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**The Last Safe Investment:  
Spending Now to  
Increase Your True  
Wealth Forever**

Made by Blinkist



These key insights in blinks were written by a team of experts at Blinkist. We screen the world of nonfiction to choose the very best books. Then, we read them deeply and transform them into this concise format that brings you the most inspiring ideas from the text.

Maybe these blinks will inspire you to dig deeper, or maybe they're enough to start you thinking and then on to something new. However you read blinks, we hope they help you become an even brighter you.

**What's in it for me? Learn how to invest in the one asset whose value is unaffected by economic changes.**

Like most people, you're aware that if you want to retire with confidence, you need a financial plan. Your plan is based on the advice of financial experts, so you make additional contributions to your pension fund, save every cent possible, generate interest through compounding accounts, and invest as much as you can.

But what happens if interest rates drop, the stock market

crashes, or your portfolio becomes worthless overnight? If the bulk of your financial plan relies on circumstances you can't control, how can you ever feel secure?

If only there were something you could invest in whose value didn't change due to external factors. Something that had the potential to continuously generate wealth. Well, that something does exist. Not only will it revolutionize how you think about wealth, it will significantly increase how happy you are now, so you don't need to hold off enjoying life until retirement.

What is this extraordinary asset?  
It's you.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- what a urinal can teach us about innovation in the workplace;
- how your sex life affects your work performance; and
- why getting paid in money isn't always the best financial option.



**To safeguard your future, shift your focus from finances to earning potential.**

What does financial security look like to you? Is it a huge savings fund that generates enough interest to cover your living costs? Or perhaps it's an extensive investment portfolio. Or it might even mean having a well-paid job in a company that values you.

All these scenarios align with the advice that most financial advisers give. But they have one major flaw: they all rely on factors that are beyond your

control. You could lose your job through no fault of your own. The stock market could crash. Your living costs could unexpectedly change.

But there's something you can invest in that won't ever lose its value, regardless of the state of the world. That something is you.

**The key message here is: To safeguard your future, shift your focus from finances to earning potential.**

What happens to stocks and investments is largely out of your control, which makes most

financial plans risky. But if you place yourself at the center of your plan, you can start working toward true wealth. True wealth acknowledges that money alone won't make you happy. As a human, you also need freedom, love, the potential to grow and learn, and the scope to be creative.

Based on this concept, the authors have developed an alternative financial plan called SAFE. SAFE stands for *self-amplifying financial ecosystem*. It's a model that creates financial safety by focusing on three disciplines that support the growth of three key assets:

your savings pot; your equity;  
and your tribe.

Don't be put off by the word "discipline." SAFE isn't one of those financial plans that's designed to make your life miserable. It takes your happiness seriously by increasing how much you enjoy life today, rather than expecting you to defer it until you retire.

Following SAFE's disciplines will help you develop super skills – the soundest way to maximize your earning potential. What's more, you'll see how the SAFE plan can give you financial security and, in the process,

ensure you achieve far more than your savings target. You'll discover a way of life that makes you feel supported, connected and free.



**Investing in your happiness will help you get more out of life. It will also help you save.**

How often do you find yourself spending money as a shortcut to happiness? If you add up the emotional purchases you made in the past 12 months, how much have you spent? Did those gadgets and clothes bring you lasting joy, or did you pull out the credit card again a week later?

Most people think that earning more money will make them happier. But happiness can get very expensive if we believe it

comes from spending more. To increase your wealth, it's actually far more useful to explore what's undermining your happiness.

**The key message here is:  
Investing in your happiness will help you get more out of life. It will also help you save.**

Increasing your *Happiness Exchange Rate* and spending wisely are the first two SAFE disciplines, and they're closely connected. Your Happiness Exchange Rate is the amount of happiness you get from the purchases you make. If something is very expensive and

doesn't bring you lasting joy, it has a low exchange rate. For example, say you take your partner to a fancy restaurant but spend the whole time stressing about a work deadline. In the end, you'll have spent lots of money but you won't feel happy, and your partner probably won't either.

Thinking about your spending in terms of your Happiness Exchange Rate means understanding what brings lasting happiness into your life. Before you buy anything, get into the habit of identifying what benefit that purchase will give you. An expensive meal with

your partner is worth it, if it leads to intimacy. But if you buy new clothes every week because you're trying to relieve stress at work, you're wasting money. You'd be better off investing in a yoga course to improve your health and help you manage stress.

Paying attention to what's motivating your spending can help you uncover the parts of your life that need tending to. Maybe you need to invest in fitness, therapy, or other healing processes. These are sound investments. Each will contribute to your future happiness, which will reduce

your emotional spending,  
allowing you to put the money  
you might otherwise have  
wasted into your savings  
account.

Now that we've looked at how  
you can save more, let's think  
about how you can earn more  
by adopting the final SAFE  
discipline: increasing your value  
in the workplace. And you do  
that, by developing *super skills*.



**By investing in your interpersonal skills, you position yourself as a leader.**

Raj Bandyopadhyay, an Atlanta-based software engineer, is feeling discouraged. He dreams of working in data science, but knows that thousands of his peers have the same dream. There's only one way to get his foot in the door: Raj needs to connect with industry leaders.

He figures he can attend some local networking events but, after doing a little research, he discovers that there aren't any. So, even though he has no

experience, he decides to create his own: a weekly meetup with a guest speaker from the tech industry. Over time, attendance increases and Raj becomes well known. In just 12 months, he goes from being invisible to getting headhunted by a hot new start-up looking to appoint a chief data scientist.

**The key message here is: By investing in your interpersonal skills, you position yourself as a leader.**

Raj's story illustrates the importance of *interpersonal skills* – the first SAFE super skill you'll need if you want to

increase your value in the workplace. Interpersonal skills cover a range of important leadership abilities, like networking, public speaking, and influencing others.

Of these, the most important for leaders is *influence*. If you can bring people around to your point of view, you'll make more sales, secure more clients, and increase your team's productivity. All of which will make you extremely valuable to any employer, no matter what field you work in.

The ability to influence others is closely linked to the ability to

empathize with them. In fact, research conducted by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner has shown that true leadership is less about personal charisma and more about empathy. And since using influence means engaging people's minds and their hearts, this means anyone can be a leader regardless of their job title, including you.

To increase your empathy and apply influence, reflect deeply on the people around you and their values. For example, you might manage a team of volunteers who are passionate about supporting crisis victims. They already work hard, but you

need them to double the number of shifts they do, which will mean motivating them to give more time to your organization. To do this, you'll need to connect with them emotionally, perhaps by stressing the difference they're making in people's lives.

The more sincerely passionate you are, the greater the chance you'll have of influencing others. And if you can master this art, you'll rise up the ranks of the workplace, where the earning potential is highest.



**Consciously developing your creativity will make your career sustainable.**

In 2004, art experts named Marcel Duchamp's *The Fountain* as the most influential artwork of the twentieth century. It is not, however, a magnificent painting akin to the works of Dalí or Picasso. It is a standard urinal, which the artist bought in a showroom.

How could something that Duchamp didn't even make be so significant?

It's because this common urinal represents the birth of conceptual art, redefining the relationship between a work's merit and an artist's labor. What mattered was how innovative the piece was, not how well Duchamp wielded his paintbrush.

**The key message here is:  
Consciously developing your  
creativity will make your career  
sustainable.**

Many people think of creativity as something you're born with – you either have it or you don't. But creativity isn't a limited skill, it's one you can develop,

whether or not you're naturally gifted. It's also highly valued by employers, because it's something machines can't do as well as humans. In the age of artificial intelligence and cheap, offshore labor, managing your career creatively can protect your long-term prospects. Which is why it's a SAFE super skill.

In business, creativity is often referred to as innovation. Innovation occurs when you explore how atypical ideas can be used in processes or projects to achieve better outcomes. You can learn to think innovatively by exposing yourself to new

ways of thinking. Make an effort to spend time with people whose lives look nothing like your own. You don't need to agree with them or change your own values. The point is to open yourself up to different perspectives.

Practicing this openness means getting used to feeling uncomfortable. Which isn't easy because it means going outside your comfort zone and exploring the unfamiliar. But if you don't look for new ideas, you'll just end up rehashing existing ones – and that's not true innovation.

If you embrace every new idea that comes to you and nurture it, you'll find that creativity begets creativity. Innovative solutions are what pull a business through changes in market demand. So, by making creativity a habit, you'll transform yourself into a valuable workplace asset that can't easily be replaced.

*“The more you love the seedlings that sprout in your mind, the more fertile the mind itself becomes.”*

**You don't need high-level technical skills to be valuable to a tech-based company.**

On his first day as president of a construction company, Lee Franklin was thrown in at the deep end. He was put in charge of building 28 cell sites for a phone company in just six months. It was an intimidating challenge. Lee had no technical knowledge about how cell sites worked, and it usually took 18 months to build just one.

But Lee possessed a super skill that made him perfect for the job. He knew how to create a

*mental model* – a sort of schematic diagram that helped him gain an overview of the relevant technical knowledge. It meant he could work effectively on technical projects, and alongside professionals with decades of experience, without needing that know-how himself.

**The key message here is: You don't need high-level technical skills to be valuable to a tech-based company.**

So what exactly is a mental model?

A mental model is a diagram which explains how processes,

inputs, and outputs interact to achieve a particular outcome. Think of it as an architect's model that gives you a sense of how a building looks, without getting bogged down by small details. We can see it in action by using a simple example: making a sandwich to eat for lunch.

The first step to creating your model is to identify all the processes. Processes are always verbs, so in this example, they're "shopping," "assembling," and "eating." Write these words in boxes in a row, with gaps in between, in the order that you would do them.

Now, think about your inputs and outputs. These are the elements that feed into and then out of each process. In our example, the output of your shopping process is “ingredients,” which inputs to the “assembling” process, the output of which is “the sandwich,” leading to your final process – “eating!” Draw arrows between your process boxes and write your inputs and outputs above each one, leading from box to box. This is your mental model.

In the workplace, mental models act as a bridge between technical and nontechnical

people. If you know how to create them, you'll significantly increase the number of job opportunities available to you. This means your earning potential won't ever be limited by a lack of technical knowledge.



**Investing in your well-being fosters powerful skills that generate true wealth.**

Picture two coworkers – Kim and Rowan. On paper, they both have the same education and level of experience. But in practice their approach to work is vastly different. Kim typically drags himself through the day, coffee by coffee, because he surfs the net until the early hours and doesn't get enough sleep. Rowan, on the other hand, tackles her tasks with energy and focus. She's far more likely to get a promotion than her work buddy, Kim.

Bosses often determine an employee's value on measurable qualities, like performance results. But how well we perform has its origins in something harder to measure – how much we prioritize taking care of ourselves physically. Being healthy enhances our charisma, confidence and longevity, adding to our workplace value.

**The key message here is:  
Investing in your well-being  
fosters powerful skills that  
generate true wealth.**

Looking after yourself is at the heart of your ability to follow

the SAFE financial plan disciplines. Exercising will make you happier and more confident, so your interpersonal skills will shine. And if you're happier because you're healthy, the risk of emotional buying will decrease. Your brain will be sharper, too, helping you generate new ideas or tackle complex projects that fall outside your comfort zone.

Mental health is an important aspect of your physical well-being because it increases your ability to focus. This is more important than ever, since most corporate employees receive around 125 emails a day. If you're

easily distracted by clickbait or office gossip, you'll be drowning in backlog and stressed before you know it.

One way to fight this is to practice meditation and mindfulness. Both can improve your focus and help you manage stress, and with a wide range of apps and courses available online – from secular to spiritual – it's never been easier to find something that suits your needs.

Another way to foster your physical super skills is to cultivate a healthy sex life – one which allows you to explore your emotions fully. A study

conducted by the authors found a direct link between a healthy sex life and a productive work life. This isn't surprising when you reflect on how sex feeds your vitality, which in turn makes you more creative and motivated.

Now that we've explored how to increase your value to employers, in the next blink we'll look at how others can give value to you.



**Equity increases your earning potential and helps you form valuable connections.**

When graffiti artist David Choe was commissioned to paint murals for a new tech start-up, he turned down the \$60,000 fee. To many people, this would seem foolish. Sixty-thousand dollars isn't pocket change. But Choe took a calculated risk. He asked to be paid in equity instead. That equity is now worth about half-a-billion dollars. The start-up Choe spray painted was Facebook.

Equity is partial ownership in a company, normally in the form of shares. It defies the notion that we must work longer and harder to earn more, making it a valuable asset. Getting equity at the right stage in a company's development can lead to huge rewards later on. This is why so many secretaries and parking attendants in Silicon Valley end up as millionaires.

**The key message here is: Equity increases your earning potential and helps you form valuable connections.**

But what if you don't live in the Valley? Can you still benefit from

equity?

The answer is yes. Anyone, with any type of useful skill, can take advantage of *adviser equity*.

Adviser equity is a type of in-kind payment you receive after you've acted as a business mentor. Say, for example, you're a wiz at creating marketing campaigns. You hear about a start-up that's developing an app with real potential, but the team is made up of software engineers, and none of them know anything about sales.

Their product is at real risk of going unnoticed by potential customers.

This is where you offer yourself as an adviser. You meet with key members of the start-up and coach them through creating a marketing plan. You offer a 90-minute meeting every quarter to give them the support they need. If things go well, they'll likely show their gratitude by giving you shares in the business. In a few years' time, those shares could be worth millions.

The great thing about adviser equity is that it doesn't cost you anything, other than time. This means its potential return on investment is huge. And even if you don't end up with a

portfolio of valuable shares,  
you've still expanded your  
network. Which in itself greatly  
increases your true wealth by  
opening doors to new  
opportunities.



**Belonging to a tribe that shares your values will significantly increase your sense of security.**

On a rainy Californian night in 2007, author Bryan Franklin's car was rear-ended in a tunnel. He was rushed to the hospital for tests to see how serious his head injury was. Waiting for the results took a few scary hours, but in that time Franklin received over 60 text messages from worried friends.

Many of these messages came from a community of people living in a cohousing facility, in San Francisco. Franklin had only

known them a few months, but in the weeks after he was discharged from the hospital, they brought him meals, offered massages to treat his whiplash, and helped with his insurance claims. Franklin was astounded by the support. When he asked a friend why everyone was being so generous, she said it was because they were a tribe.

**The key message here is:  
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increase your sense of security.**

Tribes are groups of people with a shared vision. Their sole

purpose is for members to help each other as much as possible.

Being part of a tribe increases your wealth in several ways. First, there are economic benefits. Instead of Franklin paying for a massage, a fellow tribe member gave him one for free. Other benefits might include things like free access to someone's luxury holiday home, or sharing the costs of a big purchase, like buying a car.

Second, your tribe will tell you about job opportunities, which could increase your earning potential. And if a tribe member recommends you for a position,

you're already a step ahead of the competition.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, being part of a tribe increases your Happiness Exchange Rate – that sense of belonging that epitomizes true security. If you feel connected to people who share your values, it makes you happier, and leads to all those important health benefits that help you spend wisely and save.

Franklin joined an established tribe, but you can easily create your own. Start by inviting five to ten people who share your core values to an informal

gathering. Make sure these people are diverse in their professional and cultural backgrounds – that way your tribe will have a broad set of skills. If things go well, set up another meeting for the next month and ask each member to bring five more friends. Before you know it, you'll have grown your own tribe and accelerated your true wealth.



## Final summary

The key message in these blinks:

When we think about wealth, we often think in terms of a savings target that we'll reach by living on a strict budget and investing fiercely. But financial models like this rely on factors beyond your control – like the stock market and inflation. It makes far more sense to make yourself your number one asset. By strategically building the skills that employers find desirable, and connecting with supportive people, you can safeguard your

**career and continuously grow your earning potential.**

Actionable advice:

**Become a pro at public speaking.**

The thought of public speaking fills most people with fear – which is what makes it a great skill for you to develop. There are lots of techniques you can study that will give you the confidence to speak publicly in a compelling way. A simple online search will help you find a local organization that can teach you and ensure you always stand out from your peers.

## Got feedback?

We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email to [remember@blinkist.com](mailto:remember@blinkist.com) with *The Last Safe Investment* as the subject line and share your thoughts!

## What to read next: *The Behavior Gap*, by Carl Richards

As you've just learned, the financial advice that most people follow isn't necessarily the best approach to achieving wealth and security. Author and financial planner Carl Richards agrees – but that's only part of

the picture. To increase your wealth so that you can stop worrying about money, Richards believes you need to bridge the gap between what you *should* do and what you *actually* end up doing. To find out how, check out the blinks to *The Behavior Gap*, by Carl Richards.



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