

# *Accelerating Excellence*

SIMPLE STRATEGIES FOR SKILLFULLY NAVIGATING  
LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS AND WORK



Del Gilbert

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# Preface

This book is a compilation of articles I wrote over the past several years. As I distributed them to a few people, I was pleasantly surprised at positive feedback I received from them as well as how widespread they became. Some organizations passed them out to every employee, other people told me they would send them to their college age kids and other friends and family members.

I trust you find these ideas, stories and life applications helpful as you seek to live a life of excellence in every area.

I would love to hear your feedback on the ideas shared in this book and how they helped you.

Feel free to contact me at [del@delgilbert.com](mailto:del@delgilbert.com)

Also, check out my website at [www.delgilbert.com](http://www.delgilbert.com) for additional resources.

**Note:** *This book is best read in Landscape mode but will work in Portrait mode.*

# About the Author



Del Gilbert is the Chief Learning Officer at St. Joseph Healthcare in Nashua, New Hampshire. Del has held leadership positions in the healthcare field for the past 30 years. Del holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and a Masters of Business Administration. He is a Certified Leadership Coach and a Certified Master Trainer.

He delivers nearly 100 workshops and presentations annually. His workshops are known for their practical, real life application. His unique style enables him to connect with the audience on a personal level.

**Section 1:  
Accelerating  
Excellence in  
Life**



## Chapter 1

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# Self Discipline

*“The first and best victory  
is to conquer self.”*

*-Plato*



# Self Discipline

I recently listened to an interview with a very successful business person and author. The interviewer asked him about the 'secret' to his success. Was it his superior intellect, his wealth of experience, or his natural talent? His answer really surprised me. He said something to the effect that he didn't possess a superior intellect or have particularly outstanding talent. *"What I do have,"* he continued, *"that most people don't have, is a willingness to grind it out."* The phrase *"grind it out"* really hit me. So much so that the phrase is now taped to my computer.

A good definition of **self-discipline** is ***the ability to do what you should do, when you should do it, whether you feel like it or not.*** Self discipline involves acting according to what we know is right instead of how we feel. It means behaving according to what we have decided is best, regardless of our emotions in the moment. If you really think about it, much of our success boils down to our ability in making the person in our mirror behave.

I recently saw a friend that I hadn't seen in several months. He had lost a considerable amount of weight and looked much healthier. I asked what he did to lose the weight. I

waited in anticipation to hear his big secret: *"I started eating less and exercising more."* How profound!

In most cases we already know what to do, the difficult part is doing what we know.

***"The ability to discipline yourself in the short term in order to enjoy greater rewards in the long term, is the indispensable prerequisite for success."***  
***- Brian Tracy***

## SHORT TERM PLEASURE VS. LONG TERM REWARDS

Most successful people are long term thinkers. They determine the kind of person they want to become and the goals they want to achieve. Then they plan what they need to do on a daily basis to attain their desired futures. Self discipline requires sacrificing the pleasure and thrill of the moment in order to enjoy greater rewards in the long term. This is the decision between eating that donut now versus being slim and healthy later. Or buying something that we really don't need

versus saving money over time and having a healthy bank account.

***“To move the world, we must first move ourselves.”  
-Socrates***

The ability to master our emotions, appetites, and inclinations is the key to being in control of ourselves and earning self respect.

I once heard a motivational speaker say the way to build self esteem is to look in the mirror several times a day and repeatedly say *“I like myself, I like myself.”* That is silly. The way to build self esteem is to do the things you know you need to do. There is a direct relationship between self discipline and self esteem.

## **DEVELOPING SELF-DISCIPLINE**

The good news is that self-discipline can be developed.

Here are some practical strategies to strengthen yourself in the area of self-discipline.

### **1. Do something difficult everyday.**

Occasionally give up a pleasure that is perfectly legitimate for you to enjoy. This may be holding off on eating some kind of favorite junk food or deciding to have water at a meal instead of your favorite soda. Other ideas include going to the gym

when you want to stay stay in bed or staying with a project after the initial rush of enthusiasm has worn off. When we choose to do something even when we don't feel like it, we strengthen our discipline muscles.

### **2. Practice Daily Reflection**

We are the most over-informed, under-reflective society in history. We are always moving forward and “on the go.” But there is value in developing the practice of mentally reviewing your day. This could be done at the close of the day or the next morning and doesn't need to take but a few minutes. Review areas where you were successful in the area of self discipline and why. Conversely, think back about areas where you could improve. Because are rarely tempted by something new, develop a strategy to make the coming day more successful.

### **3. Keep Short Accounts**

We all have lapses in self-discipline. This comes with being human. However, we often make things worse by telling ourselves that we have “blown it” and decide to, at least temporarily, abandon self-discipline. For example, if we give in to an impulse purchase at the mall, we often continue that pattern because we already have given in once. Or we eat something unhealthy at lunch and so we indulge the rest of the day telling ourselves that tomorrow we will be different. It is much

easier to give in a second time when we have already given in a first time.

A wise choice is to 'minimize our losses' and immediately get back on track. Don't wait until tomorrow to start over. Remember, the word 'tomorrow' is the enemy of success.



## DISCIPLINE IS FREEDOM

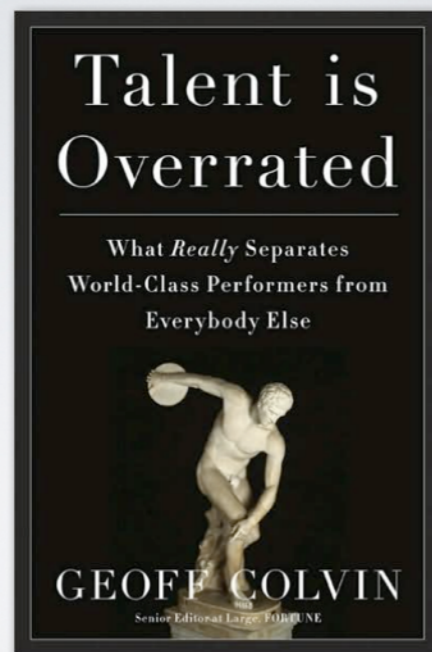
Although self-discipline may seem confining, it actually leads to freedom. Psychologists agree that we are happy and fulfilled to the degree to which we feel in control of our life. When we acquire self-discipline skills, we are more in control.

As we begin to accumulate small, private victories, our self-confidence will grow and self-discipline will translate into other areas of life. We begin to pick up steam and develop momentum.

As the saying goes, "success begets success."

*"It is one of the strange ironies of this strange life that those who work the hardest, who subject themselves to the strictest discipline, who give up certain pleasurable things in order to achieve a goal, are the happiest."  
-Brutus Hamilton*

### Recommended Reading - Self Discipline



### Talent is Overrated by Geoff Colvin

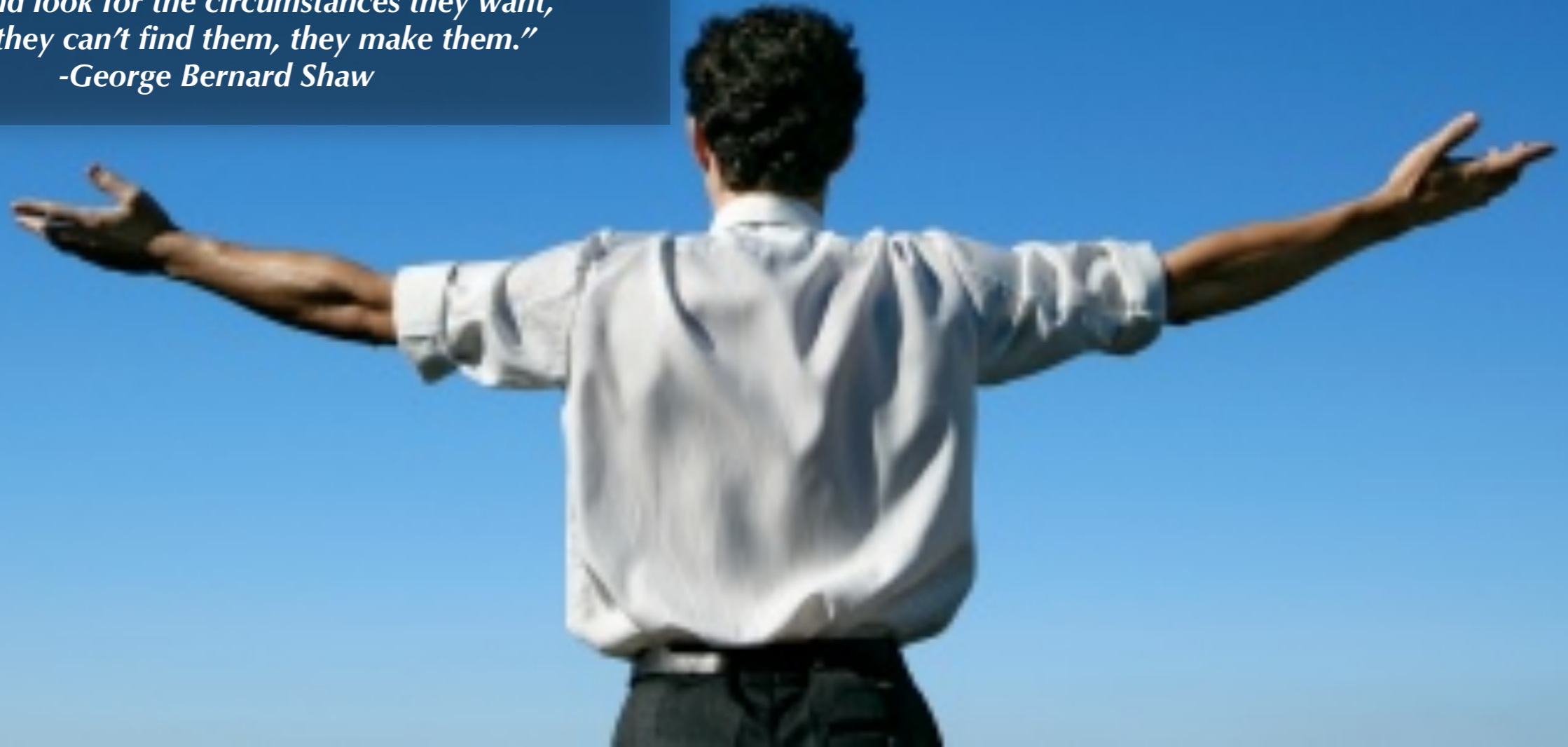


## Chapter 2

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# Personal Responsibility

*“People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can’t find them, they make them.”*  
-George Bernard Shaw



## Chapter 2

# Personal Responsibility

The other evening my son, a police officer, came over for dinner. During the dinner he got a text message from a friend. She stated that she was recently cited for driving while “under the influence.” She asked my son if there was anything he could do to “help out.” I was proud of my son’s response. He said that he was not going to intervene. If she had been drinking, she shouldn’t have been driving.

Taking responsibility for one’s actions is getting rarer and rarer.

*“You can’t talk your way out of problems  
you behaved yourself into.”  
-Stephen Covey*

It is convenient to blame others for our circumstances. We blame the economy, our metabolism, or our mother-in-law for our lot in life. The main problem with this thinking is we surrender control. We see ourselves as a victim of circumstances. We give up the freedom and the power to change ourselves.

If you look at the word: **RESPONSIBLE**. It is really made up of two words: **RESPONSE** and **ABLE**. The word literally

means that we are able to choose our response. Once we switch from victim thinking to personal responsibility, we put ourselves back in control. Life becomes more satisfying and enjoyable. It gives us the freedom to create our future.

### ASK “WHAT?” NOT “WHY?”

John Miller in his book, **QBQ!: The Question Behind the Question**, gives three simple guidelines for moving in the direction of personal responsibility.

- Begin with ‘What?’ or ‘How?’ not ‘Why?’, ‘When?’, or ‘Who?’. (For example ‘What can I do to improve my situation?’ instead of “Why did this happen to me?”)
- Contain an ‘I’ not ‘they,’ ‘them’ or ‘you’.
- Focus on the future, not the past.

*“In the long run, we shape our lives,  
and we shape ourselves.  
The choices we make are ultimately  
our own responsibility.”  
- Eleanor Roosevelt*

## PUSH YOURSELF, EASE UP ON OTHERS

There is an interesting concept in the field of psychology called the “**Fundamental Attribution Error.**”

The Fundamental Attribution Error essentially says that we attribute negative behaviors of others to their personalities or intentions while attributing our own negative behaviors to environmental factors.

*“We tend to judge others by their actions but we judge ourselves by our intentions.”*  
-Unknown

If I am eating Oreo cookies, it’s because I have worked hard all day and deserve a treat. If I see someone else eating Oreos, I tend to think they lack self discipline.

A healthier way to approach life would be to give others the benefit of the doubt. This does not mean overlooking unprofessional behavior or tolerating underperformance. But it does mean being less judgmental.

In contrast, being harder on ourselves can serve us well. When we have self-imposed high standards, we worry less about meeting others’ standards for us. It is very easy to look at the world, our organization, or others and think of all the ways they need to be changed. The fact is we have very little, if any, control over those things.

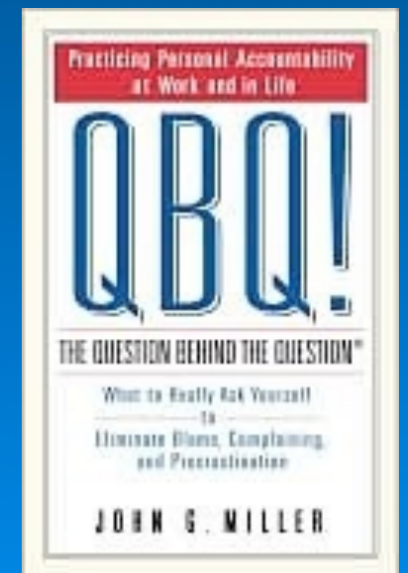
*“Time spent on improving ourselves gives us less time disapproving others.”*  
-Unknown

## NO MORE EXCUSES

A friend of mine gave me permission to share her story. When she was a little girl, she was at the kitchen table eating watermelon. Her mother told her that after she was through she would have to take a nap. As preschool kids do, she gave her mother a hard time and refused to take a nap. Unfortunately, her mother had some serious mental issues and something snapped. My friend was stabbed 12 times in the neck and chest, but survived.

If anyone has a reason to say life is unfair or blame others, my friend does! However, today, my friend is a winsome woman thriving in business. She told me she believes God allowed that event to happen in her life so that she could help other women who have experienced difficult circumstances. She decided she was **able** to choose her **response**.

### Recommended Reading



QBQ! by John Miller

## Chapter 3

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# Goals

*“The world makes way for a person  
who knows where they are going.”  
- Ralph Waldo Emerson*



# Chapter 3

## Goals

On May 25, 1961 John F. Kennedy told Congress *“I believe this nation should commit itself to achieve the goal before the decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to Earth.”*

This one goal galvanized not only NASA but the entire nation with focus and energy. On July 16, 1969 the United States put a man on the moon.

Goal setting is one of the fundamentals to success. No one ever became great by wandering around. Goals have a unique ability to give us energy and motivation.

Jim Collins in his book **“Good To Great”** says that most outstanding companies have **BHAGS: Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals**. Great companies have big plans and work to accomplishing them. They stretch and challenge themselves.

*“The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it but that it is too low and we reach it.”*  
-Michelangelo

Like high performing organizations, we as humans are engineered and function best when we are moving toward a goal. Investing the time in setting meaningful goals can produce energy and enthusiasm.

If we don't set goals it is easy to be directionless, adrift and complacent. When we set compelling, demanding goals we challenge and stretch ourselves to do things we didn't think possible.

*“Like a ten speed bike, most of us have gears we don't even use.”*  
-Charlie Brown

### THE BENEFITS OF GOALS

Deciding on a goal and then pursuing that goal gives us focus, energy and fulfillment. It is rewarding to put your head on the pillow at the end of the day knowing you are farther along in achieving what is most important to you.

*“Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood. Make big plans, aim high in hope and work.”*  
-Daniel Burnham

Goals can give us an intense, laser like focus. Light dispersed simply lights a room but finely focused light can form a laser that will cut through steel.

## SMART GOALS

When people set goals, frequently they are vague and general. The goal to “start exercising and be more careful about eating” is much less compelling than “By May 31st, I will have lost 15 pounds.”

Goals should be **SMART**.

**S-Specific:** Is it clear and concrete?

**M-Measurable:** Will I be able to clearly say yes or no that I have accomplished it?

**A-Ambitious:** Is it a stretch goal? Does it create a tension? Does it demand my best?

**R-Realistic:** Is it within reason? Is it attainable?

**Review 1 SMART Goals**

Question 1 of 5  
Specific: Which goal is more specific?

- A. Save enough money for retirement
- B. Put money in retirement fund every month
- C. Have \$500,000 in retirement funds by age 65

**T-Timely:** Does it have a deadline?

Goals get us going in the right direction. But remember you are not a failure if you don't reach your goal. I set a goal to read one book a week this past year. I ended up reading 36. Am I a loser? (Don't answer that!) I read much more than if I had not set a goal. If you don't reach your goal, pick yourself up, dust yourself off and set a new goal. You are still farther along and moving in the right direction. Resilience and perseverance are critical.



You can use the power of goals on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly or even longer term basis. A goal could be to save a certain amount for a retirement home which likely will take years, a weight goal which could take months. However you may set a goal of simply getting something in particular accomplished by the end of the day.

I regularly set weekly goals. I usually set my goals for the week on Sunday and then visualize driving home on Friday afternoon having accomplished those goals. Obviously, I don't always achieve all of them but I certainly get more done than flying by the seat of my pants all week.

## THE POWER OF GOALS

When my father-in-law was younger, he had a goal to own his own business and to be financially able to retire at age 55. He owned a Amoco station in New Jersey right outside New York City. With this goal in mind, he worked hard for many years.

During those years he would hire guys to pump gas for him. Many of his employees couldn't see past the bar on Friday night. They had no goals. He paid them fairly and treated them well, but they actually were helping my father-in-law achieve his goals.

*"A person who does not have goals  
is used by someone who does."  
-Unknown*

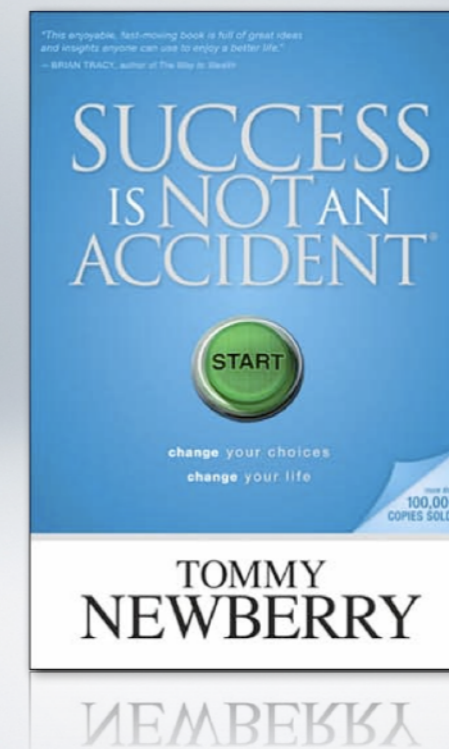
My father-in-law retired at age 55 to his dream home on Nantucket. Today he is 74 actively enjoying woodworking and still flying his own plane!

Have you set clear, compelling goals for yourself? Are they written down? If not, set some goals today.

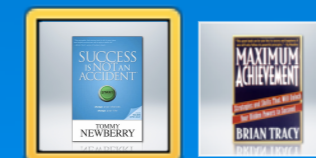
It's your life, take the wheel.

*"If you don't know where you are going,  
any road will take you there."  
-Lewis Carroll*

## Recommended Reading - Goals



*Success is Not an Accident by Tommy Newberry*



## Chapter 4

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# Priorities

*"Too many people get caught up  
in the thick of thin things."  
-Stephen Covey*



A few years ago I was staying at a hotel for a speaking engagement. My presentation was first thing the next morning. As I settled into the room and turned on the TV, I found a movie that I had wanted to see was just starting. However, I had planned on using the evening to put the finishing touches on my presentation. I had a choice to make: watch a movie or refine an important presentation.

It was a matter of priorities. We all have choices. However, some actions clearly have more value and a higher return on investment than others. Not all activities are created equal.

### **MOST VALUABLE ACTIVITIES**

Many of us prioritize in a way similar to the amusement park ride of bumper cars. Whatever is closest to us or coming at us the fastest gets our attention. We react to the latest and loudest rather than plan or prioritize. To **prioritize** is to **sort out our tasks in relation to their importance**. We have many tasks but not all of them are of equal importance. We have most valuable activities and least valuable activities.

According to author Dave Crenshaw in his book, *Invaluable*, the value of our activities can be determined by “*the amount of money per hour you would need to pay someone else to do the same job at the same level of effectiveness.*” According to this definition, some of my most valuable activities as Chief Learning Officer would be providing leadership training and strategizing organizational learning. Some of my least valuable activities would be copying handouts or inputting attendance logs.

What are your most valuable activities?

What do you do that has the greatest return on investment?

Are you investing the proper amount of time and energy on your highest priorities?

*“The things that matter most should never be subject to the things that matter least.”*

*-Goethe*

## DRIFTING INTO TRIVIA

One of the reasons we spend much of our time on our least valuable activities is they have a lot of pull to them. They are generally easier to do and take less effort. What is easier, writing an article or checking email? Putting together a proposal or filling out an expense report?

In addition, busy work from outward appearances looks more important than real work, which often involves thinking, planning, etc.

I don't mean to imply that we should never do mundane tasks. Rather I am suggesting that we be mindful of our priorities and make wise choices.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Because it is easy to become distracted or do tasks that require less effort, we need a plan to combat this temptation.

Here are four solid strategies.

**1. Clarity.** A good question to ask yourself is this: *“What is the primary purpose of my job?”*

Once you are clear on your purpose, it is easy to understand what activities contribute most to your primary purpose. This answer is like a compass that provides us with a ‘true north.’

For example, the primary purpose of my job is to help employees gain the skills and knowledge they need to excel in their

work and to help the organization succeed. The tasks that contribute the most to this purpose are my highest priorities.

**2. Plan.** Decide ahead of time what will be your most important priorities for the day and write them down. You have a 75% greater chance of achieving your task if it is written.

Be realistic and flexible. Your daily list will likely have high priority items as well as a few necessary but low priority tasks. And, of course, things will come up during the day. Because you have a clear purpose, you will know whether or not to redirect your efforts.

*“Your ability to refocus, rapidly, on the right things at the right time is the master technique of the corporate athlete.”*  
-Brian Tracy

**3. Focus.** Once you decide what your most important task is, give it your full attention.

When we concentrate on one task at a time, we are likely to get into ‘flow.’ Flow is the state of mind that occurs when you lose yourself in a task and give it complete concentration. The trick is to learn how to purposefully get yourself into flow. This is when we do our best work.

When we concentrate on one thing at a time we are able to finish the task sooner with more accuracy and higher quality. Be sure to have a pen and pad of paper nearby as inevitably

you will think of others things you need to do while you are in flow. Simply write them down and get back to the task at hand. (Don't even think about checking email.)

To be sure, focusing on one task at a time does not apply to every job. In fact, people in the service industry are supposed to adjust at a moments notice. A nurse, a secretary, and even a barista at Starbucks has no choice but to multitask. In this case, the key question may be “what is the most important thing I should be doing right now?”

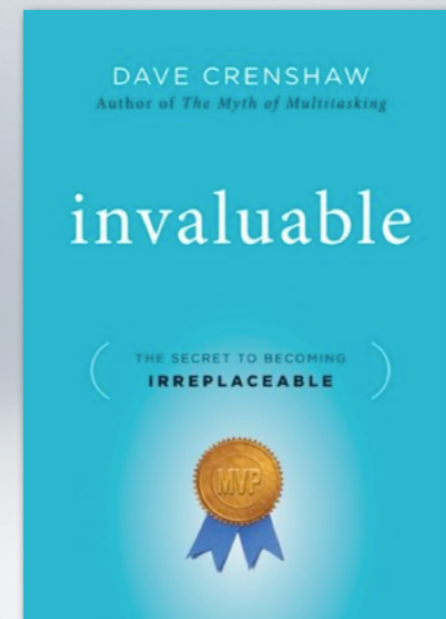
**4. Prune.** When you begin to understand what you are supposed to do, you can better discern what you are not supposed to do. Highly effective people have a ‘lean’ mindset. They are master pruners. They look for ways to eliminate, streamline, or reduce time spent on unimportant tasks. We all have “to do” lists. What about having a “not to do” list?

Many things we spend time on make little difference in the long run. What has watching the Kardashians or talking heads debating politics added to your life?

Once again, it all comes down to choices. When you focus on your most valuable activities, your fulfillment, as well as your value, is increased.

*“If you and I want to do great stuff,  
we can't let ourselves work small.”  
-Stephen Pressfield*

## Recommended Reading - **Priorities**



### *Invaluable by Dave Crenshaw*



## Chapter 5

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# Drifter, Driver or Designer

*"Never mistake activity for achievement."  
-John Wooden*



## Chapter 5

# Drifter, Driver or Designer

There is a tension in most of our lives between the important and the urgent. Between our long range goals and issues that need our immediate attention. We want to write a book, tackle a big project or take up a hobby but the lawn needs mowing, the car needs to be inspected, and the kids need help with their homework.

If we ignore the urgent, things pile up. We constantly run behind and feel stressed and overwhelmed. If we ignore the important, we miss out on what is most meaningful. But is it really possible to skillfully manage both the urgent and important?

### 3 TYPES

#### Drifter, Designer or Driver

Drifter	Designer	Driver
Lacks Structure	Balances Structure and Flexibility	Lacks Flexibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Busy work</li><li>• Rabbit trails</li><li>• Firefighting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solid game plan</li><li>• Leaves 'margin' in day</li><li>• Builds relationships</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get thru 'to do' list</li><li>• Lacks spontaneity</li><li>• Misses opportunities</li></ul>
Ineffective	Effective	Ineffective

In my experience, I have observed three types of time management styles: **The Drifter, The Driver, and the Designer.**

**The Drifter** heads into the day with no specific game plan. They tend to 'go with

the flow' and see where the day takes them. Their focus is on the urgent or whatever happens to draw their attention. The latest and loudest get the most attention. This type of style lacks focus and can be easily sidetracked by numerous 'rabbit trails' during the day. There is little concern for longer term goals. 'Now' is the operative word. Often the result of this style is 'busyness.'

This type of person is like a rocking chair, a lot of movement but going nowhere. The Drifter will often shrug their shoulders and say that it is futile to plan the day because something is always going to come up and sabotage the plan.

A second style of time manager is **the Driver**. The Driver is the opposite of the Drifter. The Driver heads into the day with a very specific game plan and checklist. They put their head down and do whatever it takes to complete the list. However, they have a tendency to ignore the opportunities and issues that come up during the day. This style is similar to the father who doesn't take time to play catch with his son because he has to mow the lawn. The drawback with the Driver style is lack of flexibility. In most jobs, issues come up during the day that we can't ignore. They need our immediate attention.

The third and most effective time management style is that of **the Designer**. The Designer balances flexibility and structure. Designers enter the day with a solid game plan but leave themselves ‘margin.’ They know what they want to accomplish during the day but allow for relationship building and addressing important, ‘on the spot’ issues.

## WHAT’S YOUR PURPOSE?

A good starting point for balancing both the urgent and important is being clear on your purpose. Clarity of purpose gives you clarity of priorities.

For example, in my role as Chief Learning Officer, I have defined my purpose as *‘helping employees gain the knowledge, skills, and behaviors they need to excel in their job.’* Having clarified my purpose, I am now better prepared to decide where to concentrate my time and energy to be most effective. It also helps me discern what to do and what not to do.



My purpose is, in a sense, my compass or my **‘true north.’** It helps guide my decisions on how to best use my time.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Okay, in theory this sounds great, but how can we actually live this out? Here are some actions that will help you move to Designer.

### 1. Keep a Master Task List

A master task list is simply a running list of all the things you need to do. This list contains tasks that are big and small, short and long term, urgent and important. Feel free to organize the list in a way that works best for you. Some people like to put tasks under different categories or roles. Once you have your master task list, develop a simple system to capture additional tasks as they come up. Make it a habit to write all tasks down.

*“Your brain is for having ideas not holding them.”  
-David Allen*

When someone stops you in the hall for something and you need to follow up, make sure you have something handy to write it down. If you are focusing on a project and in ‘flow’ and something pops in your mind that you need to do, write it down and get back to the project. Once a week ‘refresh’ and rewrite your master task list. Here you would eliminate what has been done, include any new ‘to-dos’ and organize tasks into categories that work for you.

This updated master task list gives you a good ‘big picture’ view of all the things that need to get done. This is similar to

‘zooming out’ on a map. You rise above the trees to see the forest. It gives you a solid start for the week ahead.



## 2. Set Weekly Goals

Now that your master task list is updated, it is time to plan the week. Use a highlighter to choose the tasks you want to accomplish in

the coming week. (You will not be able to do them all.) Again, this will include big and small, short and long term tasks.

For example, here are a few of my weekly goals taken from my current master task list: write this book, outline a presentation for a retreat I will be speaking at, advertise training dates for the coming months, send a sympathy card, and order contact lenses. Notice the big and small, short and long term, preparing for significant events and doing the mundane.

## 3. Plan Daily

Once you have decided on your weekly goals, now is the time to come up with a realistic daily plan. I like to divide my daily plan into two categories: ‘priorities’ and ‘to-dos.’

Priorities are the high value, more long term tasks such as outlining an important presentation. I often break down large projects into ‘next steps’ or smaller chunks.

The ‘to-dos’ are necessary actions like calling the cable company, scheduling a dentist appointment or following up on emails. Your daily plan should include enough to keep you productive but not so jam packed that you have no white space or ‘margin.’

Once your daily plan is in place, it is time to ‘zoom in’. You have already given thoughtful consideration to your priorities, now is the time to roll up your sleeves and focus.

When the unexpected comes up, you can ‘triage’ the item. If it is a true emergency, you can handle it on the spot. If not, write it down and follow up in a timely manner. The key is to adjust your plan, not abandon it.

## CONCLUSION

Your ability to focus on the right thing at the right time is the key to effectiveness. It requires both structure and flexibility. Decide to be a Designer.

*“Being busy is a form of laziness,  
lazy thinking and indiscriminate action”  
- Timothy Ferriss*

## Chapter 6

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# It's About Time

*“How we spend our days  
is how we spend our lives.”  
-Annie Dillard*



# It's About Time

John Maxwell once said a budget is simply *“telling your money what to do at the beginning of the month instead of wondering where it all went at the end of the month.”*

The same principle can be applied to handling our time. If we don't plan our time well, it can fly by with us wondering where it went.

Actually, time is more precious than money in several ways.

**Time is non-renewable.** If someone wants to earn more money, they can get a second job, take out a loan, etc. The same is not true for time. Once it is gone, there is no way to get it back.

**Time does not discriminate.** You and I have the same amount of time, 24 hours a day, as did Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, and Mother Teresa.

Spending time on what is most important is the key to our success and fulfillment.

The critical first step in using time wisely is having a 'game plan.' Like most things in life, whether it is coaching a football game, preparing for an interview, or delivering a presentation, having a game plan produces a better outcome.

## TAKE CHARGE

Either the day runs you or you run the day.

A very simple but effective way of coming up with a game plan is to spend a small amount of time planning the week ahead.

What are the things you need to do in the coming week? What are the things you want to do? What have you been putting off?

Make a realistic list of goals for the week. Then visualize the you having accomplished your goals at end of the week.

*“Begin with the end in mind.”  
-Stephen Covey*

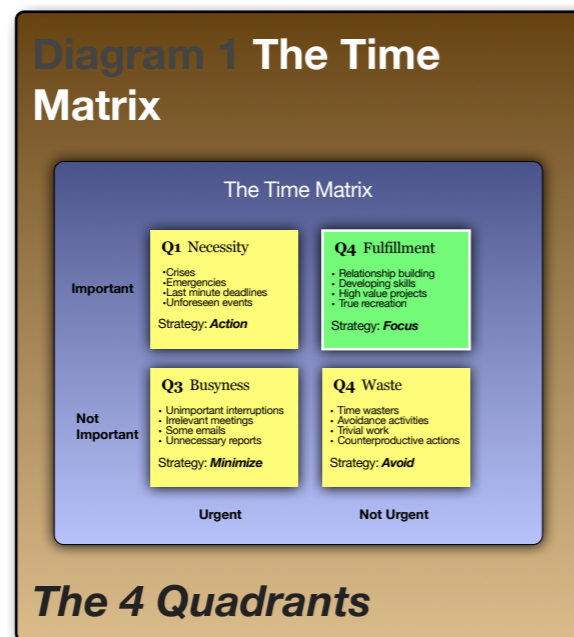
This is the way to make things happen rather than let things happen to you.

Sure, unforeseen things come up, but we can adjust to them. It is still far better than having no game plan at all.

## THE TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX

In the groundbreaking book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, author Stephen Covey, designates the 3rd habit as “Put First Things First.” In the chapter he introduces the concept of the Time Management Matrix.

The time management matrix is made up of four quadrants with four variables: Urgent, Not Urgent, Important, and Not Important. (see diagram)



Let's take a look at each of the quadrants.

### QUADRANT 1: URGENT AND IMPORTANT

This is the quadrant of **necessity**. There are things we have little control over but must be addressed promptly because of their importance. Included in this quadrant would be getting the furnace fixed, picking up a sick child from school or ad-

ressing a customer service issue. There is not much choice within this quadrant.

However some urgent things are self-imposed. If we wait until the end of the month to get our car inspected or delay writing a term paper until the last minute, what was once 'not urgent' is now 'urgent.'

### QUADRANT 3: URGENT AND NOT IMPORTANT

This is the quadrant of **busyness**. We are doing something but it really doesn't move us toward what we would like to accomplish.

There is a difference between activity and results.

This could be interruptions, attending meetings that we really don't need to be at, addressing drop-in visitors, or “busy work.”

### QUADRANT 4: NOT URGENT AND NOT IMPORTANT

This is the quadrant of **waste**.

At times we can run ourselves so ragged doing urgent things that we become exhausted and decide to just “veg out.”

*“Too many people get caught up*

*in the thick of thin things.”*  
*-Stephen Covey*

Some activities in this quadrant could include watching mindless TV, surfing the internet aimlessly, and reading magazines. It could even be more serious “escape” activities such as on-line gambling or shopping for emotional reasons.

## QUADRANT 2: NOT URGENT AND IMPORTANT

Quadrant 2 is the quadrant of **productivity** and **fulfillment**. Activities in this area are easy to put off because they are not urgent. However, successful people make it a priority to spend time in this quadrant.

Some example of activities in Quadrant 2 would be improving relationships, taking better care of ourselves, and personal development.

More specifically it could be a date night with a spouse, playing a board game with your kids, exercising, taking a class, starting a new hobby, or writing a book.

This is the quadrant where we connect our desires with our actions. Too many people are living on “Someday I’ll.”

## ACTION STEPS

So, how do you use your time? Do you waste it or invest it? Do you have a game plan or do you fly by the seat of your pants?

I encourage you to take 15 minutes at the beginning of the week and write down a realistic of the things you want to accomplish.

The list should include the following:

- Things you have to do. (Pay bills)
- Things that you should do. (Clean basement.)
- Things you want to do. (Start guitar lessons, go to the gym and/or take your spouse out on a date.)

Don’t let time pass you by having you wonder where it went. Decide what is important to you and go about the business of doing the things that matter to you.

Anything less than a conscious commitment to the important is an unconscious commitment to the unimportant.

*“Lose no time;  
be always employed in something useful.”*  
*-Benjamin Franklin*

## Chapter 7

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# Procrastination

*"We have left undone those things  
which ought to be done."*

*-Book of Common Prayer, 1552*



# Procrastination

Can you recall a time that you finally cleaned out a closet or the garage after months of delay?

Did you find yourself gaining energy once you got started? Was it satisfying to have it neat and organized? Did you find yourself asking “*why did I wait so long to do this?*”

Author Edwin Bliss defines **procrastination** as **postponing something that you know in your heart should be done now instead of later.**

All of us have to deal with procrastination to some extent. There is no question that it can sabotage success.

Procrastination can thwart us from realizing our goals. It can prevent us from gaining additional skills to advance our career, go back to school or begin a hobby we have always wanted to take up.

When we procrastinate we often put ourselves in a bind. If we wait until the last minute to file taxes, finish the term paper, or get our car inspected, we become stressed. We box ourselves into a corner with limited options. If one thing doesn't go as planned, we get ourselves in trouble.

Procrastination also comes at a cost, whether it is late fees, fighting crowds at the holidays or missed opportunities.

Procrastination takes a toll on us emotionally as well. It affects our energy level and self esteem.

*“Nothing is so fatiguing as the hanging on of an uncompleted task.”*

*-William James*

It is critical to confront the issue of procrastination head on. Yes now, not later.

Here are a few strategies to effectively deal with procrastination.

## 1. GET STARTED

Just getting started is the difficult but most important part. Newton's first law of motion states “*An object in motion will stay in motion and an object at rest will stay at rest.*”

The hardest part of exercising is getting out of bed in the morning. The toughest part of painting a room is gathering all the supplies and taping off the edges.

Don't wait for the spirit to move you, you move the spirit.

A rocket ship uses more energy during take off than once in orbit. Similarly, once you get started, you begin to build momentum.

***“Motion creates emotion.”***

***-Unknown***

So when you find yourself procrastinating, don't wait until you 'feel' like doing the task. Just get started, you will then begin to feel like it and in the end be glad that you accomplished your task. Feelings follow actions.

## **2. BREAK DOWN BIG PROJECTS INTO SMALL TASKS**

A major reason we procrastinate is that a project or task seems complex and overwhelming. However, rather than thinking about how big the task is, it is wise to 'chunk' the project. Break the project down into manageable parts. Now, instead of facing a large, looming task, you're facing only a small unit that you can see yourself accomplishing.

If cleaning out the garage is just too overwhelming, decide to work on it for 30 minutes, or pick a section that you will organize today.

***“An ant on the move does more than a dozing ox.”***

***- Lao Tzu***

If you have a term paper to do, write down the steps you need to complete it. Perhaps you begin with an outline or simply brainstorming ideas. Just concentrate on the 'next step.' Then get busy on the 'next step.'

## **3. SET SELF IMPOSED DEADLINES**

Many people say they work best under pressure. They need a deadline to get motivated.

Setting a 'false deadline' ahead of the actual deadline keeps you under pressure but also gives you a cushion if something goes wrong.

***“Work expands to the time allowed.”***

***-Parkinson's Law***

If your car needs to be inspected by the end of the month, decide that you will have it completed by the 15th of the month. Plan to send your tax return in by April 1st. (If you are receiving a refund, send it in way before then!) Decide to send in the college application a month before it is due.

## **4. REWARD YOURSELF**

We all need something to look forward to. A good way to combat procrastination is giving yourself an incentive. If you want to start a workout program, tell yourself that if you keep to your exercise routine for the first two weeks, you will buy that outfit that you had your eye on.

The habit of procrastination hinders our success in many areas. Successful people make it a habit to take action even if conditions aren't perfect.

It is vitally important that we exercise our 'action' muscles. Getting in the mental groove of 'doing it now' will move us forward.

So, what task or project have you been procrastinating in getting started with? What things have you been delaying because everything isn't just right?

Pick just one thing that you have delayed doing. Decide to tackle it even if you don't want to. Once you get started, you will be glad you did.

You will eliminate the emotional drain that comes with procrastination and will gain a sense of accomplishment that will enable you to move forward to a stronger and more fulfilling life

***“The wise person does at once  
what the fool does finally.”  
– Baltasar Gracian***



## Chapter 8

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# The Power of Habit

*"We are what we repeatedly do.  
Excellence, therefore, is not an act,  
but a habit"*  
-Aristotle



# The Power of Habit

We all are creatures of habit. It's true. You probably brush your teeth the same way, drive to work using the same route, sleep on the same side of the bed day in and day out.

Researchers tell us that about 95% of our behavior is automatic and only 5% is consciously self directed.

This is good. We need habits. They help us function. Life would be a lot harder if we started everything from scratch.

Merriam-Webster defines a **habit** as **a pattern of behavior acquired by frequent repetition.**

## GOOD HABITS VS. BAD HABITS

What makes habits so fascinating is that they can be used either for our good or our detriment. Good habits bring positive results. Bad habits bring negative consequences.

*“Habit is either the best of servants  
or the worst of masters.”  
- Nathaniel Emmons*

Look at any part of your life in which you are consistently effective and you will find that certain habits help make that possible.

If you are in good health, you probably have a routine of exercise and eating sensibly. If you have a strong relationship with your spouse or kids, most likely you have developed the habit of spending quality time with them. If you can play a musical instrument exceptionally well, you undoubtedly have had a regular routine of practice.

Conversely, if your basement is messy, you have not developed the habit of putting things back where they belong.

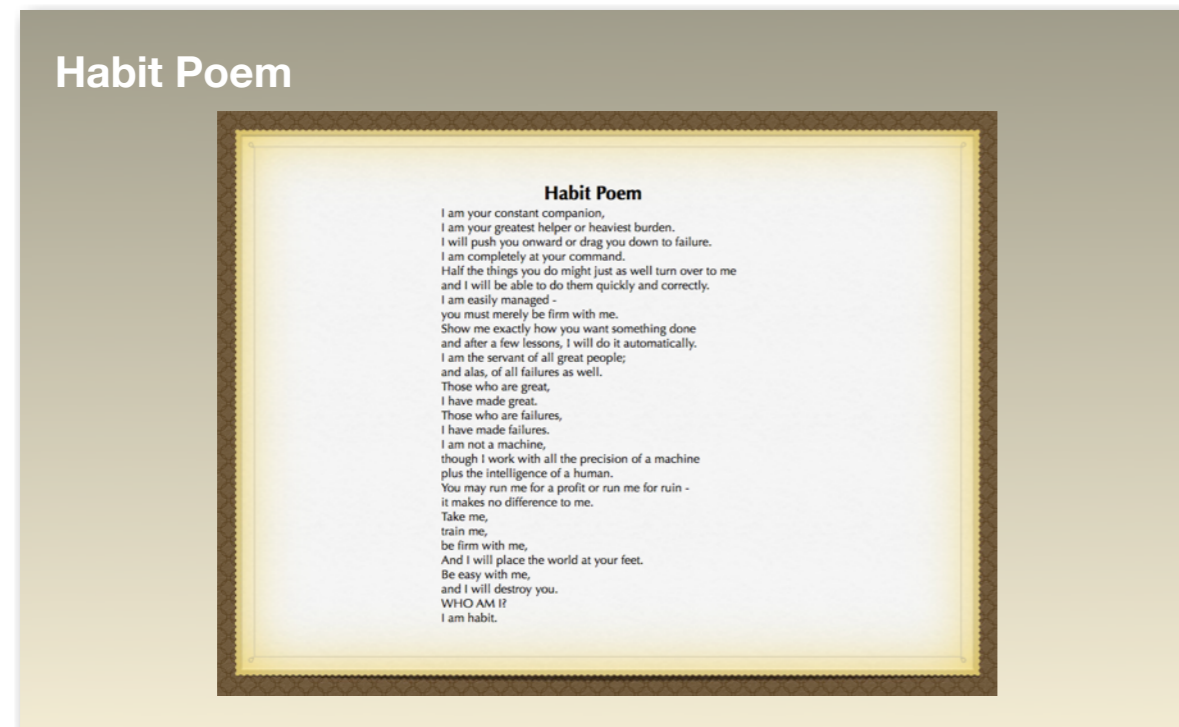
Author Stephen Covey states that we have power to choose, but not power to choose the consequences. I can choose to eat a Boston Creme donut. I cannot choose whether to have the 400 calories that come with it. Habits have natural consequences, good or bad.

## DEVELOPING NEW HABITS

Old habits die hard. Bad habits die harder.

***“Good habits are difficult to acquire  
but easy to live with.  
Bad habits are easy to acquire  
but difficult to live with.”***

***-Jim Rohn***



Changing a habit means doing the same thing enough times in a row that you begin to do it instinctively.

One of the best ways to eliminate a bad habit is to replace it with a good one. People are more successful in their attempt to quit smoking if they develop an exercise routine. Simply trying to stop smoking is much harder.

***“Replace bad habits with good habits. Trying to become virtuous merely by excluding vice is as unrealistic as trying to cultivate roses simply by eliminating the weeds.”***

***-Gary Blair***

Here are some practical steps in replacing bad habits with productive habits.

- Decide which habit you would like to change.
- List the negative consequences of habit. This builds the power of ‘why’ we are going to change.
- Choose a habit to replace it.
- List the positive consequences of the new habit.
- Decide to act on your new habit instead of your old habit for one day.
- Build off the momentum of the first day.

After a few days, you begin to build self confidence and muscle memory.

If you fall off the wagon, determine to try again. There is where resilience and perseverance come in to play. Many people fail on the first try but succeed on subsequent attempts.

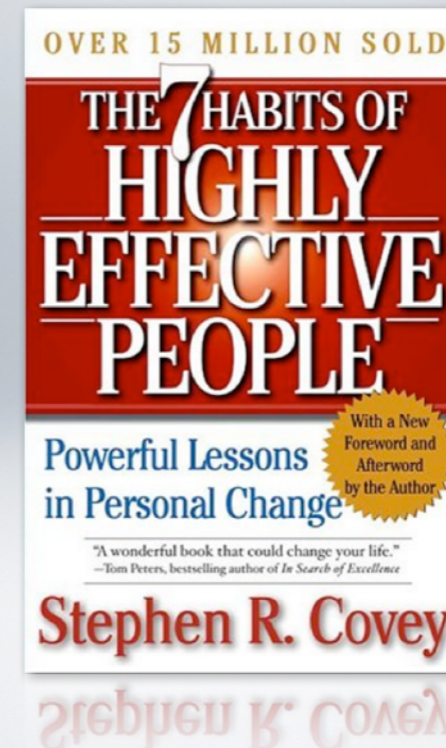
There is no magic to this. It will take willpower and determination. If it were easy to control our spending and eating, we would all be rich and skinny.

The first few days of changing a habit is the hardest. Like a rocket ship which uses most of it's energy during take off, but then it gains momentum.

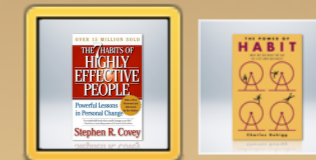
Once you get into the groove of a new, productive habit, it is liberating. Then you are ready to tackle another habit.

***“An act often repeated soon forms a habit;  
and habit, allowed, steadily gains in strength.  
At first it may be a spider’s web, easily broken through,  
but if not resisted, it soon binds us with chains of steel.”  
-Tryon Edwards***

## Recommended Reading - The Power of Habit



*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey*



## Chapter 9

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# Everyday Choices

*"Your life today is the result of all of your choices and decisions in the past.*

*When you make new choices,  
you create a new future"*

*-Brian Tracy*



## Chapter 9

# Everyday Choices

Have you ever had one of those ‘old fashioned’ donuts at Starbucks? They are delicious ...and about 450 calories. Every time I go in there they are screaming at me to buy one.

Every day we are confronted with choices that seem minor at the time, but over the long term can have a significant impact. Making the right choice involves developing a strategy and tapping our willpower.

When it comes to willpower, we have two kinds of struggles: ‘do power’ and ‘don’t power.’

‘**Do power**’ is when we seek to motivate ourselves to do something. This is what is called **the challenge of initiative**. This could be the challenge of getting ourselves to the gym, filing our taxes or cleaning the basement. Often we don’t ‘feel’ like doing something even though we know we should.

Conversely ‘**don’t power**’ is preventing ourselves from doing something we know we shouldn’t do. This could be eating one of those donuts, lighting up a cigarette or making an unwise impulse purchase. We can call this **the challenge of restraint**.

We frequently have an internal conflict as we make these ‘in the moment’ choices. The tension is between our impulsive side and our more thoughtful side.

The key in making wise choices is to pause and think things through.

Here are some good strategies to help us make wise choices.

### ‘DO’ POWER

#### *The Challenge of Initiative*

##### **1. Act your way into feeling.**

Have you ever procrastinated about something, finally started it and really got ‘on a roll?’ This has happened to me many times. Usually the hardest part in overcoming procrastination is simply getting started.

When a rocket ship first takes off, it uses a tremendous amount of fuel. As it gains momentum, it uses substantially less fuel.

The same is true with us. We expend more energy simply getting started. But if you get going, even when you don't feel like it, often momentum kicks in. So remember, **motion creates emotion**. Act first and the feelings will likely follow.

## 2. Imagine the future.

Picture yourself having completed the project. Visualize how your clothes will fit when you reach your weight goal or how your garden will look once it is weeded.

Really let it sink in and envision the positive emotions of achieving the goal. Create a vivid picture in your mind. A vision gives hope and motivation.

***“The amount of endurance and the intensity of your focus, is directly proportionate to the clarity of your vision.”  
-Jim Collins***

## 3. Pre-commit.

It is often unwise to wait until you are ‘in the moment’ to make a decision. Decide ahead of time specifically when you will go to the gym or file your taxes. You can even go so far as putting it on your calendar.

As author of the book **Quitter**, Jon Acuff says, “*crush the discussion with the decision.*” In other words, leave no room for wavering; you have already made up your mind.

## ‘DON’T ’ POWER

### ***The Challenge of Restraint***

#### **1. Think ‘as now, so then.’**

I have often said to myself, “*I can have this donut today and tomorrow I will start eating better.*”

It is easy to deceive ourself and say “*tomorrow we will be better.*” The problem is that tomorrow we are the same old self. We often idealize the person we will be in the future.

It is more accurate and effective to understand that if we give in today, we will more likely give in tomorrow as well.

‘As now, so then’ thinking leads me down the path of thinking about the consequences of having a donut every day. This thought process is more likely to temper my unhealthy indulgence.

#### **2. Use the 10 minute rule.**

Impulses can be fleeting. It is usually a good idea to wait 10 minutes before deciding to indulge. Once we get past the initial urge, the impulse is often not as strong.

For example, having a piece of fruit will likely diminish the desire to eat a donut. Once you are out of the store, that item that you just ‘had to have’ doesn’t seem like such a necessity.



### **3. Set limits.**

I really like French fries. It's hard for me to imagine not having them for the rest of my life. However, I try to limit myself to eating them only on Saturdays. When I do wait until the weekend, I can actually enjoy them without feeling guilty, knowing I eat them in moderation.

(Keep in mind this technique does not work for everything. If you are trying to quit smoking, limiting yourself to smoking once a week simply will not work. If you want to give up something completely, it is far easier to abstain altogether than it is to give in just a little then try to stop.)

## **GENERAL STRATEGIES**

### **1. Focus on positive action rather than prohibition.**

Rather than focusing on not doing something, think about a positive alternative. It is much easier to replace a bad habit with a good habit than it is to simply quit doing something.

### **2. Set up your environment to your advantage.**

If you are tempted to help yourself to a big bowl of ice cream after dinner every night, don't keep ice cream in the house. Rather, keep healthy snacks that you enjoy or pre-packaged smaller portions.

If you intend to go to the gym first thing in the morning, pack your gym bag and hang out your work clothes the night be-

fore. It will be much easier to get started in the morning. (And remember to put the coffee maker timer on!)

### 3. Start small.

Willpower is like a muscle that can be trained. It uses the rule of 'use it or lose it.'

Even minor occurrences of exercising willpower will lead to increased self control.

## CONCLUSION

Most of our everyday choices are not new. We should be able to see them coming a mile away and develop a strategy. I know when I go to Starbucks I am going to want one (or two) of those donuts. We can develop our strategic choice ahead of time.

When you find yourself in the middle of an 'in the moment' choice, choose a strategy that works best for you.

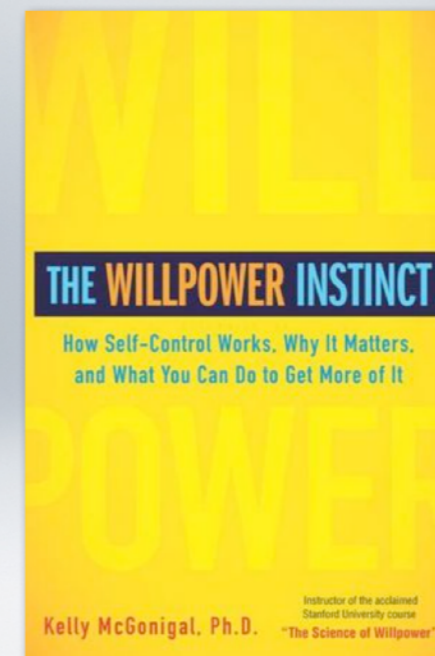
Fortunately, when it comes to choices, we don't have to push ourselves to the limit all the time. We simply need to focus on those critical moments when we are most susceptible to unhealthy impulses.

Our current habits are not our destiny. They can be changed and reprogrammed. New habits can be intentionally designed. But it will take focus and energy.

And if you happen to temporarily stumble, don't beat yourself up. Remember building willpower takes patience and perseverance. Tomorrow is a new beginning.

***"There is a choice you have to make in everything you do.  
So keep in mind that in the end,  
the choice you make, makes you."  
-John Wooden***

## Recommended Reading-Everyday Choices



### *The Willpower Instinct by Kelly McGonigal, Ph. D*



## Chapter 10

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# Managing Personal Change

*"Life is a one way street.*

*No matter how many detours, none of them leads back.*

*Once you know and accept that,  
life becomes much simpler."*

*-Isabel Moore*



# Managing Personal Change



It has been said that the only people who like change are busy cashiers and wet babies.

For most of us, change is difficult.

This year our youngest daughter will be going to college. My wife and I will be “empty nesters.” I have really enjoyed the time with our kids growing up and am saddened that this chapter of life is almost over.

Certainly you are experiencing change in your life as well, probably in many areas and on many levels. It is important that we have a good understanding of change and how to respond to it in a healthy way. If handled well, change can produce growth and strength.

### CHANGE IS NATURAL.

It is important to realize that everything we want to hold on to now was the product of past changes.

The CEO of our organization for the past 25 years recently announced his retirement. During these few decades, our company has experienced predictability and stability. But 25

years ago, he was a brand new CEO and the organization was facing many unknowns, just as we are today.

### RESISTANCE TO CHANGE IS NATURAL.

As humans, we are control-oriented beings. Anything that reduces our ability to control can be viewed as a threat.

Almost any change brings stress. If you think about it, even positive change brings about stress. Think of a time you received a promotion, had a newborn baby or moved into a new home. Even though these are good times in life, stress is still present and palpable.

*“Change is inevitable,  
except from the vending machine.”  
-Steven Wright*

However, change also leads to growth. Change gets us out of our comfort zone. Any time we have experienced significant personal growth in our life, it likely involved moving out of our comfort zone. As a matter of fact, fear and growth go together like macaroni and cheese.

## COPE OR CAPITALIZE?

When we experience change of any kind, we have a choice. We can merely try to 'cope' with change or 'capitalize' on the opportunity that change brings.

This is the difference between **reacting** and **responding**. **Reacting** is simply going where our emotions take us. Digging in our heels or ignoring reality doesn't prevent change. And by doing so, we often make ourselves miserable. **Responding** is consciously deciding our approach and attitude toward change.

I like to use the analogy of medication. When we say that someone "had a reaction to a medication," that is negative. When we say someone is "responding to the medication," that is positive.

There are many things we cannot control in life, but we are able to control our response to the changes.

*"If you don't like change,  
you're going to like irrelevance even less."  
-Eric Shinseki*

## STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CHANGE

### 1. Maintain Perspective

Everything is in constant motion.

In the big picture, if there were no change, there would be no progress. We are all trying to get better, slimmer, smarter, etc.

As I think of my daughter going off to college, I understand that this is the process God ordained for her to grow her into a mature, responsible adult.

Change can be good. Think of all the advances that change brings. I like the convenience of my iPod instead of the old vinyl records! Watching a football game on high definition TV isn't too bad either.

*"Some people change when they see the light,  
others when they feel the heat."  
-Caroline Schoeder*



## 2. Focus On The Positives

There are very few changes with no upside. It is very easy to see the danger in change, but let's not fail to take advantage of the opportunities that come with change.

I know someone who broke her wrist and was unable to work for several weeks. Although she had to use vacation time and was unable to drive, she said that her time at home forced her to slow down and re-evaluate her out-of-control lifestyle.

When we face change, it would be helpful to literally write down all the opportunities that come with the change.

## 3. Learn From Others

Whatever life throws at us, chances are someone else has experienced similar circumstances. It can be very helpful to find others who have handled change well and gain insights from their experience. True maturity is not always going it alone but knowing when to get support to help us move forward.

## 4. Serve Others

In addition to learning *from* others, it is also important to reach out *to* others as well.

A healthy way to respond to change is to help others. It could be volunteering in the community, helping a co-worker, or simply reaching out to a friend in need.

*“The best way to find yourself,  
is to lose yourself in the service of others.”  
-Ghandi*

## 5. Take Care of Yourself

Change, whether big or small, positive or negative, requires a healthy mind and body. Eat sensibly, exercise regularly, get adequate sleep and take time for yourself.

## RESILIENCE

Change can bring about **resilience**. I like that word resilience. One definition of resilience **is the ability to bounce back, to recover strength, to absorb any learning brought about by adversity or change**. A life principle I try to live by is to make *the best of any situation*.

As much as we are reluctant to embrace change, the fact is: **humans are highly adaptable**. We have a God-given capacity to adjust to life's changes in a healthy way. When we do, we come through change stronger and better.

*“A good half of the art of living is resilience.”  
— Alain de Botton*

## Chapter 11

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# Attitude

*“Attitude is a little thing  
that makes a big difference.”  
-Winston Churchill*



# Chapter 11

## Attitude

When I first became Chief Learning Officer, I wanted to come up with a compelling purpose statement for the position. I thought an excellent statement would be: *“To equip people with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed at their job.”*

I was proud of myself and it fired me up. However, there was a significant problem with the statement. People can have great skills and be very knowledgeable yet still not succeed in their position.

Through my 32 years in the workplace, I am convinced that attitude is the biggest difference between a successful employee and an unsuccessful employee.

If someone has a good attitude, she can acquire most skills and knowledge needed to do the job. If she has a poor attitude, skills and knowledge rarely compensate.

I am going to highlight five elements of a winning attitude and their negative counterparts.

### GOING THE EXTRA MILE VS. DOING THE MINIMUM

Popular management expert Tom Peters was talking to a company’s employees about their organization’s poor customer service scores. One person in the group became offended and spoke out, *“Hey, we’re no worse than anyone else!”*

Imagine if the company used this statement as their motto and hung it out on to the company sign.

You may have met some people with this mindset. It seems like their life goal is to be on the cutting edge of mediocrity.

Have you ever heard anyone say, *“Let the people who make the big bucks do it!”* One reason why some people have ‘big bucks’ is that they were willing to do what others wouldn’t. They understand that effort comes before reward.

***“When you do more than you are paid to do,  
the day will come  
when you are paid more for what you do.”  
-Zig Ziglar***

Successful employees look at their job description as a mere starting point. They show initiative, deliver sensational performance, and expand their job beyond official boundaries.

Their job is more fulfilling and rewarding as a result. Trying to get away with doing the minimum necessary leaves us with little personal satisfaction or pride.

*“If a person does only what is required, he is a slave.  
If a person does more than required, he is free”  
-Chinese proverb*

## UPBEAT VS. NEGATIVE

I recently saw a bumper sticker that said “*Stop Global Whining!*” That is a great slogan for a high performance workplace.

Author John Maxwell talks about employees as either **momentum breakers** or **momentum makers**. Momentum breakers sabotage the organization and sap energy from their co-workers. Momentum makers add energy to the workplace and help move the company forward.

*“Some people cause happiness wherever they go,  
others cause happiness whenever they go.”  
-Winston Churchill*

Are you a spectator sitting on the sidelines picking apart every little thing that is wrong with the company and your co-

workers? Or do you roll up your sleeves, solve problems, and encourage others?

*“Those who say it can’t be done  
are left in the dust by those doing it.”  
-Del Gilbert*

## CONSIDERATE VS. RUDE

I recently heard that an acquaintance of mine got fired. He is very knowledgeable and has the potential to be a great resource for customers and co-workers. One day he was called into the manager’s office and terminated because he was rude and abrupt resulting in numerous customer complaints.

Being unapproachable or abrasive is a career liability. It hurts you and your company. Considerate people are easy to be around. They make it a point to make others feel comfortable. We may not have warm feelings for all of our co-workers, but we still should treat everyone professionally and respectfully.

## OPEN TO LEARN VS. “KNOW-IT-ALL”

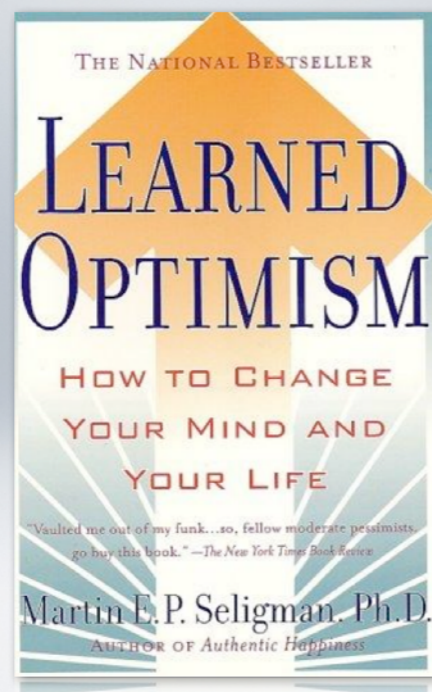
Successful people view themselves as a ‘work in progress’ while unsuccessful people see themselves as already knowing enough.

Are you on a quest to learn more and improve yourself?

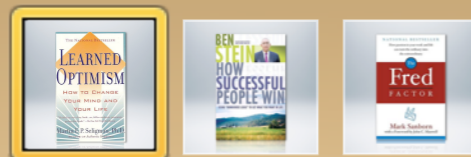
***“When you are through learning, you’re through.”  
-John Wooden***

If you are not making a conscious effort to get better, you are not just standing still, you are losing ground and getting further behind.

### Recommended Reading: **Attitude**



### Learned Optimism by Martin Seligman, Ph. D



Successful consultant Alan Weiss is known for saying “*I want to learn so fast that I am constantly surprised at how stupid I was two weeks ago.*” I love that way of thinking.

Those who are open to learning welcome constructive feedback and view it as an opportunity for improvement. ‘Know-It-Alls’ look at constructive feedback solely as criticism and take it as a personal offense.

### **SEEKING TO SERVE VS. SEEKING TO SELF PROTECT**

Successful people are ‘others oriented’ and seek to serve. They give others credit. They are generous. They are givers of time, energy, and appreciation.

Those who are simply concerned with making themselves look good have a different view of life. They have a ‘scarcity’ mentality. They believe the more credit someone else gets, the less credit is left for them.

I frequently visit a nursing home which has an energetic, friendly and caring receptionist. She does her job with passion and enthusiasm. Her specific job duties include signing in guests, answering incoming calls, and paging employees overhead. However, it is not *what* she does but *how* she does her job that makes her stand out. She is successful because of her attitude. It is the difference maker.

Everyone brings an attitude to the job. What type of attitude you choose to bring will determine your success.

## Chapter 12

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# Renew, Replenish, and Refuel

*“To keep a lamp burning,  
we have to keep putting oil into it.”  
-Mother Teresa*



## Chapter 12

# Renew, Replenish, and Refuel

In his book, ***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People***, author Stephen Covey describes the following scenario:

Suppose you come across a man in the woods working mightily to saw down a tree.

*“What are you doing?”* you ask.

*“Can’t you see? I am sawing down this tree,”* he impatiently replies.

*“You look exhausted!”* you exclaim. *“How long have you been doing this?”*

*“Over 5 hours,”* he replies, *“and I am beat! This is hard work.”*

*“Well, why don’t you take a few minutes and sharpen your saw?”* you ask. *“I am sure it will go a lot faster.”*

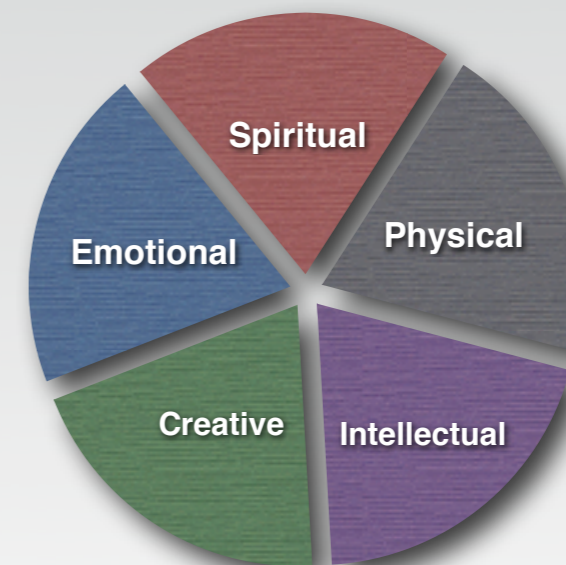
*“I don’t have time to sharpen the saw,”* he replies emphatically. *“I am too busy.”*

Our jobs require us to work hard, give our best to others, and to constantly be ‘on.’ In business, we are going hard all day long. Although this is rewarding, it can also be draining and exhausting.

It is important that we do things to keep ourselves renewed, replenished and refueled. What we do off the job can help us be more effective on the job. There is a time for energy expenditure and there is a time for energy recovery.

I like the concept of the SPICE model. It contains 5 key areas in our lives which are important to keep balanced:

The **SPICE** Model



## SPIRITUAL

What do you do to renew yourself spiritually?

How about starting the day in solitude?

Author, Brian Tracy calls the first half hour of the day the “*golden 30 minutes.*” He encourages people to spend the first part of the day in solitude reading something inspirational and motivating. This should be done before reading the newspaper, checking e-mail, or going on the internet. This provides a strong start to the day and helps give us perspective.

Prayer is also a very healthy practice. When we pray, the majority of the time should be spent on giving thanks and less time on asking God for “stuff.”

***“Gratitude is the parent of all virtues.”***  
***-Unknown***

Others feed their soul by taking a walk in nature, meditating, or practicing yoga.

## PHYSICAL

Our bodies are an amazing gift from God. It is important that we take care of them well.

If you spend 30 minutes a day exercising, that is just 2% of the day. This small time investment will help you feel better the other 98% of the day. Regular exercise reduces stress, in-

creases energy and focus. We also feel better, look better and are healthier when we exercise.

If you haven’t exercised for a while, start slow and start small. The hardest part is just getting started.

Also, part of renewing ourselves physically involves eating sensibly and getting enough rest.

## INTELLECTUAL

Many people spend too much time watching TV. Jim Rohn calls television “*junk food for the mind.*”

There is a difference between ‘vegging out’ and relaxing in a healthy way.

How about reading some non-fiction books that increase your knowledge and skill? How about learning a new language or taking up a musical instrument? Have you considered taking a class on a new computer program?

We are never too old to learn something new.

I started playing piano several years ago without ever having read a musical note in my life. I am not very good by any stretch of the imagination. However, it is enjoyable and intellectually challenging at the same time.

The mind is like a muscle, it gets stronger with use. Use it or lose it!

## CREATIVE

Many people have hobbies that bring energy to their lives.

It could be gardening, motorcycles, quilting, or listening to music. It may painting, hiking or photography.

It is important to regularly carve out time to pursue these interests. Make it a habit to do so.

## EMOTIONAL

Last, but certainly not least, is the importance of relationships.

When was the last time you went out on a date with your spouse or significant other? Do you take time to play a board game with your children or grandchildren? How about a regular 'get together' with good friends?

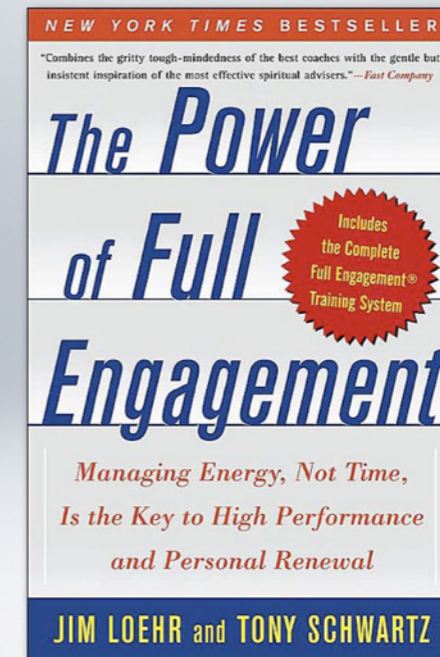
You may be saying to yourself *"all this sounds nice but right now my life is too hectic."*

The fact is that **life will never settle down**. We can either let life happen to us or make things happen.

When we are proactive and take time for energy renewal, we are sharpening our saw. It makes life more enjoyable and enables us to bring our 'A' game to work everyday. When that happens, everybody wins.

***"The best gift you can give others is a healthy, energized, focused self."***  
***-Bill Hybels***

### Recommended Reading-Renew, Replenish, Refuel



***The Power of Full Engagement by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz***





**Section 2**  
**Accelerating**  
**Excellence in**  
**Relationships**

## Chapter 12

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# Interpersonal Skills

*"The ability to work well with people is as purchasable a commodity as coffee and sugar.*

*And I pay more for that ability than any other under the sun."*

*-John D. Rockefeller*



## Chapter 12

# Interpersonal Skills

I recently spoke to a nurse about an experience with her previous employer. She had just graduated from nursing school and found a job in a hospital. She was excited and optimistic about her new career.

During the first couple days on the job she was assigned a preceptor, a seasoned nurse who was selected to orient her. This nurse was extremely knowledgeable. Her many years of experience added up to exceptional clinical competence.

However, the preceptor was also intimidating and unapproachable. She had forgotten what it was like to be a new employee let alone a new nurse just out of school. It didn't take long before the new nurse was told she was too slow and publicly ridiculed in front of the very patients she was seeking to care for. She found herself crying on her daily ride to work.

Soon after, she left the hospital and came to our organization. She is now a contributing member and we are fortunate to have her on our team.

All of us know people who are very knowledgeable or technically competent. However, that is just part of the total performance package. There are two parts to every job: **hard**

**skills** or technical competency and **soft skills** which include attitude and interpersonal skills.

Ben Stein in his book **'How Successful People Win'** puts it this way, *"If the world were run perfectly, perhaps you would be promoted, advanced, and rewarded on the basis of sheer ability. But the world doesn't work that way or even close to that way. When your superiors look for someone to promote, they look for someone they know and like. So go out and make yourself likeable. That's just how the winning players play the game."*

## RELATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Relational intelligence is the ability to work well with others. It includes having a friendly and welcoming demeanor. It means being the kind of person who practices common courtesies like saying *"please," "thank you," "it is good to see you"* and *"I would be happy to help."* We all appreciate someone who takes the initiative to make us feel comfortable. This is the attribute of 'approachability.'

People with high relational intelligence express a genuine concern for customers and co-workers.

This doesn't necessarily mean that we love everyone with work with. We are all human and differences are inevitable. Someone once said the definition of conflict is *"two people in the same county."* It's true, anytime we work with others there will be difficulties.

However, it is not how we feel towards others that matters, but how we behave toward others. Being kind to someone, even when we are not particularly fond of them, is not being fake or disingenuous, it is being **professional**.

*"Kindness is in our power even when fondness is not."*  
-Unknown

When we speak poorly of our co-workers or our team we diminish the image of the organization and decrease our own value. We are all hired to enhance the value for our organization. It is our responsibility to speak well of the organization and to help the company succeed.

Don't make your boss spend needless time and energy managing you or petty conflicts with co-workers. This doesn't put you in a position to win.

If you have legitimate concerns, bring them to your boss in a spirit of concern with possible solutions. Don't just drop problems in their lap.

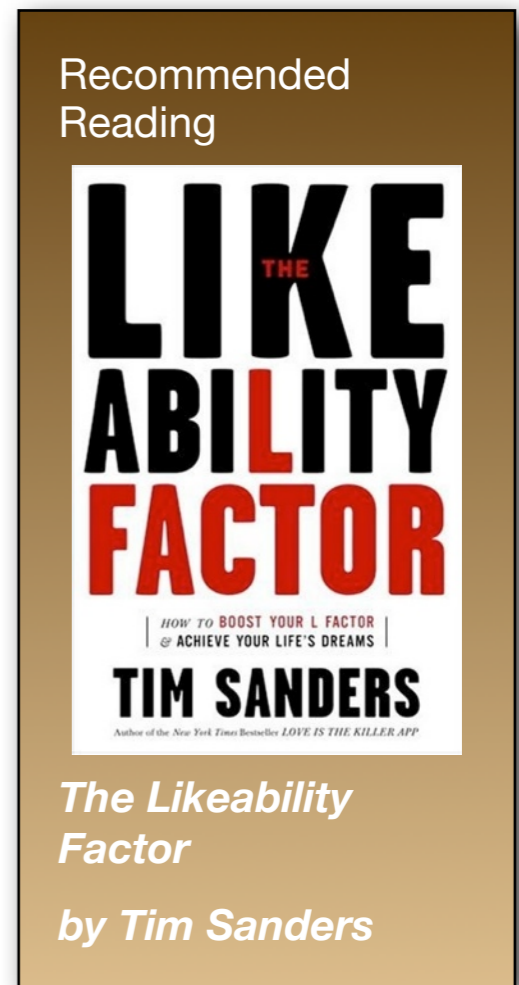
Be optimistic, be upbeat, be generous with praise and encouragement. Ask a co-worker if you can lend them a hand. Build a reputation for being dependable, professional, and cooperative.

*"A person without a smile should not open a shop."*  
-Chinese Proverb

A person who comes in everyday and thinks about how they can be an asset to the organization and work well with their co-workers are those who ride home more personally fulfilled and are the most sought after employees.

Remember, technical competence is just part of your job. A hard case can be made for the value of soft skills.

If you put these concepts into action, the organization will think they got a bargain in you! That is a good position to be in.



## Chapter 14

# Giving Up the Spotlight

*“There are two kinds of people in the world—  
those who walk into a room and say,  
‘Here I am!’ and those who say ‘There you are!’”  
-Abigail Van Buren*



## Chapter 14

# Giving Up the Spotlight

A friend of mine cuts my hair. (Her job gets easier by the month.) She once shared a story with me she said fundamentally changed the way she did business.

Early in her career she was cutting someone's hair. When she was finished, the gentleman asked her, *"Could I give you some feedback?"*

"Sure" my friend answered cautiously but inquisitively.

He said, *"You told me that you have a goal to grow your business. However, the last 20 minutes as you were cutting my hair, you talked the entire time about yourself. You talked about what you were going to do this weekend, about your kid and pets. I suggest if you want to grow your business that you center your conversations around your customers. Just about every business is a relationship business, and cutting hair is no different."*

Although initially embarrassed, my friend put this advice into practice and now runs a very successful business.

All of us are prone to want to talk about ourselves.

If somebody mentions their kids, we are eager to talk about our kids. If someone talks about their favorite place to vaca-

tion, we immediately want to tell them ours. The same can be said for pets, hobbies, or just about anything else.

To experience this firsthand, try this experiment sometime. When sitting with a group of people, perhaps over lunch or some other social setting, sit back and simply observe the conversation.

Frequently, there is very little dialogue. Often there is little expressed interest in another's experience or perspective.

Generally each person is talking about their own little world or how the subject matter relates to them. In other words, we frequently engage in multiple monologues.

***"A gossip is someone who talks to you about others.  
A bore is someone who talks to you about themselves.  
A brilliant conversationalist is someone  
who talks to you about you."***

***-Lisa Kirk***

## ONE UPSMANSHIP

Even more egregious than just talking about oneself is what I call 'one upmanship.' This is making oneself look good at another's expense.

Recently I was part of a conversation with a group of people. One woman was expressing some heartfelt concerns about the struggles she was having with her two middle school children. Right in the middle of her sharing, another person said *“you think you have it bad now, just wait until they are in high school. You haven’t seen anything yet!”*

As bad as I felt for this woman, I can be guilty of the very same thing. A woman recently told me that she was excited about the upcoming weekend because she and her husband were going away to celebrate their 15th anniversary. My immediate, knee jerk reaction was to want to tell her that I have been married for over 30 years.

However, the ‘socially generous’ thing to do is to congratulate her on her anniversary and express interest in her weekend travels.

Given our propensity to be self absorbed, let’s talk about some practical strategies we can employ to ‘give up the spotlight.’

## TAKE A GENUINE INTEREST IN OTHERS

People who are skilled socially take a genuine interest in the interests of others. It is fun to get to know about others’ background, life experiences and hobbies.

I am not suggesting that we never talk about ourselves; we should. When we find common ground, we make a connection with others. But before we immediately leap into our own world, let’s delve into theirs a little bit.

*“You can make more friends in two months by being interested in others than you can in two years by trying to get others interested in you.”*

*-Dale Carnegie*

I know a guy who is very successful. He is admittedly introverted. His strategy is to focus on the other person and ask them specific questions about their world.

For instance, if he is at a social gathering and he meets an ICU nurse, he would ask questions like *“What made you get into nursing?”* or *“What attracted you to ICU nursing?”* or *“What is a typical day like for you in the ICU?”*

Even though he is shy and uncomfortable in these situations, most people walk away thinking he is a great conversationalist. He does this by giving ‘**focused attention**’ to the person speaking.

## CALL PEOPLE BY NAME

Dale Carnegie once said *“a person’s name is, to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language.”*

We have an unconscious positive reaction when we hear our name. Make it a habit of remembering the names of others. You may think you are not very good at it but with some simple practices you can get much better.

Here are a few tips.

- When you are first introduced to someone, for a few seconds, concentrate on their name. Try and repeat their name a few times during this initial conversation.
- Associate a person's name with someone you know or somebody famous. I recently met somebody at the gym. He is about my age and has a full head of hair. His name is Paul. I thought 'mop top'='Paul McCartney.' Once I did, I had no trouble remembering his name when I saw him.
- If you meet someone who has an unusual name, ask them to spell their name. This shows genuine interest and will help you visualize the name. (Don't try this if their name is Pam. It doesn't come off very well.)

## PRACTICE EMPATHY

Empathy is the ability to identify and understand another's situation. It is putting ourselves in the shoes of the other person.

If a friend's elderly parent passes away, we can express sincere condolences as we think about how the effect of losing a parent might have on us.

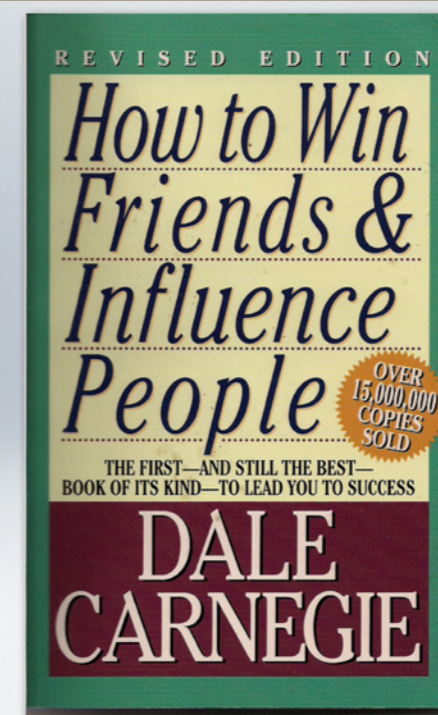
When someone you know purchases a home for the first time, we can share in their excitement.

When a new co-worker shows up on your unit, you can think back on your awkward first day on the job. Then reach out to

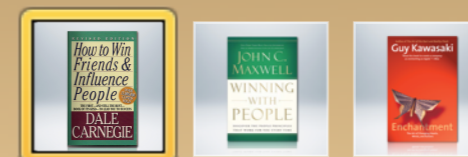
the new employee and do your best to make them feel welcome and comfortable.

A key to successful interactions is making the other person feel like the most important in the world for the brief time you are with them.

## Recommended Reading -Giving Up the Spotlight



*How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie*



Chapter 15

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# The Power of 1st Impressions

*"You never get a second chance to make  
a good 1st impression."*

*-Oscar Wilde*



# The Power of 1st Impressions

A friend of mine recently went to a surgeon's office for an initial consultation on knee surgery. She was in the waiting room 45 minutes beyond her scheduled appointment. When she was called, the nurse mispronounced her name. After more time waiting in the exam room, the physician arrived. After briefly looking at the x-rays, he told her to make arrangements to schedule the surgery. When my friend inquired about an alternative type of surgery, he was abrupt, arrogant and dismissed the suggestion immediately. My friend decided to go out of the area and have the other type of surgery with a physician she felt more comfortable with.

This is the power of first impressions.

There is no question that first impressions are 'sticky.' We all remember our first day on the job. But do we remember our 17th day or our 245th day? First impressions are more significant and longer lasting than subsequent impressions. This is what psychologists call the 'primacy effect.'

***"Impressions are based upon instinct and emotion, not on rational thought or in-depth investigation."  
-Jill Bremer***

## THE PRIMACY EFFECT

David Lieberman explains it this way, *"The primacy effect is the process whereby our first impression of another person causes us to interpret his or her subsequent behavior in a manner consistent with the first impression."* Given this information, it is extremely important to recognize and embrace the power of that all-important first impression.

If we make a poor first impression, we begin in a deficit position and it can take many positive impressions to overcome an initial bad impression.

Realtors are familiar with this concept. They talk about the 'curb appeal' of a house. This simply means the house must be attractive from the curb or there is a strong likelihood that potential buyers will not even want to see the inside of the house.

In his book, ***Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking***, author Malcolm Gladwell asserts that we generally make up our mind about people within the first two minutes. This is often done subconsciously.

I heard a popular speaker tell of a time he was having major renovations done on his house. He decided to get competitive bids from three contractors. The job was worth considerable money. Two of the contractors showed up late for the initial appointment. The third contractor arrived 20 minutes early, waited in his truck until 5 minutes before the appointment, then rang the doorbell. The speaker said this first impression went a long way in his decision to award the contract to the person who arrived on time.

Given this information, have you thought about the 1st impression you create? When someone first meets you, do you immediately create a positive impact?

*“I look for someone who produces a positive emotional effect the minute they walk in the room.”  
-Ken Blanchard*

## WAYS TO CREATE A GREAT IMPRESSION

One of the simplest and best ways to create a great first impression is to **smile**. According to Paul Ekman, Professor at the University of California Medical School, *“We can pick up a smile from 30 meters away. A smile lets us know we are going to get a positive reception.”* The lack of a smile may feel neutral but it actually sends a unintended negative message.

A second way to create a great impression is just as simple, **be friendly**. We live in a world of unfriendliness. The world is

full of road rage, cutting in line, general impatience and selfishness. If you are friendly, you give others psychological warmth, comfort and safety.

People make quick judgements regarding appearance. The key is to have **a neat, clean and appropriate appearance**. Caring about your appearance sends a message that you have are making an effort to give a good impression. Dressing inappropriately or neglecting your appearance suggests that you are socially unaware or careless.

## ORGANIZATIONAL 1ST IMPRESSIONS

The power of first impressions also holds true for organizations as well. Everything speaks to first time customer long before the first word is spoken. Think of the entry points to your organization or department. Is the trash can at the front door overflowing? Are there weeds in the flower beds? Are employees smoking at the entrance? Once the customer is in the building: Do you have personable, welcoming people on the front lines? Are customers greeted with a smile and friendly manner? Does the workspace look neat and professional? Are there inappropriate signs or “workplace humor” cartoons visible to the clients?

Think also of the employees you have answering phone calls from outside customers as well.

When a first impression for our business is anything less than excellent, we are playing catch up from that point forward.

I serve on the greeter team at our church. Research shows that visitors will decide within the first seven minutes of walking in the door whether they will come back again. Our church understands the principle of the power of the first impression and is purposeful in creating a great initial experience.

Are you as intentional about making sure your customers get off to a great start?

***“The first impression will either  
open the door or close it.  
It’s that important.”  
-Nicholas Sparks***

We never get a second chance to make a good first impression.



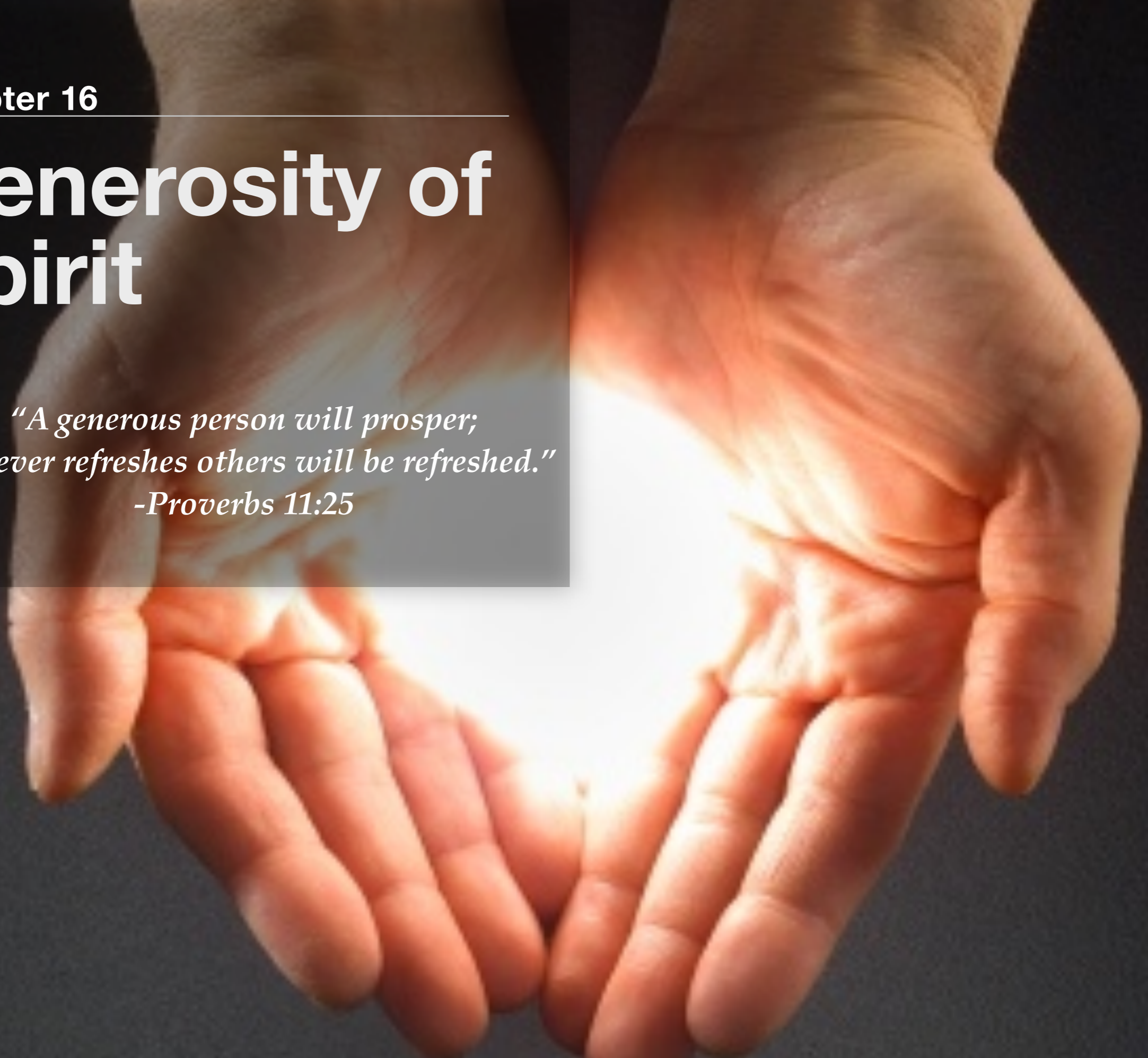
Chapter 16

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# Generosity of Spirit

*"A generous person will prosper;  
whoever refreshes others will be refreshed."*

*-Proverbs 11:25*



# Generosity of Spirit

In his book **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**, author Stephen Covey contrasts two very different mindsets.

The first mindset is what he calls the “**scarcity mentality.**” Life, for those with the scarcity mindset, is like a pie and if someone gets a big piece, there is less left for everyone else. There is only so much to go around. As a result, people with the scarcity mentality seek to self protect. They are reluctant to give credit or recognition to others because, in their mind, it takes away from them.

The “**abundance mentality,**” on the other hand, believes there is plenty to go around and more than enough for everyone. This results in helping others to be successful, sharing credit and giving recognition.

Let me share an example that you likely can relate to. When our son was little we knew that a little sister was on the way. I had the silly, but common thought “*How could I love my second child as much as I love my first child?*”

When our daughter arrived, I didn’t need to have a talk with my son and say “*Now that you have a sister, I need to take 50% of the love I have for you and give it to your sister.*” What happened? Obviously, love increased and there was plenty

for both of them. (And plenty more for another daughter who came later.)

Which mindset we adopt clearly affects our actions.

## REAPING AND SOWING

We are all familiar with the abundance mindset, we just call it different names. The Bible puts it this way: “*you reap what you sow.*”

We also use terminology like:

- “It all comes out in the wash.”
- “What goes around, comes around.”
- “What you give out comes back to you.”

Yes, there are times when those who seem to care just about themselves get promoted or get away with something. I like to think of this as ‘**temporary injustice.**’ However, in the long run, the principle of reaping and sowing is time tested.

Years ago my wife worked at a woman’s clothing store. She was promoted to lead associate. At the store were two assi-

tant managers. Let's call the first one Sue. Sue was threatened by my wife and wanted to protect her turf. My wife would ask Sue how to set up window displays, how to schedule staff, etc. Sue would say that she didn't need to know and that she would take care of it herself. She was reluctant to teach my wife any new skills. Sue had the scarcity mentality. To Sue, if my wife looked good and was successful in her new position this would somehow diminish her.

The other assistant manager, who I will call Cindy, took the time to share her knowledge and gave my wife more responsibility and helped her grow in her new position. She figuratively put her arm around her and supported her. Cindy had the abundance mentality. She really believed that it was best for everyone involved to develop my wife and help her succeed. She had "generosity of spirit."

Let me ask you a simple question, if you are the owner of the store, who is the more valuable and promotable assistant manager? The answer is obvious. A few months later, Sue was no longer working at the store because of her inability to get along with others. Cindy was promoted to Manager.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Here are some ways to practice generosity of spirit.

- Help someone who can be of absolutely no help to you.

- Share your knowledge, expertise and best practices freely with others.
- Give others the benefit of the doubt. Plato said "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle."
- Show appreciation and give credit to others.
- Focus on goodwill. Positive actions make the workplace more enjoyable and productive.

You are a more effective and more valuable when you help your co-workers and department succeed. Those in leadership are more effective when their goal is help their staff win.

How about this concept? What if you made it a goal to help your boss be successful. I know that may sound foreign to many but think of the good position that places you in.

## CONCLUSION

In his new book, **Enchantment**, author Guy Kawasaki takes the pie analogy further.

*"There are two kinds of people and organizations in the world: eaters and bakers. Eaters want a bigger slice of an existing pie; bakers want to make a bigger pie. Eaters think that if they win, you lose, and if you win, they lose. Bakers think that everyone can win with a bigger pie."*

Let's get baking.

## Chapter 17

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# Speaking in the Positive

*"If you can communicate,  
you can get by.*

*But if you can skillfully communicate,  
you can work miracles."*

*-Jim Rohn*



# Speaking in the Positive

Many years ago I became increasingly frustrated with an employee I was managing. In my view there were several performance issues. Every time I brought up my concerns, she would give me a pile of reasons and a mountain of excuses. Finally, one day, after not seeing improvement, I said frustratingly said to her, “you really have a victim mentality.”

In a sense it felt good to finally say what was on my mind. It brought some mild, superficial, temporary relief. However, it didn't accomplish anything. Worse yet, it was counter productive.

After I said that, she had no desire to work on the issue because she was too busy combating the offensive words I said.

***“When we say things out of stress,  
we eventually bring more stress on ourselves.”  
-Unknown***

All of us face communication challenges on a daily basis. It may be a customer service issue, a disagreement with a co-worker, being unable to meet a request from a boss, or a having to address a performance issue with an employee.

Figuring out the best way to say something in tough situations is a valuable skill.

I would like to introduce to you the concept of ‘**speaking in the positive.**’ Simply put, this is *choosing to express ourselves in the best way possible.* It is trying to come across as helpful, direct and truthful even in the most challenging conversations.

Think how my scenario might have been played out differently if I had said to the employee, “*I know that you have expressed a lot of reasons why you haven't been able to meet the performance standards. Now I would like to discuss what you can do to improve.*” Not only would this approach have been honest and direct, it would have been constructive. It would have allowed us to focus on her performance.

How we use language greatly influences how people receive and understand us. It is not just what we say, but how we say it. Speaking in the positive requires a shift in thinking. It means pausing and thinking “*what is the best possible way to say this?*” It is asking ourself the question, “*Is there a positive, rather than negative, way to say this?*”

Imagine you are a patient calling for an initial appointment. The person answering the phone says to you,

*“We are all booked up this week and won’t be able to see you until next Tuesday.”*

Wouldn’t that make you feel all warm and fuzzy?

What if, on the other hand, the scheduler said,

*“Our first available appointment is Tuesday morning at 10 am.”*

This is saying the exact same thing but in a very different way.

Think of the difference between saying

*“I disagree”* and

*“I have a different perspective.”*

Or how about the difference between

*“You won’t have the results of your x-rays for two days”* and

*“You will receive the results of your x-rays in two days.”*

***“There is a difference between negative information and negative communication.”***

***-Henry Cloud***

I am in no way saying that we should put a happy face on everything and be less than truthful. We should not make something sound better than it truly is. That is sugarcoating or ‘spinning’ things.

The other end of the spectrum from sugarcoating is being blunt. Being too blunt can often isolate the other person and they likely will not be receptive to your input.

For example, “This strategic plan just doesn’t cut it,” is being blunt.

“I think there are some improvements that can be made with the strategic plan,” is being direct and clear.

Speaking in the positive means you are being direct, honest and constructive.

## **CAN DO VS. CAN’T DO**

Another way to speak in the positive is to emphasize what we can do rather than what we can’t do.

For example, if I am asked to make a presentation on a certain day and I know I already have a previous commitment, I can either say,

“I can’t do it, I am not available.”

or I can say

“I have a previous commitment on that particular day, is there another day that might work?”

***“The worse the news,  
the more effort should go into communicating it.”  
-Andrew Grove***

The more we consciously pause and ask ourselves “*what is the best way to say this?*” the easier and more natural it will become to speak in the positive.

Learning to use language in its most powerful and positive form is one of the most valuable life skills we can obtain.

Practice “speaking in the positive” every chance you get.

You will experience more productive conversations and improved relationships.

## The Kind Truth

**Direct, Honest  
and Constructive**  
(courageous and considerate)

**Effective**

**Too Nice**  
(lacks courage)

Ineffective

**Too Blunt**  
(lacks consideration)

Ineffective

## Chapter 18

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# Expressing Gratitude

*"The deepest principle in human nature  
is the desire to be appreciated."*

*-William James*

Thank

you



## Chapter 18

# Expressing Gratitude

I recently heard a sermon online by my favorite preacher, Andy Stanley. He explored a concept that hit me right between the eyes.

He spoke about the difference between **felt gratitude** and **expressed gratitude**.

He talked about a story in the Bible where ten lepers came to Jesus for healing. Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests. On their way to the priests, all ten were healed. When only one came back to thank Him. Jesus asked, “were not ten healed?”

The point is not that the other nine were ungrateful. Anyone healed of this terrible condition would be grateful. The problem was that the other nine did not go back and **express** their appreciation.

I think this concept has a lot of application in the workplace. So, although this idea is certainly not my own, I would like to give you my angle on it.

Most days we work along others who help us out and do good work. They may make our job easier, make our department look good or serve the customer well.

We **feel** very appreciative for what they do. However, too often we don't **express** our appreciation to them.

We think the person intuitively knows how grateful we are even though we don't say a thing.

A friend of mine was recently looking to leave his current job because he felt unappreciated. Once the boss found out, he immediately went to my friend and told him how valuable he was and asked what it would take to keep him. My friend had no idea his boss felt that way toward him. Once he found out how his boss felt, he decided to stay.

Many times we may tell **others** how wonderful we think an employee is, but we don't tell the employee directly.

## WHY WE DON'T EXPRESS GRATITUDE

I think a major reason we think to thank others is that we tend to look ahead rather than reflect back.

Years ago after a successful accreditation visit at our hospital, a number of us were going out to celebrate. My supervisor said she would join us an hour or so later. When I asked her why the delay, she said she wanted to go up on the floors and personally thank the staff for all the time and effort they put into the survey.

It was a convicting moment for me because I hadn't even thought of going back to thank those who reported to me. It was a vivid reminder of how easy it is to overlook the opportunity to express appreciation because we are simply looking forward.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DON'T EXPRESS GRATITUDE

If we don't express our appreciation to others, it can be taken as ingratitude.

Think of yourself cooking for hours to prepare a meal. The meal is consumed very quickly. After the meal, everyone pats their full bellies and is off to watch the football game. By this time you are probably feeling that those who ate the meal were ungrateful. You may even feel taken for granted. When someone consistently feels unappreciated, they often switch loyalties.

This happens in relationships and it happens in jobs.

According to the Gallup Management Group, the number one reason employees leave their job is that they do not feel appreciated.

***“People don't leave companies, they leave bosses.”  
-Unknown***

Let's face it, nobody is a success on their own. We have all been helped tremendously by others. Expressing appreciation is a way of telling others that we depend on them. That our success is partly due to their contribution. When we fail to express gratitude, we leave the impression that we think we don't need others.

## WAYS TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE

The cool thing about expressing gratitude is that it takes so little of our time or energy and yet is so meaningful to the person receiving the thanks. Verbal appreciation is a form of currency. It is an unlimited resource that can be freely given and costs us nothing.

To make expressed gratitude more meaningful and genuine, it is best to be specific about what we appreciate.

***“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a gift and never giving it.”  
-William Ward***

Here are four simple but powerful ways to express appreciation:

1. Direct conversation. When you feel gratitude, express it. Pretty easy.
2. Send an e-mail to the person and send a copy to their boss. This adds to the significance of the recognition.
3. Write a note. In this day of electronic communication, a handwritten note has added meaning. Plus, the person can pull the note out of the drawer at a later time. It is a keepsake.
4. Publicly praise someone in front of others. It lets others see that you express appreciation.

It is so easy to get caught up in the day to day grind, that we sometimes overlook this simple but vital gesture.

When we get in the habit of expressing appreciation, we contribute to a positive work environment. A positive work environment attracts good talent as well as more customers.

Let's all do our part. Let's make the move from **felt** gratitude to **expressed** gratitude. Sometimes a small change can make a big difference.

## Affirmation

### A Different Kind of Appreciation

A different angle on appreciation is affirmation.

Affirmation is affirming someone when they do something well. Affirm literally means "**to make firm.**"

For example, suppose you just finished a great Thanksgiving meal. Saying "thank you for the meal" is appreciation. Saying, "that was absolutely delicious, you are a great cook!" is affirmation.

So practice expressing both appreciation and affirmation on a regular basis. You are much more likely to get another meal!

Chapter 19

# Encouragement

*“Keep away from people who try to  
belittle your ambitions.*

*Small people always do that,  
but the really great make you feel that  
you, too, can become great”*

*-Mark Twain*





## Chapter 19

# Encouragement

My 75 year old father-in-law has a love for flying. He owns a small plane and has been flying for about 35 years.

Over the decades he has flown to Alaska, the Grand Canyon, Florida and numerous other areas in the States.

Last year he flew from his summer home in Nantucket to visit my wife and me in New Hampshire. We were having lunch at the airport diner when I asked him how he first got interested in flying.

He said that his wife had bought him flying lessons for his 40th birthday. During the conversation he said, “you know, it’s funny, I never intended to go back for a second lesson.”

He shared that during his initial lesson he felt overwhelmed by the complexity of dials and switches on the dashboard. At the end of the lesson the instructor asked him about scheduling the next lesson. My father-in-law told him that he didn’t think he had the ability to really comprehend all that was required to be a pilot.

The instructor told him that he thought my father-in-law had picked up things quite quickly for his first lesson and urged him to at least sign up for a second lesson.

That little bit of encouragement gave my father-in-law the motivation to schedule the next session. The rest is aviation history.

It is amazing to think of all the joy and fulfillment my father-in-law would have missed if it hadn’t been for the instructor’s few words of encouragement.

### TO GIVE COURAGE

The word ‘encourage’ literally means ‘*to give courage*’ or ‘*take heart.*’ The opposite is to “discourage” or “take away courage.”

***“There are high spots in all of our lives and most of them have come about through encouragement from someone else.”***

***-George Adams***

Encouragement is essentially giving others the gift of confidence.

In his book, **Jack: Straight From the Gut**, author Jack Welch, shares a personal story about his mother.

*“Perhaps the greatest gift she gave me was self-confidence. My mother served up the perfect excuse for my stuttering. ‘It’s because you’re so smart. No one’s tongue could keep up with a brain like yours.’ I didn’t understand for many years how much confidence she poured into me.”*

Jack Welch went on to become CEO for General Electric for 20 years and was named by Fortune magazine as “Manager of the Century.”

Encouragement is the beginning of an upward spiral to higher performance whether it involves playing tennis, taking music lessons, or learning a new software program.

When someone is encouraged, they gain more confidence. A person with confidence simply performs better. High performance, in turn, provides more encouragement and confidence which leads to even higher performance. The upward spiral of encouragement is now in full motion.



***“The spirited horse who will try to win the race of its own accord, will run even faster if encouraged.”***  
***-Ovid***

## **PRACTICAL WAYS TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS**

We can encourage others almost anytime but I would like to suggest 3 circumstances in which we can offer encouragement.

The first is to come alongside someone and **affirm what they do well.**

Point out others’ strengths with statements like *“you really have a heart of compassion toward patients”* or *“you are a natural at handling difficult customers.”* They really have a positive impact.

Be known as someone that is looking to affirm others. Make this part of your every day routine.

Another way to encourage others is to see and **bring out the unseen potential in others.** I am forever grateful for the people who saw the potential in me and challenged me to get out of my comfort zone and take risks. I have often said that they saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself.

Because all of us were born on “*the wrong side of our eyeballs*” often we can’t really tell what we are naturally good at. When something comes easy to us, we don’t necessarily think it is anything special.

For example, my son has natural mechanical ability. Because I am incredibly inept in that department, I am amazed at his talent. He doesn’t think it is unusual. I want him to see his areas of giftedness.

A third means of encouragement is **bringing hope**. Everyone goes through hard times and periods of discouragement. This is when encouragement is perhaps most needed. A word of hope can motivate someone to keep going. It can breathe life into a weary soul.

*“Gracious words are like honeycomb,  
sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”  
-Proverbs 16:24*


The cool thing about encouragement is it doesn’t cost us a cent but the impact can be immeasurable.

Like my father-in-law’s flight instructor, we may never realize the powerful effect our words of encouragement may have on someone.



# Section 3

# Accelerating Excellence at Work

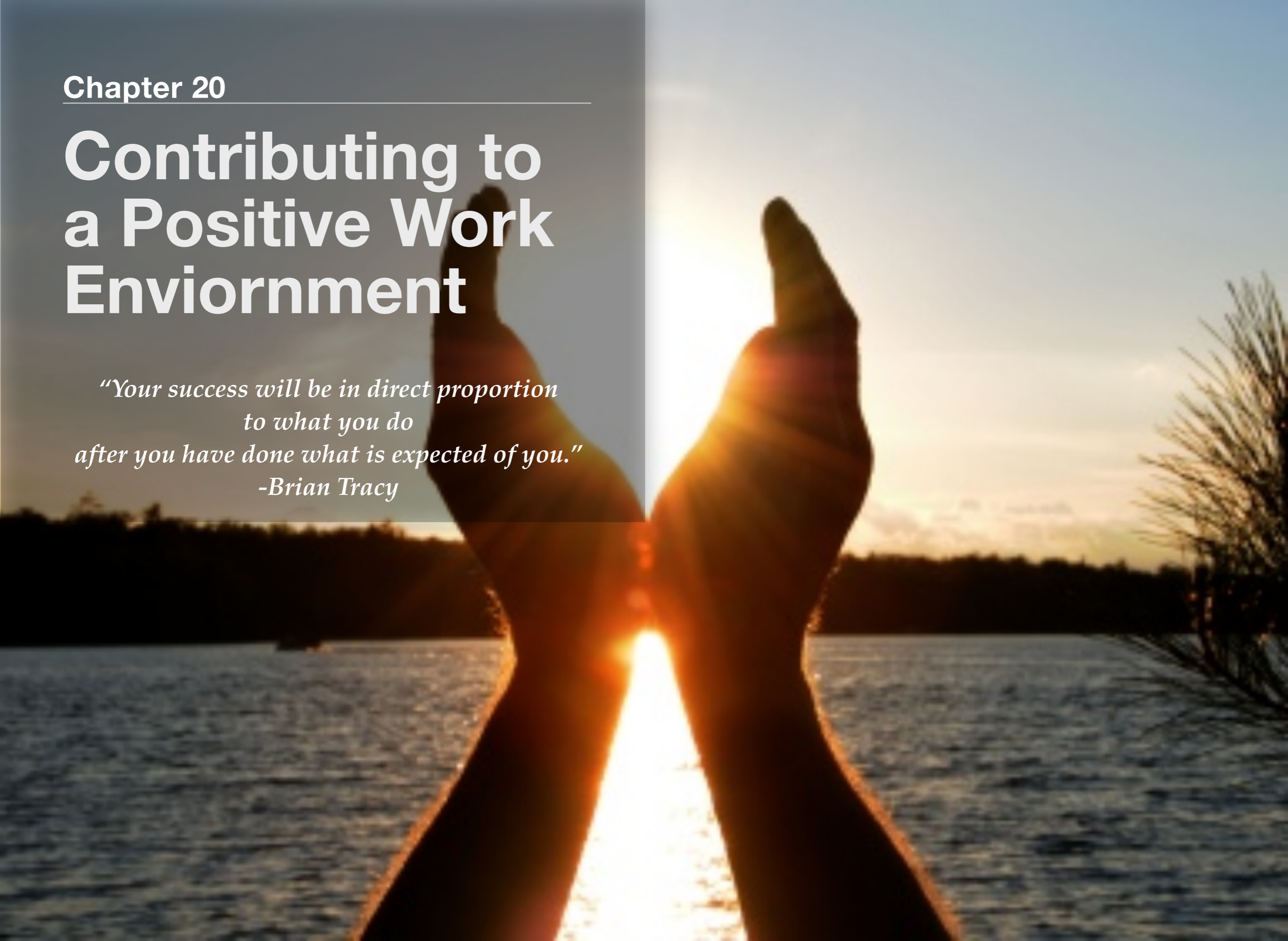
The background of the slide features a blue-tinted photograph of a modern office interior. In the foreground, the silhouettes of several people are seated at a long table, facing away from the camera towards a large window. The window provides a panoramic view of a city skyline at dusk or night, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated. The overall aesthetic is professional and forward-looking.

## Chapter 20

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# Contributing to a Positive Work Environment

*"Your success will be in direct proportion  
to what you do  
after you have done what is expected of you."  
-Brian Tracy*



# Contributing to a Positive Work Environment

The very first piece of career advice my father-in-law gave me when I graduated from college was this:

*“Wherever you work, make yourself valuable.”*

After 30 years in the workplace, I find that simple bit of advice more and more beneficial.

Many of us don’t naturally think this way. However, we, as employees, are paid to add value to the organizations we serve.

Recently I visited an office supply store. There was an employee in the front of the store vacuuming the carpet. I asked him where I could find the file folders. He proceeded to escort me to the back of the store to show me where the folders were located.

As we walked together I decided to make some small talk.

*“That sure is a quiet vacuum you are using.”* I said.

He immediately replied, *“yea, and you know what they do around here? They make me, the old guy, vacuum. See those young kids up front? They get away with murder and the manager won’t do anything about it.”*

Let me ask you a couple of questions. Is this employee adding value to the organization or himself? Is he representing his company well? Does he impress you as a strong person?

The answers are obvious.

No company is perfect. And I am not suggesting we put a happy face on everything and pretend issues or concerns don’t exist. However, there are constructive ways to address concerns, but airing ‘dirty laundry’ to customers is not one of them.

## THE EMPLOYEE’S ROLE

When you help create a positive atmosphere in the workplace, you are benefiting both the organization and yourself.

Here are some practical suggestions to do just that.

### 1. Positive Feedback: Pass It Forward

This is both simple and easy. When you hear something good about another person or department, let them know. I am not suggesting making stuff up. But everyday we hear positives about others. How diligent are we in passing it along?

Practicing this takes a thimble full of effort but makes a bucket load of difference. I recently told a physician that I had heard some positive comments about his staff. He said to me, “You made my day! Thanks for passing that along.”

## 2. Offer Solutions

When we simply complain or are negative, we drain energy from the workplace. What if you decided that every time you wanted to complain about an issue, you challenged yourself to also offer a viable solution.

When employees seek to be constructive and help the organization get better, everybody wins.

## 3. Bring issues to only to those who can do something about them.

It is pointless to complain to co-workers who aren't able to make something right. If you have a legitimate concern, do the right thing and talk to the person directly. It is not fair to just assume they won't listen or won't do anything about it. Give the person the benefit of doubt and a chance to respond. If you are not satisfied with the response, bring the issue to the next person who can do something about it.

## 4. Adapt

Sometimes adapting to ‘less than ideal’ circumstances is a good choice.

I once heard someone say, *“I decided to resign myself from the position of general manager of the universe.”*

There is a lot of wisdom in that tongue in cheek statement. There are some things that we just can't control and it is useless to get all twisted up about it. We should just make the best of it.

## 5. Give your best

When we come to work every day seeking to serve others well, we contribute to the well being of other people, we help our organizations be more successful, and we are held in high regard. There is no down side to this.

***“You can't give 50% today and 150% tomorrow.”***  
***-John Maxwell***

## THE MANAGER'S ROLE

If you are in any type of leadership position, you have the responsibility of creating an engaging work environment.

Here are some very basic ways to move employees from ‘having to’ come to work to ‘wanting to.’

### 1. Practice expressing appreciation

Research consistently shows that the #1 employee engagement factor is recognition for work well done. When you see good work by an employee, tell them. What you water, grows.

In Ken Blanchard's best selling book, **The One Minute Manager**, the main idea is simply: **Catch people doing something right, and tell them.**

## 2. Keep employees informed

When we keep staff informed of the 'goings on' in the organization, they feel more connection to and ownership with the company.

Hold regular staff meetings and let them 'in' on things such as new marketing campaigns, financials, customer satisfaction scores and current events.

Also, ask for their opinions on how to do things better. This is both respectful and smart. Often our employees have great ideas on how to improve operations because they are the ones on the frontline. It is our job to tap into their knowledge.

Jack Welch calls this getting *"every brain in the game."*

## 3. Help employees grow

All of us want opportunities to learn and grow. Make sure that employees have the chance to increase their knowledge and skills. Talk to them about their progress.

What stretch assignments can you give those on your staff?  
What development opportunities can you encourage them to take part in?

***"Leadership is taking people places they wouldn't have gotten to by themselves."***  
***-Unknown***

Give employees a voice. Be the type of leader where employees can be comfortable bringing up concerns and issues. Be empathetic when listening. Be diligent in following up on concerns.

No single factor more clearly predicts the productivity and engagement of an employee than their relationship with their direct supervisor.

## **ALL TOGETHER NOW**

Following these simple guidelines creates a mutually supportive workplace and provides the foundation for a high performing organization.

Companies, in turn, can attract and retain the best workers in the area. It naturally follows that customers are well served.

It is everybody's responsibility to contribute to a positive work environment.

Are you doing your part?

***"Doing your best today puts you in the best position for tomorrow."***  
***-Bill Hybels***

Chapter 21

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# Discovering Your Strengths

*"Try to bring out what God put in,  
not put in what God left out."  
-Marcus Buckingham*



## Chapter 21

# Discovering Your Strengths

Have you ever given careful consideration to your natural gifts and abilities? I think there is great value in discovering, then leveraging, our areas of giftedness.

I would like to explore the two main components of a strength: **talent** and **passion**.

### TALENT

Talent can be defined as a natural ability or aptitude. Though we all have talents, many people are unable to articulate what they are naturally good at. It is difficult to see a picture when you are inside the frame.

For example, my son is naturally gifted at fixing things. I am amazed at his ability but he doesn't think his skill in this area is unusual. Why? Because it comes so easy to him.

Here are some key questions to help you uncover your natural talents:

- What can you do uncommonly well?
- What comes easy to you that others find difficult?

- To what do others say, "you have a gift?"
- When were you a quick study?

If you can't come up with anything, it may be because you haven't been looking. Remember, we see what we are looking for. Moving forward, always have your antennae up and purposefully look for your natural abilities.

Perhaps you have the natural talent to get others to open up, serve customers well, fix complicated problems, think outside the box or be persuasive. Successful careers are built by putting ourselves in positions that utilize our natural talents.

A training company that I have done business with put this statement on their website:

*"We are really good at what we do  
because we only do what we are really good at."*

What a great concept!

***"Find a tiny stream where your strengths can flow  
and carve it into a Mississippi."  
-Marcus Buckingham***

## PASSION

The definition of passion is a strong desire or enthusiasm for something.

Keep in mind that talent and passion are not one and the same. Someone can be naturally gifted at something and not be passionate about it. Conversely, someone can be passionate about something and not be naturally gifted. Anyone who has watched “American Idol” auditions can attest to this.

Here are some key questions to help you discover your passions:

- What energizes you?
- What books, magazines, websites do you read?
- When do you get into “flow?”
- What makes you feel fulfilled, strong?

I have a ‘**Life is Good**’ mug that says:

*“Do what you love. Love what you do.”*

The overlap of our talents and passions is what I call a ‘**strength**.’ It is when what we do best intersects with what we enjoy most. It’s like hitting the ‘sweet spot’ of a golf club or tennis racquet. When we operate in our strengths we are more resilient, more creative and more open to learning. We are also become more confident and more fulfilled.

Working with your strengths will move you faster and farther along, with less effort, than working outside of your strengths. It is similar to walking on a moving sidewalk at the airport.

People discover their strengths in different ways. Many identify their strengths through thoughtful reflection, others through the feedback of friends or co-workers, and some through experimentation.

I recently worked with someone who had an office job. He believed his natural talents and passions led him to work more directly in caring for people. He went to school in the evening to get a degree in the medical field. He now finds his work more fulfilling and rewarding.

Once you find your strengths, pursue ways to serve others. Find a market demand or place in the world that is in need of your strengths.

## APPLICATION

If you are operating in your strengths, be grateful and help others uncover theirs. If you haven’t yet discovered your strengths, begin the journey of self discovery and zero in on your talents and passions.

In the end, this is not about ego; it is about responsibility. We all are uniquely gifted by a Master Creator. It is our responsibility to make full use of our gifts.

What could be better than using our gifts, growing our potential and serving others?

## Chapter 22

# You, Inc.

*"It takes 20 years to build a reputation  
and five minutes to ruin it.*

*If you think about that,  
you'll do things differently."*

*– Warren Buffett*

*You, Inc.*

# You, Inc.

Years ago I worked with a co-worker who, when asked how he was doing, would often reply *“I’m tired.”* When he later got peer feedback on his performance, he was surprised that many of his colleagues thought of him as lethargic and sluggish. Many of us lack self awareness about how we come across to others or the image we project.

Successful companies are very concerned about their reputation. Organizations like Apple, Southwest Airlines, and L. L. Bean understand that ‘company brand’ is important. They go to great lengths to protect it. Whether we realize it or not, we all have a brand as well.

Our ‘personal brand’ is what we are known for; it is our reputation. It would be beneficial for all of us to think of ourselves as the CEO of our own company and be intentional on building a great reputation. Successful people have a constant awareness of how they come across. They practice discipline in how they carry themselves.

Howard Schultz, President and CEO of Starbucks in his new book **Onward** says: *“Whether in front of one person or thousands, I am extremely conscious of how people might interpret anything I do or say.”*

I am not suggesting we be fake or ‘plastic.’ On the contrary, we build trust with others by being authentic and transparent. However, there is an important difference between being genuine and ‘letting it all hang out.’ We need a filter separating out inappropriate words and actions.

We all can readily think of talented, gifted and intelligent people who were careless in their everyday words or actions. And their reputations suffered severely.

A former boss of mine has said many times, *“never do or say anything that you wouldn’t want on the front page of the newspaper.”* No doubt that is a high standard but it also is wise advice.

## ENHANCING YOUR IMAGE

So, how do you go about creating a positive image?

Here are 3 suggestions:

### 1. Create a great 1st impression

First impressions have a powerful impact. First impressions are more important and last longer than subsequent impressions. Psychologists call this the ‘primacy effect.’

Three key elements of a first impression are your smile, your handshake, and your appearance.

A genuine smile sends a welcoming, positive message.

A firm but friendly handshake conveys both warmth and confidence.

Appearance is an important visual. You don't need to wear expensive clothes but a neat, clean appearance projects a healthy self image.

## 2. Be Upbeat

There is a popular bumper sticker that reads *"Life's a bitch and so am I."* I know this may be mildly humorous, but in reality, do you want to work 8 hours a day, side by side, with someone with that life philosophy? Me neither.

Jack Welch, former CEO of GE writes in his book **Winning**, *"Being a congenial, upbeat person will not get you ahead by itself. But it is very hard to get ahead without being a positive person because, very simply, no one likes to work around a dark cloud. Even if the 'cloud' is very smart."*

## 3. Communicate Skillfully

Good communication is clear, concise, and compelling.

**Clear.** Do you think before you speak? Do you take a few minutes to organize your thoughts and present them in an easy to understand manner? Is your communication direct?

**Concise.** You have heard the saying, *"ask him for the time and he will tell you how to make a watch."* Good communicators are crisp in their use of words. They are able to read others and determine if the listener is engaged or getting too much information.

**Compelling.** Good communicators make use of stories, quotes, analogies, etc. They have many tools in their toolkit to convey a message with impact.

## BRAND YOU

How we come across to others is crucial to our business and personal success. Whether we are making a presentation, interviewing for a job or simply want to be more influential, people are really buying 'you' before they buy what you have to say.

Let's turn it around. If you want to buy a car or a home, you want to be very comfortable with the salesperson first. How they carry themselves and what they say either builds or erodes trust.

Just like great companies seek to build their brand, make it your goal to build a great personal brand. Companies with great reputations have more market value. This is true for individuals as well. Take this seriously. Go out and make a great name for yourself.

After all you are the CEO of your own company.