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## FEATURES

# What if Nothing is Impossible?

Many of us believe that we can make the impossible possible. But only few of us try. One such man is Mick Ebeling, who is proving that doing good is good for business - and good for marketing.

Mick Ebeling is on a mission to change the world through technology and story. Tough stuff, but Ebeling speaks with a confidence that's richly deserved.

Part inventor, part producer and part dreamer, Ebeling founded the The Ebeling Group, a multidimensional creative firm-slash-think tank. The Ebeling Group's directors created trendsetting and award-winning work in the commercial, film, broadcast, and branded content arenas, including the coveted James Bond main titles and Grammy-nominated music videos.

But now, Ebeling's most important endeavor is Not Impossible Labs. Not Impossible creates accessible (and often astounding) technology-based solutions primarily in the areas of health, mobility and communication, and then tells the very human stories that result as a way to inspire others to do the same.

### The EyeWriter

Not Impossible's first project began as a gift for the world-renowned graffiti artist Tempt One,

who had been struck by the degenerative nerve disorder ALS. Seven years after Tempt One's diagnosis, all he could do was lay motionless in his hospital bed and move his eyes. After bringing in programmers and hackers from around the world, Not Impossible created the EyeWriter, a low-cost eye-tracking system that turns eye movement into a means of communication.

## A mission to change the world through technology and story.

The EyeWriter was not designed to be for sale; it is on an open-source, DIY platform. This enables the caretaker of ALS patients to create the tool without significant expense.

After using EyeWriter, Tempt One sent the team

an email: "That was the first time I've drawn anything for seven years. I feel like I had been held underwater, and someone finally reached down and pulled my head up so I could breathe." Shortly thereafter it went on to be honored by TIME as one of the Top 50 Inventions of the year.

### WHY not HOW

Not Impossible's mantra is "commit and then figure it out". The team only works by hacking and reengineering. They are not scientists or



Mick Ebeling and Project Daniel

engineers. And they don't have the scale of an NGO or a big organization to back them up.

"We have no formal background or training... we just look at absurdities in the world and do something," said Ebeling, referencing Not Impossible's multi-Cannes Lion award-winning Project Daniel. "If you even had a remote idea that you could help an armless boy be able to feed himself again, then why wouldn't you do something about it? That's how we approach every Not Impossible project — we ask ourselves WHY we have to do something long before we figure out HOW we are actually going to pull it off."

### Doing good is good for business

Ebeling believes that a brand should never have to compromise its own self-interest to do something good. Instead, it should re-position its mission and ideals in a way that opens it to a greater sense of purpose. Not Impossible works closely with numerous brands, which all benefit from Ebeling's lifelong ambition to solve problems and change the world.

And by putting brand, invention and content together, Not Impossible seeks to create a cycle in which collaboration inspires innovation, and its stories spur people to action.

"Our objective is to use technology for the sake of humanity and we choose our brand partners very, very carefully. We do not act unless we

believe that our work together will increase brand awareness and consumer preference long-term," said Ebeling. "We have no interest in being the flavor of the month."

### The business model

The two pillars of the Not Impossible business model complement each other. The for-profit arm creates different products and solutions, while the non-profit pillar supports the people whose lives are improved through the use of the inventions. What's unique about this approach is that most of Not Impossible's projects — from creating a new "language" so deaf people can experience music to providing Sudanese war amputees with 3D-printed prosthetic limbs — are developed without capturing any intellectual property. This makes the inventions accessible to all.

It sounds so simple to change the world when listening to Mick Ebeling. But it takes courage, determination and the willingness to ignore the skeptics. It also means asking yourself two questions:

- (1) By helping one person, how many others can be helped?
- (2) By focusing on one problem, how many residual problems can be solved?

The single answer is that you never know until you try. Until you commit. Until you decide that nothing is impossible.