



# The Laws of Subtraction: 6 Simple Rules for Winning in the Age of Excess Everything

*Matthew May*

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**Winner of a 2013 Small Business Book Award for Economics**

The world is more overwhelming than ever before. Our work is deeper and more demanding than ever. Our businesses are more complicated and difficult to manage than ever. Our economy is more uncertain than ever. Our resources are scarcer than ever. There is endless choice and feature overkill in all but the best experiences. Everybody knows everything about us. The simple life is a thing of the past. Everywhere, there's too much of the wrong stuff and not enough of the right. The noise is deafening, the signal weak. Everything is too complicated and time-sucking.

Welcome to the age of excess everything. Success in this new age looks different and demands a new skill: Subtraction.

*Subtraction* is defined simply as the art of removing anything excessive, confusing, wasteful, unnatural, hazardous, hard to use, or ugly . . . or the discipline to refrain from adding it in the first place. And if subtraction is the new skill to be acquired, we need a guide to developing it.

Enter *The Laws of Subtraction*.

Through a dozen of the most compelling stories of breakthrough innovation culled from 2,000 cases and bolstered by uniquely personal essays contributed by over 50 of the most creative minds in business today, *The Laws of Subtraction* outlines six simple rules for winning in the age of excess everything, and delivers a single yet powerful idea: When you remove just the right things in just the right way, something very good happens.

*The Laws of Subtraction features contributions by over 50 highly regarded thinkers, creatives, and executives.*

## **On Law #1: What Isn't There Can Often Trump What Is**

"When you reduce the number of doors that someone can walk through, more people walk through the one that you want them to walk through." -- SCOTT BELSKY, founder and CEO of Behance and author of **Making Ideas Happen**

## **On Law #2: The Simplest Rules Create the Most Effective Experience**

"Keeping it simple isn't easy. By exploiting subtraction in innovation, we've been able to create an environment of freedom and creativity that allows us to thrive." -- BRAD SMITH, CEO, Intuit

## **On Law #3: Limiting Information Engages the Imagination**

"Subtraction can mean the difference between a highly persuasive presentation and a long, convoluted, and confusing one. Why say more when you can say less?" -- CARMINE GALLO, author of **The Apple Experience**

## **On Law #4: Creativity Thrives Under Intelligent Constraints**

"Here's the key to the conundrum for managers who want to stoke the innovation fire: That close cousin of scarcity, constraint, can indeed foster creativity." -- TERESA AMABILE, author of **The Progress Principle**

**On Law #5: Break Is the Important Part of Breakthrough**

"If you kill the butterflies in your stomach, you'll kill the dream. Embrace the feeling. Save the butterflies." -- JONATHAN FIELDS, author of **Uncertainty**

**On Law #6: Doing Something Isn't Always Better Than Doing Nothing**

"When we're faced with the greatest odds against us, often we need to edit rather than add." -- CHIP CONLEY, cofounder of Joie de Vivre Hospitality and author of **Emotional Equations**

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