You Already Know How to Be Great

A Simple Way to Remove Interference and Unlock Your Greatest Potential

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

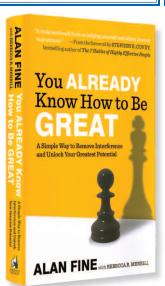
Most people who want to get better — at hitting golf shots, negotiating with clients, delivering presentations or any other field of endeavor — seek out new information. They read a book, take a class, hire an expert tutor. But as Alan Fine has learned from many years of coaching athletes and businesspeople, this "out-side-in" approach often doesn't produce the results people want. More information becomes a distraction rather than a solution, and high performance remains

Fortunately, there is a better way, as he discovered years ago while working with a 9-year-old tennis student. The more tips and tricks he gave her, the worse she played. One day, he told her to just forget all his instructions. Then he used a simple tool to help her change how she paid attention and what she paid attention to. Her ability to hit over the net instantly improved 1,000 percent!

Since then Fine has developed and honed a unique "inside-out" approach to performance improvement. In *You Already Know How to Be Great*, he shows us how to unlock Faith, Fire and Focus: confidence in our ability, high energy and passion, and focused attention on the things that really matter.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to use essential coaching concepts to improve your work and life.
- The most common mistakes made by people conducting engagement conversations.
- How to recognize the biggest obstacles to our performance.
- A simple process that can help you achieve greatness in any area.



by Alan Fine with Rebecca R. Merrill

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: YOU ALREADY KNOW HOW TO BE GREAT

by Alan Fine with Rebecca R. Merrill

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Up Front

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar?

- You know that if you had a regular exercise program you'd have more energy and feel better. You've bought a variety of exercise equipment. You've tried a lot of different types of programs. Each time, you've lasted about three weeks. You ask yourself: "What's the matter with me? Do I just not have the character to do this — or was I somewhere else when the exercise genes got passed out?"
- You've been told that your job as a manager includes coaching the people in your division, so you've been meeting with them regularly, giving them good instruction and trying to help them improve. But much of the time, your help doesn't seem to matter, and sometimes it's even rejected. One person you need to talk with about an accountability issue refuses to even meet with you. You think: "How can I coach these people, and how can I do it in a way that will truly make a difference?"
- · Your organization is not performing as well as you'd like. You've tried a variety of approaches and had some success, but the goals you set at the top never really make it down the line and your employees are not fully engaged. You spend most of your days dealing with internal problems instead of external opportunities. You keep asking yourself: "How can I raise performance throughout the organization? What can I do to get everyone fully engaged and on the same page?"

These scenarios represent a range of common experi-

ence, but they have one important element in common: They all deal with issues of performance — either in self or in others. Most of us want the results of top performance. We want the enthused organization, the engaged work team, the exceeded sales quotas, the responsible child, the low handicap on the golf course, the increased energy and the washboard abs. But even when we know what it takes, we don't always have the tools that make those kinds of results possible.

The premise presented here is that EVERYONE has the potential to perform better; potential is blocked by interference; interference can be reduced by focused attention; and focused attention can be simply and systematically increased.

Part 1: Paradigm and Principle

I decided to do the training necessary to qualify as a Registered Professional Coach, which was the highest tennis-teaching certification a person could get in the United Kingdom at the time.

It was as a certified coach eight years later that I stood on the court on that gray day that totally changed my life. I had been working with one of my students — a shy little 9-year-old girl. Her mother and I both agreed that she was a bit uncoordinated, but her mom felt that if I could help her improve a little, she would be able to participate in the group sessions, which would be very good for her socially. The instructions I'd given her had been very simple ("Shake hands with your racket." "Hit the ball on its way down." "Hit the back side of the ball."). But the best she'd been able to do was to hit the



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ball about five times consecutively across the net.

Feeling frustrated as I watched her struggle, I decided to try something different. I'd just begun to expand my approach to coaching, including studying disciplines such as Neuro-Linguistic Programming™, psychosynthesis, Zen and everything I could find on sports psychology. One particular approach that caught my attention was Timothy Gallwey's Inner Game of Tennis. The basic idea is that we each have a Self 1, the analytical, critical self ("You didn't hold the racket right." "You should have hit that differently." "You moved too slowly, you dummy!") and a Self 2, the natural, curious self that learns by experience and performs best without the interference of Self 1. Performance improves when we're basically able to silence Self 1 and free Self 2 to do its thing.

A Blinding Glimpse of the Obvious

So I said to this little girl, "Look, let's not worry about all the instructions I've given you over the past six weeks. Just say 'bounce' when the ball touches the ground and 'hit' when the ball hits your racket. That's all. Just focus on those two events. Don't worry about anything else." The first time she tried it, she hit 53 shots in a row over the net! The girl was thrilled. Her mother was so shocked she literally fell off her chair leaning forward to watch. Personally, I was astonished and frustrated. My fundamental view as an educator had been challenged. Was it possible that much of the specific technical instruction I'd been giving my students was not only not helping them but was actually getting in the way?

It was at that point that I was struck with a "blinding glimpse of the obvious." This girl hadn't been performing poorly because she didn't know what to do; it was simply that there was too much interference getting in the way of her doing it! And sadly, the principal source of that interference was me.

That day on the tennis court, that little girl improved her performance by over 1,000 percent, or 10X. Can you imagine what would happen if you were to get that kind of breakthrough performance — or even a 10th of it — in your team or organization or in other areas of your life?

Prior to that day, I had believed — as most people do — that the best way to improve performance is to increase knowledge. This is an "outside-in" approach. It assumes that people are lacking in some way and that additional knowledge has to be put in from the outside to help them improve. Clearly, this is the most common approach used to improve individual and organizational

The Heart of Change

In their book *The Heart of Change*, Harvard Business professor John Kotter and Deloitte Consulting principal Dan Cohen assert that "changing behavior is less a matter of giving people analysis to influence their thoughts than helping them to see a truth to influence their feelings. Both thinking and feelings are essential, and both are found in successful organizations, but the heart of change is in the emotions. The flow of see-feel-change is more powerful than that of analysis-think-change."

performance. It reflects the fact that individuals, managers and leaders tend to see performance problems as knowledge problems and therefore look for knowledge solutions.

There are times when a lack of knowledge really is the problem, but much of the time the biggest obstacle in performance isn't not knowing what to do; it's not doing what we know. In other words, the problem is not as much about knowledge acquisition as it is about knowledge execution.

The Nature of Performance

As I continued to work to help people and organizations improve performance, I had another blinding glimpse of the obvious. Knowledge was not the only thing — or even the most important thing — being blocked by interference. There were three other elements at the very heart of high performance. And not only were these elements important in and of themselves; they were also important because they facilitated the use of knowledge. When these elements were blocked, performance suffered. When they were unleashed, performance soared.

I've come to call these elements Faith, Fire and Focus.

Faith has to do with our beliefs about ourselves and our beliefs about others.

Fire has to do with our energy, passion, motivation and commitment.

Focus has to do with what we pay attention to and how we pay attention.

Faith, Fire and Focus are what create engagement. They are how we get the 10X performance!

Because the impact of these three elements is so significant, I have become increasingly convinced that what separates high performers from everyone else is their Faith, Fire and Focus. And because the impact of inter-

ference on these elements is so profound, I have also become convinced that reducing interference to Faith, Fire and Focus is probably the least recognized but most effective way to improve performance.

The good news is that there is a simple, scalable, replicable process that can make that happen.

A Model of Performance

Together, Knowledge, Faith, Fire and Focus create the "K3F" model of human performance.

If you think of this model as a wheel, Knowledge represents the rim. Faith, Fire and Focus are like spokes supporting the wheel. The rim without the spokes or the spokes without the rim would render the wheel useless — as would a weakness of any of the four basic parts. Therefore, all four parts are vital to performance success.

Obviously, some basic Knowledge is essential. You'd find it hard to be a salesperson if you didn't know anything about your product, your customers or the competition. You'd find it difficult to excel at tennis without knowing what a racket is, what a ball is and the object and rules of the game.

However, it is Faith, Fire and Focus that drive the quality of performance and performance improvement. It is what creates results in organizations where people:

- genuinely believe in the viability, competency and purpose of the organization;
- are enthused about and engaged in their work;
- know what to pay attention to and are focused on the key objectives that would make the organization successful; and
- are able to fully execute on the Knowledge they already have.

When Faith, Fire and Focus are released, extraordinary things happen. This is when possibility opens up.

Getting Rid of Interference

To one degree or another interference affects our Faith, Fire and Focus — and our performance — nearly every day. Some of this interference is external. It comes from things that are mostly outside our direct control. In the marketplace it might be the economy, new technology or increased competition. On the tennis court it might be the wind, the sun, the court surface or an opponent. At home it could be economics, the media or the demands and expectations of family members and others. Onstage it might be the lights, another performer's missed cue, the rustling of programs in the audience or the sound of a siren outside the theater. In

many situations it's judgmental communication — both verbal and nonverbal — from other people.

But much of the interference that affects our performance is internal. A good deal of it comes from our response to external interference. It's reflected in the stories we tell about ourselves, the way we approach situations in watch-out mode, the way we worry about the past or the future or think of all the things we should be doing instead of focusing on the present. It's manifest in the conversations we have with the "800pound gorillas inside our heads" — the internal dialogue that goes: "You have to do this the 'right' way." "Don't screw this up!" "What will others say?"

We all have our gorillas. No one is exempt. And it's the noisy chatter of these gorillas — not busyness — that creates internal interference. In fact, it's possible to be very busy and still have the quiet mind necessary for top performance, as long as you're focused.

So how do we get rid of interference? Usually, we can't change the external interference. It's just the way things are. However, by reducing the internal interference, we can free ourselves and/or others to get at higher performance. And the simplest and most accessible way to get rid of internal interference is through Focus — through changing what we pay attention to and how we pay attention.

After a lifetime of studying human performance, Claremont Graduate University professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi suggested that we all perform best when there is a balance between our perception of the challenge we are facing and our perception of the skill we have to meet the challenge. In other words, we need to have enough challenge to keep us excited, but not so much that it overwhelms or discourages us. According to Csikszentmihalyi, this is when we're most likely to get into a state of "flow" — a state where we're focused, fully engaged and intrinsically motivated. In this state, we process things faster, learn faster and are often not even aware of time or space. It's in this state that whatever we're doing seems almost effortless.

Part 2: Process

In sports such as tennis and golf, the term swing velocity describes the speed and direction of the racket or club, which in turn controls the speed and direction (and therefore accuracy) of the ball. Obviously, the faster and more accurately you hit the ball, the more likely you are to win. This same combination of speed and accuracy has a similar effect on decision making and, therefore, on the results we get in any area of performance.

Decision Velocity, then — or the speed and accuracy with which we make decisions — is critical to top performance in any area of life.

So the question is: How can we create the Focus that increases Decision Velocity and leads to breakthrough results? We can do it through a process called GROW.

Creating Focus Through 'GROW'

The GROW process is basically a map of human decision making. It provides a simple way to create Focus, reduce interference and improve performance in any area of life. Having since recognized the vital roles of Faith, Fire and Knowledge as well as Focus in top performance, I now place that performance model at the very center of the GROW process.

This is how GROW works. Whenever we make a decision, we eventually go through four phases. We think about the following:

Goal: What we want to do.

Reality: The circumstances we're dealing with (or how we perceive them).

Options: How we might move from our Reality to our Goal.

Way Forward: What action we want to take.

By giving order, discipline and focus to these phases as we go through, we can significantly reduce interference, increase the speed and accuracy of our decisions and improve performance.

Using the GROW Questions

A few fundamental questions in each of the four areas make a significant difference in helping people clarify their thinking. These questions are listed below.

Goal: What issue do I want to work through? What do I want from this GROW "session" (meaning time devoted to resolving the issue)? What are the consequences if I do not take action?

Reality: Briefly, what's been happening? What have I tried so far? What were the results? In what different way might others describe this situation? Is my goal still realistic?

Options: Describe fantasyland. If I could do anything to make progress on this issue, what might I do? If others are involved, what would they need to see or hear to get their attention? If I were watching myself work through this issue, what would I recommend? Do any of these options interest me enough to explore further? If I were to act on this/these chosen option(s), how might I go about it?

Way Forward: Do any of these options interest me

enough to take action? How will I go about it? What might get in my way? How might I overcome that? What and when is my next step?

Coaching for Breakthrough

The inside-out approach gives us a different way to think about coaching itself. It's far less about providing additional Knowledge than it is about releasing the Faith, Fire and Focus that was inherent and natural in the performer as a child but is now suppressed by interference. It's not about looking at people in terms of what's wrong, broken or missing; it's about looking at them in terms of what's inside that we can help out. It's about removing interference and making it safe for people to dare to dream, to dare to think about what's possible — and then helping them find doable first steps.

Thus, a coach using the inside-out approach is always looking at an individual's performance through the lens of that person's Faith, Fire and Focus as well as Knowledge. He or she is constantly asking, "Where is the person low — in the area of belief, passion or attention? What is it that's getting in the way? How can I help remove it? What Focus will most significantly increase this person's Faith and Fire?"

Getting Into the Performer's World

It's easy for coaches to get blindsided by what they think people have to pay attention to — to get so focused on the task that they miss the window through which a person can actually pay attention. What's helpful is for the coach to get into the world of the performer — to find the window through which the performer sees — and then ask him or her to look a little more carefully through that window. And if that window only allows someone to see one thing, to then work on that one thing and expand the view as the performer is able.

Inside-out coaching is not as much Knowledge coaching as it is Focus coaching. Even when the issue involves Knowledge, it's about helping the performer focus on the doable steps that enable him or her to gain or use Knowledge most effectively. It's not about solving the problem for someone; it's about helping that person solve the problem for him- or herself. It's about helping a person take full ownership for the solution.

Therefore, while a coach using the inside-out approach provides critical knowledge (such as the laws of physics, biomechanics or competitive tactics in sports), his or her primary objective is to increase the performer's awareness by helping that person focus on

and learn from real-time experience. And the more the coach can remove interference, the more quickly the performer will learn.

Coaching for Engagement

When a performer is unwilling and/or unaware of a performance issue, you're no longer dealing with a performer-driven conversation. You're dealing with a coach-driven conversation. In other words, you can't begin by drawing Goal, Reality, Options and Way Forward out of your performer.

Instead, you have to start. You own the agenda. It's your goal. You're trying to take this valued person from where he or she is to where you want him or her to go — which is basically to where he or she is willing to engage in a performer-driven conversation about the issue. Until the performer reaches that point, you're the one who's driving the conversation.

In situations such as these, the biggest challenge isn't the situation or the performer; it's your own interference. And that changes your initial task as a coach. In breakthrough conversations, it's the performer who has the interference. Your job as a coach is to help the performer clarify his or her thinking.

Only by getting rid of your own interference first can you effectively help others get rid of theirs. This is the same principle you see in operation when a flight attendant instructs you to put on your own oxygen mask before trying to help others put on theirs.

Giving Feedback

In the process of taking valued people from where they are to where they want to go, we often need to give performers feedback to help them become aware of an issue or an opportunity to improve their performance. Until we can help performers increase their awareness of the gap between what they think they're doing and what they're actually doing, they can't take responsibility for doing things differently.

For most people, feedback is a paradox. Most of us say we want it and on the surface will tell you it's valuable. But we're often anxious about receiving it.

The reason is that rather than understanding feedback as a perception of data, many of us see it as just another name for criticism delivered in a sensitive way. It creates interference because we hear the information as judgment. Our reaction is to discount, avoid, or become defensive when people tell us what we "should" have done.

Common Mistakes in **Engagement Conversations**

As people work to integrate the inside-out approach in conducting engagement conversations, the most common mistakes are these:

- 1. Failure to Plan.
- 2. Failure to Listen.
- 3. Failure to Follow the Process.
- 4. Falling Into Outside-In Coaching.
- 5. Making Comfort the Driving Force.

Inside-Out in Teams and Organizations

It's easy to tell the difference between teams and organizations in which Faith, Fire and Focus are high and those in which they are low.

An organization with Faith has a clear, compelling sense of mission and purpose that is effectively communicated to and passionately believed in by people on every level of the organization. People have a strong "We can!" belief and a firm conviction in the organization's resilience and ability to effectively learn and adapt in a changing environment. An organization without Faith is filled with fear, doubt or lack of clarity concerning its value proposition as well as the value of the organization's purpose and/or its viability in changing circumstances.

An organization with Fire has a positive energy directed toward the accomplishment of the purpose of the organization. An organization without Fire is filled with apathy, lack of interest and resigned compliance (rather than enthused commitment). What energy exists is often turned into negative fire, which is manifest in politicking, backbiting and criticizing.

An organization with Focus has clearly articulated key priorities that lead to the accomplishment of the organization's purpose, and those priorities are given robust attention on every level. An organization without Focus is filled with distraction, miscommunication, redundant effort, waste of resources and poor execution.

Just as the inside-out approach can help a coach look at the individual performer in terms of Faith, Fire and Focus as well as Knowledge, it can help managers and leaders look at teams and organizations through the same lens. And when teams and organizations move ahead with all four elements of high performance, the possibilities for breakthrough performance are truly amazing.

Part 3: Practice

Inside-out is more than a process; it's a way of thinking and interacting with others that helps eliminate interference, increase Decision Velocity and improve performance in any area of life.

Although the inside-out approach is simple and most people are able to implement it immediately, there are times when you have to deal with a particularly difficult issue or you just get stuck.

Below are two of the most common types of responses:

Creating Accountability

"The person I'm trying to help says, I can't come up with any Goals' or 'I can't come up with any Options. You're the coach; you tell me what to do.""

"Tell me what to do!" is a phrase I used to hear often in coaching kids in tennis. They'd play really well in practice, but when the pressure was on, they'd want to abdicate their responsibility for deciding what to do next. They'd want a higher authority to tell them what to do.

One of the main purposes of the inside-out approach is to help people accept responsibility for their own performance. That's when they really get engaged. That's when they stop blaming and accusing and begin to tap into their own Faith, Fire and Focus.

No matter how hard it may be (and this is one of the main challenges for a coach), you're almost always better off if you avoid the temptation to simply tell people what to do. It may seem quicker and easier in the moment, and it may temporarily feed your ego. But it won't empower the individual to create consistently high performance.

The first time I went rock climbing, there was a man about 50 feet up on the rock face, completely frozen. He was holding onto the rock for dear life and, despite the instructor's calm and repeated instructions, he just couldn't seem to move. As the afternoon wore on, the man finally became convinced that he either had to get past his panic or he was going to be on the mountain face all night. It was at that point that he finally began to take action that would get him safely to the ground.

The key to working with someone who is paralyzed by some belief (whether that person is being overpowered by a gorilla or is stuck in an unproductive story) is to help him or her get in touch with reality and the consequences of different choices. You might say, "So what's going to happen if you don't take action? What is the consequence? Isn't that okay with you?" If he or she says, "No, that's not okay," then you can say, "Well

then, let's look at our Options."

Helping someone who initially feels hopeless is a bit like pushing a stalled car to get it moving from a stationary position. It's that initial movement that's the hardest. But once there's a bit of momentum in any direction, the pushing doesn't take as much effort.

The first objective is to shift the belief from "it can't be done" to "maybe there's a possibility here." In other words, help shift the Faith in order to engage the Fire and Focus. One approach is to use empathic listening. You may even need to start in the Reality phase of the process and ask the person to describe what he or she sees as hopeless. Then you could do a bit of probing -"How do you know this is hopeless? What is it that's telling you it's hopeless?"

At some point the person will probably get enough off his or her chest that you can say, "Now given what you've said, are you open to the possibility that there may be another way to look at this? If so, what might your goal be?" If you time that question right, it will begin to engage the person's Faith, Fire and Focus so that he or she can begin to move forward.

Managing Your Own Interference

"I worry that my coaching skills are so poor that they will come across as artificial and manipulative to the person I'm trying to help."

Those 800-pound gorillas in your head will always have something to say about anything you do. The trick in getting past their chatter is to focus on simply following the GROW process — even if you think it's going to be clunky. All the evidence I see is that even when the coach feels awkward in doing so, the performer doesn't experience it that way at all. This is because the GROW questions are not new to the performer. They're questions we all ask already; now we're simply asking them in a disciplined, ordered way that creates more Focus and reduces interference. In fact, you can just read them — even mechanically — and it doesn't come over as manipulative or artificial. Just be up front and make sure your motive is to help.

"Sometimes it's hard for me to see people's potential, and that throws me back to the outside-in approach — 'Just listen to me and do what I say!'"

Sometimes it is hard to suspend judgment and genuinely see someone's potential. I've got a judge in me that makes decisions about people just like anybody else. But I've learned to not believe everything that gorilla says to me. I make a conscious effort to look beyond what he's saying. I combine the results of that effort

with what I know about kids and learning and that's when I begin to see what's possible.

Everybody has the potential to perform better because everybody has a phenomenal ability to learn. We were all born with it — even that person in the organization you may have transferred out because you thought he was a disaster. Once upon a time, that person was a cute little one-year-old, hungry to learn and get into everything. What you're seeing now is a buildup of years of emotional defense against the world.

And as long as you judge him based on that buildup — "Oh, that's Chuck. That's just the way he is" you're going to be scanning for evidence to validate that belief. It's like what happens when you buy a red car or name your new baby "Aidan." Suddenly, you become amazingly aware of all the red cars on the freeway and all the boys who've recently been named "Aidan." So you'll be scanning for evidence to validate your perception of what you see as the present (not the potential) Chuck. As a result, you will never be able to help him get rid of the interference that's blocking his Faith, Fire, and Focus and contribute most meaningfully to the organization.

The Faith Behind the Focus and the Fire

I first met "Divot" at the National Sports Center for Wales in the winter of 1986, where he was training with the other members of the Welsh Amateur Golf Team. Born and raised in a mining town in South Wales, Divot was 20 years old.

He had a talent for golf that had enabled him to become a member of the national team. Even so, the national coach, who'd asked me to spend the weekend with the team, had taken me aside and said, "Don't waste too much time on this one. He's technically so poor he'll never make it. Besides, he's not the sharpest pencil in the box!"

By the end of the first day, there was one thing I knew for certain: If ever I saw a learner, this was one. Despite his discomfort, he was there, asking question after question and displaying all the symptoms of a rabid learner. So not only did I try to respond to his questions throughout the weekend; I continued to do so after the team event.

The more I engaged with Divot, the clearer it became to me that he had plenty of Fire. What we needed to address was his Focus and his Faith. Up to that point, he'd been focused on what he thought others believed

about him and their opinions had formed the basis of what he believed about himself. What we needed to do was help him shift his attention to something that would help him change his belief about himself.

As we worked together over the next few years, our Way Forward included three areas of Focus. First, to keep his mind quiet as he hit the ball, he would focus on saying "back" when his club reached the top of his backswing and "hit" when the clubface hit the ball. Second, to keep his mind quiet when he wasn't hitting the ball, he would focus on maintaining a confident and upright posture — the same posture he had when he played well. And third, to change his belief about himself in general, he would focus on changing some things he was paying attention to that were giving him negative messages.

What enabled him to develop and carry out these options was creating an environment in which he felt safe to process his own experience without fear of judgment or being pushed. The more we were able to remove the interference to his Faith, Fire and Focus, the more his learning increased and the more his performance improved.

At the time of this writing, Divot had taken first place three times on the European Tour, represented his country nine times in the World Cup and been featured in the top 50 of the Official World Golf Rankings. He was also ranked in the top 40 of the all-time money winners on the PGA European Golf Tour.

Your Own Way Forward: The finest service we can give to other human beings is to make it safe for them to explore their own experience.

This is when people begin to reconnect with their Faith, Fire and Focus. This is when they begin to dare to dream, to think about what's possible. This is when transformations and breakthroughs happen.

The Faith, Fire and Focus inside you is something that is truly amazing, and your ability to release it in yourself and others will not only transform you and those you help; it will transform the world.

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked You Already Know How to Be Great, you'll also like:

- 1. Now, Build a Great Business by Brian Tracy and Mark Thompson. This summary is filled with straightforward, powerful strategies to ignite growth in your business.
- 2. Great Work, Great Career by Stephen R. Covey and Jennifer Colosimo. How do your create a great career? Covey and change consultant Colosimo offer a complete handbook for anyone seeking answers.
- 3. Mojo by Marshall Goldsmith. In his follow up to What Got You Here Won't Get You There, #1 executive coach Marshall Goldsmith lays out the ways that we can get — and keep — our Mojo.