

My name is Kyle. I'm the [Red Paperclip](#) guy. But before I got started on that story, I want to draw attention to this slide behind me: on the beginning of every TED video out there, what it's called the screenshot that precedes the video there everyone standing like this, all of them. So we would demand more from TED, post comments online **poking fun at** this, we need better screenshots for these videos. We can make a better world of TED with better screenshots.

On to the paperclip though, this kind of crazy idea I had when I was about 10 years ago, I was looking down at my desk and I saw a red paperclip sitting there. And I said you know what I remember this game called Bigger and Better where you start with something small and you trade it for something bigger and then you repeat. I wondered what would happen if I took this red paperclip and tried to trade it. So I posted a picture of that red paperclip on a website called craigslist and two girls named Ronnie and Karina responded and said, "Hey, that's pretty cool! We'd like to trade with you. We got a pen shaped like a fish." I was really excited. This is a cool pen. This is bigger and better than a red paperclip, how far can I go with this idea.

Anybody want a pen shaped like a fish? "Absolutely. My name is Annie and I've got a door knob with a crazy face on it." Two trades in, I've already gone way up from a paperclip and I was thinking like **how far can I go with this?** Maybe I can keep going until like one day own a house or something from this.

Shawn says, "Come down to my place I'll cook your burgers and I'll trade you my camping stove for that door knob because I need it to fix the knob on my stovetop espresso maker. We're moving assets — moving liabilities into assets were creating value, were improving each other's lives, albeit on a small scale. But the Sergeant David J of the US Marine Corps, he said, "I've been looking for that exact model of camping stove and I've got extra generators; would you like an electric generator?" And to me this was a **dream come true**: an electric generator finally my teenage dreams of being able to create power were realizing.

Unfortunately, most people on the internet didn't **suffer from a blackout**, they didn't need power. So my trading in for bigger and better things that I thought had value turned into a liability and it took me several weeks to be able to trade this. But I actually found another person just recently out of his teenage years who did want to create power of this generator and his name is Martin and he was in New York City and he says, "Look, I've got an empty beer keg, I'll trade you an IOU to fill the keg of beer and a neon with Budweiser sign, and what do you say?" So I met up with him, we made the trade and here's us showing all parts of the trade work.

I rebranded the **mishmash** of IOU beer keg and the Budweiser sign and called it an instant party. Does anybody out there want to party? "My name is Michel Brett, I'm a famous radio and TV personality in the province of Quebec and I want to make a trade with you."

"Absolutely! Michel, what do you have to trade?"

"I'll trade you my worst snowmobile." I was intrigued just by the idea of somebody's worst snowmobile, and implied that he had not only had more than one snowmobile, but he was kind of cheeky and willing to prove to me that 'you know I've got better ones but I'll trade you my worst'. I was really happy to trade with him, he was a great guy and it was a pretty nice snowmobile. Seeing how is the middle of winter in Canada and it was very cold and it was the kind of thing where a snowmobile at that time of year had more value than in the summer, a snowmobile magazine called [SnoRiders West](#) called me up and said, "Hey, we would like to offer you two trips for two to the Canadian Rockies in exchange for that snowmobile. It will probably give our magazine some publicity" and who doesn't want to go to the Rockies at this time of the year? I said yes and I said, 'All right. **What's the catch?**' And they said, "The catch is you can come to the Rockies you can't come to the town of Yak in British Columbia." And I said, "All right. Well I got to **find a loophole** around this."

We decided to kind of blackmail a national news organization, it's a really long story but what ended up happening was I got on TV wearing the logo for the shirt I was wearing, it was called [Cintas](#), the uniform company and it was just sort of an **inside joke** my cousin's husband had given me this shirt and even longer story to explain the whole thing, however the **head honcho** of that company saw me on TV with his corporate uniform on, and said, 'Wait a second. This is a huge liability to me, but it's also an opportunity' And we met up one night, he says, 'I'd like to make you a trade. What do you say?' And I am like I think that's the perfect way we can work together without **selling our souls** to the corporate ownership devil, and he said great, let's meet up.

So we met up, he offered to trade this van for the trip for two to the Rockies, I drove the van to the Rockies, he flew because the trip included that and I wound up with this giant huge machine much bigger than a paperclip, arguably better, worst fuel mileage but to transport a lot better things than just that. So I said, does anybody out there want to trade? And I realized bigger and better was just really getting bigger but how could it get better, what was the opportunity here? And I realized that I've been offered a recording contract, piece of paper promise, an opportunity to someone who is good at music. Does anybody want to be a recording artist? So I traded the van for the recording contract with Brandon, he used it to drive around in his band which was currently traveling around, in 1988 Volkswagen Jetta moving up to the van really helped him out. I took the recording contract.

'Does anybody want to be a recording artist?' And it turns out pretty much everyone in the world wants to record music. I was offered my soul from a soul singer, a **pinky finger**, someone actually offered me their virginity which is I don't know what the legalities or needless to say I said no because Jody said to me, "Look, I've got a half a duplex in Phoenix, Arizona, half of it's unrented, I'd like to trade you a year free rent in my duplex for that, what do you say?" I said yes, I went down there, we made the trade in front of the white picket fence, very Americana and now had a year free rent. Her next door, it wasn't one of our tenants actually — her next door neighbor Leslie found out about this and she says, I want that free rent. So she offered me up and afternoon with her boss and at first I was kind of like this, who, because I didn't know who her boss was and then she stood up, I'll bring them out and then like well this is kind of weird .She brings out her boss. Her boss was Alice Cooper because she worked at Alice

Cooper's town in Phoenix, AZ as the manager of the restaurant. So I was like an afternoon, Alice Cooper that's pretty amazing, what's it going to be worth. His tour manager called me up and says we're on tour in Fargo, North Dakota; why don't you come up, experience an afternoon with Alice Cooper and see what it's like. And then after our afternoon this happened live on stage.

Alice is a really nice guy, this picture displays how nice he is. Look, it's great you're doing this, you're going to find an Italian billionaire who's a big Alice Cooper fan, you probably have several mansions, he'd easily trade you one of them, can you promise me one thing what's that. You promise you won't trade an afternoon with me for a weekend with Rolling Stones or a night with KISS, I said, all right I'll try. And the phone rang and it was Mark. Mark says I'm an amateur photographer and I've got a lot of KISS memorabilia, would you be interested in any of that? I was like that's hard because I really want to trade with this guy. 'But what do you have?' And he says well I got this, I got that, I got KISS posters, I got KISS guitars, I got a KISS snow globe, when he said KISS snow globe I immediately said yes, and only the snow globe.

When I went up, met up with Mark, traded the afternoon with Alice Cooper a **priceless opportunity** for a KISS snow globe and the whole world kind of sort of like — and I was like this is great, lights up, changes colors.

Here's some of the various online responses from the video. 'This is the worst trade that I've ever heard of, **bar none**'. 'This is possibly the dumbest decision I've ever seen anyone make ever except for the people' and other people were much more **eloquent** in their delivery and this was the only time during the entire project where I had another trade **lined up**. Every other trade had come along **serendipitously** and it'd just been this amazing experience.

However two months previous all this, this guy had called me up and said, 'Hey, my name is Corbin Bernsen. I'm a huge Hollywood actor, I'm making a movie and I would like to offer a paid speaking **credited role** in a Hollywood film. Would you be interested in trading for that?' I had just done the recording contract trade and I was like yes absolutely, this sounds perfect. He hung up the phone and I'm like Corbin Bernsen, who is this guy? **Turns out** he is very well known, he's been in many major movies and he also according to Wikipedia has the world's largest snow globe collection, over 6,500 snow globes. Since it was Wikipedia, I knew it was true and I just sort of **kept it in the back of my head**. And when Mark said he had a KISS snow globe, I was like, it's perfect, I called Corbin, "Corbin, you want the KISS snow globe?" He was like, 'send me a picture'. I sent him a picture, Corbin called back, "Not only do I want it, I need it."

And while these comments were coming in like dumbasses et cetera, I had no backup plan and luckily for the project and for Corbin he didn't get hit by a bus and he was still alive and we made a trade and he showed us into his snow globe layer of over 6,000 snow globes which looks kind of like this. Following this, the economic development officer of the town of Kipling, Saskatchewan, a fellow named Bert Roth, called me up and said, 'We see that you've been doing this project. Our town has a couple extra houses that we own. Would there be a potential that maybe we could trade one of these houses for something you have?' And I said, 'Well, right now I have a role in the movie.' He is like 'Oh, that'd be perfect. What we were thinking is having a huge **house warming** party, a huge celebration inviting everyone in the world to come to Kipling and we could offer an opportunity, we will call it Kipling Idol and we'll have live auditions for the movie role here right in town.' And I said, 'That's absolutely perfect, Bert. What do you need to do to make this happen?' He's like, 'Well we need town council approval.' I said, 'All right. Well if you can get it that'd be great.'

He called me back two weeks later, he's like 'I did it, I got town council approval, we can make the trade.' Turns out town council approval was getting two people to put their hand in the air but **full credit to Bert** he made it happen. And we traveled to Kipling and there we are. That's how you treat a paper clip for a house and that's the house. The best part about this whole project though is fun, making the trades for things, it's easier to tell the story with the objects but it was the people behind it and in Kipling apparently they have mount [ph] used to sign the deeds to house when you make a trade. We had a huge house warming party, over 3,500 people came to the town of Kipling, the town of under a thousand people for an entire weekend, there was live auditions on stage, 500, 600 people in the crowd including the volunteer fire department, in a capacity 300-person building. So yeah, they **let it slide** but it was an amazing amazing experience. Corbin Bernsen went out on stage the next day in town and said here's the winner of the movie role and written on his back was the name Nolan Hubbard. Nolan Hubbard had just graduated from high school, was making minimum wage at [The Bottle Depot](#) and two months after this picture was taken he was down in Los Angeles working on a film with Corbin, an amazingly talented person who without this opportunity to make a film might have not had that chance. And it was all about the people saying yes, let's build something, let's do something together, let's collaborate, let's see what happens. That was what One paperclip was all about.

And at this house warming party in Kipling, Saskatchewan, Karina had the original red paperclip around her neck in a picture frame, and people were saying to me like wow you treated her with a paper clip, but don't you wish you had it back now. That's got to be worth a lot of money. That's got to be, it's really famous and I said to them that day what I still say today: it wasn't about the paper clip, it's not about having it or selling it for what it's worth. If I hadn't traded away that red paperclip, I'd just be a guy sitting there at a desk holding a paper clip in his hand, wondering what would happen if I did something with the paper clip. So if you have a paperclip, trade it away. You might only get a fish pan but it might be the single step that leads to an amazing journey and for me that journey will be off this red circle. So I wish you the best.