Welcome to the greatest year of your life. The events that will shape you are yet unknown, the global economic climate is uncertain, and everything outside of your control may seem unstable.

That is incredible news. There are several things you could do about this situation, but I invite you to focus and execute. Here’s what I mean: A teacher was working with his students in the art of archery. He set a wooden bird as the target and asked his students to aim at the eye of the bird. The first student was asked to describe what he saw. He said, “I see trees, branches, the leaves, the sky, the bird, and its eye.” The teacher then asked the second student the same question: “What do you see?” This student said, “I only see the eye of the bird.” The teacher said, “Very good. Shoot.” The second student’s arrow flew straight and hit the eye of the bird.

Until you focus, you cannot hit the target. As you think about your life, your business, and your career, here are five ways for you to be focused and confident:

WELCOME TO THE RECOMMENDATION ECONOMY
With the rise of Yelp, TripAdvisor, Google Places and LinkedIn, people organically recommend, like, and share their personal opinions. The internet has made word-of-mouth feedback digitally verifiable. With just a touch, a swipe, or a few clicks, anyone in the world can find out what others are saying about you, your brand, and the value of your product. According to the Local Consumer Review Survey (2012), approximately 72% of consumers surveyed said that they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations, while 52% said that positive online reviews make them more likely to use a local business.

Focus on how you will create a brilliant moment for every person who crosses your path—and particularly your online presence. Then ask those individuals to give you a recommendation that you can use online. Click here to see an example of what I’m talking about. If I can do it, then you can, too.
BE A HYBRID LEARNER
If you intend to be relevant in this global economy, then consider developing a new skill that can benefit you. Consider what you know already and think of ways you can expand upon your knowledge. For example, in twenty-five years, I have worked for six different companies in ten different jobs. Each employer and job gave me skills and knowledge that are benefiting me now in my own business.

Combine the different elements of your skills, know-how, genius, and proven solutions to be relevant in a fast-changing world. The benefits of being a hybrid allows you to be more collaborative, communicative, and creative. Click here to see an IBM CEO Study that can tell you more about how to become a hybrid learner—and leader.

RETHINK STRATEGY
In her book 11 Rules of Creating Value in the Social Era, Nilofer Merchant says, “Strategy as a separate concept from execution is a relic of the past. It is something that was created when organizations needed structure to direct people who didn’t have much education, where information was limited, and when markets and competitors moved slowly.” She goes onto say that we need to shift our approach from telling the strategy to co-creating it, so that the strategy is owned throughout the organization.

Here is the takeaway for you: Do you understand the “big picture” of your business and the thousands of choices that impact long-term results? If you do, then what about your team? Do they hold the same understanding? Be open, share as much as you can, and constantly get a pulse check to ensure proper alignment among your cohort.

For example, the head honchos at Rackspace, an IT hosting company in cloud computing, don’t really want their employees to have a job—they want their employees to have a life. Their strategy is built on core values such as results first; that is, substance over flash. They are committed to greatness, full disclosure, transparency, and a passion for work, and by carrying out these values every day, they determine the talent the folks at Rackspace attracts and the results they generate. Click here to see what makes the Rackspace brains brilliant.

Could it be time for you to rethink your strategy? If so, solicit input from those who know you and care about you. My friend, Mark Repkin, invited me to do it, and now I can’t wait to see how this new strategy unfolds over the next year.

SHIFT INTO CUSTOMER SCIENCE
Jim Clifton, Chairman of Gallup, says, “What customers at any level really want is somebody who deeply understands their needs and becomes a trusted partner or advisor. In other words, know more about your customer than anyone else.” (I love Clifton’s book The Coming Jobs War. It’s a must read.)

This concept is also proven in the competitive New York City restaurant industry. In a recent New York Times article, “What Restaurant Know (About You),” it is said that “hundreds of restaurants are now carefully tracking their patrons’ tastes, how much you ordered, tipped, and whether you were a table hog who lingered long after dessert.” This information is vital in a cutthroat industry. The purpose is to make the customers feel “the love” and recreate “The Cheers effect”—referring to the 1980s television
Five Ways to Be Confident in the Midst of Uncertainty

Do you know your best customers’ birthdays and anniversaries? Do you know the special people in their lives or what makes them tick? Learning the little—and big—details can help you build your business and further cement your relationship with your customer.

**Sitcom about the Boston bar where “everybody knows your name.”** [Click here](#) to read the New York Times article.

**“BRING IT” ECONOMY.**

Average is dead. History. Gone and never to be seen again—may it forever rest in peace. **Average** had a short life span, thankfully. It lived from January 1, 2012, and departed the universe on December 31, 2012. It has now been replaced by “Bring it,” which means stop talking about what you are going to do. Find your inner Madagascar and “move it…move it…get to it.” Simply put, be you. Be more. Be Brilliant!

There is no room anymore for the status quo. Your personal brand is on the line and you will have to show up, step up, and over deliver every second of the day. If you can’t “bring it” no one will relate to you or remember you, let alone recommend you—and why should they? Put yourself on the line. As the athletes would say, leave it all on the field. In the “bring it” economy, in the words of Seth Godin, “Small is the new big.” Focus on better by taking small steps everyday instead of racing to get bigger.

Here are the benefits to those who “Bring it”:

- You won’t have to ask people to like you on Facebook, follow you on Twitter, or repin your images on Pinterest. They will automatically do it.
- Your mind will begin to notice the uncommon in the common.
- You attract new relationships that stretch your thinking and expand your capacity to make a bigger difference in the world.
- You shift into an environment where you are valued for your contribution instead of for your tolerance for being present.

Yes, my friend, focus and execution is possible when you decide to be confident in the midst of uncertainty. How? By protecting the most important economy—the one between your ears.
MEET SIMON T. BAILEY

Simon T. Bailey is a Motivational Thought Leader who equips leaders and employees with practical tools and solutions. His insights are based on his work with 1,000 organizations on six continents. He has also written a bestselling book – Release Your Brilliance, published by HarperCollins and ranked #17 of the Top 100 books being read by Corporate America and his new book The Vuja de Moment – Shift from Average to Brilliant.

After working as Sales Director at the world-renowned Disney Institute, Simon founded Brilliance Institute, which designs and delivers its own proprietary curriculum on leadership, employee, and customer experience. The result of this work is increased engagement, personal accountability, and customer retention. He can be reached at www.simontbailey.com.