Create a Paper Trail

A SAMPLE "GO FORTH" INITIATIVE

I don't like having my birthday info on social media. It's kinda personal, and I don't much care to provide a handy reminder for people to shoot me some cutesy gif and stock well-wishes that remind me how very little I mean to them. If I really meant something to them, they would know my birthday without a reminder (or at least have it jotted down somewhere), and they'd likely do something more than fire off a digital insta-something that costs them the bare minimum on a scale of anything meaningful.

Yeah, it's time to bring back the birthday card. And if we're serious about this actually costing us some effort, it should include Christmas cards, graduation cards, get well cards, anniversary cards, just-thinking-about-you cards... all sorts of cards. Cards that tell the people that matter the most to us that we care!

As I've alluded, this will take some effort. You're going to have to choose or make a card, write a few genuine lines, hunt down a stamp, and hike to a mailbox. Sounds difficult, I know, but we all probably still receive the occasional card from someone in that vanishing breed of thoughful card senders who all share these similar traits:

- They remember what matters
- They are generous with real attention
- The are disciplined ritual keepers
- They are fluent in gratitude and affirmation
- They deliberately invest in strong ties
- They're patient and crafty
- They prefer the real world over the digital world

If any of that sounds like you, then congratulations, and keep going! The world needs your kind of loving attention now more than ever.

If you're like me and need to work on those muscles, here's some stuff I'm putting into practice that just may help you get moving:

Create a Paper Trail *(continued)*

HAVE A SYSTEM
A simple birthday list in your notes app will work just fine, but you may just want use a good old-fashioned list on paper somewhere. Be sure to add a couple of personal lines such as one detail to mention, and one hope you have for them in the coming year.

BATCH THE WORK
As a matter of discipline, I've set aside the second Sunday of each month to assemble my cards in advance. So far, it takes less than 20 minutes.

BE SINCERE
Being spectacular might seem even better, but three simple and heartfelt sentences beat a blank card that you never send – every time.

GET CREATIVE
If you can't find the perfect card, what's stopping you from making your own? Sometimes I find that folding a standard sheet of paper in half and affixing a photograph on the front works just great. If I can't find a photo that will mean something to the recipient, I'll just go old school with the colored pens and markers. Glue and glitter? Have it.

ADD ONE "JUST BECAUSE" CARD PERIODICALLY
Birthdays should go without saying, but the "just because" card is even better because it will surprise the recipient by not easily falling into that obligation category.

As with all these initiatives, keep it simple. Buy a few packs of cards you actually like and keep them in a drawer with other important stuff. The key is action. Turn your love of attention into action, and action into meaningful connections.

We can't fix the world in a day. But we can surely brighten someone's day with a card cradling a few honest lines. That's not old-fashioned; it's timeless.