



Sustainably Successful:
The Balance Between Kindness and Hard Work
Anne Deegan

1. Gary Vaynerchuk, a powerful entrepreneur and motivational speaker, serves as a constant reminder of human potential. Having immigrated to the United States from the Soviet Union, Vaynerchuk faced brutal adversity that, to many, would mean impossible obstacles and discouraging limitations (“Gary Vaynerchuk”). Instead, thanks to a positive perspective and persevering dedication, Vaynerchuk has overcome his challenges to become an influential figure committed to encouraging others. Furthermore, despite struggling academically, Vaynerchuk’s success in the business world is a result of his core values—kindness and hard work. By having the ability to execute, influence, and build relationships, he naturally succeeds at capturing the attention of extensive fan-base. In addition, because he is an achiever, has a positive mindset, and displays extensive communication skills, Vaynerchuk develops rhetorical strategies to spark change within his listeners, including myself. In a fast-paced and competitive environment, it is easy to lose sight of what is important in life. Whilst extremely successful, Vaynerchuk reminds me that kindness is the basis of prosperity and without it, we can only get so far. Additionally, it is easy to get wrapped up in the idea that success is the result of luck, when in reality, it is the outcome of pure hard work and dedication. All in all, Vaynerchuk sparks my desire to accomplish my dreams, while, most importantly, being the best person I can be. In an interview with Tom Bilyeu, Gary Vaynerchuk enthusiastically shares his knowledge, incorporating *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, to argue that hard work and kindness lead to a successful life.
2. First, Gary Vaynerchuk’s proven success in the business world

Keywords: rhetorical superhero, argument, hard work, audience, kindness, success, interview, profile

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as well as his confidence in the delivery of his messages proves his credibility and, therefore, confirms ethos throughout his speech. Vaynerchuk's entrepreneurial skills were evident from a young age when he started a lemonade franchise at the age of seven and sold thousands of dollars worth of baseball cards as a teen ("Gary Vaynerchuk"). Then, with the development of the internet, Vaynerchuk turned his father's local, discount liquor store into a company accomplishing sixty million dollars in sales ("Gary Vaynerchuk"). However, it doesn't stop there.

Vaynerchuk successfully founded the company, Vaynermedia, which assists major companies such as PepsiCo and Johnson & Johnson in creating social media platforms. Finally, to top it all off, Vaynerchuk has written five New York Times best selling books focused on sharing his knowledge and skills ("Gary Vaynerchuk"). Because the purpose of the interview is to introduce listeners to the ideas that will help them achieve their dreams, proven success is critical for potential persuasion and trust within the audience. With established credibility and proof that Vaynerchuk knows how to successfully accomplish his goals, his audience becomes accepting of his advice and increasingly open to his opinion. Because he has overcome adversity to become a successful achiever, it is clear that Vaynerchuk not only has the capability to talk about accomplishing aspirations, but he has lived a life that perfectly reflects the topic. In addition to proven success, Vaynerchuk's own personal branding and confidence is translated into trust within the audience. Throughout the interview, Vaynerchuk does not hesitate to express his talents and prosperity. For example, when talking about young entrepreneurs, Vaynerchuk proudly states, "before you tell me that you're gonna be bigger than



Figure 1: Gary Vaynerchuk gives a speech on the positive economic impacts of building relationships on social media.

me, start thinking about what you're doing" (Bilyeu)¹. In addition, Vaynerchuk openly reveals that he is more successful than other people simply because he works harder than them. Although candid, Vaynerchuk's honesty and confidence in his achievements reveal his capability and fitness to give advice to a willing and motivated audience. In fact, in order for trust to be established, one must first display confidence in their own beliefs and strengths. Then, after *ethos* is constructed, the intended message gains value and the audience is one step closer to change. In rhetorical situations, *ethos* is necessary for persuasion to be accomplished and an argument is only strong when the person delivering the message has the credibility to do so. Overall, Vaynerchuk did not become a leading entrepreneur through luck and hope, and he makes that clear through powerful statements and straight-forward assertions. Through hard work, Gary Vaynerchuk has become an achiever with the self-assurance and credibility to stress the necessity of dedication and perseverance to success.

3. Secondly, Gary Vaynerchuk's positivity and appeal to emotions incorporates pathos and creates an opportunity to discuss perspective and promote kindness. At the beginning of the interview, when referring to the current state of the world, Vaynerchuk states, "it's never been better to be a human being," and "it breaks [his] heart" when he watches what people complain about (Bilyeu). In a time when "people literally complain when somebody gives them the wrong amount of extra cream in a Starbucks six dollar coffee", Vaynerchuk acknowledges the flaw in our current state of thinking and uses his positive perspective as an example for his audience (Bilyeu). Through vivid language such as "breaks my heart" and "never been better", Vaynerchuk appeals to the emotions and morals of his listeners (Bilyeu). In a society where poverty and hardship overwhelm millions of people, Vaynerchuk prompts empathetic values through a humbling reminder to be grateful for what we have. As opposed to attacking and blaming, Vaynerchuk calmly sympathizes through relatable examples and inspirational word choice. Similarly, because he recognizes that harsh criticism does not lead to persuasion, Vaynerchuk chooses an un conventionally hopeful and sympathetic route focused on changing the mindsets of his followers. All in all, people want to be understood and Vaynerchuk's optimism and mind-altering statements successfully opens doors that create

acceptance within his audience. In addition to the necessity of a positive perspective, Vaynerchuk appeals to a common, universal value--kindness. Throughout the interview, Vaynerchuk pushes forth the notion that "doing good for other people is a good strategy" in both the business and social world (Bilyeu). In fact, he even states that his number one goal is to "trick the business world into becoming kinder" (Bilyeu). In a society where people are constantly competing and fighting for success, it is surprising and encouraging to relate kindness with a corporate environment. Furthermore, seeing a successful businessperson display acts of kindness as well as promote it in a typically cut-throat environment, appeals to positive emotions and encourages a change of heart. Overall, by captivating the emotions of his listeners, Vaynerchuk proves that his positivity and kindness are the foundation of his success. Then, by living a publicly successful life based on goodwill, his audience is successfully persuaded that optimism and kindness are essential to prosperity.

4. Next, Gary Vaynerchuk's extensive communication skills establish *logos*, creating structure and reason within the discussion. Vaynerchuk starts with the overarching argument that "everyone is good at sending a tweet about how the world should be and nobody's doing anything about it" (Bilyeu). In other words, Vaynerchuk claims that as a society, we need to take action and be proactive in order to be successful. Then, throughout the rest of the interview, Vaynerchuk gives encouraging and powerful examples, analogies, and metaphors that support his initial claim. For example, when saying that "work ethic is a taught behavior", he gives a personal example of getting healthier at the gym and, therefore, argues that we must push ourselves in order to learn hard work (Bilyeu). Also, when he said that "life is broken down into complaining and not", he talks about his friends who make a choice to work all day and then complain about not seeing their families (Bilyeu). By making this claim, he argues that we must take responsibility for our actions and take charge of our attitudes in order to be successful. Lastly, at the end of the interview, Vaynerchuk ends with a positive call to action by stating that change is, in fact, possible through kindness and hard work. Through personal references and examples, Vaynerchuk provides proof and logic to support his claim that, when it comes to being successful, actions towards success are more powerful than words. Just like in writing, evidence and commentary is needed to

support an opinionated claim, and when an argument is unclear or difficult to follow, the audience loses focus and the argument, therefore, loses effectiveness. In this case, by supplying relatable, powerful examples, and adding structure, Vaynerchuk creates an argument that is straightforward, understandable, and successfully rhetorical. Overall, by having the ability to effectively communicate and supply logic for his arguments, Vaynerchuk uses *logos* to engage and persuade his followers.

5. In summary, Gary Vaynerchuk has three major strengths that make him a successful rhetor. First, Vaynerchuk is an achiever with the credibility to encourage hard work and establish trust within his audience. Second, he is positive and, therefore, appeals to hopeful and kind emotions. Third, he is a communicator with the ability to structure his arguments and provide proof to support his claims. Fundamentally, these three strengths are the basis for *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* and fall under his powers to execute, build relationships, and influence. Importantly, proof that Vaynerchuk is a successful rhetor lies within his massive and growing social media following. With over 8 million followers on Instagram and 2.8 million followers on YouTube, it is evident that individuals around the world are actively persuaded and inspired by the words of Gary Vaynerchuk. Through encouraging speeches and motivational posts, Vaynerchuk uses his success as an example for aspiring business owners, like me. As passionately stated at the end of the interview, his hope is that “kids who aren’t even born today think they can build a five billion dollar company and be a great guy or gal” (Bilyeu). In conclusion, being the kind and hard working person he is, Gary Vaynerchuk has chosen a compassionate and generous life focused on the success of future generations.

¹ All quotes cited as “(Bilyeu)” are stated by Gary Vaynerchuk, himself. However, these quotes happen to come from an interview published by the interviewer, Tom Bilyeu.

Works Cited

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Project Two: Rhetorical Superhero (20%)

Our second project this semester invites you to develop an account of an especially effective *everyday* rhetor – someone who, in speech or in writing, proved persuasive in a specific situation. We will consider this effective communicator to be a “rhetorical superhero.” This means that your account should examine the specific qualities, tactics, or “powers” the person put to use in changing the hearts, minds, or actions of others or in compelling assent (i.e., getting people to nod their heads in agreement).

To begin, you should begin to think about what makes a superhero super. Superheroes have special powers, right? They are usually able to adapt their identities in such a way that foregrounds some distinctive measure of speed, strength, magic, or energy. In *Understanding Rhetoric*, although the figure is purely fictional, [Metamorph](#), should begin to give you ideas about what a rhetorical superhero might do. Another source of ideas might be the [Clifton Strengths assessment](#). All first-year students at Virginia Tech complete. Strengths, in this context, are qualities that distinguish one person from the next and that help us make choices about how we want to develop, sometimes by keying on what we are already good at, and sometimes by finding opportunities for growth in areas we might not already be as proficient with.

As you begin to write, remember that this is a *profile* piece. It should be focused on one person in a specific situation. Once you have a specific person, place, event, and rhetorical artifact (speech or document), you have what you need to make the case for your rhetorical superhero. Your challenge is to tell readers about the person, to provide a fully developed description of the situation, and to use rhetorical terms such as *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, and *kairos* to account for the rhetor’s effectiveness. Evidence for this work might include memory (what you remember about the event), an artifact (a copy of the effective document or a transcript of a speech), a photograph or video, an interview with the rhetor, or second-hand accounts from others who witnessed the event. Evidence for this work might include memory (what you remember about the event), a text (a copy of the effective document or a transcript of a speech), a photograph or video, an interview with the rhetor, or second-hand accounts from others who witnessed the event (people at the event or comments on the YouTube video would both work as evidence for this paper).

Selecting a suitable figure or person and locating the moment or text through which they were distinctly effective are among the most important dimensions of this work. Consider focusing on someone whom you find to be inspirational or interesting in the way that they make their points and use rhetoric. In identifying a “rhetorical superhero” you may choose someone who has personally impacted or affected you through their speech, writing, or

composition (this could include art, music, family, religion, culture, sports, etc.). As a guiding premise, I urge you to stay away from those whose speeches and language have been analyzed prolifically--prominent and well-documented or long-analyzed public figures, such as politicians and celebrities. Instead, identify someone with a lesser-known profile such that your work, your accounting for their rhetorical heroics, stands out as a distinctive perspective that is yours.

Generating Questions

- How does rhetoric work? What does a rhetorical situation involve?
- What kinds of powers or special qualities might a rhetorical superhero exhibit?
- What other tools or devices did the rhetorical superhero make use of in this case? Provide a detailed description (and/or an illustration of photo) of what those tools or devices are. How did the rhetor learn to use them? Do you think the uses were strategic and planned? Or accidental and improvised? Why?
- How did their command of rhetoric, whether they knew they were commanding it or not, affect you?
- How can you tell how the message affected others? Do you consider these reliable and telling indicators of the message's effectiveness? Why?
- What are their "superpowers" that make them so rhetorically special?
- What would be the equivalent of a rhetorical superhero's weakness or vulnerability? Is there any evidence that in this case things did not go well at any point in the lead-up, development, circulation, or reception of the message?
- How was this person involved in a rhetorical situation? What was the exigence (or occasion), who was the audience, and what were the constraints (e.g., attitudes or values held by those involved) in this situation?

Deadlines and Specifications

- A half-draft of at least 700 words is due in your Google Folder (as a Google Doc) and posted for Peer Review no later than the end of the day on Tuesday, October 13 (11:59 p.m.).
- Project Two and Invention Portfolio are due in your Google Folder no later than the end of the day on Sunday, October 25 (11:59 p.m.).
- At least five pages, typed and double-spaced (i.e., 1400 words)
- A title that adheres to the model, Catchphrase: Description, all the better if it has a playful, memorable turn of phrase in the first half
- Required: One image or figure incorporated with a caption (image description)

Boosts (optional)

Boosts are value-added badges, of sorts. They offer you the incentive of doing something a little extra both to level-up your writing practice and also to gain experience with some aspect of development that will enrich your work. To claim a boost, simply add a note in your project at the location where you have applied the boost, like this [Boost One - Photographic Evidence] or [Boost Two - Social Media]. There are two three boosts available for Project Two. Each will also bear inflection in your project's evaluation, benefiting the project with a slight increase in credit.

Boost One - Photographic Evidence

Include a photograph of the rhetor. It's preferable if this is a personal or family photo, perhaps one you take yourself. If you use a photo taken by someone else, be sure to give credit to the photographer in the image caption.

Boost Two - Social Media

Include a tweet and/or Instagram/social media caption that goes with your project. To earn this boost, you must actually post the message to social media and use the hashtags #rhetoricalsuperhero and #hokieswrite. Think of this as a promotional extension of your project .

Boost Three - Sent Reflective Letter

During Week Nine, you will develop a reflective cover letter addressed to someone who has been influential in your literacy development (a family member, a teacher, a mentor, or friend). You will earn an additional boost for actually sending the letter about what have learned in Project Two by addressing the letter to them and actually sending it. To verify that the message was sent, bcc your instructor at Lshafer3@vt.edu

Invention Portfolio Contents

The invention portfolio amounts to a small collection of writings, notes, reflections, and annotations that lend a broader base to your thinking through and deciding about directions to take for Project Two. Invention is a key rhetorical concept in that it names the processes and practices relating to how we come up with what we write or what we say when we speak. With this in mind, the Invention Portfolio is a collection of smaller, everyday writing prompted for you do as the project begins to take shape.

(Note: This list may change at our time on the project unfolds.)

Grading Breakdown and Rubric

Grades for Project Two will be returned to in Canvas using the rubric tool and Grades area of the course. The rubric assigns values to the following criteria:

Project Two - Reading Spaces

- o Superhero Profile - The project presents a vivid impression of the rhetorical superhero, the situation in which they were effective, and the means by which they were rhetorically effective.
- o Specific accounts of qualities that include rhetorical vocabulary/terminology - The project elaborates at least three rhetorical qualities using vocabulary introduced in the readings associated with the project.
- o Balanced and purposefully arranged moments - The descriptive accounts are balanced (approximately equal length) and arranged with purpose.
- o Overall development (inc. title and length) - The project honors specifications concerning title, length, and any other formatting noted in class.
- o Style - The project reflects control and consistency, which is evident in the presentation of understandable, accessible syntax (word order) and diction (word choice), regardless of multilingual and vernacular variation.
- Invention Portfolio - Evaluated based on the pattern of checks, check-plusses, and check-minuses in the collection of shorter written work. (questions 1, 2, & 3 above.)