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# The Weed Eater by Bob Manna & Matt Manna • 004FCA66(R07)

*"Until you can change the game you're destined to play by somebody else's rules. Forty years ago, George Ballas changed the game when he invented the Weed Eater."*

Here's a chance to get some exercise. Take a moment and stick either arm out directly in front of you. Now open your hand palm down and extend your fingers as far as they will go. Make a really tight fist and release it. Again, make a tight fist and release. Again, make a tight fist and release. Now do it 10 times fast.

That hurts! Yet, for many years, that exact motion was required to work the bladed trimmers used to trim weeds and grass.

Customers went to manufacturers and asked, "Can't you do something about this?" Manufacturers said, "Yes, we can make a better bladed clipper." They did so by adding a motor and battery.

Customers said, "Gee that's better, but now it's heavy and hurts my shoulder. Can't you do something about this?" Manufacturers said, "Yes we can make a better bladed clipper." They added wheels.

Customers said, "That is superb, but you see it hurts my back to bend over. Can't you do something about this?" Manufacturers said, "Yes we can make a better bladed clipper." They added a long stick handle!

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Then, 41 years ago, a real estate salesman named George Ballas changed the game. Ballas was watching his car go thru a car-wash in Houston Texas and wondered if the revolving brushes could be made to cut grass and weeds. He got in his cleaned car, drove home, and invented the Weed Eater. A year later, in 1972, Weed Eater, Inc. came into being.

In its first year Weed Eater, Inc. had net sales of \$560,000 per year. In 1974 the figure was \$7,791,000. In 1975 it was \$14,305,000. In 1976 it was \$41,000,000. In 1977 it was \$80,000,000.

That's impressive growth, but it's only half the story. The other half, and maybe it's 51%, is what happened to the other guys. How would you like to have been CEO of a company who's warehouse was full of bladed trimmers the day after (almost literally the day after) the Weed Eater was invented?

The invention of the Weed Eater is a stunning example of the difference between intelligent minds and Unusual Minds.

Intelligence is widely accepted as a measure of one's ability to store, recall, and process data. Store and recall processing is impressive. We reward it in schools and on game shows. But store and recall processing is limited by an undeniable fact. The only data that can be stored, recalled, and processed is data that already exists.

Store and recall processing is dependent upon what came before. It's a paint by numbers exercise, the results of which are predestined by the makeup of the data being processed.

So, repeatedly squeezing your hand shut hurts. No problem, here's a motor and battery. What's that, a motor and battery are too heavy. No problem, here are some wheels. What's that, it hurts to bend over. Here, have a stick.

The only way to avoid the restrictive obedience of intelligence is to develop the talent of an Unusual Mind. That's what George Ballas had going for him, and it's why Ballas did what the intelligent mind was restricted from doing. Ballas changed the game! Let us make this point perfectly clear, *until you can change the game you're destined to play by somebody else's rules.*

A bladed trimmer with a stick, wheels, motor, and battery isn't a change of what came before, it's a replication of what came before. It couldn't be anything else, because each step along the way was restricted by intelligence. And intelligence is, by definition, rooted in the past?

Developing an Unusual Mind requires dissociation from the past. The unconditional first step is to avoid asking, "What process do I recall to deal with the situation at hand?" Unusual Minds ask a different question, "What is the basic and invariable meaning of the topic at hand?"

Before the Weed Eater came along manufacturers were asking, "What process(es) exist that will result in a better bladed trimmer?" George Ballas asked a different question, a basic and invariable question, "What's a better way to trim weeds and grass?"

There is no evidence indicating if George Ballas was more or less intelligent than those who managed the bladed trimmer industry. In truth, intelligence had very little to do with the invention of the Weed Eater. The Weed Eater's invention was the result of an Unusual Mind — of the talent to reveal basic and invariable meaning.

Forty years ago this spring George Ballas founded Weed Eater, Inc. Ballas has stood as a prime example of the game changing power of an Unusual Mind for each of the 40 springs since.



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