

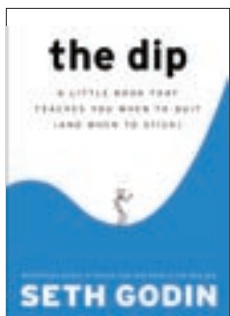
Seth Godin's latest book is a 76-page sparkler called *The Dip*. Seth says he wrote it to provoke you into thinking about an overlooked question: *When is it time to quit?*

*The Dip* is written for those who want to be remarkable but aren't sure if they can stand the pain. We had a whole bunch of questions for Seth about what that means and he was very happy to tell us.

### What is *The Dip*?

*The Dip* itself is yet another curve in the spirit of *Crossing The Chasm*, *The Tipping Point* and *The Long Tail*. This curve says that there is a moment, after the benefits and excitement of getting started have gone away, where it's really hard to keep going. Most people, in that moment, quit.

For example, Organic Chemistry is a dip on the way to becoming a doctor. Lots of people say they're pre-med and it's all very exciting. But then they hit Organic Chemistry and most of them stop. But the people who stick with it and get through to the other side extract lots of value.



### But it's rarely a black or white choice, right?

Here's the thing. What we know about the dip is that just adding something new is almost certainly not going to work. It will feel good when you launch it, but if you don't push it through the dip, it's never going to go anywhere. Whereas canceling things that aren't working might free up 2, 5, 10, 20 or 50 people who can push something that does have a chance to get through the dip.

Microsoft cancelled literally hundreds of products because, in their nature, they understand the dip. They understand that *not* investing in five iterations of *Flight Simulator* frees up 20 people to make sure that they have a Chinese-localized version of Word.

### Should Microsoft stick with Zune?

There's no question they should quit it. Microsoft should have recognized the dip before they launched Zune. Look at the dip of trying to displace the iPod on its terms. You can't be 10 percent or 50 percent or even twice as good as the iPod and displace them from their platform. The only way to win in that space is to disrupt the definition of "best in the world" so sufficiently that Apple has to start over with a new dip.

### Is JetBlue in a dip?

That gets into an interesting side conversation that I don't address a lot in the book—which is, how big is good? Why is getting bigger better? There is a natural size for almost any organization, and the question that JetBlue has to answer is—how big do we want to be and why?

Too many people have jumped on JetBlue for something that was only partially their fault. But, in fact, I think that JetBlue is going to recover just fine from that experience. The real question that JetBlue faces is, what's their next dip and do they want to get through it?

### How about Krispy Kreme?

Krispy Kreme is another great example. We're going to leave aside corporate malfeasance, lying and fraud for a minute. They came up with a *Purple Cow*. They were extremely disciplined in the way that they grew. What they found was that if they waited long enough to go to a city, they could launch in that city and push through the dip in a week.

It wasn't because they had spent a lot of money on marketing, but because they didn't open all of the Krispy Kremes in the world at once. They waited until there was enough demand to completely push them through the dip and they had won.

Mistake number one was that they went public. Mistake number two was that, because they were public, they had to please Wall Street. And to please Wall Street, they had to go through the next dip. The next dip was—how do we make this the best treat you can buy in the supermarket?

Well, as soon as Krispy Kreme is in every supermarket it ceased to be remarkable. They were unable to make it through that dip, and in order to cover up the fact that they were struggling, they lied, and then they got burned.

### Are you in a dip right now?

When we launched Squidoo.com, we successfully waltzed through three or four common dips. The one that was most gratifying was the software development dip.

Lots of times, when people develop a piece of software, they make a quick prototype that works

great. And then as they try to scale it, they start piecing it together with Band-Aids and eventually the whole thing falls apart.

We knew that was going to come, so we organized around it. Now, the next dip—the one we’re confronting this minute—is re-dedicating ourselves to what we’re doing and also stopping many of the time-consuming things we have been doing so that we can focus on getting from 120,000 visitors a day to 1,000,000.

### So, it’s never just one dip.

Unfortunately, it’s not. The reason is this: The other theme of the book is this idea of being the best in the world at whatever it is you choose to do, because that’s where the value is. The reason that there are many dips is that once you get to be the best in the world at a smaller thing, you often want to be best in the world at a bigger thing.

For example, Squidoo is already the best in the world—the number-one site—at building the kinds of lenses that we build, for free, with a share of the profit coming back to you. If you’re looking for a service like that, then you think of Squidoo, because we’re the best at it.

But we want to be bigger than that. We want to be the best in a bigger world, which is the place people go online when they do a Google search on just about anything. Obviously, there’s a new dip to go with that because we’re defining a new world.

### What gives you the strength to keep going?

One of the things I’m trying to teach in *The Dip* is that you can organize for your challenges. If you set out to get to a certain spot, and you can make some good guesses as to what the dip involves, then you should go for it.

With Squidoo, we have a very lean organization and we don’t get more expensive to run as we get bigger. We’ve looked each other in the eyes and made commitments to each other that we’re going to push through this dip and that we can outlast the market.

### Is there any scenario where you would quit?

Oh, yeah. It’s something we think about all the time. How do you know when to quit? Well, you need a metric, or several metrics. If you’re not making any

progress over a given period of time, then you’re deluding yourself to think that sticking it out is a smart strategy. That’s what we got taught in school—never quit; quitters never win and winners never quit. I don’t buy that.

In Squidoo’s case, what we measure is whether our traffic is increasing every day. Are the numbers of people who are building these pages increasing? Are the people building the pages happy that they did? If all of those things going up, then over time, you’re moving in exactly the right direction. The question is just whether you can amplify it quickly enough. So far, we are.

### How does the dip apply to the way you wrote the book itself?

There was lots of pressure from various people to make the book twice as long as it is. But if I made the book twice as long, it would just be another book. By making the book short, I forced myself to commit to every page, to every word, to every idea—not to making it long enough.

### What made you write *The Dip*?

I saw in a lot of people around me—children and adults—non-profits, for-profits, start-ups and big companies—a similar frustration. The frustration had to do with people wanting some sort of results and not getting it, and not understanding why they were stuck.

When I talked to people about this dysfunction and they understood that quitting was better than being average—that mediocre is for losers—it freed them up to realize that quitting isn’t a moral failure.

Once you have permission to quit something, it’s much easier to either decide to re-commit to it, and get through the dip, or walk away and marshal your resources for a better battle. ■



**SETH GODIN** is the bestselling author of nine books. Seth was founder and ceo of Yoyodyne, an interactive direct-marketing firm, which Yahoo! acquired in 1998. He also founded and is the original squid at Squidoo.com.