and reveal our privilege, and they have me thinking about how our culture defines what doing is and is not. There's this consensus that doing is an action. It's movement, it's the opposite of non-doing, it's something relevant and provable when asked "What are you doing about it?" We order books, we issue statements, we create groups, we develop plans, we join webinars. But perhaps we are defining doing too narrowly. Maybe we need to expand our definition of acceptable doing to include some non-doing, some being, some slowing, some pausing, some sitting confused on the couch as we sip tea and ponder the questions we're afraid to ponder. In the Jewish tradition, after someone dies, people mourn for seven days by "observing a shiva" where there is more grieving than planning, more sitting than acting, more remembering than Instagramming.

Maybe our obsession with doing is more for us than it is for the cause itself. Maybe it's a way to avoid our grieving, our confusion, or the need for the slow, nonlinear work to explore, as my friend and coach [Jerry Colonna](#) invites us to ask, how are we complicit in the things we say we don't like?

Decolonizing Wealth

I interviewed [Edgar Villanueva](#), author of [Decolonizing Wealth](#) on the Uncharted podcast last week. Edgar is globally-recognized expert on social justice philanthropy and how to bring race to the forefront of funding decisions. An enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, Edgar sits on many boards focused on

indigenous rights and communities. In our podcast, he talks about the four ways that social impact leaders can apply a racial justice and equity lens to their work. Listen on [Apple](#) or [Spotify](#) and subscribe.

Can you help?

- **Managing Director:** We are hiring a Managing Director (job description [here](#)) to lead the day-to-day of the organization. Close your eyes right now and think for 20 seconds about who might be an extraordinary fit, and then forward this email. Thank you!
- **Mentors:** We are looking for people who have expertise in growing, managing, and supporting online/virtual communities to be mentors for a new accelerator we're launching. Does anyone come to mind?
- **Economic Justice:** We are looking to connect funders working in the economic justice / economic inequality space. Do you know of anyone?

What I am reading

All hyperlinks to books in this Insider link out to [bookshop.org](#), where you can find [Black-owned booksellers](#) to purchase from.

- On March 14th, 1966, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote [this op-ed](#) in *The Nation* calling for people to “unite social and economic justice into a single package of freedom.” A contemporary op-ed on the same topic by Darren Walker, [here](#).
- How a WNBA superstar retired at the peak of her career (4 championships and an MVP) to fight for criminal justice. [The story of Maya Moore](#), one of the world's greatest basketball players who gave it all up.
- Why we all need Brene Brown more than ever during 2020. The rise of “America's therapist” and how COVID is a “lesson in collective vulnerability.” [Here](#).
- How an Alaskan volcano ushered in the demise of Caesar's Rome. The relationship between political instability and volcanic activity. [Here](#).
- **Book:** [Braiding Sweetgrass](#). If you're weary and seeking rest, this book will help you exhale. The secret wisdom of plants, written by an indigenous botanist who invites us to raise our ecological consciousness to appreciate the reciprocal relationship with the earth.

Something Personal

One of my closest friends, Bryant Mason, is a first-generation farmer in Paonia, Colorado. Bryant has one of the most brilliant, entrepreneurial minds I've ever met; give him \$50, an internet connection, and the freedom to pursue his blooming curiosity, and you'll have a \$500,000 business in six months. In only a few years, he has become one of the leading voices across the country in soil health with his business [Soil Doctor](#), and he and his wife have purchased land and are turning it into a soil laboratory and peach orchard in Paonia. I drove the 4.5 hours from Denver to Paonia two weeks ago to help him irrigate his land for a few days. We tilled furrows lined with cover crop, we lost battles with prairie dogs, we cleaned out drainages with the help of walkie-talkies. We talked about water rights, microclimates, floodplains, and draughts. We pondered how a farmer's relationship to the land imprints itself under nails and onto jeans and into joints. We discussed racism and food justice and rural America, and all of it — the whole experience visiting him — had such an impact on me that, when I got home, I lasted a full 24 hours deeply admiring the residents of my kitchen-counter fruit bowl, my tomatoes and apples and bananas, as heroic travelers on a triumphant journey we call the agricultural supply chain. But then the entitlement of my urban existence took control once again, and I became annoyed that my Instacart delivery didn't have the cilantro I ordered. I have some unlearning to do.

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Our resilience is our choice,

Banks

May 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the May edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update

- **New Partnership with Facebook:** Uncharted is partnering with Facebook on a new [Community Accelerator](#) launching this summer focused on helping impactful virtual communities to scale and create impact in a COVID-19 world.
- **New Cohort of 8 Ventures for the Chipotle Aluminaries Project:** We selected [eight unique, badass ventures](#) that are empowering the next generation of farmers across the US to participate in year 2 of our accelerator with Chipotle.
- **At The Table:** We have launched a [rapid-response accelerator](#) to help build resilience and scale for five organizations working on the front lines of food access and food security in one neighborhood in Denver.
- **Our Podcast:** We launched [Uncharted Territory](#), a podcast that combines big predictions on the future of social change with practical leadership tips for leaders and changemakers. From the future of philanthropy to caring for the mental health of teams, we've released 11 episodes so far. Subscribe wherever podcasts are.

Experimenting with a 4-day Workweek

This summer we're launching an experiment to try out a 4-day workweek. Everyone's salary is staying the same, but our team will work 32 hours every week between June 1st and August 28th (This is not four 10-hour days. This is four eight-hour days.). As an organization, we're committed to the quality and quantity of our work remaining the same, but every person will get every Friday off. 100% pay and benefits, 80% hours, 100% contribution.

Our hypothesis is that we can deliver (at least) 100% of the work at 80% of the time, while increasing team mental health, reducing team stress, and maintaining team culture and cohesion. At a time when 1) people are exhausted by all the video calls and screen time, 2) it's hard to work from home while caring for homebound children, and 3) our collective mental health is more important than ever, we're wondering if we decrease the number of hours stuck to a screen, do we increase the chance that our team can live healthy, creative lives while also taking Uncharted to new heights? We're launching a 13-week experiment (evaluated by a third-party evaluator) to find out. Learn with us this summer and follow along [here](#).

On Intellectual Humility

In the March and April editions of the Uncharted Insider, I chose to share poetry over articles because I was overwhelmed with the amount of content being pumped out about COVID-19. Everyone has become an armchair expert predicting the future, and while one part of me is intoxicated with the witnessing and imagining of how our world will change, the other part of me believes that all of our predicting is nothing more than a thinly-veiled attempt at reclaiming some sense of control and power in a world that has reminded us how little control and power we have. Is it possible that our desire to predict tomorrow's future is actually a desire to feel

safe and secure today? The French enlightenment writer, Voltaire, once said, "Doubt is not a pleasant condition, but certainty is absurd." In the face of immense uncertainty and unpredictability, how do we act? How do we prepare? Intellectual humility seems essential; it is the basis for nimble leadership. If we're too busy protecting our need to be right, then we'll miss out on new patterns and trends that are unfolding. Ego puts us on our heels, curiosity puts us on our toes. Ian Wilson, a former executive at GE, once said, "No amount of sophistication is going to allay the fact that all your knowledge is about the past and all your decisions are about the future." This moment calls for the following leadership formula: curiosity + decisiveness + the intellectual humility to change our minds and course-correct.

What is the purpose of office space?

We have a 4,500 square-foot office space that we love in an old, industrial building near downtown Denver. We moved in less than a year ago, redesigned the space to our specifications, and furnished it with plants, leather ottomans, and fruit snacks. There are skylights and vaulted ceilings and tree-shaded parking. But we're not using it, and it's hard to imagine us rushing back into the office anytime soon. We miss our in-person togetherness, but we can also fully function remotely (as the last 2.5 months have demonstrated). What should we do? [The purpose of office space might change in the future](#). Perhaps we'll exchange designated desks for flexible collaboration spaces. Perhaps multiple organizations will share the same space and it won't be one organization's exclusive home. My (intellectually humble) prediction is that once there is a vaccine, having some designated space to gather and collaborate will be valuable (even if it's not every day). So from a long-term, steady-state perspective, I don't see the office fully disappearing from our work culture. But what should we do in 2020? I'd love to hear your reflections and ideas about the future of office space.

Can you Help?

- Does anyone have a good connection at the [Peery Foundation](#)?
- I am looking for people who can mentor me on how to launch a high-net-worth fundraising strategy.
- We are going to be hiring 2-3 people in the next six months (roles are still finalizing). Can you think of someone who 1) is at least 10 years into their career and 2) is so extraordinary that we should have them on our radar? Let me know directly or add their name [here](#).
- I'm looking for constructive feedback on the podcast. What is the one thing we can do to make it better?

What I'm reading/watching/listening to

- A memo on how to embrace uncertainty and practice intellectual humility. Written by Howard Marks from [Oaktree Capital](#), [this is a beautifully written commentary](#) on uncertainty and the merits of intellectual humility (and one source of my musings above).
- How COVID-19 is accelerating the demise and reinvention of higher education. [The rise of the elite cyborg university](#).
- *Podcast: [Against the Rules](#)*: This outstanding podcast by Michael Lewis (*The Big Short*, *Moneyball*) features the role of coaches in American life. From athletic coaches to college coaches, *Against the Rules* dives deep into why coaches exist, why they matter, and what they say about our society.
- *Documentary: [The Last Dance](#)*: I am not much of a basketball fan, but this episodic documentary is captivating and brimming with applicable lessons. It is a study in leadership, culture, competition, ego, and big, baggy suits from the '90s. Worth it, even for non sports fans.

Something Personal

Not long ago, my friend Abi Ramanan shared the following quote "There are decades when nothing happens, and there are weeks when decades happen." It has certainly felt that way in 2020 where each week is dense

enough to comprise a decade of living. For me, May 2020 marks one actual decade from when I graduated college in May 2010. Just before we graduated, my group of friends made predictions about where we'd be in ten years. We didn't write them down, but I remember many of them and most have been wildly wrong. I know amongst our group of friends there has been more suffering than we bargained for, and more undeserved delights too. I would guess that we have more doubt than we used to, and maybe less whimsy, but also more courage, and, for me, a sense of awe about how marvelously life plods along and then bursts forth. Sometimes when I'm paying attention and not too tired, I'll lie in bed and think "if you would have told me when I woke up this morning that [unexpected event] would happen today, I would have said there is no way. But it did. It happened." And somehow that encounter with the wondrous idea that our plans are no match for the day's unfolding is enough to send me off into a night's sleep that, night after night, turns days into decades.

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An ally in racial justice,

Banks

April 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the April edition of the Uncharted Insider.

What is there to say about COVID-19 that hasn't already been said? Do we have the capacity to digest any more predictions about the new normal? Do we have the appetite to read through another newsletter that starts with "Our Response to the COVID-19 Crisis"? The amount of content out there is making me feel oversaturated. So, similar to last month's Insider, I'm pursuing a different approach in this April edition.

On Not Doing Enough

When I read the newsletter emails from peers and partners spelling out their "Response to the COVID-19 Crisis," my psychological reaction is quite similar to the neighborly comparison of "keeping up with the Joneses." There is this vague need in me to prove to the world that Uncharted is doing enough, and perhaps through the prism of that insecurity, I find myself asking spiraling questions: "Are we doing enough? Look what they're doing!"; "Maybe we should be doing more?"; "Why aren't we?"; "Have I failed?" My mind circles this fear of missing out, of not doing enough, of somehow falling short during a crisis like this. But I've found answering a different question has brought me some peace: "When I look back on all of this one day, what can we do now that will make me proud then?" It is a question that de-centers the fear of not keeping up and re-centers the acknowledgement of our human place amidst all the frenzy, and it calls us to respond in the best way we know how.

Our Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

Just kidding. After all of that, you didn't think I would immediately leap into our wildly impressive, glossy, and must-forward-to-your-network response, did you?

On Restructuring

That said, we are using this moment to make an internal change by restructuring our organizational chart and reimagining how our team collaborates and coordinates. I will confess that this restructuring feels like we are performing deep surgery on ourselves through a reshuffling of roles, reporting structures, communication patterns, and the crafting of an "essential intent" of each role and department. It has not been easy. It's not

going to win us any press and doesn't neatly fit into a MailChimp template, but I am placing a bet on how a tighter and focused organizational structure will make us far better at our work next week and next year. If we look back one day and say that actually the COVID-19 season was the best long-term thing that ever happened to Uncharted, I believe it will have been because we restructured the internal human and operational system. I'm proud of our team for trusting the process and letting go of the safety in our familiar status quo. Each day they are choosing to lean into an unfamiliar future with the firm hope that on the other side of this complexity, there just might be simplicity.

On Speed and Forgiveness

Like most of you, I am a human, which means on some days I take constructive feedback well, and on other days I find myself defensive when receiving feedback. Sometimes feedback goes down rather smooth, and other times it feels like chewing on raw, dry broccoli. But I've noticed that in the last few weeks, my eagerness for feedback has grown and my defensiveness around feedback has shrunk. This is not due to some spiritual epiphany or enlightenment in me, but rather due to the environmental conditions I find myself in. In a fast-paced environment where decisions come quickly and mental acuity is paramount, defensiveness impedes necessary progress and clouds judgment. When we are forced to move fast, somehow it seems more possible to assume a self-forgiving, open-hearted posture to our mistakes because we simply don't have the luxury of stewing on things. Once we're out of this state of emergency, will our egos and defensiveness have more room to show up again? I wonder if there is a way to insert this "buffer of grace" into moments of less urgency.

On the Purpose of a Company

This crisis is raising a simple but essential question: "what is the role of a company in its community"? Maybe the best place to look for an answer to this question is the Small Town Small Business (STSB). These STSBs have written the playbook on what a company's role and responsibility ought to be to its community. If you walk into your STSB and realize you left your wallet at home, they'll loan you the milk on credit. If there is a family passing through town whose car has broken down, the STSB mechanic will likely bring their tools and expertise to help out, free of charge. If you're planning an important community gathering, the STSB coffee shop will stay open late for you.

Perhaps the biggest companies have the most to learn from the smallest ones and the most scalable solutions have the most to learn from those who are least scalable. STSBs hold clues for any company seeking to understand what role it should play in its community, how it can deploy its expertise, its resources, and what it might look like to redefine the relationship between company and customer, such that a company does something as preposterous and edgy as the equivalent of loaning milk on credit! What would a STSB do? That's where we need to start and we shouldn't stop until we've redefined the social contract between employer and employee and company and community. It's time for our institutions and organizations to view their roles more expansively and to look holistically at the opportunities for humanity in their spheres of influence.

How you can help

- As we restructure our team, it's giving us the chance to return to the basics of how we collaborate and coordinate. We are looking for practices, tools, routines, and recommendations that achieve the following trifecta: high coordination, high efficiency, high togetherness/belonging. What is working for you?
- We're looking to be inspired by websites that aren't just 2x better, but 10x better. What company websites just totally blow you away? Send us the exemplars.

Some P's Poetry

- ["The Journey"](#) - Mary Oliver
- ["Self-Portrait"](#) - David Whyte

Prose

- [Homegoing](#): This is the best piece of fiction I've read in 10 years. It is a story of oppression, heart-break, and how the human spirit is gritty, forgiving, and vigorous in its ambition. This book will make you cry, but it will also situate this moment of COVID-19 into the vast expanse of a multigenerational human experience.

Pictures

- 38 photographs of social distancing around the world. [Here](#).
- Portraits of isolation from around the world. [Here](#).

Something Personal

In this Great Pause, I've been noticing things I haven't noticed before. There is a squirrel that traverses along the peaks of my north fence-line, bounding forward on his mysterious mission, flicking his tail, nervously glancing. There is a minor construction project underway down my alley whose plodding progress on those midweek afternoons is marked by the intermittent buzz of a saw and the zoom-click-click-click of an electric drill completing the final tightening of a screw. There is the morning sunlight as it divides and redivides my living room in swatches of warm glow: first it frames its own empty portraits on my gray walls, then it colors the leafed canopy of my cloistered houseplants, and then finally onto my hardwood floors as it makes its morning creep. There is the outstretched bend of a lone, regal plant that lives on my hutch. This floral companion has proven itself resilient to my negligence, leaning towards the dining-room window 10 feet away, seeking the sunlight as its trusted partner in survival and photosynthesis. And if I sit extra still in my rocking chair on the back porch, there is the fastidious work of a small sparrow who shuffles about in my mulch, collecting the supplies needed to renovate her nest that perches on the limb of my neighbor's adolescent maple tree. These are some things. I'm sure there are others too; I just haven't noticed them yet.

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Together,

Banks

March 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the March edition of the Uncharted Insider. If you're like me, the last few weeks have been dense living: full of moments of fear, curiosity, and energy.

The uncharted territory we collectively find ourselves in has been both emotionally draining and powerfully invigorating. Like many, COVID-19 is forcing Uncharted to adapt in many ways (more on this next month...I think we will look back one day and say this was one of the best things that could have happened to our organization), and it's been an eventful few weeks as we navigate the unfolding terrain. Given the circumstances, I'm taking a different approach to this March Insider.

On Leadership

I've been asking myself this question of "How is the way I am showing up now consistent with (or inconsistent with) the person and leader I aspire to be?" That question has prompted a sober reflection into areas of strength (decisiveness, lucidity of strategy, ability to navigate ever-changing dynamics) and areas of weakness (impatience, lack of emotional availability, ego). This reflection has also led me to consider the work of leadership during these times as consisting of three priorities:

1. Show up for the humans on the Uncharted team and in my life (parents, neighbors, etc. Including myself here).
2. Ensure the organization can navigate the short and medium term (cash flow and financials, external relationships, culture, communication, trust).
3. Begin building now for the other side of this crisis so we can step into new paradigms and explore opportunities of impact. How can this accelerate who we want to be in the future?

What am I missing? Let me know how you're assigning leadership priorities to yourself in this time.

On Paradigms

Last week I had the privilege of serving on the grant-making committee for the [Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger](#). They're allocating \$1M+ in a hunger relief fund to food security and food access organizations across the state. For their first disbursement, they received 400 applications by the deadline last Wednesday night. They asked the grant-making committee to review applications in 16 hours so we could discuss, decide, and ultimately disburse money on Friday (less than 48 hours after the deadline). My eight years of experience doing this work of vetting, reviewing, and selecting social ventures has taught me that 4-6 weeks is best practice (at least for Uncharted's work), so I was highly skeptical. But it happened; we did it, and the money is out the door to organizations on the front-lines of fighting hunger across the state.

If COVID-19 is teaching me any one lesson, it is that the distance between impossible and inevitable is shrinking. I saw this play out firsthand with the speed of the grant-making process with the Blueprint. But it is playing out in politics where what used to be perceived as politically impossible (bipartisan \$2 trillion stimulus) quickly became inevitable. It is playing out in societies where what seemed impossible (like imposing the largest lockdown in the world on India's 1.3 billion people for 21 days) quickly became inevitable. What we perceive as impossible is often far more possible than we think, and it takes a crisis like this for us to have our existing paradigms disassembled and new ones introduced. Perhaps it's time we ask ourselves two related questions: "What are the things in my life I am declaring impossible or highly unlikely? What would it take for me to be proven wrong?"

On Trade-offs

This crisis is unprecedented in so many ways, but it does fall into the familiar trade-off between saving lives and saving livelihoods. Most sensible political leaders and societies value the primacy of human life and understand that long-term, the best thing for the economy is to flatten the curve. The economy will suffer in the short-term, but today's sacrifice is necessary for long-term public and economic health. The choices we are currently making in this trade-off are exactly the choices we seem unable to make when it comes to climate change. Yes, there are many differences between COVID-19 and climate change, but I'm curious how this crisis might be an accelerated test of a much bigger and longer-term trade-off we will need to make in the coming years and decades. Will we be willing to make economic sacrifices so we can save lives and save our planet? What lessons will we draw from this current trade-off? And, how might the economic pain of this crisis make us less willing to make those trade-offs in the future?

On Connection

My friend Gabe Krenza (a brilliant human working at the intersection of leadership development, biomimicry, and wilderness exploration) has observed that our virtual working and connecting has led to a "softening of

formality.” The backdrop of our video-calls is where we spend our non-work hours...where we live our lives. We’re wearing more relaxed clothes, the interruptions by pets and kids are accepted and quickly normalizing, and video-call platforms like Zoom are distributing our faces onto a screen without any concern for hierarchy or role. Gabe points out that on a video-call it’s as likely that the newest intern is front-and-center while the CEO’s face is a small tile in one corner of the screen. For those who believe that work needs to be a setting where humans can show up as fully themselves, this crisis will hopefully accelerate a more humanized and less formal approach to work.

On Powerlessness

A few weeks ago, right before things got crazy, I went on a backpacking trip down the lost coast in northern California with two of my best friends. Over four days and 28 miles, we carefully made our way along the coastline, with the looming cliffs to our left and the vast Pacific Ocean to our right. There are segments of the trail that are impassable at high-tide, as there is no place to escape when the waves swallow the narrow beach and pummel the rocks and cliffs. We kept a tide-chart with us and only proceeded at low-tide, which was a beautiful reminder of just how powerless and small we are in the grand scheme; when the moon — our planet’s orbiting celestial body — pulled the ocean back, only then could we proceed. It was a lesson in our own powerlessness in comparison to the cosmic interplay between planets and oceans. When those forces exert, I was reminded of how little I actually control in this world. It feels the same way with COVID-19. How will the unexpected, destabilizing event like this crisis remind us of our relative lack of power? And then, when we’re conscious that perhaps we are in less control of our lives and our organizations than we originally thought, how will we choose to show up?

Some Poetry

...Because who wants to read another article about COVID-19? The best thing about poetry is it forces you to slow down and lean close to the page.

- [“Moments”](#), by Mary Oliver
- [“Everything is Waiting For You”](#), by David Whyte
- [“When You Are Old”](#), William Butler Yeats
- [“On the Pulse of the Morning”](#), Maya Angelou
- [“Keep Quiet”](#), Pablo Neruda
- [“I, Too”](#), by Langston Hughes
- [“What Kind of Times are These”](#), Adrienne Rich
- [“Won’t You Celebrate with Me”](#), Lucille Clifton

Something Personal

I visited the redwoods a few weeks ago, and in light of our social distancing and physical isolation from each other, I’ve been thinking about them recently. Redwoods are the tallest living things on earth (can grow 300 feet tall), and they can live to be 2,000 years old. But their root systems are only 5-6 feet deep. Instead of growing down, their root systems grow out, sometimes as much as 100 feet from their tree, so they can intertwine with the root systems of other redwoods. These trees have discovered that the best way to live as long and grow as tall is not to go it alone. Instead, they have chosen to bond themselves to one another where they are literally holding each other up. This is why they cluster in groves; you’ll never see a lone redwood.

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With vigor,

Banks

February 2020

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the February edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Community Driven Accelerator:** We received 17 applications for the community-driven accelerator we are running in one zip code in Denver. The next step is for residents and community experts to select the organizations they believe are best positioned to advance healthy food access in their neighborhood. Whomever they select, we will accelerate.
- *I feel a desire to use this bullet point to impress you with a big win or a milestone in February so you'll like Uncharted (and me) more, but this month our team has been working hard on so many things (some will lead to future announcements, some you'll never know happened). Sometimes the most important work doesn't lend itself to impressive headlines every month.*

Ideas on my mind:

Nonprofit sector stats: 97% of nonprofits operate with less than a \$5 million budget, 92% operate with less than a \$1 million budget, and 88% with less than a \$500,000 budget ([link to statistics from National Council of Nonprofits](#)). This is striking: nearly 90% of nonprofits have an annual budget less than \$500k! On one hand, many of these organizations are under-resourced and under-staffed, and they're forced to duplicate efforts (like fundraising) and work in isolation from others doing similar or complementary work. This resource-scarce reality creates a \$500k barrier that 90% of nonprofits are struggling to break through. Small nonprofits often stay small. But on the other hand, some of the most transformational change is happening at the smallest scale, and that change is being championed by people who are making real sacrifices to advance their impact (they're heroes!). We would know because so many of the organizations we stand beside in our accelerators are trying to break through this \$500k barrier, and we're going to the ends of the earth to help them scale their impact.

The sector would do well to:

- Help organizations break through this \$500k barrier of resource scarcity by helping them tap into new funding sources.
- Support mergers and acquisitions between organizations.
- Build coalitions to work together and get funders to fund the coalition.
- Kill zombie nonprofits that are puttering along but are not effective.

Note: 25% of organizations in our portfolio are non-profits.

The Art of Gathering: Our COO Nicole Dill has been praising a fabulous book called [The Art of Gathering](#) by Priya Parker. It's a book about gatherings, parties, meetings, and the moments and opportunities where humans come together for a shared purpose. If you consider yourself a host or community builder, this book will help you refine your craft. It speaks to how you arrive at a crisp purpose for your gathering, how we often let the guest list define the purpose instead of letting the purpose define the guest list, how to prepare people to arrive at your gathering in a headspace to be fully present, and how to incite vulnerability, how to manage conflict, and how to make events that are powerful in their connection and spirit. The book has made me think about treating the work week as a gathering. How might we change team meetings, team communication, and team connection if we imagined ourselves as hosts of our team in a gathering we call the work week? What kind of magic and intentionality might sprout? How might we spark delight and connection amongst our team? How might we surface new and different behaviors if we elevated the work week (and our office space) from the

realm of simply the time and the physical space where work happens and into the realm of an *extraordinary* gathering?

Monthly Rant

Big Bet Philanthropy vs. Safe Philanthropy. In 2015, Stanford Social Innovation Review wrote a [report](#) on the state of “big bet philanthropy” (donations in excess of \$10M). They reported that only 20% of those philanthropic “big bets” went to social change; the remaining 80% was institutional giving to universities, hospitals, and cultural institutions. Since then, there’s been more focus on big bet philanthropy (including [this series of articles](#)), but it strikes me that these big bets are more *big* than *bet*. They’re defined by their size, not by their audacity. The problem is that the organizations that can absorb a big bet are inherently *not* big bets. They’re safe bets because they are large and established institutions with lots to lose by making an actual big bet and deviating from their status quo. For example, the MacArthur Foundation just released the [100 finalists](#) for its \$100 million big bet grant. I spent an hour last week reviewing the finalists and looking at their annual budgets. 90/100 finalists had a budget greater than \$10M (contrast that with the statistics above about the distribution of nonprofits by budget size). I am a big admirer of the MacArthur Foundation for many reasons, and I do see merits in safe philanthropy where the impact is so proven and expected that little risk appetite is needed, but they have created a prize that is only accessible to the largest ~1% of nonprofits. In doing so, are we relying on the biggest behemoths in our social impact space to lead the charge in risk-taking? Call me a small-scale ranter, but I believe we need to make big bets at every level of investment. Sometimes those who are taking the biggest risks are working for the smallest organizations simply because the largest and most well-established non-profits are designed to be incompatible with that level of risk-taking.

Can you help?

- Do you know of organizations or people who have experience taking a boutique consulting company or agency model through a season of growth? We’re looking for mentors.
- Is anyone tight with Brene Brown who would be willing to make an introduction? We want her to be a mentor for entrepreneurs in our accelerators.

What I’m reading:

- California needs to create 3.5 million new homes by 2025 (which is triple its current pace of building) to begin to put a dent in its lack of housing affordability. How nearly all the biggest social problems in the US have roots in housing. [Here](#).
- In 1850, 75% of Americans older than 65 lived with relatives; by 1990, only 18% did. The decline of the extended family, the problem with the nuclear family, and the correlation relationship between the growth of GDP and the growth of loneliness. [Here](#).
- In the last two decades, the average venture capital fund has barely broken even. The history of venture capital, its current overcapitalization, and its uncertain future. [Here](#).
- How the American response to WWII is a blueprint for fighting climate change. The need for climate R+D. [Here](#).

Something personal:

I’m trying out two new things in 2020: I’ve transitioned to a vegetarian diet, and I’m sleeping around 7.5 hours most nights. I am late to the party when it comes to respecting the power of sleep. I’ve always told myself the story that sleeping less enables me to live and achieve more during the day. But the benefits of sleep are innumerable; it’s a veritable panacea for almost everything! And I’m enjoying the vegetarian diet; I’ve committed to it for one year, and then I’ll figure out if I want to continue. The hardest part—as I am sure you can guess—is the lack of pork dumplings in my life...if only sleep could solve for that. In the meantime, I’m always open to your best vegetarian recipes!

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Friday,

Banks

January 2020

Hi everyone,

Happy new year! Welcome to the January edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **We launched our first Collective Accelerator called [At the Table](#).** We're focused on increasing the access of healthy food in one zip code in Denver. Unlike a traditional accelerator, residents from the neighborhood will form a selection committee to select the organizations they believe are best positioned to expand healthy food access.
- **We launched Year Two of the Chipotle Aluminaries Project,** our accelerator program focused on supporting the next generation of the American farmer. The average age of the American Farmer is 58 years old, and annually only 397 Americans between the ages of 25-34 become new farmers every year (compare that to the annual number of new entrepreneurs at 785,000). We're teaming up with the Chipotle Cultivate Foundation to find ventures that are supporting the next generation of farmers and making it easier for new farmers to become successful. Learn more [here](#).

Ideas on my mind:

The Catharsis of Naming Failure: This month our team went up to the snowy Colorado mountains and spent two full days sitting around a big fireplace talking about all the possible ways our plans for 2020 might fail. It's a practice called a [pre-mortem](#) where, before undertaking a project, a team identifies all the possibilities for failure and corresponding mitigation strategies. As an organization, we've done pre-mortems before, but we've never spent two full days sitting in a space of anticipating failure, and a few things stood out:

- Our team loved it and declared the retreat one of our most productive yet. People expressed catharsis in being able to publicly name anxieties and fears that often don't get airtime. There are so many things that aren't fully spoken but are fully felt. This retreat will become a blueprint for future ones.
- I personally struggled to sit for so long in a space exclusively dedicated to anticipating all the things that could go wrong. I realized how much I need to balance the anticipation of failure with the anticipation of success. I've found that the creative release of thinking of our work as art sometimes is greater than the cathartic release of thinking of our work as risk-mitigation. Fortunately, there are people at Uncharted who prefer the opposite, which makes us a good team.
- I am curious if there is a correlation between a team's ability to sit in a place of anticipated failure and that team's ability to take risks and more quickly bounce back from failures. Does the naming of failure de-stigmatize it and increase the collective risk-appetite of a group of people? We'll see!

Cultural Neuroplasticity: The last few months have been a lesson for me in how the energy and spirit we, as humans, bring to our work gets transmitted onto the things we make, the programs we run, the culture we build. If I bring a spirit of fast-paced anxiety (which I sometimes do), that anxiety gets transmitted and imprinted. If I bring a spirit of poetry and creativity, that creativity also is transmitted. Our executive team grew from two to three people last year, and we're spending more time consciously exploring the energy and spirit we bring to

our daily work and our team. In the same way that a brain's neuroplasticity enables it to be transformed, we're curious about the neuroplasticity of our team. Can we change the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves and about the state of the business such that we imprint creativity and possibility into our work? One of the ways we're hoping our collective neuroplasticity will change is through how we pace the organization. We're examining how Uncharted's pace leads to a narrative of unnecessary, manufactured urgency and scarcity, and how urgency and scarcity then get imprinted on our work and culture. What might we build if we brought greater spaciousness to our work in 2020?

Can you help?

- We are recruiting mentors for the Chipotle Aluminaries Project (see above) that have expertise/experience working to support the next generation of American Farmers. Do you know of anyone who could be a great mentor themselves or knows prospective mentors working in next-generation American agriculture?
- We are looking for a new Treasurer for the Uncharted Board. Details can be found [here](#). Do you know of anyone?
- As I mentioned last month, I am spending 25% of my time in New York City in 2020. I have the best apartment in East Village, and now I am looking for a desk (just for me) with the privacy to take a few calls. Many co-working spaces don't structure anything for less than a month, and hot-desks start around \$450/month, so I'm looking to see if I can find something for cheaper (or free). I am curious if any Uncharted Insiders knew of free or discounted space through an organization with an office in New York. Or maybe you have another idea?

What I'm reading:

- If the federal minimum wage in 1968 had kept up with inflation and productivity, it would now be \$22 an hour. Instead, it's \$7.25. The unraveling of working class communities across the US. [Here](#).
- How some farmers are starting to cultivate a new commodity: environmental services like carbon sequestration. Regenerative agriculture and the grassroots movement to incentivize farmers to fight climate change. [Here](#).
- When asked what traits society values most in boys, only 2% of male survey respondents said honesty and morality. The narrow definition of what it means to be a man and how those rigid masculine norms stifle emotion and lead to loneliness and toxicity. [The miseducation of the American boy](#).
- 0.6% of foundation giving was targeted to women of color in 2016. The massive philanthropic blindspot. [Here](#).
- Book recommendation: [White Fragility](#). As a white person, I often don't see myself in racial terms and therefore don't fully engage in dialogues exploring my own racial identity, which leads to a discomfort and fragility on the topic of race and an aversion to exploring my own complicity in racist structures and systems. This book is an education, and a must read. (I also took some notes on the book, which I'm happy to share as a summary for those who are interested).

Something personal:

I took a few hours off in the middle of last week to go to a Claude Monet exhibit at the Denver Art Museum. Wandering throughout the exhibit with the other Tuesday morning patrons, it struck me that maybe Monet was less interested in the subject of his painting and more interested in how that subject changed in an ever-evolving environment. The sun would set, a cloud would migrate overhead, water lilies would be illuminated by the late afternoon glow, London fog would roll in. Perhaps because he wasn't painting subjects but instead painting moments, he could fall in love with the same subject at a different moment and become entranced by it all over again (like his collection of water lily paintings). Maybe that's the essence of being an impressionist painter: not being obsessed with exactitude of a subject but more intrigued by capturing its

fleeting essence...the impression of something that never occupies the same moment twice. It made me wonder if there is virtue in capturing the ephemeral thing imprecisely instead of capturing the static thing precisely. Maybe our pursuit of perfection gets in our way of noticing those in-between moments in ourselves, in our families, in our artwork when the light changes and the same thing is recast and new colors show through.

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From New York City this time,

Banks

2019 Uncharted Insiders

December 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the December edition of the Uncharted Insider. Thanks for following along this year. I love hearing from you, and I've been humbled by your willingness to reply and share your insights and stories. Please keep it up! Similar to last December, I'm taking a different approach in this final Uncharted Insider of 2019.

Gratitude to the Uncharted Team

It's one thing to be able to report on the work Uncharted is doing in these monthly Insiders, but it is another thing altogether to do the work itself, and that credit goes to our team. I want to acknowledge the entire Uncharted team (cc'd) in this last Insider of the year because I've found that CEOs tend to get too much of the credit and their teams too little. Make no mistake: it is the Uncharted team on the front lines, leading initiatives, championing entrepreneurs, standing with community members, advocating for justice and equity, and creating the internal, organizational conditions that lead to our collective flourishing. They are the ones that bring our work to life and do so with a spirit of togetherness, humor, and bravery. Our team is the reason I am giddy on Monday mornings for the week ahead, and they are the ones that propel me forward and invite me to give my very best, every day.

Advice to Myself In 2019

I'm finding that the advice I offer is often the advice I most need to hear myself, so I've been paying attention to what I say out-loud this year, and these themes came up repeatedly: *Healthy people lead healthy companies. Courageous people do courageous things. Transformational cultures create transformation out in communities. Underneath strategy, there is always psychology.* These ideas were present for me this year because I witnessed just how powerful *healthy* human relationships can be in doing an organization's work, and conversely just how derailing *unhealthy* human dynamics are. I noticed in myself unhealthy dynamics of anxiety and fear and how those influenced people around me, and I observed how much stronger I was as a leader when I showed up from a place of rest and confidence. There are no shortcuts through advice columns or business books that lead to changing the psychology underneath the strategy. That requires creating those rare cultural spaces where humans can lean into each other and hold space for the truth to emerge.

2019 Lessons of Leadership

2019 taught me that I am at my best when I can hold three things together in my mind:

- **Being kind to myself:** I tend to be hard on myself, but I'm giving Uncharted the best I have, so being kind means letting myself be proud of how I show up and giving myself the permission to ease back and chill out even when I feel the pressure to keep pressing forward.
- **Thinking big:** Everyone says "think big" as if it's this naturally easy thing to do. I've found it to be quite hard to consistently think big and outside the familiar paradigms we operate in, so I'm working to create the psychological conditions to think abundantly.
- **Being skeptical of the stories we tell ourselves:** I tell myself stories all the time about how well I am doing, how poorly I am doing, how self-aware I am, how delusional I am, how smart I am, how much of an imposter I am, and stories about Uncharted: how we're going to change the world of philanthropy, how we'll be found out for being naively idealistic, how we're really onto something, how we're completely adrift. Sometimes I find I'm telling myself opposite stories within the same hour. And I'm learning the wisdom of just being skeptical of the stories I'm telling myself. Things aren't as good or as bad as I think they are. Premature conclusions are presumptuous, and perhaps rooted in my own ego or desire to categorize things that are hard to understand. Be patient, the story is still unfolding.

Curiosities for 2020:

As I think about 2020, here are some curiosities and opportunities I see in the world of social impact.

- **Social impact / philanthropy can grow in its emotional intelligence.** We are obsessed with the high-IQ, peer-reviewed, evidence-based approaches *within* issues and sectors like affordable housing, early childhood, workforce development, economic mobility, and so on. But what about working in the blindspots *between* those issues... in the "fluffy" EQ realms of loneliness, social cohesion, mental health, conceptions of identity, and cultural norms? These are unbounded spaces that cut across a foundation's "focus areas" where the impact is less measurable and attributable, but I hope that we can swim upstream and explore these less-defined areas that are often the invisible forces shaping downstream issue-based success metrics.
- **Populism in the world of philanthropy.** Where is the foundation that models itself after the Bernie Sanders campaign? 2018 featured books like [Winners Take All](#) and [Decolonizing Wealth](#), and people like [Darren Walker are perceived as reformers](#) within philanthropic institutions by working to divest endowments, apply equity lenses, and focus on inequality. But I'm curious if the values of populism, democracy, and equity in our contemporary zeitgeist will express themselves in different approaches to philanthropy that resemble the grassroots mobilization of populist political campaigns. Will we see a major philanthropy rise to power that is marked by the abdication of power by traditional power-brokers and led by the "beneficiaries" themselves?
- **Climate change is a lens across all impact.** In 2020, I hope more people apply climate lenses into issue areas that are not climate-explicit. We have social determinants of health; we need climate determinants of health. We advocate for 2-generation approaches to poverty that think decades ahead; we need those approaches to be informed by how our climate will look decades ahead. Climate is not just an issue area, it is a lens applied to all work.
- **Getting capital off the sidelines.** I have become obsessed with Donor Advised Funds (DAFs). Assets in DAFs are doubling every five years. In 2018, there were [\\$121 billion dollars in DAFs](#), but most of that money just sits undeployed on the sidelines. Whoever is able to crack the nut of DAF mobilization will be able to unlock a tidal wave of financial capital.
- **Bridge-builders in a post-truth world.** We're in a post-truth world and the silos we occupy reinforce convenient narratives that align with our worldviews. I am curious if we will get over our need to be right and start to fund the bridge-builders who are working across lines of difference to unite coalitions of the unlikely. Does it matter more to us that we can prove to climate skeptics that global warming is anthropomorphic, or are we willing to explore the cultural, political, racial, and

geographic bridging that might be necessary before we can even begin to explore ideas about what is true? Sometimes speaking our truth is easier than listening to theirs.

Expanding to New York

Start spreading the news... I will be splitting time between Denver and New York City in 2020 as part of a strategic effort to expand Uncharted's presence on the east coast. Colorado is Uncharted's home and our HQ will remain in Denver (as will many of our initiatives...don't worry!), but we are looking to expand our partnerships with national funders and corporations in New York and across the east coast. I'll be launching our east coast presence in 2020 by spending 25% of my time in New York City next year.

- Which foundations should we be talking to?
- What corporations would benefit from working with us?
- Where should I eat dim sum?

Final Reflection

If we are willing to live an adventure, there is an adventure to be lived. Here's to the unexpected adventure ahead and gratitude for the adventure that was 2019.

With gratitude and ambition,

Banks

November 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the November edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Uncharted was named [one of the 50 best companies to work for in 2019 by Outside Magazine](#).** We're not really award-collecting people, but we're proud of this one.
- **We kicked off the [Futurebound Acceleration Lab](#)** with a week-long summit in Denver supporting 18 ventures pioneering new approaches to child development.
- **We hosted a fireside chat with renowned executive coach [Jerry Colonna](#)** on the psychology of leadership at our HQ in Denver. It's the first event in the Uncharted Event Series.

Ideas on my mind:

Social determinants of organizational health. [Social determinants of health](#) are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, and work that shape their physical and emotional wellbeing. They are powerful drivers in health outcomes; for example, there is [a 20-year gap in life expectancy between richer and poorer zip codes in the city of Baltimore](#) (We're working on a social determinants project focused on healthy food access and food justice in north Denver). Recently I've been thinking about applying the concept of social determinants of health to organizations themselves. What are the social determinants of *organizational* health? What conditions lead to healthy outcomes? Perhaps things like comprehensive onboarding for new employees, continuously updated job descriptions, regular space held for bilateral feedback, and consistent and transparent updates from leadership. We likely spend too much time dealing with organizational health *consequences* and too little time focusing on organizational health *conditions*.

Monthly Rant

Less proof, more imprecision. Publicly-traded companies are regularly criticized for optimizing around their quarterly earnings and not thinking long-term about their business, and I'm beginning to think that the stringent impact metrics imposed upon us (or self-imposed on ourselves) are our sector's equivalent of quarterly earnings reports. The pressure to *arrive* at proof might be getting in the way of thinking bigger, planning longer-term, and acting upstream. For a publicly-traded company to disrupt itself and reinvent its business, it needs to contend with the reactions it will face in the public markets. Non-profits and social enterprises that are held to precise proof-points of impact face similar consequences: they struggle to work upstream into root causes, they are held back from thinking divergently about where the space is trending. Better to demonstrate to a funder that we can guarantee delivery of 3,000 meals every month at the soup kitchen than to begin some imprecise, upstream work addressing the drivers of homelessness that could be difficult to prove. That upstream work might not be effective (in which case funding is lost) and/or that upstream work might be so far upstream that it's nearly impossible to prove effectiveness (in which case funding is also lost). Our system rewards short-term precision and proof because we are in a rat race that optimizes for the quick-ripening/low-hanging fruit of impact.

I'd suggest those of us in the impact investing, social enterprise, and philanthropic spaces consider two lines of inquiry:

- At what point are our standards of precision and our thresholds of proof a barrier to real impact instead of an enabler of it? We need to embrace greater imprecision and lower our standards of proof. For example, when the only eligible grantees for a foundation's "big bet" are those with a randomized control trial, is that a big bet or a safe bet? As long as we operate within the narrow confines of precision, we limit our ability to try experimental or upstream approaches.
- When is our obsession with precision and proof of impact more about reinforcing our need to be right and less about determining that impact is actually happening? Is it possible that both the obsession with quantitative metrics and the relentless drive towards proof are sometimes more about our own fragile need to know beyond-a-shadow-of-a-doubt that our money and our work are actually effective? What is it about being imprecise that makes us so uncomfortable?

Can you help?

- We want Uncharted to be a carbon-neutral company in 2020. Who has done this who can give us some insight here? We are open to all resources, advice, and people.
- We are looking to take on a Program Related Investment (PRI) to finance the growth of our business development department. Do you know of anyone who would be interested in chatting with us?
- Does anyone have any connections at the [Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation](#)?

What I'm reading:

- Scientists Have Been Underestimating the Pace of Climate Change. [Here's why](#) (and why it's a more universal problem than just with scientists).
- The real revolution in redistributing billionaire's fortunes is coming from inside their own families. How those who have inherited wealth are giving it all away. [Here](#). Plus [this article](#) by the author of *Winners Take All* on how 2019 was bad for the elites.
- Social isolation is more lethal than smoking 15 cigarettes a day. The epidemic of loneliness in the US and UK and the grants that are focused on bringing people together. [Here](#).
- *Podcast*: I've listened to a lot of podcasts this year, but [this one](#) is the best. It's a multi-part series on Dolly Parton that weaves her prolific discography into a sweeping ethnographic exploration on culture, gender, politics, race, and religion in the United States.

Something personal:

Last week I went over to my new next-door neighbor who just moved in. I told him that I didn't really know how to be a good neighbor, but I thought I'd start by introducing myself. We chatted for a while, and then he invited me to a friendsgiving dinner at their house. A few days later, I ran into some other neighbors I had never met before who live right behind me. Turns out we live so close that their wife shows up on my list of available networks, but we've never met (they're so fun and spunky and kind. They're coming over tonight for drinks). What discoveries! And what a reminder that community is right around us if we're willing to let ourselves be swept up in it.

~~

Thanksgiving,

Banks

October 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the October edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **We selected [18 child-focused ventures](#) for Futurebound Acceleration Lab**, which will provide this cohort with the tools they need to succeed in Colorado over eight months.
- **We've been hiring for 2020.** Currently, we have [three roles open](#). Do you know our next hire? Share the applications directly with them or refer them through [this short survey](#).
- **This year we launched an internal startup/new revenue-line** inside Uncharted that [licenses our curriculum](#) around the world to nascent accelerators that are seeking our playbook to run high-quality programs for local social entrepreneurs in their region. We're in month eight of this experiment, and we're seeing some sales traction. Big shout out to [Caitlin Ferguson](#) on our team who deserves *all* of the credit.

Ideas on my mind:

Scale versus leverage. If I can generalize, the social enterprise / impact investing space focuses more on *scale*, while the social justice / activism space focuses more on *leverage*. This makes sense: social enterprises are rewarded when they grow in size, and the capital in impact investing pipes is intended to beget more capital. In the social justice / advocacy space, there is more focus on creating impact through systems, and therefore organizations must create leverage to influence that system. Rarely will one organization — through its sheer size — tip a system, but if it works through its leverage points, and in concert with other organizations working through leverage points, then a coordinated effort might be more successful. Embracing the idea of leverage (instead of just scale) will likely mean smaller organizations, less opportunities for follow-on rounds of impact investments, and maybe less directly-attributable impact...all of which would challenge the vogue notions of scale, proof, and credit. But in exchange, you might begin to work further upstream on issues whose downstream consequences necessitate big social enterprises and lots of impact investing capital. Scale and leverage are not mutually exclusive, and I'm curious how these spaces might further cross-pollinate.

Monthly Rant

Proclamations versus invitations. I attended an impact investing / social impact conference this month, and I was struck by how much of the overarching discourse and conference structure was designed around promotional marketing and self-congratulation. Lots of organizational horn-tooting. I get it...organizations need

to market themselves, bring in funding, secure press, receive accolades, and burnish their cultivated images (all things that we do too; we're not above this). But I am annoyed by the panels that are happy to operate within the familiar, acronymed grooves of industry platitudes and feigned vulnerability. Where is the hearty debate? Where is the honest disagreement on approach? Where is the airtime for those willing to talk about their biggest *actual* mistakes in the last year? I don't think we're incapable of it; we simply aren't co-inviting each other into spaces of perceived safety where such topics can be exchanged with courage and full-throated honesty. Time to replace proclamations with invitations, time to exchange our sanctimony with curiosity.

Can you help?

- I'm looking to connect with someone who steered a fast-growing social enterprise/non-profit about how they grew their business development team and built a revenue/funding machine. A few archetypal examples are someone in leadership at [New Story](#) or [Scott Harrison](#) from Charity Water.
- I am looking to connect with funders targeting climate activism, climate justice, and climate innovations. Ping me, and I can share more details.
- Who runs or is on a world-class board of directors? Can you introduce me?

What I'm reading:

- Four of the top 48 executives at Amazon are women. Plus other insights into the inner-workings of Amazon and Bezos. [Here](#). Another article underscores the challenges facing Amazon and its impending confrontation with antitrust regulators. [Here](#).
- How the wilderness and backcountry might be the best incubator of leadership. The impressive number of leaders who are also NOLS graduates. [Here](#).
- This seven-part series by the Harvard Business Review on gender equality, women, power, and influence. [First article by Melinda Gates](#).
- The tension between the hyperbole of a CEO and the financial supremacy of their investors. When investors strike back. [Here](#).

Something personal:

I'm spending more time working on my house these days. Turns out I love interior design and the way that different textures, spaces, lighting, and permutations of art and furniture can create a sense of belonging and rest, of energy and inspiration, of confidence and possibility. I'm also curious how our physical spaces tell a story and serve as a kind of three-dimensional tapestry of expression. In what ways is our art telling a story of justice? How is our living space inviting belonging of a guest? What feeling do we have when we walk in the door after a long day? The private spaces we create and curate for ourselves are profoundly powerful in the formation of our outlook and sense of self.

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From snowy Denver,

Banks

September 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the September edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **We ran our 5-day boot camp for the [Visible Connect](#) accelerator** focused on mobile tech ventures working on major social issues like veteran mental health and improved legal representation in the criminal justice system.
- **Uncharted helped select a cohort of five ventures working to address the cost of housing in the US**, as part of the Turner Center's [Housing Lab](#) (in partnership with the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative).
- **Uncharted's intramural volleyball team won the championships in Denver**. We decided to decline our invitation to the White House.

Ideas on my mind:

The power of unpackaged truth. I've been fascinated to watch the rise of teen climate activist Greta Thunberg as she makes her debut in the US. Setting aside the topic of the climate crisis for a moment (although I do endorse the book [The Uninhabitable Earth](#) by David Wallace-Wells as a jarring and kaleidoscopic survey on the topic), I want to explore Greta's approach to communicating her message. She speaks with powerfully austere and stripped-down simplicity ([like this](#)). Her messages aren't packaged with prose or stitched together with incendiary poetry. She communicates blunt truths in self-effacing style, [telling congress](#), "I don't want you to listen to me. I want you to listen to science, and then act." She seems less interested in using her platform for advancing her personal brand, and she avoids the tendency to combine her projected image with her proclaimed message. This conflation of identity and truth is easy to do in an age of personal brands, Instagram images, and influencer cause-marketing. Our identities, as humans, are very much compositions of the truths we believe. But I'm reminded of what one of my friends (and master speech coach) [Erin Weed](#) has said for years: "Our own stories sometimes get in the way of the truth we need to speak." To be sure, truth can be spoken through story, but there is something arresting about the unpackaged truth, divorced from story, standing in naked profundity. All of this, of course, makes me think about the stories and truths that Uncharted is speaking, and how we might refine our messages and our methods to be deeply heard.

Monthly Rant

Risk-taking. If you were to grant me one wish to change the philanthropic sector, it would be that we would trade in our habits of self-preservation and exchange them for an approach marked by audacious risk-taking. We've created an entity — a foundation — that is tasked with reconciling a contradiction at the center of its model. On one side, this entity exists to create impact, solve problems, and step in to market failures. On the other side, it's responsible for preserving itself so it can live on forever. Those sides are not in perfect balance: the side that is charged with creating impact gets 5% of the endowment to spend every year while the self-preservation side keeps the remaining 95% to reinvest and grow in traditionally non-impact related investments. What other organization is only using 5% of its available resources to advance towards its mission? This seems like the equivalent of trying to be dexterous to handle a complex task, but then only using 50% of one of your fingers, while the other nine fingers are perpetually resting up to be used later.

I could go on about this, but I'm actually more interested in how the structure (these contradictory sides united in one entity) influences decision-making. The psychology on the self-preservation side of the business can seep into the impact-creating side of the business, and some philanthropists are hesitant to make big bets and pursue upstream, intersectional, systems-level approaches. I've admired the progressive thinking of the foundations that are thinking differently and removing these competing influences by choosing to "sunset" in which they spend down all their money over a period of time (like the [Gates Foundation](#) and others). Others are making big bets (like the [MacArthur Foundation](#)), while others are changing their posture with grantees by [funding general operating budgets](#). Some of these changes are nibbling away at the conservative risk appetite in philanthropy, but I wonder what impact would be possible if we could embrace a mentality of "highest and best use" that is anchored in a

perspective of viewing our time and our dollars as finite. What would be possible today if we didn't hold out hope in an eternal future and a perpetual endowment?

Can you help?

We're expanding our executive team from two to three, and I'm curious to get advice from those who have been through this executive team expansion. What went well? What do you know now that you wish you knew earlier?

What I'm reading (and listening to):

- A person getting paid minimum wage would have to work 127 hours a week to afford rent for the median 2-bedroom rental home in the US. [Housing insecurity and the new homeless.](#)
- The tortuous road to building a business; the story of the dozens of failures in building Stonyfield Farms. This is one of the most incredible "How I Built This" podcasts I have ever heard. [Podcast.](#)
- Why our optimism is naive and counterproductive on the climate crisis. [Here.](#)
- Why we should be more curious than afraid, and how terrified people make terrible decisions. [On Being with Elizabeth Gilbert.](#)

Something personal:

I just spent a week in the Utah backcountry paddling 47 miles down Labyrinth Canyon on stand-up paddleboards with two of my closest friends ([photo](#)). The desert has this unique power to withhold its beauty until you're feeling nearly exasperated by its grit and heat, and then it slowly releases its charms through the receding sun against a looming rock wall, the silence of the river broken by a heron cutting through the stillness, the thickness of the milky way spreading across the sky like a quilt, the lightning storm that pulses far-off clouds. The canyon itself — with its arches, crevices, slopes, and hues — is a masterpiece that has taken millions of years to render. It was humbling to be amidst such history, and it was a reminder in the power of patience. Whether in geology, human relationships, or in organizational culture, masterpieces take time. They unfold slowly, non-linearly, sometimes through erosion. They ask us to be patient and trust that the alchemy will run its course and exert its force.

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Patiently,

Banks

August 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the August edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **We are hiring two (senior) roles to join our team:** [Director of Business Development](#) and [Director of Accelerators](#). Forward this email to spread the word or share [this link](#).
- **We completed a three-month participatory strategic planning process** where we engaged over 100 community members in the creation of the National Western Center future programming strategy.

- **We're busy interviewing and vetting entrepreneurs** for our [Futurebound Acceleration Lab](#), and the Turner Center's [Housing Lab](#).
- **The Uncharted volleyball team is in the playoffs** (after an undefeated season).

Ideas on my mind:

Take your own advice. I serve on the board of a company that had its two-day board retreat in August. I found myself giving out a lot of advice during those two days, and I decided to use my journal to note down the advice that I was dispensing: what I was recommending to do, not to do, the mindset the CEO should be in, etc.. Every piece of advice I gave to this company's leadership was advice I needed to hear myself. I don't think my advice was offbase for the context of this company, but somehow my subconscious mind had chosen to select and then speak the advice that it, itself, was most needing. It was both profoundly eerie and revelatory, and it made me realize that sometimes the only way we can effectively speak to ourselves is to boomerang advice out, and be open to receiving when it comes back. In some ways, giving advice is not an arrogant act that is rooted in believing yourself to be an expert, but rather an act of humble, self-aware selfishness: what I share with you I also might need myself.

Monthly Rant

Non-profits distort markets. Many tech accelerators (think Techstars and Y-combinator) employ the business model where the accelerator invests and takes equity in the startup. Most startups see this as a fair trade. But in the social impact accelerator / social entrepreneur "fellowship" market, there are many free accelerators and fellowships that don't take any equity (while still giving out philanthropic grants), so social impact startups get to compare programs that charge with those that don't. Back in the day, we tried to charge our startups, but as more free programs popped up, we were undercut and struggled to attract the best entrepreneurs because the perceived return on investment for a free accelerator was almost infinitely better than the perceived return on investment for a paid accelerator (simply because the investment was only a founder's time versus their time and their equity). The social impact accelerator / fellowship market has been distorted by awards, prizes, and free programs and fellowships, and that is changing our customer's perception of what ought to be paid for. Consequently, accelerators are abandoning potential revenue streams that should be available to them if they operated in more efficient markets. Now, like any good market-responsive company, accelerators (Uncharted being one of them) are identifying new customers and seeking alternative revenue streams (like corporate-sponsored programs), but the irony is not lost on me that programs that espouse the principles of social enterprise, charging for value, focusing on earned revenue, treating people as customers not beneficiaries, and avoiding the non-profit charity models, are themselves somehow caught in this downward cycle where their weird non-profit behavior is making the market evaporate underneath them.

Can you help?

- See the roles we're hiring above. Research says that often the best hires come from referrals, so if you refer someone for one of these roles, I'll pay special attention (and buy you a drink next time I see you, even if we don't hire them).

What I'm reading:

- A powerful journalistic series on the sweeping societal consequences of racism and our history of slavery. The relationship between our history and the stories we tell about ourselves. [Here](#). You can also listen to the [podcast](#).
- Only 5% of men pursue outpatient mental health services like therapy. The culture of emotionally-suppressed toxic masculinity and how men without male friends are turning to women and burdening them with emotional dependency. [Here](#).

- Should companies have a purpose beyond maximizing value for shareholders? The right-leaning Economist isn't willing to agree. [Here](#) (requires registering for a free account).
- Millennials care about issues, not institutions. The 10-year longitudinal study on how millennials engage with social issues. [Here](#).

Something personal:

Someone gave me the advice recently that I should look for small, daily opportunities to tell myself that I am worth prioritizing. I'm a person more focused on productivity than self-indulgence (and I've also been in a particularly busy season), which is why this advice was extended my direction. "Be a little indulgent with yourself," this person said. So I've been trying it out. I've discovered there are two ways to approach this: First, you can identify an opportunity to do something out of the ordinary as a way to show yourself that you're worth it. For example, doing the unusual act of leaving my house after dinner to go to Dairy Queen for a blizzard, or stopping everything I'm doing to really listen to a song I love. The other opportunity is to dignify the routinized actions that you are already, instinctually doing and ascribe holy intentions and meaning to them. For example, going to the gym and branding it not as just a pre-planned step taken on Tuesdays, but as a 60-minute demonstration of self-love/self-care.

~~

Call your mom*,

Banks

*advice to you (but for myself)!

**p.s. If you are curious about previous editions of the Uncharted Insider, you can find them [here](#). Want to be removed from this list? Or know someone who should be added? Let me know.

July 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the July edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Uncharted had its 2nd birthday!** We turned two years old on July 25th!
- **We received 125 applications for the [Futurebound Acceleration Lab](#)**
- **We completed the [Chipotle Aluminaries Project](#)**, an accelerator for ventures working to build the future of food with integrity
- **We hosted our Summer Team Retreat** ("Camp Uncharted") up in the mountains: cooking competitions, strategic planning, board games, fear-setting (instead of goal setting), paddle-boarding, toastmasters, and collective problem solving on Uncharted's biggest challenges and future opportunities.

Ideas on my mind:

Cultures of Photosynthesis: I am a biomimicry nerd, which means I find myself searching for examples of how human systems can learn from the elegant, self-correcting dynamics of the natural world. There is

biological brilliance in our midst, yet we often don't look to a grove of aspen trees for lessons in sharing resources or to an ant colony for insights into coordination and teamwork. Recently, I've been captivated by the process of photosynthesis, where plants intake carbon dioxide and sunlight and transform them into oxygen and sugar. I'm curious how organizations like Uncharted can build cultures of photosynthesis where we breathe in the "carbon dioxide" of the world (whether that's challenging interpersonal dynamics, disempowering relationships, painful experiences, etc.) and transform that carbon dioxide into the oxygen of greater organizational, interpersonal, and psychological thriving. Over the years, I've observed how our team has inhaled something painful and broken and exhaled something healed and fortified, but I'm curious how to further strengthen our photosynthetic power: collective learning and postmortems, individual reflection, de-stigmatized feedback, practices of gratitude. Would love to learn from you.

Monthly Rant

Self-Preservation. We vastly underestimate the power that motives of self-preservation, safety, and security play in an organization's strategic planning process. Somehow, we've concluded that good strategy stems from the rational integration of data, learning, insight, sense-making, and decisiveness. But is it possible that one of the greatest invisible contributors to a strategy is the tendency towards self-preservation? We first have to dig into our subterranean emotional drivers, examine our own complicity, and regard ourselves with the sober self-awareness necessary to name biases and acknowledge other non-strategic factors. Only then can we get to the data, learning, insight, and sense-making. Before strategic planning is strategic, it is psychological.

Can you help?

- I gave a speech this past month, and it wasn't my best performance. I know I'd benefit from a public speaking coach. Know anyone?
- Our team is seeking an organization here in Denver that we can challenge to trivia nights, kickball games, and other feats of intellectual, physical, and comedic strength. Basically, we're realizing we need a rival organization in our lives. We're looking for a 15-20-person company with a good sense of humor, a penchant for pranks, and the willingness for a fun-spirited rivalry.

What I'm reading:

- Interviewing white men in first class: How one African American woman explored white male privilege with her fellow passengers. [Here](#).
- LeBron James is building a school in Akron, Ohio that is generating such positive results that it could be a model for the country. How moving slowly, integrating trauma-based pedagogical practices, and returning to first principles of love are leading to outcomes. [Here](#).
- Some ideas move only at the speed of human trust and relationships. How some ideas stick and others get lost. [Here](#).
- Darren Walker controls \$13 billion at the Ford Foundation, but is it the philanthropy of human capital, not financial capital, that is more transformative? [Here](#).

Something personal:

I'm part of this extraordinary mastermind group of social impact leaders. There are four of us; three women and me. These women lead some of the most pioneering organizations in their fields/countries (one is based in Germany, one in Australia, and one in DC/Pakistan). We Whatsapp-message every day, host monthly video-calls where we tackle problems we're encountering, and we're gathering next month in Vancouver to apply the collective brain-trust to issues of management and leadership. I've absorbed and applied much of their wisdom into the Uncharted context, and I'm a better leader for it. The whole experience has reminded me of how rare true peership is. Someone told me once, "Humans are good at relating 'up' where we assume the role of student and learn from a teacher, and humans are good at relating 'down' where we are the mentor and we seek out a mentee, but we are inexperienced at relating 'across' as peers." I've found that to be both true

and profound, which makes the discovery of peers -- no matter how many time-zones away they are -- an unusual gift.

~~

Airborne,

Banks

June 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the June edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Launching Futurebound Acceleration Lab:** We launched a new initiative in partnership with Gary Community Investments called [Futurebound](#) that is focused on early childhood ventures looking to land and expand in Colorado. Spread the word!
- **Visible Connect Interviews:** Our team is in the middle of selecting our next cohort of [Visible Connect ventures](#) using mobile tech to create impact in communities across the US. We will be announcing selected ventures later this summer.

Ideas on my mind:

Physical space: We just moved into a new office space, and it's made me consider the impact that physical space has on our human psychology: the physical spaces we occupy shape our sense of self and what we're capable of. They have a bearing on our confidence, creativity, courage, and belonging. I'm learning that if those concepts play centrally into an organization's culture and collective identity, then our physical work spaces are worth serious design and consideration. I know this isn't a new idea, but it's been an exciting intention that we've brought into working with an architect, an interior designer, and our team to explore how our new Uncharted HQ can be a place of creativity, a place of shared belonging, a place with gravitational pull for our network and community. We just moved in three weeks ago, so I'm curious what kinds of stories this space will invite us to tell about our vision, our impact, and ourselves. Come find us at 3532 Franklin St, Denver, CO.

Donor Advised Funds: We've spent considerable time in the last six months researching the Donor Advised Fund (DAF) market and how Uncharted might better partner with DAFs to drive funding to our portfolio of social ventures. It's becoming clear that a DAF renaissance is afoot: the assets in DAFs have more than doubled in the last five years to \$110 billion, the number of DAFs outnumbers foundations 5:1 ([460,000 DAFs in the US](#)), and the largest charity in the United States is not the Red Cross or another household name; it's [Fidelity Charitable](#), the DAF-provider arm of Fidelity. But even with such a meteoric rise, DAFs are still vastly unknown, misunderstood, and underutilized. Money is being aggregated into DAFs at a staggering rate, but once deposited inside, there is little incentive (and some disincentives) for dollars to be put to work creating impact in communities.

Before you can mobilize capital, you need to mobilize humans. Underneath strategies and behind bank accounts, there are humans making decisions. DAFs have the potential to be one of the most powerful financial vehicles available to create impact, but ultimately everything hinges on a fundamental human behavior question: how might we compel people to take full advantage of their DAF and use it more actively?

Can you help?

- We created a case-study about ourselves that we want to share with people who can advise us on designing our growing business development department. Let me know if you (or someone else) can be helpful in exploring the future of Uncharted's business development strategy, and I'll send over the case-study.
- Does anyone have a good contact at the [Heron Foundation](#) who is managing their impact investing strategy?

What I'm reading:

- The end of expertise and the rise of "fluid intelligence." How the Navy is shifting its staffing model and what the future of work looks like in the 21st century. [Here](#).
- The peculiar culture of a company trying to sell culture. The story of WeWork (and its founder). [Here](#).
- By 2030, "care workers" (nannies and health aids) will be the biggest workforce in the US. The rising movement to protect and advocate for the rights of domestic workers. [Here](#).
- The boom of Sikh truck-drivers in the US. Discrimination, faith, Indian food, and the truck-driver shortage along US highways. [Here](#).

Something personal:

I was in the Portland airport this month, which happens to be the place where one of the most extraordinary stories in my life began. Here's what happened:

Seven and a half years ago, I sat in the airport atrium annoyed that I wasn't able to fly standby on an earlier flight back to Denver. I had flown up to Portland for a job interview that hadn't gone well, and I was hoping to get home earlier. The gate agent had acknowledged available seats, but some technicality with my ticket didn't provide the opportunity to get onboard.

Angry at the gate agent and frustrated with my luck, I took a seat on a bench in the airport atrium and defaulted to my phone to entertain me for the six hours until the next flight. I rarely used Twitter back then, but I had a lot of time to kill, so I found myself mindlessly scrolling through Twitter. Somewhere in those six hours, there was a tweet posted from the Unreasonable Institute (what is now Uncharted) seeking a 10-hour per week unpaid intern to lend a hand for five weeks. I was coming off another unsuccessful job interview, and I was feeling insecure; a 10-hour per week unpaid internship for five weeks wasn't my idea of a career opportunity, but I kept getting rejected from every job I applied to, so on the flight home, I updated my resume and drafted a cover letter. One month later I was hired, and seven and half years later I am still here with the privilege of serving as the CEO.

If I had been able to board that earlier flight, I wouldn't have ever come across that tweet looking for an internship. But something kept me off that flight and in the airport. The last 7.5 years have been the greatest adventure of my life and Unreasonable Institute/Uncharted has presented a career opportunity bigger than my wildest dreams. I had no idea when I came across that tweet, in the throes of my frustration and boredom, that it would lead to such a beautiful, unfolding journey ahead.

When I pause to think about it, many of the biggest leaps in my life have happened at unexpected, liminal moments. They have not entered through the front door with great fanfare and expectation, but instead happened when I'm least expecting it, when I'm most resisting it, when the last place to look is the place I'm most trying to escape from. Cheryl Strayed says: "There are some things you can't understand yet. Your life will be a great and continuous unfolding." So here's to more long layovers, more frustration, more boredom. Here's to letting this wondrous life continue to unfold.

~~

High fives,

Banks

May 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the May edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Partnership with Sephora:** We've been working with [Sephora](#) for the last three years to manage a loan fund for the women-led social ventures in their accelerator. This month we participated in the most recent cohort in San Francisco, and I got a free charcoal face mask.
- **Affordable Housing Accelerator:** We have partnered with [The Turner Center for Housing Innovation](#) and the [Chan Zuckerberg Initiative](#) to support an accelerator they are launching that will target ventures reducing the costs of housing. Learn more [here](#).
- **We just hired seven people**, which is giving us the chance to rebuild both our hiring and onboarding processes. Big congratulations to our operations and program teams for leading the charge.

Idea on my mind:

Entry points: We're working on an initiative with the [National Western Center](#) to use agriculture to bridge the rural/urban divide in the US, and it's made me realize that some of the best chances at cultural reconnection happen through economic dependencies. The agriculture and food supply chain (from farm/ranch to table) is a series of relationships and economic transactions that present hundreds of entry points for cultural bridging and human interaction. By going to a farmer's market and engaging in an economic exchange with a farmer, we are participating in the cultural act of bridging the rural/urban divide. It makes me wonder about the entry points hidden within our economic dependencies that create opportunities for cultural cohesion: where are there cultural divides in need of bridging and what economic dependencies make that bridging easier?

Monthly Rant:

Industry Navel-gazing: The non-profit/philanthropy sector is talented at attempting to re-convert those who are already converted. We find ourselves evangelizing to those who are already believers in the perils of climate change, convincing those already erudite in the merits of the social determinants of health, persuading those already conversant in the intersectionality of social issues. We write articles for ourselves, we speak to each other at industry conferences, we show each other TED talks that will only furnish our worldview with more evidence. It's easier to get buy-in from people who are already bought in, but for a sector so committed to concepts like systems change and scale -- concepts that require broad adoption -- we need to push out into unfamiliar territory and work the edges. Why aren't we funding non-traditional but far-reaching approaches like search engine optimization around key topics, or spending more time at other-industry conferences planting seeds, or pursuing a climate advocacy strategy that is indirect and non-politicized so that it lands with people who aren't believers yet? Why isn't advertising a key pillar of our theories of change? We need to replace our echo chambers with olive branches, we need to replace our "about us" webpages with "about you" approaches.

Can you help?

- We're looking for an introduction to a person at Omidyar Network who has expertise in impact investing intermediaries and field building.
- We're looking to receive some mentorship from financial advisors of high net-worth individuals about trends in philanthropic giving amongst their clients.

What I'm reading:

- With the spotlight on Alabama's abortion laws, there is less focus on the state's restrictions on childbirth. The undercover movement on Alabama's borders for women to give birth in campsites, Airbnbs, and RVs. [Here](#).
- The \$100 billion fund by SoftBank with the investment thesis that computers will run the world more intelligently than humans. How Softbank is taking over Silicon Valley. [Here](#).
- How the study of primates on an island off the coast of Puerto Rico is leading to breakthrough insights in how primates (and humans) deal with trauma in the wake of Hurricane Maria. [Here](#).
- 60% of male managers say they are uncomfortable engaging in common workplace interactions with women. How #MeToo has impacted mentorship for women in the workplace. [Here](#).
- *Shameless plug*: Uncharted got published in Quartz last week, featuring the concept of the User Guide as a tool to manage up. [Here](#).

Something personal:

I am an Airbnb host, and this French couple booked a room in my house in January for two nights. Within hours, I formed a friendship with Aude and Nico, and they extended their stay and have been living with me until just last week. In addition to their perfect hospitality, they brought all the charms of French cooking into my (mostly barren) kitchen. I would return from work and the enchanting aromas of the French cuisine would confront me with such delightful regularity that I sometimes wondered if I was entering the wrong house: pastries, roasted vegetables, souffles, quiches, homemade bread, crepes, etc. We celebrated birthdays, weathered snow storms, and discussed the flavor notes in a bottle of champagne. I introduced them to my parents and they borrowed my camping gear. Mostly, the whole experience was a daily reminder of the beauty of unexpected collisions and new friends.

~~

With a deep breath,

Banks

April 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the April edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Sara's Baby**: Sara Rodriguez, our COO, had a healthy baby girl, Alba, on April 13th (see photo attached). It's just the best news.
- **Funders + Mobile Tech Ventures**: We hosted a funder convening in Denver for entrepreneurs in our [Visible Connect](#) cohort, a portfolio of ventures using mobile technology to create impact. We're launching the next year of this accelerator with our partner [Visible](#) today. [Spread the word!](#)

- **April Fools:** We launched an [April Fool's Day prank](#) that too many people took seriously.

Idea on my mind:

User Experience and Human Engagement: Recently we were co-hosting a gathering with [Gary Community Investments](#) and other experts in the early/young childhood space on the drivers of impact and opportunities for innovation, and someone made an off-handed comment that stuck with me: "We can attribute the majority of positive outcomes in healthcare and education to successfully engaging the humans involved." That might seem obvious, but it's a good reminder that the right solution with the wrong user experience is no solution at all. The best intervention without sensitivity to the human interaction will fail. Have we over-engineered solutions while under-designing their relationship to humans? [IDEO](#) and [Ford](#) think so, and we do, too. We're re-examining our initiatives to explore how we can better design for breakthroughs, long-lasting connection, and profound insight for the humans involved.

Monthly Rant:

Therapy not strategy. Most books on leadership and business strategy don't go deep enough. They stay in the shallow waters of strategic frameworks, decision-making matrices, and hackneyed anecdotes. Rarely do they plumb the depths of our underlying psychology. Perhaps the best strategic investment we can make is not reading the latest edition of *Harvard Business Review*, but instead more time with a counselor exploring our own interior landscape. I say this as someone who reads many of the latest business books AND who finds himself on the plush couch in my therapist's office, so consider me hypocritical or just hedging my bets, but my point is beneath every strategic question is a set of other questions: what is your relationship to risk? Are you actually - *actually* - willing to suffer that blow to ego that accompanies failure? How has your past led to a mindset of scarcity or abundance? Courageous strategy comes from courageous humans, and often that strategy sits on the other side of doing this deep, messy, psychological work. The most important relationship a leader has is not with their team or their board or their partners. It is the relationship with themselves.

Can you help?

- Have you come across advisory boards that are *actually* awesome? Where people don't feel under-utilized or over-utilized. What makes them great?
- I'm looking for advice from people who have successfully taken their business development/sales team from one person to two people. How did you scope roles and divide responsibilities?

What I'm reading:

- The controversial charity that is paying out bonuses to its employees by accepting donations generated from stock options derived from tech-startup acquisitions and IPOs. [Here](#).
- Canada has reduced its poverty rate by 20% from 2015 to 2017. How the [neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach](#) has changed the complexion of poverty.
- The growing body of evidence of how trees might reduce crime. [Here](#).
- The conservative argument against gun control that has nothing to do with guns: the debate raging in Parkland, Florida that is splitting the community in the wake of the 2018 shooting. [Here](#).

Something personal:

I go about my days mostly ignoring the reality of outer space. But then something will happen that will create a little [Copernican Revolution](#) in my worldview, and I'll spend 15 minutes losing my mind contemplating the expansiveness of outer space, the insignificance of our earthly existence, and if humans are mistakenly placing *truth* and *mystery* as opposites on a spectrum of epistemology. Usually these metaphysical moments will be interrupted by unhelpfully pedestrian epiphanies about remembering to schedule a dentist appointment or the need to feed my parking meter, but fortunately I had three such moments in April as 1) [scientists revealed the](#)

[first picture of a black hole](#), 2) the Hubble Telescope turned 29 years old, which was an excuse to release some of [the best Hubble images](#) over the years, and 3) today is [Day 2 of an asteroid drill](#).

~~

Call your mom to say hi*,

Banks

*My mom gets this letter and suggested this month that my usual sign off of “united in the common work” was confusing because the work Uncharted does is so *un*common. We debated this for a while, without much success. Anyway, in honor of Alice Benitez, I’m changing it up this month with a reminder to call your mom to say hi (and maybe discuss outer space).

March 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the March edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Chipotle Aluminaries Project:** Uncharted is partnering with [Chipotle](#) and their Cultivate Foundation to run an accelerator for ventures working on the future of food with integrity. Our team spent last week with the [eight selected ventures](#) at Chipotle Headquarters in Newport Beach, California, meeting with Chipotle executives, facilitating one-on-ones with Uncharted mentors, and leading workshops to help the ventures scale. Photos [here](#).
- **New partnership on regenerative Ag and global food solutions:** Uncharted has partnered with the [National Western Center](#) to launch an open call for ideas related to the future of regenerative agriculture and global food solutions. The National Western Center is a Denver-based global destination for agricultural heritage and innovation, and it’s looking for ideas from farmers, chefs, non-profits, prospective partners, startups, and investors who are seeking to scale global food and agricultural solutions. Submit an idea [here](#).

Idea on my mind:

In grad school, I studied the anthropological and linguistic complexion of poverty, and I had this one anthropology professor who consistently argued that as economies “developed,” culture was inevitably lost. The price of economic progress, he said, was the loss of culture. Since then I’ve noticed this phenomenon manifest itself in the communities in which Uncharted works, through the stories our entrepreneurs tell, in the contemporary sociologies of our neighborhoods and our nation. But I’ve always wondered if such an inverse relationship is destined. Is it an immutable law of progress that growth invariably hollows out culture?

I’m curious how Uncharted, an organization that is growing, can fight these physics to preserve its heartbeat. I want Uncharted’s humanity—its cultural vitality, its personal cohesion, its principled values—only to be amplified with any top-line growth we experience.

It’s almost easier to grow the top-line than it is to plant these cultural seeds and be committed to cultivating them with intention and patience. It takes saying no sometimes to the exciting thing outside and prioritizing the important thing inside. It takes slowly chronicling a collective mythology. It takes stitching together cultural practices into a lived team experience that invites flourishing. It takes surrendering the productive for the

frivolous once in a while. I'm curious if you have any practical advice or tips on growing an organization with cultural integrity?

Monthly Rant:

Personality Tests vs. User guides: Is it just me, or are personality tests more interesting than useful? I take all these tests and invariably conclude: "Yup, that's me. They nailed it." But then I struggle to convert all the bar graphs, concentric circles, and presumptive paragraphs into usable next steps. People on the team might know I am an INFJ, Enneagram 6, and C on the DISC, but do they know how to earn my trust, what I'm *not* good at, and those weird off-putting quirks of mine? In an attempt to accelerate the time it takes to build a healthy working relationship, I have created "[The User Guide to Working with Banks](#)." It's targeted at direct reports and new hires, but it's also a template others can use to create their own user guides. My hope is user guides like this can be human roadmaps we give to each other to decrease misunderstandings and increase the mutual permission to be our full selves around each other.

Can you help?

Who do you know who has expertise in or strong opinions about Donor Advised Funds (DAFs)? We're looking to learn from people who know this space and where it's going...

What I'm reading:

- Louisiana loses a football field of land every 90 minutes. Why and how humans are making it worse. [Here](#).
- People who experience discrimination are almost twice as likely to experience hunger. How structural racism affects the social determinants of health. [Here](#).
- Why Ford Motor Company hired a furniture maker as CEO. [We live in the age of user experience](#).
- Only 10% of NYC inmates are able to make bail, and 90% end up pleading guilty, even if they are innocent. The nationwide (inspiring) fight to end cash bail. [Here](#).

Something personal:

I got an email this month from someone I haven't spoken to in over a decade. This person apologized for the way they showed up in a conversation we had over 12 years ago. I had only vague memory of the conversation, but this person felt compelled to track me down and apologize. I found myself in a similar situation a few years ago: reaching out to someone to offer a long-overdue apology, so I knew first-hand how important it was to do my small part to release them from the burden of guilt they had carried for so many years. It's just never too late for a shot at reconciliation.

February 2019

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the February edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Affordable Housing Accelerator:** In February Uncharted launched an affordable housing accelerator (in partnership with the [Affordable Housing Institute](#), [Gary Community Investments](#), and [Boulder Housing Partners](#)). The accelerator isn't oriented around entrepreneurs (like most accelerators), but is targeted at affordable housing practitioners, investors/foundations, and businesses to identify new models of financing affordable housing initiatives.

- **Impact Measurement:** Every year at this time, we collect impact data to evaluate the efficacy of our work. Our impact team is chasing entrepreneurs to submit data and crunching numbers in our CRM.

Idea on my mind:

Getting out of the way: We are doing more community mobilizing work as we connect organizations and people in one place to collectively create impact (see Hypothesis #2 [here](#)). I was in a meeting recently with a resident of one of these neighborhoods, and the language I was using and the way I was showing up were met with resistance. This person's lived experience had justifiably made them suspicious of anyone who was trying to come in and "fix" their neighborhood (particularly when that person might be a white, male CEO of a non-profit). Fortunately, we have people on our team who are far more skilled in community relationship-building than I am. One of those people had joined me and her connection with this person was far better. She used different language, expressed herself differently, and altogether built a stronger relationship.

Later that same day, our COO gave me the permission to step back from leadership responsibilities that I wasn't particularly good at. She is far better at these responsibilities than I am, so I gladly accepted. As Uncharted grows, my role is becoming more narrow. I've always seen myself as a generalist, and the generalist skill-set has been valuable for me since I joined Uncharted in 2012. But I'm brushing up against instances where my attempts at generalist-leadership are sub-optimal. I am realizing the path forward is one where I surrender areas of work I once owned and hand more leadership to the people I stand beside (it's not hard to do with our badass team).

Monthly Rant

Redefining Innovation: For a word as ubiquitous as innovation, it is poorly defined. I attended an "Innovation conference" this month and people were slinging the word around with such impressive velocity that either I was on the outside of a secret innovation club, or it's our sector's equivalent to saying "um" or "like." When you don't know what else to say, sprinkle the word "innovation" and "innovative" throughout your vocabulary and you'll quickly establish yourself as a club member. But instead of writing off innovation as another hackneyed concept in the impact zeitgeist, we need to press in. Keeping it in the realm of ambiguity only makes it more inaccessible. What is innovative is often less of a leap from the status quo than we think. The word conjures vague notions of new ideas, 3D-printed products, and futuristic business models. But some of the best innovations are often just slight tweaks on existing models. Innovation is more about borrowing than it is about inventing, more about adapting existing approaches to new markets and customers. Fast Company just came out with its [list of the 50 most innovative companies](#) for 2018, and a striking number of them are "innovative" through adaptation, evolution, and tweaking versus through novelty, invention, and lab-based R&D.

Can you help?

What are the best ways to speed up a hiring process while not sacrificing quality?

What I'm reading:

- A \$1 increase in the minimum wage reduces child neglect reports by 10%. How increases in the minimum wage have positive implications on the social determinants of health. [Here](#).
- Philanthropists like Lisa Chan and Mark Zuckerberg, Pierre Omidyar, and Laurene Powell Jobs are converting their foundations to LLCs. Why? [Here](#).
- Estonia has built the world's first "data embassy" and is running its government like a tech company. [Here](#).
- [The LGBT renaissance in the trucking community](#). How two stats are connected: 70% of all goods shipped in the US are driven by truckers, and in 31 states, you can still be fired for being LGBTQ.

Something personal:

There's this [coffee shop](#) one block from my house that's owned by this couple, Desiree and Mike. They pull one of the best espresso shots outside of Australia, where my love of coffee bloomed into existence when I lived there in 2011. Anyway, as you can tell, Desiree, Mike, and I are on a first-name basis, and despite me being just one of their many patrons, they remember specifics about my life. I wouldn't consider them *friends*, but we've transcended the chasm of transactional strangerhood and entered this rare and comforting solidarity of people who are loosely known to one another and whose lives afford opportunities to regularly, but not deeply, intersect. There is a satisfaction often under-appreciated in the low-touch relationships in our lives that sustain themselves without any pressure for them to be anything more or less than they are.

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United in the common work,

Banks

January 2019

Happy new year! Welcome to the January edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **New partnership on regenerative agriculture:** We're launching an initiative focused on regenerative agriculture that leverages our skill sets in collective impact and entrepreneurial acceleration.
- **We selected eight ventures for our Chipotle Accelerator:** We selected and announced the eight ventures participating in the Chipotle Aluminaries Project. Check them out [here](#).
- **Team Uncharted is growing:** One year ago there were five us. Today there are 15—and we just opened up three new roles. Check them out [here](#).

Two (related) ideas on my mind:

A mindset shift: It's been a season of transition as we triple our team and nearly double our budget this year. What's taken us here won't get us to the next level, so we're making some changes to our team structure. But perhaps the bigger leap we need to make is a psychological one: shifting from the mindset of "I need to brute-force hustle to make this happen..." to the mindset of "I have limited time, so I need to spend it at the leverage point that delivers the most value." This is a shift from reactive to proactive, from working hard to working intentionally. It's easier to make a structural shift to our org chart than it is to make a psychological shift in how I approach my work.

Culture in time of transition: I had a linguistic anthropologist professor in grad school who said: "There is no such thing as culture; just cultural practices." Whether those practices are scripted or subconscious, it doesn't matter. Culture manifests through practices. With a growing team, I'm curious to see how our culture is continuously expressed and recombined. But I'm also feeling a tension. On one hand, I've seen how familiar cultural practices provide a ballast to the team in times of transition; they anchor us amidst growth and change. On the other, ossifying old cultural practices makes them static and brittle. As new people join, the cultural practices of old might impede the formation of new practices that are championed by the current team. So how are we (not just the leadership but the whole organization) to think about shepherding culture in a time of transition? How do we hold tightly and hold loosely?

Monthly Rant

What is the point? Uncharted has an extraordinary human leading up our marketing ([Ash Dumford](#)). She's brilliant and creative and skeptical and strong and a speaker of truth. Ash doesn't let you get away with easy answers, so we've been exploring some big questions about the purpose of marketing. We're asking how Uncharted can avoid following the non-profit/social-enterprise/foundation marketing playbook, but instead tell stories that grip people and mobilize armies to march in the same direction. I don't have good answers to these questions yet, but the playbook for marketing in our space is well-worn. It goes something like this:

- Share organizational highlights and updates
- Ask for money
- Share a network opportunity
- Ask for help
- Invite you to an upcoming event
- Remind you of some highlights
- Tell a story of impact with a photo
- Ask for money while thanking you proactively for giving money
- Share an article the organization is mentioned in
- Send out an exhausting long annual report that no one reads

First of all, this is boring. Is this the best we can come up with? Second, Uncharted has followed this playbook, so we aren't above any of this. Guilty. But we're looking to transcend what's pedestrian. We—as a space—can do better at identifying a specific target audience and then making *them* the hero of *our* work. Who is doing this well? It doesn't have to be in the non-profit / foundation space; we're simply looking for anyone doing a masterful job at their marketing / storytelling.

Can you help?

Uncharted is built on a network of mentors, investors, entrepreneurs, corporations, foundations, and more. We're currently re-examining our network strategy and curious to learn from other models that are brilliant at activating many different stakeholders towards a common goal. Are there any movement builders, activists, and decentralized networks that have been successfully mobilized?

What I'm reading:

- The story of how two Google programmers code together from the same computer. The creative power of friendships (from Google to Monet and Renoir to the Beatles) [here](#).
- Patagonia is shifting its mission-statement to "save our home planet." How businesses are taking a public stand (but not shifting their business model). [Here](#).
- The rise of superstar cities and how it is shifting how we work. The future of cities and inequality. [Here](#).
- When a black or Hispanic person is fatally shot, the likelihood that local detectives will catch the culprit is 35% — 18 percentage points fewer than when the victim is white. [How shootings go unsolved in America](#).

Something personal:

We were a hockey family growing up, so I never learned to ski—until this year. I started with a beginner lesson in December (where I—along with five mothers from the Midwest—pretended to downhill ski on completely flat ground), and I've been skiing nearly every weekend since on slopes of increasing slope. And here's the thing: I've made so much progress! Learning to ski has reminded me how much I love being a beginner at something. When you start from zero, the ego is detached from the outcome, and the rate of progress is often exponential. Somehow the physics of learning were designed so that the pace of learning slows over time while the ego's attachment to outcome increases over time: beginners are explorers of new, unclaimed terrain; experts are protectors of existing, claimed terrain.

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United in the common work,

Banks

2018 Uncharted Insiders

December 2018

Hi everyone,

Thanks for following along this year! I've been so humbled by your response and engagement to this monthly letter. Your questions, challenges, and offers to help all contributed to a breakout year for us. But it was your validations and encouragement that will stick with me; those words gave me the permission to share so honestly. My voice and style of leadership are still works in progress, so I'm grateful that you'd let me explore that tender and fierce terrain with you. For this year's last Uncharted Insider, I'm taking a different approach by sharing a few reflections and predictions.

Proudest Moment of 2018

When we run our in-person bootcamps for entrepreneurs (like we did in February and August), I often have nothing to do but watch our team lead the whole thing. The joke is I'm "dead-weight." People have wondered: "What does Banks actually do for Uncharted... because right now he's mingling with people at the snack table... and he's been doing that all week." This is what I am most proud of: that our team is made up of exceptional leaders who take ownership over our mission, our impact, our work, our relationships. I make less than 10% of the decisions at Uncharted, and we're working towards a place where every person sees themselves and operates as the CEO of their role. I am honored to be a part of an organization where leadership and ownership are decentralized, and it's not immediately clear to an outsider who the CEO is.

Biggest Mistake of 2018

Saying yes when I should have said no. I said yes to short timelines that put stress on the team because I was afraid saying no would jeopardize a partnership. I said yes to short-term projects that distracted our team from more strategic work. I said yes to meetings that weren't important because I was afraid to disappoint people. And there were real consequences for the team and for me: feeling worn down, feeling distracted, and being pulled in too many directions. Next year, I'm challenging myself and the team to focus on the 20% of the work that is 80% most valuable for the long-term future of Uncharted. As Warren Buffett said: "The difference between successful people and really successful people is that really successful people say no to almost everything."

Two Predictions for 2019

- **We will see a tidal wave of entrepreneurs and activists working to spur civic engagement.** For a long time, social entrepreneurship and social justice activists have occupied different worlds, but I predict a convergence around civic engagement. The 2018 midterm elections had [the highest voter turnout in a midterm since 1966](#). Building on this momentum, between now and the general election in November 2020, expect a wave of new social entrepreneurs, existing organizations, and activists who take on civic engagement as the upstream, systems-changing approach to addressing hundreds of downstream problems.

- **We're at the beginning of a corporate citizenship renaissance.** There are three big trends that are going to reinvent the ways that corporations commit to social impact:
 1. [The days of corporate neutrality are over](#). Corporations are becoming activists and are taking a stand on issues like [police brutality](#), [gun control](#), and [the environmental crisis](#).
 2. As corporations become more activist, there will be [greater scrutiny](#) on the integrity and social impact of their core business operation.
 3. Millennials 1) [care about social impact](#) and 2) are [the least entrepreneurial generation in recent history](#). The convergence of these two factors will mean impact-driven millennials will fill the ranks of corporations and create internal pressure for corporations to walk the talk.

Partner with Us

In November's Insider, I ranted about my dislike of the "donation dynamic" pervasive in the non-profit space where non-profits undervalue their *impressive* ability to transform dollars into impact outcomes. I prefer a dynamic of partnership where funders and non-profits see themselves as peers joining forces to create impact—i.e. non-profits convert dollars into impact outcomes and then deliver to the funder a return of social impact. Uncharted is in this business of transforming dollars into impact, and we have a big 2019 planned, so if you're interested in partnering with us financially, click [here](#) or reach out to me.

Final Reflection

From time to time I ask myself this question: what meta-story is my life telling? And is that the story I want my life to tell? I like these questions because they challenge me to take leadership in living a life I'm proud of. But earlier this year someone offered this: perhaps some of the best stories are ones we can't take full leadership in manifesting. Perhaps they happen *to* us and we simply need to *let* a story be told through our lives. Maybe living a good story is as much an act of surrender as it is an act of agency. Here's to another year of beautiful, courageous, and unexpected stories.

With a big hope for the adventure ahead,

Banks

November 2018

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the November edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Selecting Food Entrepreneurs:** We've partnered with Chipotle's Cultivate Foundation on [a major initiative](#) to find and accelerate ventures working on the "future of food with integrity." Our team has spent the past month in final due diligence and interviews with 30 finalists. We will select eight ventures in the coming weeks
- **Marie Hathaway, for the win:** I want to take a moment to recognize [Marie Hathaway](#), our Operations and HR Manager. 2018 has been a year of nonstop hiring, and Marie has led every hiring process for every role. From reviewing thousands of applications to leading hundreds of interviews, Marie has done extraordinary work managing the hiring process to double our team. We've been deep in interviews this month, and we'll start the process all over again next month when we announce new roles.

Ideas on my mind:

The futility of social entrepreneurship and impact investing. Sometimes Uncharted encounters entrepreneurs who say some version of the following: “I was outraged by our society’s lack of commitment to fighting climate change, so I started an environmentally-friendly coffee company.” Our industry often acknowledges how these entrepreneurs are doing “inspiring work to change the world.” But there seems to be a disproportionality between problem and solution: your solution to society’s apathy towards climate change is an environmentally friendly coffee company? Really?

In Anand Giridharadas’s new book [Winners Take All](#), he contends that the tools—like social entrepreneurship and impact investing—to change the world are not only ineffective at achieving major change, but that by directing time and resources towards private business and capital, aspiring changemakers are neglecting more effective, structural approaches through public policy and political arenas. Giridharadas suggests that so much focus on the conspicuous and sexy might be a way to avoid making sacrifices to do the slow, nonlinear work of changing systems and structures. I agreed with some of his conclusions and disagreed with others, but I found it overall to be a provocative read that both challenged and validated Uncharted’s approach to working at the intersection of structural change and entrepreneurship. Would love to discuss with anyone!

Monthly Rant

Stop taking, start giving. There is often a difference in the mentality of for-profit and non-profit social enterprises when it comes to fundraising. For many non-profits that rely heavily on philanthropic funding, the mentality is often dominated by being a *taker* of money, not a *giver* of value. The standard language is “asking for money” and “chasing” people named “donors” who “give.” The whole dynamic is structured around the non-profit being this passive recipient of someone’s generosity. This is dumb. Not only does it perpetuate an unhelpful power-imbalance, but more importantly, it reinforces a warped view of how non-profits see themselves: as a fortunate beneficiary. Regardless of legal status, social ventures are creating tremendous value measured in social impact. There is an impact return on investment. The conversation and dynamic change when a non-profit *partners* with a philanthropic donor to *activate* their intention for impact by *generating a social return* for their capital: “With a \$100,000 investment (not donation), you will be partnering (not giving) to X non-profit to create 2,000 jobs. From a ‘unit economics of impact’ perspective, you’re able to create one job for every \$50 you invest in our organization.”

Can you help?

I am able to identify organizational needs and opportunities, but I am bad at figuring out how those needs and opportunities coalesce into specific roles to hire for. Should x,y,z responsibilities go together, or should they be split up into two roles? We wrestle with those questions all the time. Are you someone (or do you know someone) who has experience in scoping roles for a growing business?

What I’m reading:

- In the last 20 years, the population of monarch butterflies in the United States has fallen by 90% and the population of bumblebees has fallen by 87%. In China, human workers are replacing bees to pollinate flowers. [The insect apocalypse](#).
- Children with incarcerated mothers are five times more likely to end up in foster care than those with incarcerated fathers. [America’s family separation crisis](#).
- In the US, there are twice as many suicides as homicides. [The best way to save people from suicide](#).
- Should you march? How street protests are surprisingly effective at getting people to vote. [Here](#).

Something personal:

I spent a few days in Vietnam this month and went to the War Remnant Museum in Ho Chi Minh City. The museum chronicles the “American War,” as it’s known there, through an unvarnished and gruesome

photographic exhibit. Catching a glimpse into the Vietnamese interpretation of the war was both heartbreaking and startling for someone like me, whose understanding of the war was constructed through American-centric high-school textbooks. Visiting the museum made me reflect on the narratives I allow to shape my view of the world and how incomplete they might be. Do I have the courage to unfurl the convenient narratives I clutch so tightly and surrender them to the disorienting light?

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United in the common work,

Banks

October 2018

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the October edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Raised level-up investment:** We closed a major investment this month to help us further build out our business development function, invest in key systems, and create further capacity in our venture funding department. This funding will help us level-up as a social enterprise, and prepare for an ambitious 2019.
- **Revamping Impact Strategy + Measurement:** We are working with a truly [extraordinary consultant](#) to revamp our impact strategy, measurement, and systems. We're refining our theory of change, updating our key organizational metrics, stress-testing our impact data collection systems, and aligning the team around our overall impact strategy.

Ideas on my mind:

Sector Plumbing: As I fundraise and build partnerships for Uncharted, I'm realizing how much capital there is that wants to be mobilized for impact. The problem is the pipes that connect that capital to real impact outcomes 1) don't exist, 2) are clogged, or 3) are directed towards band-aid solutions. We have less of a capital problem and more of a plumbing problem. Organizations that are "impact plumbers" (intermediaries like Kickstarter, and, I believe, Uncharted), who are fixing and expanding the pipes between financial capital and impact outcomes, are going to play a bigger role in the future than organizations that only have capital (like traditional investors/foundations). The nature of power is shifting: power used to move vertically along ladders of hierarchy. Increasingly, power will move horizontally in pipes like Kickstarter and through movements like #metoo and #blacklivesmatter. I'm exploring how Uncharted positions itself along these new axes of power.

How do you create ownership? In my experience, the ability of an employee to take ownership is the characteristic/quality that has the highest correlation to excellent performance. Ownership is the upstream source of so many downstream qualities we seek when hiring. If someone feels a deep sense of ownership, chances are they employ a far more resilient approach to problem-solving. And nothing plants the seeds of curiosity and persistent learning like the responsibility of ownership. I've seen members of our team take on extraordinary levels of ownership in their roles, effectively becoming the CEO of their domain. Once they hit this ownership tipping point, not only does performance shift into a higher gear, but the person becomes a more full and empowered version of themselves. But how do we get to this "ownership tipping point?" I've been reflecting on our processes—starting at hiring and continuing through the conditions we create daily for our team—and

I'm exploring the steps that led to reaching this ownership tipping point. I'm curious about how others facilitate and enable ownership.

Can you help?

I am looking to add two new Uncharted board members in 2019. We are seeking people with leadership experience in (at least) one of the following realms:

- Forward-thinking Foundations/Philanthropy—i.e. someone who has experimented with new approaches to philanthropy
- Impact Investing + Social Entrepreneurship
- Corporate Social Responsibility—i.e. someone who is pioneering new approaches to leveraging the power in corporations to create impact

Do you know anyone who fits this profile?

What I'm reading:

- How to turn a person into a voter: the playbook for mobilizing African Americans to vote (a playbook that applies to all people). How the low-tech, face-to-face, empathetic approach prevails. [Here](#).
- By 2100 the global GDP is projected to fall by 8% due to a 1.5°C increase in global temperature. A snazzy [interactive graphic](#) on the implications of climate change (based on the United Nation's recent groundbreaking [report](#)).
- In the past two years, there has been a 75% increase in the number of people living in urban areas who say they feel more at home in places other than the space they live in. [IKEA's global study](#) on the sense of home, belonging, and private space.
- There is a 7x difference in the incarceration rate between two neighborhoods in LA only two miles apart. [How neighborhoods are the new unit of social change](#).
- **Shameless plug:** I wrote [this article](#) for Quartz on the introvert's playbook for sales and fundraising. Conventional wisdom says extroverts are better at sales, but I've found introverts have a competitive advantage.

Something personal:

I turned 31 yesterday, and I'm taking some time away from work and the regular rhythms of my life to inhale the fullness of this past year and hold it close in reflection. This past year has been a dense one for me personally: it's been a year of exploring some deep-set fears, discovering courage I didn't know I had, putting everything on the line for Uncharted and coming up short in moments and surpassing my ambitions in others. It's been a year of surrendering long-held beliefs and narratives, giving my heart the permission to open as it never has before, and ultimately standing in awe of this world and its mysterious, conspiring unfolding. I've never felt more empowered and more humbled than I do today, and I suppose there's something about that unusual paradox that pulls me out of bed each morning with the firm hope that if we let ourselves live an adventure, there is an adventure to be lived.

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United in the common work,

Banks

September 2018

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the September edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **We are hiring (again)** a [Program Director](#) and a [Program Manager](#). Spread the word! If you recommend someone we ultimately hire, coffee/beer/trendy brussels sprouts on me.
- **We're moving offices.** We outgrew our office, so we're doubling our space. We've been working with an architect to design the new space, and we're moving in two weeks. Come visit! 2330 Broadway #105, Denver, Colorado

Ideas on my mind:

How do you become a true learning organization? I've pondered this recently and have been inspired by the way Ray Dalio, from Bridgewater, applies the scientific method to his work (see his book, [Principles](#)). Whether it's for marketing, management, business development, or any work process, the approach looks something like this:

Step 1: Objectively take note of the phenomena ("Our team reported a greater sense of strategic clarity in the last team meeting.")

Step 2: Seek out the underlying cause-and-effect relationships/patterns that drive the phenomena ("Surveying the last 10 team meetings we've had, meetings that followed the x,y,z structure were more strategically clarifying for the team than meetings that followed the a,b,c structure.")

Step 3: Create a playbook of actions rooted in those cause-and-effect relationships ("For team meetings where the desired outcome is strategic clarity, follow the x,y,z structure.")

Step 4: Apply the playbook to future scenarios, and repeat steps 1-3 ("After applying the x,y,z structure to team meetings, the most critical elements are x and y, but not z.")

I'm starting to apply this approach to a few parts of my work. I'm curious if I can accelerate my rate of learning and produce successful outcomes more often and in a more repeatable way. Being able to understand and then influence the underlying "machinery" that drives outcomes isn't rocket science. It's simpler: pay attention and consider everything as part of a larger case-study. I'm curious how others build learning loops into their work.

Monthly Rant:

Note: this was written before Musk's [settlement with the SEC](#).

Hero complex. I've been tracking Elon Musk's journey, and like many, I'm impressed by the audacity of his vision, but I'm concerned by what appears to be an unsustainable approach to leadership. As [this article](#) suggests, his actions are more a study in willpower than in leadership. He seems too far out in front of his companies, and their success too dependent on him. He may be a rare breed when it comes to an audacious vision, but he is among a sea of entrepreneurs seemingly afflicted with the hero complex, trying to be *the everything* for his company. I've found myself trying to play hero before, but I am striving to be conscious in how we're building an organization that is resilient beyond the strengths and weaknesses of its leadership. How do we build an organization that has many faces (instead of just one)? How do we empower people to be the CEO of their role? How do we build playbooks that codify the brilliance of each team member? How do we ask for help? Bottomline: An organization is truly exceptional when it doesn't need heroes.

What I'm reading:

- 89% of obese adults are verbally abused by their romantic partners. The pervasiveness of fat shaming in our culture and the new ways to address (and celebrate) obesity. [Here](#).

- One third of the American workforce earns less than \$12 / hour. How jobs aren't poverty panaceas, the working homeless, and our un-nuanced cultural understanding of the poor. [Here](#).
- Elder care duties cost the average American woman about \$324,000 in forgone lifetime earnings. How women disproportionately are responsible for caring for elderly parents, and Maine's ambitious plan to do something about it. [This story](#) hits close to home for my family.
- **Memoir Pick:** [Educated](#) is a masterpiece. A devastating, poignant memoir that weaves together the wounds of family, the complexities of culture, the dynamics of gender, the paradoxes of epistemology, and a redefining of the concept of education, this is one of the best books I've read this year.

Something personal:

A few weekends ago, I visited my friend Ryan in Michigan. On Sunday, we ventured 45 minutes into rural Michigan to participate in a county fair. I was munching on an apple I'd picked from an adjacent orchard when a wave of culture shock hit me. I was surrounded by people who looked just like me, who drove a similar car to the one I drive, and who were from the same country, but who were living drastically different lives. Driving home, I lamented how rarely I insert myself in an environment outside my cultural bubble—even when it's only 45 minutes down the road. The grooves of my life are well-worn and familiar, but it's tempting to stay in those grooves and conclude how important I am and how important Uncharted's work is and how the universe orbits around my little Banks-centric universe. But my life needs regular [Copernican revolutions](#) to grasp just how big and varied this human experience is.

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Standing with and believing survivors (this week especially, and every day),

Banks

*p.s. If you are curious about previous editions of the Uncharted Insider, you can find them [here](#). Want to be removed from this list? Or know someone who should be added? Let me know.

August 2018

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the August edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **We kicked off our 9-month mobile tech accelerator**, called [Visible Connect](#), with our partner [Visible](#). Nine entrepreneurs joined us in Denver for a 5-day bootcamp. One entrepreneur said: "I have been through a handful of accelerator programs like this, but this program sets itself apart and differentiates itself from the rest by how authentic and honest and vulnerable it is. No other program does this."
- **We announced a new partnership with [Chipotle](#)** on the future of food with integrity. We will be selecting ventures working in Farming & Agriculture Technology, Alternative Farming & Growing Systems, Food Waste & Recovery, and Plant & Alternative Products. It's called the [Alluminaries Project](#)...get it?
- **We released our [Annual Report](#)**. We tried something different this year by launching a series of resources chronicling our last year: from failures to quantitative impact data to a practical guide for organizations going through transition.

- **New Hire:** We are delighted to welcome Adrienne Russman to our team, as our new Director of Collective Impact. [Adrienne](#) will lead up programs that combine collective impact (bringing organizations together to tackle an issue) with acceleration (helping organizations scale). We're coining it "collective acceleration."

Ideas on my mind:

The loneliness of leadership. I often feel lonely as the CEO of Uncharted, and I don't talk about that loneliness enough. It shouldn't be a surprise, but it's always comforting to meet other folks who say "me too" when it comes to the psychological rollercoaster of leading a growing organization. In one day (and sometimes in one hour) I can feel both confident and validated in my work, and then, in the next moment, feel like an imposter. So much conversation is around the technical dimensions of growing impact-driven organizations and what it takes to scale (things like marketing, operations, impact measurement, hiring, systems, etc.), but the interior psychological landscape of leadership is often neither explored nor mapped. Before a leader can do any leading externally, they need to be a leader to themselves. Sometimes this means whispering: "I forgive you... and keep going" in those moments after a big mistake, and sometimes it means "I'm proud of you" after a big win.

Monthly Rant:

Overhead is a four-letter word. Uncharted is a non-profit social enterprise, and in 2018, only 29% of our budget will come from philanthropic funding at the organization-wide level. The remaining 71% will come from earned revenue and funding from partnerships with Chipotle, Visible, and others. While we're working hard to build a strong economic engine within our non-profit legal structure, we still encounter the backwards thinking that any philanthropic investment (from a foundation, individual, etc.) should not go to overhead (or only a small fraction should go to overhead). This is dumb. Like any organization, non-profits need resources to invest in their future growth: from business development and partnership building, to leadership training, to hiring exceptional people in all roles and paying them competitive salaries so the organization can deliver excellent results.

[A study](#) reported that donors "ranked overhead ratio and financial transparency to be more important attributes in determining their willingness to give to an organization than the success of the organization's programs." This is stunning: people would rather know how their money was used ineffectively than not know how their money was used effectively. The focus on intermediate organizational metrics (like overhead ratio) should not blind philanthropic investors to their end goal: impact outcomes.

What I'm reading:

- 80% of people who try heroin today started on prescription painkillers. In the time it takes you to read [this riveting and devastating account](#) of the company behind the opioid crisis, 6 people will have fatally overdosed on opioids.
- The average American spends 95% of their lives indoors, but there is [a growing body of evidence](#) pointing to the healthy benefits of spending time in nature.
- Arianna Huffington wrote an open letter to Elon Musk about how he's demonstrating poor leadership. [It's worth reading.](#)
- Over the years, we have found that the greatest strength of the leader is the greatest weakness of the organization. [How the curse of knowledge is often invisible and needs attention.](#)

Something personal:

Therapy. I regularly go to see a therapist, and it's one of the best investments of my time and money. I've been seeing someone for over two years now, and I've noticed a few breakthroughs in my relationship to myself: from growing in my own self-worthiness to increased self-forgiveness to debunking some of the unhealthy narratives I have lived by.

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United in the common work,

Banks

*p.s. If you are curious about previous editions of the Uncharted Insider, you can find them [here](#). Want to be removed from this list? Or know someone who should be added? Let me know.

July 2018

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the July edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Uncharted turned one year old:** We rebranded one year ago last week. We are so proud of our progress since then, so [we took time to celebrate](#).
- **New ventures in our portfolio:** We just announced the nine mobile tech ventures in our newest cohort. Scroll down to see them [here](#). They will be joining us in Denver next month to kick off our Visible Connect initiative.
- **Our Annual Report:** We're releasing our annual report in the next few days. In it we share our evolving approach to impact measurement and some failures/learnings from the last year. Your feedback is always welcome.

Ideas on my mind:

Are we exempt from impact? A few years ago I was telling a friend about the impactful work Uncharted was doing and he said: "yeah, yeah, yeah, but are *you* volunteering?" That question really landed because I felt at the time like my work somehow exempted me from serving in other ways. Of course this was a silly idea, so I started volunteering and exploring how to create impact outside of my work at Uncharted. Similarly, as a non-profit whose core work addresses issues like urban poverty, hate/discrimination, and food systems, it might be tempting for us - as an organization - to believe we are exempt from giving back and creating impact in other ways. We went on a team retreat this past month and spent an afternoon exploring how to use our talent, passion, and organizational assets to create impact in our community. We brainstormed dozens of ideas (examples include: creating a fund to support aspiring entrepreneurs who have just been released from prison, teaching entrepreneurship to children, hosting drop-in entrepreneurship clinics for underserved entrepreneurs in our neighborhood, launching a campaign to get our entire office building to adopt recycling practices). We'll be prototyping a few ideas in the coming months and will report back.

Monthly Rant/Reflection:

We overestimate big moments and underestimate small moments. As Uncharted turns one year old, I've been reflecting on the big and small moments that make up an organization's story. Rebranding on July 25th, 2017 felt like a big moment for our organization, and there are other "big moments" I can point to over the years. I'm learning how organizations are built on a million small moments too. Those moments, when added together, form something that is far greater, more human, and more impactful than any one big moment could ever achieve on its own. Organizations are built on boring moments, moments no one sees, moments we don't get credit for, moments that define our character and deepen our culture and advance us just one more step.

The moment sending that fourth follow-up email to a potential investor, the moment of writing that inefficient handwritten thank-you note, the moment of deciding to make an introduction to someone who requested one. Thinking about all of this, I fell in love with all the small moments needed to build an organization and how our team is extraordinary at the small moments. I started to cry at my desk last week as I considered how each member of our team is a master at the small moments, and how there is perhaps nothing more important in building an organization of integrity than to build a team with people who are masters of the small moments. Of course, I recognize that leveling-up as an organization requires not just incremental improvements, and I spend most of my time preparing to seize that next big opportunity for Uncharted. But in between those big moments, there are so many small ones to acknowledge, to celebrate, to struggle through, to fall in love with.

What I'm reading:

- A 20-year gap in life expectancy exists between Baltimore's poor, largely African American neighborhoods and its wealthier, whiter areas. Curious to see how the structural violence of racism translates into real statistics? [This article](#) is the most comprehensive and stunning account of racism's deleterious effect on health.
- Domino's Pizza is starting to pave potholes on city streets (what?!); [How big companies are taking over US cities](#). Also, in a separate-but-related article, the [inside story](#) of socialism vs. Amazon in a battle for the future of Seattle.
- *Non-fiction pick*: [Evicted](#). This is a truly exquisite ethnographic account of urban poverty in the United States. If you are seeking to look beyond the statistics to understand the human face of poverty, start here. Also, over 20% of all renting families spend 50% of their income on rent.
- **Shameless plug**: I wrote [this article](#) about how to lead a team through a year of transition (practical principles in communication, decision-making, culture, and self-care). Quartz just published it today.

Can you help?

I'm adding this section this month to highlight a few specific asks:

- We are hiring an Executive Assistant to the CEO. Who is the best Executive Assistant you have ever come across? What made them great? Also, can you think of 1-2 people to forward this email (with [job description](#)) to?
- I am looking to meet someone at the [Bloomberg Government Innovation Team](#). Do you know anyone there? If so, let me know and I can follow up with more details.

Something personal:

My brother and I just took our mom on a 5-day mother-sons trip to Portland and Seattle. Last year we took my dad to Puerto Rico to trace our family's ancestry there (so many Benitezses down there). Now that my brother and I are grown up, our relationship with each parent has evolved into a more honest and more heart-centered one, anchored in mutual respect and friendship. Parents are the best.

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United in the common work,

Banks

June 2018

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the June edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Senior Citizen Poverty:** We just wrapped up a partnership with the [AARP Foundation](#) focused on identifying ventures working to improve the lives of low-income elderly Americans. With our help, the AARP Foundation is adopting two ventures to work closely with their internal entrepreneurs-in-residence to develop new models designed to improve the lives of the low-income elderly.
- **New Corporate Partnership:** We locked up another top-secret partnership with a major corporate brand to launch a signature CSR initiative with them. We're so excited....launching soon.
- **New Team Member:** We are excited to welcome [Zach Strom](#) to our team to lead up our Venture Funding department. Our historical data demonstrates that for every dollar that funds Uncharted, we're able to turn that into \$21 of additional capital for our portfolio.

Ideas on our mind:

- **Take our own medicine:** [Emily Scott](#), our Program Director, has said we need to put ourselves through our own accelerator. We have witnessed how transformative our accelerators can be for others, yet we haven't put ourselves through our own model. What if we built a custom-made accelerator for ourselves, given our specific needs and priorities? What if we surrounded each employee with mentors, advisors, and coaches that we surround each entrepreneur with? It's made me curious why more organizations don't take their core competency - their secret sauce - and apply it on themselves. It's hard and time-consuming work, but it's also a new level of organizational integrity: believing so strongly in what is done externally that it's also practiced internally. I'm curious to learn about organizations that have applied the DNA of their external success internally.
- **R+D Laboratories for Cities.** Last year we partnered with the City of Denver (#hometown) to run an experimental program focused on identifying and scaling new models that increased the access of healthy foods into low-income neighborhoods. Our work on this initiative with the City continues this year, and we're engaging with the City on a few other initiatives as well. It's made me curious about the existence of R+D Laboratories connected to municipal governments with the mandate of experimenting with solutions to the city's biggest social, environmental, and economic issues. Google/Alphabet launched [Sidewalk Labs](#) in 2015 with this mission, but I'm wondering about others.

Monthly Rant:

Failures to communicate. We're making updates to our website because we've realized that parts of it are confusing, repetitive, and vague — and even repetitive. It's been nearly a year since the rebrand, and everything is clearer now, so we're asking ourselves whom are we targeting with our website and how can we be concrete in our language and succinct in our length. But wow...so many organizations with a tangle of funders, partners, beneficiaries, payers, and supporters have websites that are truly impressive in their confusing and buzz-wordy writing. Maybe it's the curse of knowledge, maybe it's that we aren't doing the hard work of distilling things down to their very essence, or maybe it's just that websites aren't targeted at someone and we're writing simply to write, but I think many of us have work to do here. If you know of any websites that truly stand out in their elegant simplicity, send them this way.

What I'm reading:

- How the right dirt can reabsorb 3x more carbon: experiments in carbon farming, composting, and regenerative agriculture to address global warming. [Here](#).

- Community colleges are boosting graduation rates by fighting poverty themselves. [The story](#) of one community college that is doing everything from food pantries, emergency loan funds, and legal aid clinics to systematically remove every barrier to graduation.
- The inside story of [Vice](#), a media company bereft of both strategy and ethics. [The story](#) of faking it.
- How artificial intelligence is helping the Crisis Text Line to predict the people most at risk of suicide (the word "Advil" is more predictive of risk than the word "cut"). [Here](#).
- This year-long series on the fight for gender equity is worth your time. [Part 1](#) featured interviews from visionary women about their own struggles for equity. [Part 2](#) focuses on how to raise girls to understand and harness their power.

Something personal:

I'm leaving tomorrow to go on a five-day solo backcountry camping trip near Telluride, Colorado. Few things make me as happy and grounded as sleeping in a tent, breathing in the mountains' silence, and letting myself be guided by topo map and whim alike.

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United in the common work,

Banks

May 2018

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the May edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Hiring:** We hired five people (both part-time and full-time) in the last three months (with roles in programs, business development, marketing, and venture funding). All the credit goes to Marie Hathaway and Sara Rodriguez who led the charge on [our team](#). Earlier this week, we opened applications for another full-time [Program Director role](#).
- **Current Programs:** We're currently running [Uncharted Mobile Tech](#) with a corporate partner, [Visible](#), a new mobile tech company. We also have partnered with the AARP Foundation to identify startups focused on senior poverty.

Ideas on our mind:

I've mentioned both of these topics in previous Insiders*, but they continue to be areas of curiosity for us.

- **CSR looking for a breakthrough:** I've had a handful of meetings recently with heads of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) departments at large corporations, and there seems to be a common struggle to sell their initiatives up to the top leadership at the corporation. While many corporate leaders understand the need for CSR initiatives, they're hesitant to roll out and fund those initiatives more broadly across the company. In turn, heads of CSR are left with small budgets but big mandates to create impact. I'm curious to hear examples of the business case for CSR, and how CSR personnel might be able to effectively sell a bigger vision for impact to their leadership.
- **The next generation of the foundation:** [FSG](#), a social impact consultancy, recently released [this report](#) on how foundations are evolving. It's long but full of intriguing insights. They interviewed 114 people at 50 major foundations across the US/Canada. Here are two of my big takeaways: 1) **The**

role of foundations is shifting to become more active and less concentrated on traditional grant-making. Foundations aren't just passively outsourcing their impact creation to their grantees, but instead using tools like policy-influence, connecting grantees together, and building partnerships with other funders, and 2) **Foundations are recognizing the power of staff** not just as a cost-driver but as an impact multiplier, so foundation staffs are growing, becoming more active, and diversifying in function and competency.

What I'm reading:

- There are fewer women who are chief executives of Fortune 500 companies than there are male Fortune 500 executives just with the name "James." How under-represented women and minorities are in positions of power. [Here](#).
- There are only 35 affordable and available rental homes for every 100 US families that live in poverty. [America's history of unaffordable housing](#).
- Should CEOs be vulnerable and emotional? [21st century leadership looks different](#).
- We are nearing the one-year anniversary of what seems to me to be the greatest athletic feat in human history. [How one man climbed El Capitan free solo](#). If you are interested in more articles about Alex Honnold, let me know.

Something personal:

Just over a year ago, I started taking piano lessons. I'm not good - barely can play Jingle Bells, but I'm slowly learning to read music and pick up tempo. It's been invigorating to be a true beginner at something as an adult. I'm both humbled by how much there is to learn and energized by how quickly I can see progress. I think I'll be ready for my first recital in 2022, and you all are invited.

~~

United in the common work,

Banks

April 2018

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the April edition of the Uncharted Insider.

Uncharted Update:

- **Uncharted Mobile Tech:** We just announced a major partnership with a new mobile tech company in the US, targeting non-profit ventures that use mobile technology to create meaningful impact. [Learn more](#).
- **West Africa Agribusiness:** We're heading to Ghana next week for an investor event as we wrap up a 9-month accelerator supporting new models of agribusinesses in West Africa with our partner, [Kosmos Innovation Center](#).

Ideas on our mind:

- **Power Dynamics:** We often hear about the power dynamics that exist between funders and fund-seekers. When money is involved, power dynamics exist, and they often distort behavior and create unwanted outcomes. I'm curious if there are models/approaches that are effective at reducing power dynamics. How have foundations partnered in ways where grant-seekers don't feel motivated

to contort their strategy to fit into foundation priorities? How have investors been able to get entrepreneurs to be their honest selves when seeking capital?

- **Contrarians:** We're curious to hear about foundations and investors that, compared to their peers, are true contrarians and mavericks. What foundations are approaching their work in unconventional ways (and why)? We're wondering what 21st-century philanthropy might look like, and we'd love to learn from them.

Monthly Rant:

We hide behind research: A few weeks ago I met with two older, experienced entrepreneurs who have been working on their most recent startup for a few years. They referenced all this industry research proving they were on the right track. They unveiled mock-ups and color graphs. They had done everything but figure out if there was a market for their solution. No product, no letters of intent, no conversations with prospective customers. It made me think about the maxim of "measure twice, cut once," and how sometimes we get so afraid of cutting that we obsess over the measuring (our team would tell you I do this too). No matter what business we are in, we ought to lean into our courage and go to market sooner. Sometimes cutting multiple times is the best way to measure.

What I'm reading:

- Innovation is overrated. [The case for boring impact.](#)
- How the [water crisis in Cape Town](#) is bringing a racially segregated community together. Is social harmony an unexpected benefit of global warming?
- How Slack has built one of the [most diverse workforces in Silicon Valley](#).
- There are 30 million jobs in the U.S. that pay an average of \$55k per year and don't require bachelor's degrees. How one of the biggest barriers to the future of employment is [stigma](#).

Something personal:

Recently I've been thinking about the kind of person I want to be when I grow up. Not necessarily professionally - more personal stuff like being a dad one day and being a good neighbor to the people who live on my block. I want to be the kind of person who understands how to be a white male ally, and who goes on adventures in the mountains, and who knows how to walk with someone through their grief, and who can taste the difference between types of scotch. Anyway, I started looking for a mentor who was "Banks in 15 years" and I found him, and we've been meeting once a month for almost a year. Our careers are quite different, but I can see myself in him, and it's become a relationship that I know will change my life.

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United in the common work,

Banks

March 2018

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the March edition of the Uncharted Insider, a monthly email from me that provides an inside look into our organization and what we're thinking about.

Uncharted Update:

- **Food systems and collective impact:** In 2017, we [ran an accelerator](#) focused on increasing access of healthy food in low-income neighborhoods. In 2018, we're continuing that work by facilitating a group of organizations to co-locate into one neighborhood in Denver, with the goal of reducing food insecurity for the 1,500+ inhabitants. We're just getting started, but it's been a chance for us to learn how to unite a group of organizations to achieve a common goal.
- **Low-Income Elderly:** We just launched an initiative focusing on ventures that work to benefit the low-income elderly in the U.S., an often overlooked demographic. There are 25 million Americans above 60 years old who are considered "economically insecure."
- **Partnership Announcement:** Last month, I mentioned that we'd be announcing a corporate partnership focused on mobile technology for social impact. Our timeline has been adjusted, so we'll be announcing as soon as we can.

Ideas on our mind:

- **What is the next phase?** In the social impact space (if there is a "space" so encompassing), it seems like the last ~20 years have been characterized by *experimentation* with different models and tools to create impact. It's been a renaissance of exploration. Organizations and individuals have applied entrepreneurship to solve problems (social entrepreneurship), taken approaches and vehicles of investment to create impact (impact investing), and recognized the need for a defined skillset in "collective impact" to tackle systems-level change. I'm curious if the next phase will be about the thoughtful *combination* of these tools and models. My hypothesis is that the true change-makers in the next 20 years will be organizations and entities that combine relevant tools and models to achieve more impact than pursuing just one model in isolation. But I'm curious what others think: What do you see as the next phase?

Monthly Rant:

Solutions looking for problems. Many organizations we see are led by visionary leaders who want to effect change on a grand scale: tackle poverty, disrupt food systems, slow down global warming, transform healthcare. We need these people to expand our field of vision of what's possible, but many of their solutions fall into two traps: 1) their solution is disproportionally small compared to the problem they're proclaiming to solve (disrupt the education system with an app on a classroom tablet!), or 2) they have found a proportional solution to a problem, but not a reliable payer/customer (the healthy-food grocery store in a food desert that doesn't have food neighbors will actually buy). The traps share a common underpinning of being unclear about 1) what problem is actually being solved, 2) whose problem that is, and 3) who pays. Businesses inherently get this; social impact orgs often struggle. And we ourselves are not immune: Uncharted has fallen into this trap before, and the advice we're currently getting from our advisors is to spend as much time finding a market as proving out the impact of our solutions. Here's an article on [this](#).

What I'm reading:

- Big corporations aren't so bad: on average, they provide steadier employment, better benefits, hire more women and minorities, and create more innovation per dollar than small companies. [Here](#).
- Louisiana is losing a football field of land to the sea every hour: [how climate change is going to affect migration and coastline](#).
- The inside story of how Facebook's pursuit of neutrality backfired. The soul of any organization needs to stand for something bigger than [doing no harm](#).

- *Fiction Pick:* [Homegoing](#) is an exceptionally powerful and wrecking book chronicling the multiple generations of descendants from the west African slave trade - through slavery - and up to present-day America. One of the best books I've read in a long time.

Something personal:

Every year my brother and I take a sibling trip to invest in our relationship, go on adventures, make plans for the next year, and determine how to prank our parents. I'm just getting back, feeling refreshed and energized. My relationship with Ryan is one of the most important in my life, and I'm thankful for the time to deepen it.

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United in the common work,

Banks

February 2018

Hey everyone,

Welcome to the February edition of the Uncharted Insider. The Uncharted Insider is a monthly email from me that provides an inside look into our organization and what we're thinking about.

Uncharted Update:

- **Top-Secret revealed:** Last month I mentioned we're running an undercover accelerator supporting organizations addressing hate and discrimination. Now I can announce it's a partnership called [Erase the Hate](#) with [NBC Universal](#) and [Civic Nation](#) to support organizations like [Athlete Ally](#). We ran a one-week summit in NYC in early February.
- **New Partnership:** In January we locked up a major partnership with a wireless carrier to help scale organizations using mobile technology for social impact. Announcement coming March 7th.
- **We're hiring:** We have [four open positions right now](#): from partnerships to programs to investment to logistics to [financial architects](#). We'd love your help thinking about who would be a good fit: feel free forward this email to them.

Ideas on our mind:

- **How can corporations be genuine?** We've been working with a few corporations as they design future CSR strategy. Leaders of CSR at major brands are responsible for spearheading initiatives that actually create impact AND for ensuring that the company's impact efforts aren't perceived as thinly veiled attempts at positive PR. For brands with a genuine desire to create impact - in a world where perception is reality - the recurring question seems to be: "Will our customers trust us when we say we're committed to impact?" What companies do you think are genuine in their commitment to social impact? What CSR models do you admire? We're building a list.
- **How do we become creators of game-changing moments in our lives?** Chip Heath, one of our mentors, just released a [new book on how to create extraordinary moments](#). It's worth a read if you find yourself stuck in a routine, responsible for 'building culture' on a team, or eager to create enduring memories for your kids. We're implementing some of the book's concepts as we think about how to create magical moments for our entrepreneurs, mentors, and team.

Monthly Rant:

We forget about art: As an organization, it's imperative that we are able to quantifiably determine - through measurable impact outcomes - if we have been successful in our work. But it's also easy to get buried in the numbers to the point where we miss the humanity of the impact. So it was refreshing to have a few opportunities recently to appreciate how powerful intangible, unquantifiable impact can be. Specifically, I've been struck by the power of art to influence culture. I visited the Whitney Museum and saw an exhibit on [art as a form of protest](#) against wars and oppression. I snagged a ticket to [Dear Evan Hansen](#), a masterful Broadway play, that normalizes teen depression and the idea that we're not alone. I saw [Black Panther](#), a film with sweeping influence to shift narratives around how "the west" perceives the continent of Africa. And I am reading the disquieting novel [American War](#) by Omar El Akkad that places readers in a futuristic, ruinous world facing the consequences of global warming. Are we able to measure the impact of a Broadway play or a novel or an anti-Vietnam War poster? And if we can't quantify it, does that make it less-than? Art has the power to transform culture in extraordinary, immeasurable ways, and I sometimes worry that an exclusive loyalty to metrics can blind us to the complexity of more intangible vehicles of impact - like art - in shaping culture.

What I'm reading:

- How one couple got the Chilean government to [increase its national parks by 40%](#).
- Curious about what structural racism *actually* looks like? [This](#).
- From 2005 to 2015, all net job growth in the American economy was in [contingent jobs](#).
- Loneliness is killing you; how community is the [newest healthcare intervention](#).

Something personal:

Whenever I can, I try to get into the backcountry. Time slows down when I'm five miles into the wilderness and with my pen and journal. Attached is a photo I took from a snowshoe trip to a Colorado hut at 11,600 feet last weekend.

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United in the common work,

Banks

January 2018

Hey everyone,

Welcome to the January edition of the Uncharted Insider. The Uncharted Insider is a monthly email from me that provides an inside look into our organization and what we're thinking about.

Uncharted Update:*

- **Top-Secret:** We're working on an undercover accelerator that will support organizations addressing hate and discrimination. More details coming soon.
- **We Want Problems:** We're exploring potential partnerships with a number of corporations and foundations to address big social and environmental problems. We're considering what an "External Innovation Unit" might look like with an organization supporting low-income elderly Americans. We're talking to another about running an accelerator around the future of employment for low-income workers. We're starting to experiment with some [collective-impact](#) work.

- **Giving Power Away:** We don't talk about this enough, but we ship out an "accelerator-in-a-box" curriculum to teams [all over the world](#) so they can run mini-accelerators for local social entrepreneurs. It's the profitable "startup" within Uncharted. This month we're starting to make investments in streamlining our licensing operation (systems, legal agreements, HQ management) so our support can be faster and simpler.

*Our team gets all the credit for everything we're working on here. You can reach them at Team@uncharted.org.

Ideas on our mind:

- **Disrupt the Foundation:** More and more foundations are expressing interest in working with us to bring innovation and acceleration to their existing portfolios of grantees/investments. It's making us wonder what needs to change to build the next generation of the foundation and what the future of philanthropy will look like. We hosted a [Jeffersonian Dinner](#) in January with experts in philanthropy, foundations, and impact investing to explore these ideas.
- **Accelerators are experimenting** - All of our organization's work right now is powered by one underpinning curiosity: how can the DNA of an accelerator not only grow companies but also tackle social problems? So it's been cool to see how other big-time accelerators like Y-combinator are using their power and network to create impact. Check out [Y-combinator's focus on experimenting with universal basic income](#).

Monthly rant:

Scale is not sexy: One of the industry buzz words I dislike the most is "scale" (even though I hear myself saying it all the time, and we work tirelessly to help our ventures scale). It's the holy grail of social entrepreneurship. Despite the glamour of scale as a concept, our experience trying to "scale" Uncharted is that it's unsexy and arduous work often spent deep in legal license agreements, software optimizations, and email chains ensuring consistency of message and outcome. You can tell someone has done the grueling work of scale when you can see in their eyes: "you don't know the half of it."

What I'm reading:

- Patagonia has 100% of their mothers return to work after having a baby (National average is 79%). [How they transcend](#).
- In 1950, there were 17 American workers to support each retiree. When millennials retire, there will be just two. [The WTF generation](#).
- Of the 300 grantees that account for 1/3rd of the combined spending of the top 15 US foundations, 10% are insolvent. [What to do about it](#).
- In 2012, 4% of the biggest philanthropic donations came from people under 50 years old. In 2014, it was 25%. [Next generation of philanthropists](#).

Something personal:

2018 is for dinner dates with my mom. She and I are exploring a new restaurant every month. [Here](#) we were in January for month one.

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United in the common work,

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