

## THE BIG IDEAS

**The Diamond Cutter**  
Cutting the absolute.

**The Buddha**  
Think: tall, graceful Prince.

**Business Peeps**  
Please apply.

**Produce Results**  
Intensity & perseverance.

**Emptiness, Emptiness**  
It's ALL Emptiness.

**The Hidden Potential**  
Can you see it?

**Imprints**  
They're powerful.

**"Set the Day"**  
Morning imprints.

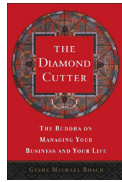
**Your New Business:**  
Mental gardening.

**Your Forest Circle**  
Check out and in.

**The Ultimate Wealth**  
Oneness.

*"So now we're down to the brass tacks. Admit it. You want to be good in business, you want to be a success in your life, but you also have a strong instinct that tells you life wouldn't be much unless it had a spiritual side to it. You would like to make a million and meditate, too."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach



# The Diamond Cutter

The Buddha on Managing Your Business and Your Life

BY GESHE MICHAEL ROACH · ANCHOR © 1991 · 293 PAGES

"To summarize, the goal of business, and of ancient Tibetan wisdom, and in fact all human endeavor, is to enrich ourselves—to achieve prosperity, both outer and inner. We can enjoy this prosperity only if we maintain a high degree of physical and mental health. And over the length of our lives we must seek ways to make this prosperity meaningful in a larger sense... we should see that we have conducted ourselves and our business in a way that had some lasting meaning, that left some good mark in our world."

~ Geshe Michael Roach from *The Diamond Cutter*

[The Diamond Cutter](#). Great book by a cool guy.good

Imagine yourself as an American, Tibetan Buddhist monk living in a monastery in New Jersey going to work for a diamond business in New York where you're systematically applying the truths of one of the classic sutras of Tibetan Buddhism called, sure enough, [The Diamond Cutter](#). Every day you wake up early, do your meditation and prayers, then you hop on a bus to rock your job as head of sales at a quickly growing diamond enterprise before returning home to your little room at the monastery... without ever telling the peeps you work with that you're a monk!

That's the back story to this book by [Geshe Michael Roach](#)—a scholar of Tibetan, Sanskrit and Russian who, after twenty two years of study, became the first Westerner to qualify for the Geshe degree at Sera Monastery in India. The book's \*packed\* with Big Ideas as Roach walks us through [The Diamond Cutter Sutra](#) and shows us how to apply these ancient Buddhist truths to our modern lives. Very cool. Let's start with a quick look at why the book's called "The Diamond Cutter":

## THE DIAMOND CUTTER

"Although the diamond is the nearest thing in the everyday world to something ultimate, it cannot compare much at all to the hidden potential we have been talking about... for this potential is something truly ultimate. In this sense then the diamond is an entirely inadequate metaphor, and so it is 'cut' or outdone by the power of what is really ultimate. And this is why this ancient book of wisdom is called *The Diamond Cutter*: It teaches about a kind of potential which is even more ultimate than the diamond, the hardest thing, the closest thing to an ultimate in the normal world around us."

Love it. We'll get into more about "hidden potential." For now, let's take a peak at the [Buddha](#), who was most influenced by his teaching and why his wisdom is relevant for us business peeps today. Then we'll get into Emptiness, Karma/Imprints, Gratitude, and some practices to most fully create and enjoy prosperity for yourself and others!

## THE BUDDHA: THINK OF A TALL & GRACEFUL PRINCE

"The royalty of ancient India were the driving force in the economic and political life of their

*"You have to be able to look back and say not only that you made money, and not only that you enjoyed making and spending it, but also that you made a difference in the world, while you made the money and afterward."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"The ancient books of wisdom say that, to really throw yourself into this stuff with the amount of effort it takes to pull it off, you \*must\* start from a firm belief that it works."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"Buddhism has always taught that there is a time and a place for taking on the life of a secluded monk, for living apart from the world in order to learn to serve the world. But serve the world we must, and to do so we must be in the world."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

countries: They were nothing less than the exact equivalent of the business community in modern Western society. When we speak about the Buddha and Buddhist ideas nowadays, we tend to think of an odd-looking, oriental man with a bump on his head and—if we have seen one of those Chinese statues—a big smile and a big tummy. But think rather of a tall and graceful prince, traveling quietly through the country, speaking with knowledge, conviction, and compassion of ideas that every man or woman can use to succeed in life, and to make his life meaningful."

That's awesome. We tend to forget the fact that before the Buddha was the Buddha (Sanskrit for "the awakened one"), he was a prince, Siddhartha Guatama, son of a King in Nepal. He spent his first three decades in 5th century bce luxury before committing himself to a quest to relieve suffering.

Geshe Roach continues: "And think of his followers not just as shaved-head mendicants sitting on the ground cross-legged, chanting *om* at the wall. Perhaps the greatest masters of Buddhism in ancient times were the royalty, those with the drive and talent to manage entire countries and economies." Sweet. So, in sum, Buddha was a sophisticated, regal guy who deeply influenced the greatest influencers and "business" leaders of his time.

## BUSINESS PEEPS PLEASE APPLY

"Never accept the idea that, because you are in business, you don't have the opportunity or time or personal qualities which a true spiritual life demands, or that maintaining a deep inner life is somehow contradictory with leading a business career. The wisdom of *The Diamond Cutter* says that the very people who are attracted to business are exactly the ones who have the inner strength to grasp and carry out the deeper practices of the spirit."

So, Geshe (which is a Tibetan Buddhist academic degree for monks... kinda like the "Dr." a Ph.D. gets) Roach starts his book by making the super important point that business people are the \*perfect\* people to truly practice spiritual ideals because "They have drive and they have the ability to do what must be done to get something done, as no else does."

He also says: "In America, it will be the business community that leads a quiet but certain revolution in how we conduct the business of our work, and our lives as well, using ancient wisdom for the goals of the modern world."

Amen. So, not only are business people not excluded from the spiritual party, they are, in fact, the IDEAL peeps to play. AND, if you believe Geshe Roach, they're the ones who're gonna lead the revolution and really change our culture.

That notion is shared by many—including [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#), author of *Flow* (see Notes) and *Good Business* and one of the leading positive psychologists. In *Good Business*, he says we can see who's controlling the culture by who has the tallest buildings. In ancient times, the tallest buildings in town were the churches and temples and synagogues. They were in power. They controlled culture. Then we saw castles become the tallest buildings and the state capitols rose to the greatest heights. Government and politicians controlled culture. Now, we see corporate skyscrapers dwarfing every other building. Business creates culture.

The question, of course, is: Do we have conscious business leaders creating the type of culture we want? And, the answer to that question is really, in my mind, a CHALLENGE for those of us who feel so called, to BE those leaders to create the products that best serve the world. We'll save that for another discussion. :) For now, we've established the fact that business people are in a unique position to integrate their spiritual truths most powerfully while impacting their world most powerfully at the same time. Good stuff.

Alright, now we're ready for some Big Ideas on how to apply the wisdom of *The Diamond Cutter* to our 21st century businesses and lives. First, know this:

*"The ancient Buddhist books say that every person is driven, deep down inside, to discover what is truly meaningful, and we are incapable of being happy until we find it."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"We are always in the business of gardening for the future."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"What's the best way to teach young children how to lead an ethical life?" At that age,' said His Holiness, 'it doesn't matter what you tell them to do. They will watch and imitate you; they will do what you do, and so you are faced with the hardest task of all—to be ethical yourself."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"We are not in this system of ancient wisdom talking about how an attitude might color your perceptions of your financial situation. We are, rather, setting forth the details of a process which actually determines the reality around you. We are not talking about how you feel about not being able to make your payments. We are talking about how you feel actually determining whether or not you can make your payments."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

## INTENSITY & PERSEVERANCE PRODUCE RESULTS

"Wise men of Tibet have said that, whenever these laws don't seem to work, it's because you're not actually following them; and I think you'll find this true if you're honest with yourself. The laws must be observed over a period of time—and with complete self-honesty and a sensitive understanding of the principles we have set out above—in order to bring the business success we have promised. To try them out for a while and then give up on them would be like stopping an exercise program after three days because it hasn't given you bulging muscles yet. For these principles to produce the business and personal success you hope for, they must be followed with about the same intensity and perseverance needed to become a good piano player or a very competent golfer, and that's not easy."

Ah, I love that. Isn't it funny how we want results \*immediately\* and, if we don't get them, we blame the system/program rather than ourselves? Of course, too many programs are marketed as a quick-fix solution but still... people who usually complain about those programs not working rarely, if ever, actually follow them. :)

In any case, it's all about diligence, patience and persistence—whether we're talking about [The Diamond Cutter](#) sutra or any self-development principles. Check in with yourself and see if you've \*really\* been living the truths you know to be true or if you've been slacking.

Imagine you don't know how to play the piano well or play golf very competently. Think about just how much practice it would take to get good. It's a LOT, eh? And it's not once in a while, it's CONSISTENTLY. So, what's one way you can step up your "life" game a notch or two or three? How can you be much more in integrity with your ideals?!

I can increase my intensity, commitment and perseverance in this way:

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(And watch yourself the next time you start blaming a system/program and see if YOU might have been the variable that went wrong. :)

## EMPTINESS, EMPTINESS, IT'S ALL EMPTINESS

"In the last chapter we spoke about the hidden potential in all things—what the Buddhists have always called 'emptiness.' We saw, clearly, that nothing that ever happens to us is a good thing or a bad thing *from its own side*, because—if it were—then everyone else would experience it that way as well. For example, our irritating person at work would strike everyone else in exactly the same way, if his or her 'irritating-ness' were something inside that was flowing out of that individual and flying across the room to us. In reality though there is almost always *someone* who finds the person good and lovable."

This is one of the key ideas of the book: NOTHING has meaning outside of that which we give it. Nothing has any \*absolute\* meaning because, if it did, then EVERYONE would experience it EXACTLY the same, ALL THE TIME. Everything, as the Buddhists say, is "empty" of meaning.

For example, imagine your boss yelling at you. Is he a jerk? Well, that's one perspective, but not the only one. His wife may think he's an incredibly loving and considerate guy. He's "empty" of meaning. Yah?

Have you ever seen those Rorschach ink blobs? One big blob. No inherent meaning.

Psychologists use it to get a peak into your subconscious mind because what YOU see in it reveals what's in YOU more than it reveals what's in the blob. The ink blob is "empty." A million people will have a million nuanced experiences/interpretations of it. It has no inherent meaning other than that which you give it.

Emptiness...

*"In and of itself, independent of how different people are perceiving it, it has no such nature; it is neutral or blank or empty. In short, it has 'emptiness,' and this—according to the deepest books of ancient Tibetan wisdom—is its hidden and ultimate potential."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"We have seen first of all that everything has a hidden potential, a kind of fluidity about what it could be. No person we meet is irritating from their own side, because there's always someone there who finds them quite charming; no matter how they seem to us, it's not something that's coming from them. So where's it coming from? Obviously it's somehow coming from us, from our own minds."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"There's no word in Tibetan for 'guilty.' The closest thing is 'intelligent regret that decides to do things differently.'"*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

## THE HIDDEN POTENTIAL

"The hidden potential that we have talked about is something which is truly absolute, in a way that no physical thing can be. It is the highest nature that a thing can have, it is the absolute truth of every person and object. The hardness of a diamond is in nature the closest that any single object in the universe can come to an absolute: It has the greatest hardness there is. And so a diamond is significant in a second way—as a metaphor for that one thing which is truly absolute."

Alright, so once we see that everything (YES, EVERYTHING!) is empty, we can choose to see the "hidden potential" in it—the "highest nature that a thing can have." That's a super powerful place to be.

Let's take a current example: As I write this in March, 2009, we're going through a dynamic economic time.

Is this empty? Is there "hidden meaning" in there somewhere?

Well, of course! I can CHOOSE to see whatever I want in the empty "ink blob" of the economy and there's \*always\* hidden potential waiting to be discovered.

What do YOU see when you look into the ink blob of our current economy?

Do you focus on all the things you don't like or do you see the hidden potential—the truly highest nature of this moment?!? REALLY important thing to consider.

So, what's stressing you out right now?

Have you convinced yourself that your perspective is the \*absolute\* truth/only way to look at it?

How can you step back and see it in a new, more empowering way? (And, um, what are you waiting for? :)

## IMPRINTS: THEY'RE POWERFUL

"And this, of all the points in this book, is the single most important one for business and personal success: Even a relatively minor action, if undertaken with a conscious awareness of how imprints make us see an otherwise 'neutral' or 'empty' world as we do, will lead to tremendous results. To illustrate this truth, the Buddha is telling his disciple Subhuti that it would be better just to lay hands on *The Diamond Cutter*, and have some inkling of its contents, than give another person an entire planet, or even a billion entire planets, covered with precious jewels. This is because a person who even comes close to understanding how imprints make us see our world as we do can go about creating, consciously, a perfect life and perfect world."

Wow. That's powerful.

Two things there: 1) "Imprints" determine what we see in the ink blob emptiness of events; and, 2) When we get this and start being REALLY aware of what imprints we allow to be created, we can see the wonderful hidden potential in things more and more often and "can go about creating, consciously, a perfect life and perfect world."

So, what are imprints?

Imagine that every thought you have, word you say, and action you take creates a little "imprint" on your mind/consciousness. It's kinda like you're wiring your brain/mind a certain way such that whatever you consistently feed it is what you're more likely to see in your outside world.

Make sense?

With that in mind, we want to be VERY conscious of what we're allowing to "imprint" itself on our minds!

*"The truth though is that the market will appear kind, and the market will therefore be kind, to any dealer who has the right mental imprints coming up to his conscious mind at any given moment."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"It's good if you can spend fifteen to thirty minutes of silent time every day. And the 'every day' part is important; these things don't work if you don't keep them up every single day, without a break. The best way to make sure you get your silent time every day is to do it at the same time every day."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"Imprints works the same as plants, don't doubt it. Nobody would plant some flower seeds in their garden on Monday, and then stand in the garden all day on Tuesday waiting for their flowers, angry and disappointed when they failed to appear by evening."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

## “SET THE DAY”: MORNING IMPRINTS

“The Tibetan wise men say that this should be the last part of your silent time in the morning: picturing yourself as the most successful, and wise, and compassionate person you can imagine. Take a few minutes in the about-to-get-noisy silence just before you get up off the couch, and really work hard to see yourself as you could be. It plants a very strong imprint in your mind to get that way some time. You’ll see.”

You taking some time for silence in the morning?

(Please say, “Yes!!” And, please note that if you say you’re too busy, you \*really\* need to take the time. The Dalai Lama likes to say that the busier his day is going to be, the more time he takes in the morning for meditation! :)

The Tibetan wise men call this process of starting your day in silence *penpa tang*: “The expression means to set the tone for an entire day by spending a few quiet moments in the morning, and the phrase is close to another that means ‘shooting the arrow.’ This daily morning quiet time, sitting silently by yourself to prepare your thoughts for the day, is like the six-time book: absolutely essential for you to pull off the task of creating complete personal and business success for yourself in the years to come.”

My AM ritual has given me more consistency, clarity and confidence than ever before.

Meditation, movement, journaling, visualization. It’s hard to have a bad day with that start! :)

So, I highly recommend you get your morning routine on and how about spending the last few minutes of your AM silence shooting the arrow as you imagine your ideal self?!

## YOUR ADDITIONAL BUSINESS: MENTAL GARDENING

“You are now in the additional business of mental gardening: choosing the seeds or imprints you want to put in your mind by studying which imprints create the things you want to achieve—consciously planting those seeds, and then sitting back to enjoy the extraordinary success that will come to you.”

Geshe Roach has a \*genius\* tracking system to cleanse your consciousness. It’s called a “six time book” and is known as *tundruk* in Tibetan.

The book goes off (!) on this process. *Super* quickly: Get your journal. Take one page. Draw a box with six squares. Pick three things you want to work on (for me, it was ending all criticism, gossip and blame). Write one in each box then once thru again. Now, check in at six different times during the day to see how you did on your cleanse. Note positive times (“*I didn’t criticize when I usually would’ve!*”) or negative (“*Eek. Gossiped again.*”)

Do that every day. And you’ll be AMAZED by the new imprints you’ll be creating.

## YOUR FOREST CIRCLE

“Later, when you go back to the express train of your home and work life, some of the life and business decisions you made in the Circle will seem unrealistic, even naïve. Don’t believe it. This is how the vision born of silence looks to a mind that has gone back to the world of noise. The whole point of the Forest Circle is to return ready to create a new world, and new worlds are not built without a little risk and courage.”

Love it. Geshe talks about the importance of taking time off from the daily rhythms of work to create silence and connect to your highest self. He describes his own weekly practice—where he agreed to less salary for awhile and took every Wednesday off from the office, immersing himself in quiet reflection, studies, thinking and service outside his normal routine. He goes off about

*"Imagine, just for a moment, what would happen if the entire world thought and acted as if everyone else were themselves."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"If a situation can be fixed, why get upset about it? If a situation cannot be fixed, what's the use of getting upset?"*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

*"You fix your life, and your business, and your world by fixing yourself."*

~ Geshe Michael Roach

the importance of HONORING that commitment and never letting a week pass where you're "too busy" to follow your ritual.

He also talks about the importance of taking two weeks off in addition to normal vacation (and foregoing pay if necessary) to really check in to silence and what the universe is looking to bring to the world through you. He says go somewhere alone with NO distractions. Bring two weeks of food and just hang out with your journal—no TV, books, just quiet. Get quiet, tune in, and follow the inspiration. :)

How about you? You taking time off during the week to check in to your highest self? And what about taking a full two weeks to REALLY check in? Powerful stuff.

Challenging? Of course. "New worlds are not built without a little risk and courage."

## THE ULTIMATE WEALTH

"To overcome the tendency not to think of others, to spread your idea of yourself to include all your employees and everyone else around you, to work not for the sake of others, but as if there were no 'other'—this would be real happiness, this would be true contentment. You know in your heart that it would be right, you know in your heart that it would be right to start right now, and you know that, if you spent your whole career and your whole life this way, purposely trying to work for the good of those around you as hard as you work for yourself, that you could look back with pride, for this is the real meaning of a human life. This is the ultimate wealth."

All I can say to that is, "Amen."

Here's to the hidden potential in everything and the risk and courage to build new worlds,

B

**Brian Johnson,**  
Chief Philosopher

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[The Science of  
Getting Rich](#)

## About the Author of "The Diamond Cutter"

GESHE MICHAEL ROACH



Michael Roach (born 1952) is an American teacher of Tibetan Buddhism of the Gelugpa school, and was the first Westerner to qualify for the geshe degree at Sera Monastery in India. He received the degree after twenty-two years of (part time) training in both India and abroad. He is a scholar in Tibetan, Sanskrit, and Russian. He is currently spiritual director at Diamond Mountain University in Bowie, Arizona, which he founded in 2004. He has founded several other endeavors in addition, including Andin International in 1981, the Asian Classics Institute (ACI) in 1993, the Asian Classics Input Project (ACIP), the Diamond Abbey in New York, and the Enlightened Business Institute. (from Wikipedia.)

## About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at [brianjohnson.me](http://brianjohnson.me).