



HOW TO OPEN THE DOOR TO YOUR FUTURE

*Unlock the secrets to a brighter future
with the step-by-step guide that has
helped people just like you build their
own success stories.*





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What really leads to success in the 21st century

For starters, let's agree that we can disagree about what 'success' is. It certainly means different things to different people. For one person, 'success' may pop up pictures of a sports car, a yacht, a new house, maybe a business of your own, a white-collar management career with a solid company, or all those things. For somebody else, just the thought of having to put on business attire and go to an office every day is frightening. For others, the emphasis may be on family, not money. So there's no point in trying to force any one idea of success onto you.

However, we may be able to agree more easily on the opposites of success, on what we do not want our lives to become. For example, consider these items:

- Not having enough money to pay debts
- Living payday to payday
- No money to save, invest or buy a house
- Frustration at seeing others get ahead faster than you do
- Stuck in a dead-end job
- Passed over for promotions
- Lack of job security
- Embarrassment about your job
- Worry about the future in general
- Desire to do better but not sure what to do, or what steps to take
- Lack of education or know-how about computers or other technology that may be coming into your workplace

Do ANY of these apply to you? Chances are, at least several do, just as they do to millions of others, especially men and women in the 19 to 30 age group. In fact, most people go through their entire adult lives never solving any of these issues. They get stuck just 'going with the flow.'

What we'd like to do here, in the beginning of this book, is to challenge you to take a completely fresh look at where you are, where you COULD go in life, where you'd LIKE to go in life, and how you can take control of that process.

Success can be defined in many ways – open your mind to the ideas presented in this book and you may surprise yourself.

The only constant in life is change.

Change is constant. Your physical body changes on a minute-by-minute, day-by-day, month-by-month, year-by-year basis. You know that you can exert considerable control over that, by smoking or not smoking, exercising or not exercising, the foods you eat and so on. Some people choose to do certain things deliberately, to control their weight, get and stay fit and stay healthy. Others do not. But everybody changes physically. Change happens in every other aspect of living too, for everybody; marriage, divorce, kids, get a job, lose a job, buy a home, move, get older, learn something new, education etc. The list of changes is endless. You just cannot escape constant change. But you can make it work for you or let it work against you. We have the power of choice; the ability to make choices and decisions. Will you use your power or ignore it? Perhaps it may be time to STOP 'going with the flow'.

Who me? Control my future! How?

These days, it seems everybody is a 'victim', and in some circles, it's even popular to be 'anti-achievement'. You will undoubtedly hear people insisting that the cards are stacked against them to such a degree there's no point in trying to do anything. Or that 'society' owes them a job or a certain standard of living. Only you can decide whether such attitudes are right for you. It's important to remember, though, that every aspect of life operates on cause and effect – for every effect, result or outcome, there is a cause. 'Victim' thinking or 'it's no use' thinking becomes a cause in and of itself. What kind of effect do you think it has to have?

You may very well have some disadvantages to overcome. Maybe you grew up in a broken home or a terrible neighbourhood. Maybe you were abused. Maybe you don't have a high school education. Or maybe you don't read very well, can't do maths, you're shy, whatever. Each person's obstacles appear very large to them. But here are two absolutely inarguable truths:

First, regardless of what your particular obstacles may be, there are many people who have had those exact same obstacles – or worse ones – who have overcome those obstacles to become successful in life. The fact that others have overcome the same obstacles you have is proof that you can too.

Second, if you continue to do the things you've always done, you can only expect to get what you've always got. Whatever change happens, it will work against you. Opportunities will pass you by. Only by first changing your own actions and behaviour can you create other desirable changes in your life.

So, let's talk about some of the very basic, fundamental things you can do to go after the kind of success in life you want and how you can go about getting it. We call these: the five essential foundations of success in life.

If you don't know where you want to go, any road will take you there.

Foundation No. 1: Positive Directions

What does that mean? Well, 'direction' means where you are headed, where you are going, where you want to go. Most people spend more time planning a weekend activity with friends or a holiday than they do planning their futures! In fact, most people never really think about 'directions' at all. One writer in the field of self-improvement once spent a whole morning on a busy city street, stopping people on their way to work, and asking them why they were going to work. Why are you going to work today? The answers he heard most were:

- To put food on the table
- To pay my debts
- Because I have to
- Everybody else does

These are all terrible reasons for going to work! Why terrible? Well, if one of the above is your only reason, how are you going to feel about your job and yourself after 10 years of that? Or 20 years? Or 30 years? Probably pretty awful. You'll feel trapped, bored, wasted, or stuck in a rut – and the only difference between a rut and a grave is the rut is open at both ends!

Actually, work should be a means of accomplishing many appealing and rewarding goals. Buying your own house and decorating and furnishing it, or raising a family and helping your kids achieve higher education. Pursuing a hobby or interest of yours without limitation – rebuilding classic cars, fishing in the great rivers and lakes of the world, or growing a beautiful garden. Developing a career and so the list goes on. These are all 'directions'.

'Positive directions' means choosing directions that are most likely to lead you to the kind of lifestyle you want.

Just for example, one direction you could take is spending all your free time hanging out at the local club, watching sports, playing billiards or snooker, and spending all your money that way. That is a 'direction'. It is going to take you towards a destination. It is a 'cause' that will have a predictable 'effect'. Or, taking two nights a week of your 'free time' and using those to go to evening classes, seminars or the library to learn some new skill, and setting aside even a small amount of money each payday, this too is a 'direction'. Which is 'positive' and which is 'negative'? Which is most likely to lead 'somewhere', which is most likely to lead 'nowhere'? Well, you certainly know that without being told! But what you may not have given a lot of thought to is the idea of sitting down and choosing certain 'destinations', things you want to accomplish, things you want to have, and then deciding on certain positive directions most likely to lead there. You can do that. Regardless of where you are right now, you can start doing this.

At the end of this chapter, you'll find some pages headlined 'Brainstorming your future'. You might copy them onto bigger pieces of paper, on a pad or a notebook, or use them as is and write in the book. Either way, try something: lock out the world, get into a quiet, private place for an hour or so, no distractions, no TV, no iPod, just you and those pages.

Put your pencil or pen in hand. Let your mind engage. Then, without being critical... without worrying about the 'how to's'... note down the answers to the questions. Make the lists. You may find this to be a very exciting and challenging experience.

There is a direct link between education and income, and education and opportunity. You cannot beat this system.



Take a positive direction towards your goals.

Foundation No. 2: Education

Certain things are 'facts of life'. The law of gravity, for example, is a fact of life. Any object you drop out of your hand will fall to the ground. What goes up must come down. You are actually a tiny bit shorter at the end of the day than you are each morning, after lying flat all night, as an effect of the law of gravity. There is absolutely nothing you can do to change this fact of life. The richest men and women in the world cannot escape this fact of life, even the most talented athletes cannot escape it.

Well, there are certain facts of life relating to education that are just as 'always true' as is gravity. You may not like these facts of life, but you are affected by them nonetheless. You can ignore them and you will suffer as a result. Or you can accept them and then change directions and do things to make these facts of life benefit you. Here are the facts:

Fact No. 1

Government studies, census data, and statistics clearly demonstrate that people who have finished secondary school earn much more per year than do people who have not. Over a 40-year working career, this may equal enough to pay off a house mortgage, or enough to put into an investment and retire. Also, the number of good jobs that you just cannot get without completing secondary school keeps increasing.

Fact No. 2

Above a high school education, career training and work experience are known to make a big difference to income over a person's working career.

Fact No. 3

Above that, tertiary qualifications and other university level studies can increase income even more. To make this simple: More education equals more income and more varied career opportunities.

*'If a man empties his wallet into his head,
no one can take it from him.'*

- Benjamin Franklin, a founding father of the USA

It is difficult to soar like an eagle if you hang out with the chickens all the time.

Foundation No. 3: Association

There is a principle of success called 'the power of positive association'. It basically means that you either hold yourself back or improve yourself based on the people you spend the most time with, because their values, ideas and directions are always influencing your own.

Another proven fact of life is that a strong and stable family environment is an advantage. If you happen to have a good relationship with your parents or parent, brothers, sisters and children, and your family life has included helpful values, then you do have an advantage, there's no doubt about that – and you should value it and continue it. If you do not have this advantage, you will have to work harder on your own thinking, your own values and your own decisions.

As we become adults, though, 'peers' become just as important as 'family' in this area of association. Surely you've heard about 'peer pressure'. It can be 'positive' or 'negative' – helpful in going in the directions you want to go or distracting from going in those directions. Here are some very tough questions to ask yourself about the friends and other people you spend most of your time with: Are these people going in the directions I want to go? Do they have ideas, experience and encouragement to share that can help me move in the directions I want to go? If you can't honestly answer 'yes' to those questions, then you probably need to make some changes – who you spend time with, who you listen to. You may need to get involved in very different activities, where you will get to meet new and different people.

Everybody needs a 'support group'. Your 'support group' can include family members, friends, neighbours, coworkers, a mentor on the job, teachers and coaches. It must feature people who share your directions or who have already travelled successfully in the directions you want to go.

You cannot score a goal sitting on the bench. You have to get in the game!

Foundation No. 4: Beginning

There is a certain process to success, an order of steps you have to go through, and to begin, you have to get into the game. How do you get into the 'game of success'?

It all seems to start with gainful employment. A job. Even if it is not the job you want. Not the job you've prepared for. Not a job that seems like it naturally points toward the kind of job you want. Any job is better than no job. Employment is better than unemployment. The way you get into the game is with a job.

Begin somewhere. You cannot build a reputation on what you intend to do.

When you go and apply for a 'better job', what will you be asked about? Well, one set of questions will centre on your education. The next set of questions will centre on your work experience. Most smart employers will be as interested in how you performed the job as what tasks you performed in the job. A study of business managers, executives and other employers revealed this list of basic on-the-job behavioural characteristics they looked for in any and every job applicant:

- Showing up
- Showing up on time
- Showing up ready and able to work

Well, any job gives you the opportunity to demonstrate these three things, and establish a reputation for these three things. If you are currently gainfully employed, don't make the mistake of drifting into negative thinking about that job...of just going through the motions or worse, failing to show up. Show up on time, show up ready and able to work.

The best way to get a better job is to out-perform the one you have! If you are not now employed, re-think your position on this. Maybe it would be better to get in the game with any job than to sit on the sidelines waiting for the right job.



Lifelong learning is the only way to improve your knowledge and skills, so that you can achieve success.

Foundation No. 5: Lifelong Learning

Many people have the idea that once they finish secondary school, they can 'stop learning'. No more school books. No more study. This is reflected in the fact that the majority of adults get all their news and information from radio or television (not reading), that the majority of adults never visit the public library, and about half of all adults never go into a bookshop. Unfortunately, many people have learnt how to be taught, but have not learnt to enjoy learning on their own.

In contrast, successful people are usually involved in 'lifelong learning'. They tend to choose a subject, learn a lot about it, then choose another one and do the same, one after another. They tend to continually read and improve in their own career area. If you haven't visited a public library in a while, and you do so now with an open, curious mind, you may be very pleasantly surprised at everything that is available for you there – all free of charge! You will find magazines, both current and back issues, and of course books on many topics.

There may be easy-to-use computers you can work with to help in assembling information about any topic. There may be books to help you in choosing careers, preparing résumés, getting ready for job interviews, learning certain skills, even managing your money. And the library staff are usually very eager to help and very patient with newcomers. This is a great environment for you to get comfortable with and use frequently as an adult.



Brainstorming your future

Describe your life as you would like it to be three to five years from today, by category.

1. Career and work

2. Income and finances

3. Personal and family relationships

List five things you definitely want to change about your life in the next three years.


1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



What holds you back? What moves you forward?

We often think about 'external forces' holding us back or moving us forward; things outside ourselves and, to varying degrees, outside our control. Some of these 'external forces' include:

- I grew up in a bad neighbourhood
- I don't have a car to get to work
- My boss doesn't like me
- The economy's very bad here in my country

What we'd like to explore a bit in this chapter are 'internal forces' that hold us back or move us forward. Often, the external forces are not as influential and powerful in reality as they are in our own minds. After all, it's comfortable to blame other people or circumstances beyond our control for things we're not happy or proud about. Unfortunately, people learn 'The Blame Game' early in life as kids – 'he started it'... 'John made me do it', etc. – and then carry that into adult life, even though it is more of a handicap than a help. Only by honestly examining the internal forces can you begin to really control your present and your future.

One such internal, or inside, force is a thing psychologists call 'self-image'. This literally means the image or picture you hold in your mind about yourself. Lots of things contribute to the self-image. Things your parents or your siblings said repeatedly about you and to you as you were growing up. Things your friends or coworkers now say about you. Past experiences. Comparisons you make between yourself and others. From these and many other sources, you sort of 'build' your self-image.

It is said that you cannot out-perform your self-image. Your self-image serves like a thermostat in your house – the thermostat limits how hot it gets in the summer or how cold it gets in the winter. The self-image limits what you might attempt and what you might accomplish, even what you might earn. Consider the person who sees herself as ‘shy’... ‘not good at persuading people’... ‘can’t sell’... ‘the quiet type’. She may never even attempt speaking out and presenting her ideas at work or leading a committee or taskforce at work or in her church. But is she really so limited?

Probably only by her self-image. You see, there really is no such thing as a ‘born’ leader or ‘born’ salesperson or ‘born’ communicator. There really is no such thing as a genetically shy person. These are all acquired beliefs and learned behaviours.

In her childhood, she may have had strict and protective parents, and constantly heard such things as ‘speak only when spoken to’ and ‘don’t talk to strangers’. Maybe one of her close childhood playmates was very outgoing and aggressive, so that friend always ‘led’ and she always ‘followed’. Through this ‘programming’, she built a self-image early as a ‘shy person’. Then she begins choosing what she will do and won’t do based on this idea, so her experience reinforces her self-image. Before long, she has drawn a line in the sand that she tries never to cross. If no one or thing ever pushes her across that line, she may never discover what is often true: as an adult, she has abilities and talents unknown to her.

Are you being held back by a limiting self-image? A line drawn in the sand? Maybe. It’s worth thinking about. If you react to the ideas of getting more education... preparing for a better career... setting goals... with ‘that’s not for me’, you may very well be doing battle with your own self-image limits.

You can’t out-perform your self-image, but you can change it. You can test your limits, push at them and experiment.

How to discover your hidden talents and new interests

When a person says ‘I’m not much of a reader’ or ‘I don’t like to read’, often the truth is that he never learnt to read well and, since school, has let what reading skills he did have get rusty. Further, he was always forced to read, so he naturally resists it.

Most adults share this experience: There is some food, maybe a vegetable, you hated as a kid, haven’t eaten in a long time, and absolutely believe you don’t like. For one reason or another, you taste it for the first time in years and discover that, now, it tastes good to you! This same kind of experience can happen with anything, including this example – reading.

When a person says something like ‘I’m no good with computers. It’s just too complicated for me’, often the truth is that they simply lack information, knowledge, training and assistance about that particular subject or skill.

How the ‘nerd’ discovered his secret talent as a billiards shark

We know a maths whiz who had a great interest in computers, in science, in technical topics, but no interest at all in playing billiards with his mates, who were avid players. ‘I’m no good at it’ he said, ‘I’m clumsy. I’m not good at games or sports. That’s just the way I am.’ By saying these things, he was verbalising part of his self-image, describing the picture he carried in his mind about himself.

One day, somebody pointed out to him how much playing billiards has to do with geometry! This caused him to look at the game in an entirely new way. Then he got interested in it. He tried playing with this new knowledge and, to his surprise, he discovered that his understanding of the angles made up for less-than-terrific physical dexterity. He could play well and he

enjoyed it. Then, by playing regularly, his physical skills naturally improved too. After a year, he was routinely beating his friends and started entering tournaments. The way to uncover your own hidden talents and interests is simply to experiment. Instead of saying 'That's just the way I am', say 'I'll try that'.

How to strengthen skills or abilities

When you decide to develop some skill or ability, especially one that may be new and relatively unfamiliar or uncomfortable, you may benefit from some or all of the five ways top athletes and business people alike strengthen their skills:

- Visualisation
- Affirmation
- Education
- Association
- Action

Visualisation means forming and holding pictures in your mind. Although it was a radical idea at one time, today it is common knowledge in the sports world that 'mental practice' has almost as much positive impact as physical practice and, in mental practice, athletes practise perfectly. Basketball players, for example, have proven they can improve their success at shooting baskets from the foul line just by sitting in a quiet room for an hour, 'imagining' themselves standing on the foul line and shooting one perfect basket after another. The imagination is a powerful thing.

Ironically, as a kid, you may have been accused of being a 'day-dreamer' yet the truth is that 'day-dreaming' has a place and serves a constructive purpose.

Let's say that you feel weak in communication skills and dread going to a job interview. You might build a 'mental movie' of you going on a job interview, getting along very well with the interviewer, being calm and relaxed, answering the questions

brilliantly and getting hired instantly. Dr Maxwell Maltz, an early pioneer in self-image psychology, called this using 'The theatre in your mind'. To make this 'mental movie' realistic, you would consult a couple of books on interviewing skills, to learn techniques, and you would make up or get a list of questions most interviewers would ask, and use those questions in your 'mental movie'. Once built and run, your 'mental movie' is stored in memory and can be recalled at will. Visualisation, then, is simply the re-running of this 'mental movie' over and over and over again.

Another term for all this is 'synthetic experience'. Synthetic means imitation or substitute. For example, cotton is 'real' fabric, a polyester-cotton blend is called a 'synthetic' fabric because it perfectly imitates the real thing. Now here's a very interesting thing about how your human mind works. The very powerful subconscious mind cannot tell the difference between synthetic and real experience. For example, your blood pressure might go up and you might get a severe headache from worrying about taking a big test, just as your blood pressure would go up and you would get a headache whenever you actually had to take the test. That's because the subconscious mind can't tell the difference between the synthetic experience (worry) or the real one (taking the test), so it tells the body to react the same way both times. Once you understand all that, you can make it work to your benefit.

Go back to the job interview. If you've had that interview as a synthetic experience enough times, over and over, and remained perfectly calm, relaxed, confident and had success each time, when the real thing starts - the actual job interview - your subconscious mind says to itself: 'Hey, I remember this, been here, done this. I know exactly what I'm supposed to do and how this guy's body is supposed to react'. Then the subconscious mind sends out its directives to the rest of you: 'Relax', it tells the nervous system. It triggers the memory for the best responses to the questions. It re-creates the already rehearsed event.

Mental reinforcement is another means of ‘programming’ the subconscious mind. Sometimes this is referred to as ‘self-talk’. Most people talk to themselves all the time, constantly, though usually silently, and most such self-talk unfortunately reinforces negative self-image beliefs.

Here’s an example: John locks his keys in the car. To himself, he says: ‘You idiot!’ Then: ‘I can’t seem to remember anything. I’m such a screw-up.’ John has translated the incident into an indictment, a criticism of himself. It’s interesting, by the way, that most people’s self-talk is critical. Obviously, you do a great many smart, good and right things every day, yet, in self-talk, you probably do not praise yourself for doing those things. But make a mistake, and you’re all over yourself, like your worst enemy!

The reason this is so harmful is that your subconscious mind accepts cumulative self-talk (the same criticism heard and said repeatedly) as a ‘command’, then it does everything in its power to fulfil the command. If you tell it that you are clumsy over and over again, it will exert its control over your physical body to literally make you even clumsier. The good news is that you can tell it something you want to be over and over again, and it will work on making that command a reality. Now this is not ‘magic’. It won’t do much by itself, but as a reinforcement tool, it can be very powerful. Let’s say you’re always late and have decided to change that about yourself. You have chosen a new direction; you are going to be a punctual person. Your positive mental reinforcement might be:

- I am the kind of person who always shows up on time
- Being on time and reliable is very important to me
- I value and respect my own time and others’ time, so I honour my commitments

You might want to write these down on a small card until you memorise them. Then you should say them out loud at least several times a day. Repeat them out loud or silently over and over again as you fall asleep. You may feel silly at first – until you see the results!

Just saying positive things and doing nothing else will have a very limited effect, but while also doing certain things to improve your on time behaviour, setting all your clocks and watches 15 minutes ahead, starting to use an appointment calendar, picking out the day’s clothes the night before – the combination of this type of positive mental reinforcement and actions can be very dramatic. Education or information is the next important tool. Simply put, the more you know about something, the less intimidating or difficult it is to deal with.



Think about skydiving, for example. To someone who has never done it, and knows nothing about it except having seen people parachute jump on TV, the idea of jumping out of an aeroplane is probably not going to have much appeal. But let's say you had to do it, for one reason or another – maybe you lost a bet – and you had time to prepare. How could you reduce the fear and improve your chances, not only of survival, but of doing it well and enjoying it?

A man only learns in two ways, one by reading, and the other by association with smarter people.

One thing that would help would be seeing how the parachutes themselves are 'rigged' or assembled. This is a painstaking process with many checks and double-checks. Then you could read a book, maybe watch a video about skydiving. Then you could go to a 'skydiving school' – required in almost every place before you are allowed to jump.

At the 'school', you learn how to properly exit the plane, position your body, count, pull the cord, navigate and land. You practise each of these things over and over, with the help of a very experienced instructor. Finally, on your first jump, there's a safety cord from your chute to the instructor, in the plane, so even if you should 'freeze up' and not pull your cord on time, he'll pull it for you. As you went through all of this, chances are excellent that your fears and worries were diminished and your interest increased. That's the way the human mind works. Of course, you may have no interest whatsoever in skydiving.

But you can benefit from this same 'process' with any skill you want to learn, improve or master. By exposing yourself to as much information about it as possible, your confidence and your competence will automatically get stronger.

Association is the fourth method of strengthening a skill. We talked about association in the previous chapter, too. If you want to get good (or better) at something, then it just makes sense to be with people who are as good or better than you are at that thing. If you bowl, for example, you'll never get better if the only people you bowl with are less skilled than you are. To get better as a bowler, you'd bowl with people slightly better than you are, who would challenge you and from whom you could learn by observing. Action is the fifth tool.

None of the above tools are of much value unless and until you take action on your thoughts and ideas. And, incidentally, most people drop the ball right here, over and over again, throughout their entire lives. The world is full of people who will tell you about the 'great idea' they had, did nothing about, then saw someone else turn it into a successful product or business. Procrastination – the putting off of doing something – is the universal language of the poor!



The more you know about something, the less intimidating it becomes.

Five tools for change

1. VISUALISATION

Describe a picture, a mental movie of yourself doing something you want to do and doing it successfully. (Examples: A successful day in the work you'd like to be doing. Renovating your house. Competing in a race.) Run this mental movie at least once a day every day for 30 days – you'll probably be surprised by related events that occur in your life!

2. POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Create at least three of your own, limit-lifting statements in keeping with the positive directions you'd like to take in your life. Try using your statements for 30 days. Carry them with you. Read and repeat them a number of times each day. Even though this will feel uncomfortable, maybe foolish, it is proven to achieve results!

Limiting statements and self-talk	Limit-lifting statements
Example: I have difficulty meeting new people.	Example: I am a dedicated listener, I'm interested in other people, and people quickly sense that about me – so meeting new people keeps getting easier.

3. EDUCATION

Three things I can do now to further my education, that relate to goals I want to achieve:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. ASSOCIATION

Considering my directions, three people I should associate with less are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Again considering my directions, three people I should associate with more are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5. ACTION

Date: _____

What I will do in the next 10 days to advance in my positive directions. Check off items when they are done.


1. _____ ☐

2. _____ ☐

3. _____ ☐

4. _____ ☐

5. _____ ☐

A woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a bright yellow cardigan over a colorful patterned dress, is smiling and writing in a notebook. She is holding a yellow pencil. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space with large windows.

How to manage your time to get ahead in life

At age 20, age 40 seems as far away as a distant planet, and age 60 seems inconceivable. At age 40, people wonder what happened to all that time between age 20 and 40, and at age 60, most adults, sadly, look back and see how they wasted and squandered time – and wish they could do it all over again, which they can't. The 'breakthrough idea' to living your life differently and getting much more out of your life is 'goal-setting'.

If you've never set and systematically achieved goals, the idea may be frightening and intimidating. Or you may think it is too stuffy for you. Something other people do, but why should you? Or it may strike you as dull and boring. These reactions are natural and understandable, but only because you don't have enough true information about goal-setting. Once you understand why and how it works, you just cannot argue against it.

Consider the game of cricket. Perhaps you've played it. Maybe you're good at it or know somebody who is. So let's take you or the best batsman you know or even one you 'draft' from a club out to the nearest batting cage, pay our money, get a bucket of balls, and let's play 'Blind Cricket'.

The batsman can try to hit the balls only while blindfolded. He's probably not going to get very many hits. Going through life without goals is like playing 'Blind Life'. You are a wandering, meandering soul, bumping into things, reacting to things, at the mercy of every little breeze or bump in the road. Setting up goals for yourself is much like taking the blindfold off.

Here's another explanation for why goal-setting works. Engineers have determined that the pressure, per square centimetre, is actually greater from the average woman's single spiked heel than from an elephant's foot. This is because all the woman's weight and power is focused in that tiny spike on her shoe; the elephant's is spread out (diffused) over a much broader surface. This is like the power of focus. Or perhaps you remember the little experiment you probably had to do in secondary school science.

Focus the sun's rays through a magnifying glass and start a fire. The sun's rays do not start fires normally because the heat is diffused over a large area. But focus those rays and you will start a fire. When you direct all your weight, energy, creativity, power and effort on achieving a very specific goal, you benefit from the power of focus.

How to begin making goals work for you

Getting involved in goal-setting first forces you to focus your thinking, then your resources, then finally your actions. Like fooling around with the focus on a camera, you adjust it, and a very blurry image gets clearer, clearer, and ultimately sharp, clear and 'there'.

Forms are provided at the end of this chapter to engage you in the goal-setting process. You'll see that we start with long-range goal ideas, for three to five years away, with the process divided into eight categories of living:

- Careers
- Money
- Social / friendships
- Love relationships / family
- Physical / health
- Mental / intellectual
- Spiritual / philosophical
- Recreation / fun

Next, we move to medium-range goals, for one to three years. Next, short-range goals, for three to 12 months. Finally, goals for 'this month' – what can be done 'this month' to move towards the goals you set.



Setting goals focuses your attention, resources and actions.

How to govern the way you invest your time with goals

For many, the idea of 'investing' time is a new way of looking at things. For one thing, a lot of your time has been managed for you. You haven't had much control over it. You had to be in school a certain number of hours each day, and now you have to be on the job a certain number of hours a day. It takes a certain number of minutes to travel to and from work each day. Time to eat. To sleep. When you take all that out, you may have only about five or six hours a day of time you truly

control. Still, that's a lot. Five hours a day is 1,825 hours a year. Call that 'your time'. Most people let all of this 'your time' slip away. Sort of evaporate, like a glass of water evaporates into the air as the day goes on. At the end of a month or a year, people can't really point to many desired changes in any category of living resulting from the use of this 'your time'. In a very real sense, they just 'spent' that time.

And often they let others determine how it would be spent. A friend drops by, says 'Let's fly kites'. You say yes and go and fly kites for three hours. There's nothing wrong with that, of course. In fact, you might set a goal to fly kites or otherwise get at least five hours a week of physical exercise. So there's nothing wrong with that act itself. But over time, if you casually let others spend all 'your time' for you, on impulse, haphazardly, you will probably find yourself disappointed with your progress in life.

Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.

When you look at your goals, you'll see that there are ways you could deliberately 'invest' certain amounts of your time to move towards achieving them. The difference between 'spending' and 'investing' is that when you 'spend', you have little to show for it after the fact; when you 'invest', you have something of tangible value to show for it after the fact. There's nothing wrong with 'spending' a lot of your time, but don't you think it'd be smart to 'invest' some of it?

A tough lesson in life is that not everybody wishes you well.

The magic power of just one hour a day

Earl Nightingale, one of the most respected authorities of all in the field of human potential and self-improvement, became convinced that if a person dedicated just one hour a day to studying one particular subject or skill, he would be a world-class expert in that subject in less than three years.

Imagine doing nothing but watching videos of great players throwing baskets, studying the mechanics of shooting from the line in slow motion, and practising shooting from the line for one hour every day, every single day, for three years.

You'd probably get pretty good at it, even if, in the beginning, you had never touched a basketball, watched a basketball game or done anything athletic before. (Of course, this is the kind of dedicated investment of time a top athlete does make in mastering each skill involved in their game.)

You could apply this to anything. For example, as you may know, people judge you, in part, by your vocabulary. Many high school graduates – even some university graduates – have very limited vocabularies. Many people are unable to confidently and effectively present their ideas in the workplace because of limited vocabulary.

So, let's say you decide to significantly expand and improve your vocabulary. All you would need to do is set aside one hour a day. That's all, one hour a day. There are approximately 50,000 words in a typical dictionary. You could easily go through every one of those words and their definitions and pronunciations, if you're just an average reader, in two years. To approach this with greater ease, there are books or CDs available in bookshops to use in building a better vocabulary. The magazine *Reader's Digest* has a section in every issue called 'It pays to enrich your word power'. With as little as an hour a week, you could probably improve your vocabulary by 500% in one year.

‘For good or ill, your conversation is your advertisement. Every time you open your mouth, you let the world look into your mind.’

– Bruce Barton, pioneer and innovator in the field of advertising

How do you eat an elephant?

Any ‘big improvement’ you want to make can be achieved with the magic one hour a day. The way you eat an elephant is the same way you eat an apple – just one bite at a time.

The famous at-home training courses provided by Open Colleges take this ‘one bite at a time’ approach into account, by the way. You work entirely at your own pace, using as little as that magic one hour a day. ‘One bite at a time’ you can train for an entirely new, exciting, high-paying career of your choice, in the comfort and convenience of your own home.

The enjoyable experience of a ‘productive day’

What is a ‘productive day’, anyway? Here are several related definitions:

- At the end of the day, you can see, feel and know that you have accomplished and achieved something.
- At the end of the day, you can see, feel and know that you have done something that has moved you closer to one of your most important goals.
- At the end of the day, you can take note of having learnt something new, something you did not know before.

If you’re like most people, you haven’t given much thought to having ‘productive days’. The truth is: the day just ends. You turn off the TV or radio, go to sleep, wake up and go through the next day. If you make a point of having ‘productive days’, as a little test for a month, you may be very, very surprised at how differently you feel about yourself and your life.

The \$25,000 ‘secret’ to having a ‘productive day’ every day

Each night, write down a list of the 10 most important things you want to get done the next day, in order of their importance. Then force yourself to get number one done before moving on to number two. Check off each item as you finish it. Why not try it yourself for 30 days and see how valuable you think it is.



Each of the tips you are being given can be done anywhere, anytime. Create good working habits and you will see results.

Goal Categories

LONG-RANGE GOALS (three to five years)

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

MEDIUM-RANGE GOALS (one to three years)

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

SHORT-RANGE GOALS (three to 12 months)

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Things I want to do today

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____
- 11. _____
- 12. _____
- 13. _____
- 14. _____
- 15. _____

How to manage your money to get ahead in life

Money gives most people a whole lot of trouble! There is a lot of unhappiness that comes from not having enough of it. Misuse or excessive use of credit, for many, is like the use of drugs; it temporarily feels good and masks some pain, but that's only temporary; 'the morning after', there's more pain. Statistics indicate that the majority of adults go through their entire lives without ever figuring out how to master money.

During the average working person's life, a lot of money will pass through his or her hands. You'd think that some of that has to stick, but at retirement age, after 40-plus years of work, less than 5% of people have enough money saved, invested and in assets to produce a decent retirement income, while 95% are dependent on a measly pension for part or all of their basic needs. And if you gathered a random sampling of those 95% together, you'd find they had one thing in common: surprise at reaching that age with so little to show for it financially.

Of course, it's very hard to think that far ahead now. But you cannot wait until you are 50 either! There are certain 'money habits' that make you a master over money, instead of a slave to it. The sooner you put those habits to work for you, the better.

First, though, you might want to know about 'The poverty habits'. There are three poverty-inducing habits at work in the lives of everybody stuck being poor. If you happen to have a lot of money troubles now, not enough income, breaking these poverty habits is the first step up and out.

Poverty-inducing habit 1: A negative attitude about money

Abraham Lincoln once said, 'A penny saved is a penny earned'. These days, you can scatter small change in the street and nobody will even bother to bend over and pick it up. This says: 'It's too small. It's not important.' Maybe. Maybe not.

People who work for low wages and have very little money tend to 'waste' what little they have left after paying for necessities, like housing and utilities, often saying to themselves or to the world: 'No worries – what I've got is so little it won't make any difference, so I might as well spend it and have a good time today. I'll suffer tomorrow anyway.' All this can ever do is guarantee more of the same.

If your outgoings exceed your income, then your upkeep becomes your downfall.

The solution, by the way, is not a bigger wage. You may think it is. 'Gee, if I just had a bit more pay each week...' But this never seems to solve the problem. A person who gets this poverty-inducing habit ingrained in their behaviour keeps applying the habit to the bigger pay, and the bigger pay after that. As hard as it may be for you to imagine, there are people earning very high incomes STILL living from pay to pay, still saying to themselves: 'I've got so little left here after paying my essential bills, I might as well just spend it.'

The only law about money you ever really need to know to escape from financial prison

Going through life pay to pay, using up all your money even before the next pay, is like locking yourself up in financial prison and throwing away the key.

This negative cycle must be broken before you can ever hope to get ahead. You break it by obeying 'the only law about money you ever really need to know'. This 'law' requires a habit that, over time, changes the lives of all who use it for the better. At first, the results may seem insignificant. But it is the habit itself that leads to big differences. The law is: pay yourself first.

Out of all money that comes to you, in your pay or from any and every other source, expected or unexpected, you take a pre-determined percentage off the top and put that aside as 'untouchable' savings, before you pay any other bill. You might choose just 1%. You might choose 5%. But 'lock in' on that percentage and keep this promise to yourself no matter what.

Now, we know this is going to sound crazy to many readers. You might argue, 'I'm not getting all my bills paid now, using 100% of my income. Now you want me to manage with 95% – how will that work?' We don't blame you for being doubtful. Fortunately, you don't have to believe this law makes any sense for it to pay dividends.

All you have to do is obey it. If you try this idea, and stick with it absolutely, for just three months, you will see for yourself how your attitudes about money and your actual financial situation change for the better.

Here is a 'bottom line': You must change the way you think about money, before the actual money situations of your life will change.

Poverty-inducing habit 2: Slavery to debt

Our parents and, certainly, our grandparents lived very, very differently than we do with regard to purchases. If our grandparents decided to buy a new appliance, they didn't debit it to a card, get it the same day they decided they wanted it, and pay for it month after month for years. Instead, they saved up money until they had enough to buy it.

Today, we are very much into 'instant gratification'. We want it – and we want it now. Well, for certain purposes, modern automatic debit is a wonderful thing. But misused and overused, it can literally make you a slave to it.

If you are a slave to debt now, you should very seriously think about breaking those chains of slavery as soon as possible. If you are deeply in debt and unable to make even the minimum payments due on all your bills every month, you should probably get some professional assistance. Finance counsellors can help you work with your creditors and devise a plan you can live with, to get your debts under control. If in doubt about which organisation to call, check with your bank manager or your family accountant for a referral. If you're just mildly in debt, you will be able to reverse the process without help. One way or another, escaping from high interest debt is a very smart financial move. Here are three steps to help you end slavery to debt:

Step 1: Stop doing whatever has gotten you into debt in the first place. If it is buying things on impulse, stop doing it. Lock your cards in a drawer and only take them out for a carefully thought-out purchase if you must, but don't carry them with you all the time. If you're living way beyond your means, stop it. Pull back. Do without for a while. Delay major purchases. If there's a more serious problem, like gambling, get help. There is no shame in getting help for a problem. The shame is in refusing to honestly face your problems.

Step 2: Devise a plan to systematically reduce your burden of debt. After you pay yourself first, then take a predetermined percentage of your pay and any and all other monies that come to you and use that to reduce debt. If you happen to own your own home or some other mortgageable asset and you have a lot of high interest consumer debt, you may be able to use the equity in your home to get a debt consolidation loan, pay off a bundle of the high interest debts, and have a lower interest (ie. lower cost) loan in its place. If you do this, though, you must avoid placing high debits on the cards all over again – even if you have to cut them in half and close the accounts to do it.

Step 3: Avoid taking on new debt unless it definitely improves your financial situation, such as incurring debt to buy a house and stop renting, or further your education, or move to a new city to take a better job, or to take advantage of a carefully chosen business opportunity.

Poverty-inducing habit 3: Not increasing your value in the marketplace

Just about everybody wants a bigger pay and most people want better career opportunities. There's certainly nothing wrong with that, and a whole lot right with it, but 'wants' alone won't get much accomplished. Actually, the size of most wage payments, and the opportunities that become available to different people, are largely determined by a concept called 'value'.

Think about the professional athlete, for example. A player has a phenomenal season; he plays a very important role in getting his team to the championship, and his popularity increases, which means more ticket sales, higher ticket prices and more revenue for the team. That athlete has increased his value through performance. He is, in a very real way, more valuable this year than last year, and has a legitimate argument for a bigger pay. He

may not get it instantly, though.

His contract with his team may limit his raises. But one thing is certain: if he continues to improve his value through improved performance, in another year or two or three at the most, when he negotiates his next contract with that team (his current employer) or moves to a new team (his next employer), he will get a much bigger pay that reflects his increased value. But this is very, very important: Note that the increase in his value comes before the increase in his pay. Here are the four main ways people can increase their value in the marketplace to current or future employers:

- Performance
- Experience
- Education
- Combinations of performance, experience and education

Obviously, we all have room to improve our on-the-job performance. That might be by having a better attitude, being more punctual, cooperating better or cheerfully taking on extra tasks. If you will honestly examine your own on-the-job performance, you'll certainly find ways you could do better if you really wanted to.

*When your work speaks for itself...
don't interrupt it.*

Experience increases some people's value. Only 'some', because some people, even if in a job for 20 years, only repeat the same one year of experience 20 times. That does not appreciably increase their value. But if, with each passing month, you are learning a new skill, getting better at the job, even finding ways to do things more efficiently and effectively, then experience counts. One great mistake, by the way, is to presume that you are entitled to more money just because of the number of years on the job. The idea that an employee keeps getting raise after raise only because of the number of years of employment is out-dated;

that worked when we had a 'closed economy'. Today, just about every industry and business is part of a 'global economy', and companies cannot compete in that environment if they pay people a lot more than a particular job itself is worth.

If they can get the job done right for \$20 an hour, they cannot justify paying you \$40 to do that same job, even if you've been there for 20 years. You may not like that, but that's the way things really are. Education is the great income multiplier! Education absolutely, definitely, inarguably increases your marketplace value.

These days, you need a plan for increasing your value. Odds are excellent that someone starting out, say 18 to 25 years of age, will not only change employers but will change careers at least three to five times during his or her working lifetime. Computers will play an ever-increasing role in everyone's lives, and roughly one-third of all adults will, at some time, choose to start and operate a part-time, home-based business of one kind or another. There's going to be a lot of change in your life! Putting your continuing education 'on pace' with this change is a very good strategy.

The three prosperity-building habits

Just as there are habits that induce and perpetuate poverty or 'lack of money', there are habits proven to build prosperity or 'having more money than you need'. If you apply these habits in your life, you are certain to gradually but significantly improve your overall financial 'health'.

Prosperity habit 1: Saving

Back to Lincoln's 'a penny saved is a penny earned' axiom; yes, even cents matter! A cent saved helps build the habit of saving. Every time you 'save', you create a feeling, an inner sense of 'building', and you strengthen a habit. If you systematically save, that feeling becomes pretty powerful. It has an impact on your self-image, self-esteem and self-confidence. If you SYSTEMATICALLY save, that habit becomes automatic behaviour. In the beginning, your saving activity may not mean much in

actual money. You may start just by putting 'spare coins' into a jar at the end of every day, and by putting a tiny 1% of every pay into a savings account.

That will take a long time to build up, but getting this habit working for you is what's important, regardless of the amount. Later, as your savings build, you can begin using more sophisticated investment methods that may be available to you. In the beginning, very ordinary savings vehicles are fine, and even small but consistent savings, in ordinary mechanisms like bank savings accounts, can add up.

Prosperity habit 2: Giving

The practicality of what we're about to suggest is, admittedly, mysterious – you might even call it mystical. We are not even going to attempt to explain it. But we will insist that it works. Every individual who tries this idea reports remarkable results.

If you have three apples and give one away to a hungry person, your 'wealth' has decreased from three to two, right? On paper, yes, but in real life, the act of giving seems to increase wealth rather than to decrease it. The act of giving actually violates the maths we learn in school. When people combine the habit of saving with the habit of giving, they seem to 'attract' new job opportunities, promotions, raises, even money coming to them from unusual and unexpected sources.

You may want to pick a favourite charity, your church, a local civic project, a food bank, a homeless shelter, whatever, and regularly and consistently give a small donation. Just like 'paying yourself first', you might set a percentage, even 1% or 2% or 3% of all the money that comes to you. The amounts are less important than consistency and frequency.

Giving of time counts, too. Your community is overrun with worthy, charitable organisations and projects in need of volunteers. Volunteerism is a growing worldwide tradition that enriches everybody's lives.

Prosperity habit 3: Self-improvement

Whether through formal or informal education, reading, going to seminars, people who experience increasing incomes and prosperity are always actively involved in self-improvement. We are 'the TV generation'. No previous generation has spent as much time watching television as we do. Now, we're not going to 'bash' television. We enjoy TV just as much as anybody. We use TV for news, for entertainment, for watching sports, for information, even for shopping, but the person who uses the TV as an 'escape' from real life... who flops in front of it as soon as they arrive home from work and stays there until they fall asleep... this person does himself a terrible disservice. Instead, some portion of your time should be deliberately and wisely invested in self-improvement. When you stop to think about it, 'you' are the only thing in life over which you have a great deal of control. 'You' are the one asset that can never be lost or stolen. Doesn't it make good sense to invest time and money in improving that asset?



Understanding the incredible power of habit

If you've ever tried to STOP some habit – smoking, over-eating, tardiness – you've experienced the incredible power of habit. Our habits virtually control our lives!

Chains of a habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken.

You get dressed in the morning by habit. You choose the foods you eat by habit. You choose activities by habit. You travel to work by habit, and most of these habits get formed mostly by accident.

Think about the foods we like, for example. Why do we prefer sweets as desserts? Why don't we prefer fresh fruits and cheeses instead? Because of habit. As children, we got sweets as treats. Thinking of those foods as treats became a habit. Had your parents started out and stayed consistent with giving you fresh fruits as treats and never giving you sweets, by the time you toddled off to school, you would have formed a habit of preferring and desiring those fruits. Of course peer pressure from all the other kids would have undoubtedly interfered with that in a pretty short time, but if we were all raised with the fresh fruit habit instead of the sweet habit, we'd certainly be a healthier society! The good news is that, as an independent thinking adult, you can choose to break certain habits, and to create other habits. You can choose habits that work for you.

*Laws are never as effective as habits.
If you create an act, you create a habit.
If you create a habit, you create character.
If you create character, you create a destiny.*

Escape from debt list

Ten things I can start doing now to escape from debt:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

A young man with short brown hair, wearing a dark grey suit jacket over a light blue button-down shirt, is sitting on white concrete steps. He is looking down at a silver laptop on his lap with a slight smile. His hands are on the keyboard.

How to manage your career to get ahead in life

A huge, positive step in life is switching from ‘working for a living’ to ‘developing a career’.

There has been a fairly recent social trend of young people choosing just to take ‘jobs’, claiming to have little interest in the income or the nature of the work, and focusing entirely on their after-work pastimes and interests. This is like dropping out halfway. The truth is, it wears thin quickly.

An interesting truth about human psychology is that we derive a great deal of our personal satisfaction and self-esteem from our work. It turns out you can’t just stick your job in a pigeon hole, go through the motions, and still feel good about yourself. Our work and our self-esteem are closely linked. If our work is unsatisfactory to us, we will be unhappy. People stuck in unsatisfactory jobs carry that unhappiness over into other areas of their lives and find that nothing else makes them happy either.

How to escape a dead-end job (before it’s too late)

A trend of recent years in many mature economies, unfortunate in many ways, has been that a big chunk of the new jobs being created are low-end, low-wage service-oriented jobs, like fast food restaurants, delivery and shop assistants. This is not to say you cannot start out in such a job and work your way up to better and better positions. You can, and many companies in these types of industries go out of their way to ‘promote from within’. However, the odds are definitely heavily against you breaking free of low wage jobs if your education is severely limited. High school is, today, virtually a necessity. Beyond that, career training is the big breakthrough for tens of thousands of people each year.

*People are afraid of the future, the unknown.
If a man faces up to it, and takes the dare of the
future, he can have some control over his
destiny. That's an exciting idea to me.
Better than waiting with everybody else to
see what's going to happen.*

Actually, career thinking even precedes career training. Career thinking is the change, in your own mind, from 'jobs' and 'paydays' to a 'career' and a 'career path'. The word 'path' is important; it says you are involved in a career you can develop, move forward with and progress from one level to the next. It says there is opportunity for growth, now and in the foreseeable future. To stimulate your career thinking, a list of such careers appears at the end of this chapter. Incidentally, as you look through this list and think about career choices and options, it's helpful to remember that your own intuition or 'gut instinct' about which career path to follow will probably be right.

Your subconscious mind is a vast, computerised warehouse of information and ideas – many that you have put away there and consciously forgotten about. When you begin to focus your conscious thought on one thing, like a career choice, your subconscious does a kind of 'computer sort' through all the related, stored information, quickly organises and summarises it, and communicates it to you, through that 'little voice' inside your head. One of the pioneers of the self-improvement field taught that 'no problem ever comes to you for which the answer is not already within you' and 'man is deaf until he hears the inner voice of his own being'. You can and should place quite a bit of trust in what your own 'inner voice' has to say about your career.

Yes, you can get a better job...

For every industry that is temporarily stalled in the economy, there are two others growing by leaps and bounds. You may read in the newspaper or hear on the news about some huge company laying off workers or eliminating jobs. But what they don't tell you in the news are the hundreds of smaller, growing companies in that same field hiring and eagerly looking for new employees!

The plain truth is that there are (and always will be) plenty of opportunities for a person who steps forward with sufficient education and preparation, positive references from past employers and others, a positive attitude and an honest desire to develop a career.



Four proven ways to getting a better job

An optimistic and determined attitude

Take the previous facts to heart. Ignore the negative news about the 'tough' economy or 'tough' job market. Instead, focus on the fact that there are always opportunities for top-quality people – and that's you!

Organise your 'sales' story

Few people think of it this way, but you are actually 'selling' yourself and your services to an employer. Before even attempting to arrange job interviews or going in to fill out any applications, make notes of your best qualities, past accomplishments, reasons why a company should hire you and references. Carry these notes with you if you are filling out job applications, or use them in preparing a résumé. And get his information firmly fixed in your mind so you can use it in conversations and interviews.

Don't limit yourself to advertised openings

Sure, you should check the career section in your city newspaper, maybe local newspapers or trade magazines in your particular field, depending on how far along you are in your career. But don't stop there! Most people further their careers through the 'hidden job market', not through advertised openings.

Based on research done by some of the large recruitment agencies, we know that only a small proportion of the jobs paying good wages are filled by recruitment agencies or applicants responding to job advertisements. In fact, many of these jobs are never advertised at all!

These jobs are filled by recommendation and referral; someone already working at that company refers a friend, by tips – 'I hear XYZ is hiring' – or by prospective employees presenting themselves to companies without regard to whether they are known to be hiring or filling a position at that moment.

To be successful in your job hunting you will need to diversify your job search. For example, you'll want to let everybody you know who is employed anywhere, as well as 'centre of influence' type people like your or your family's accountant, lawyer, banker know that you are interested in finding a particular type of position. Put the word out! Build a 'target list' of employers you think you'd like to work for and contact them, even if they are not advertising any positions.

Always be preparing for your next move up the career ladder

Through employer-offered training, formal distance education like Open Colleges' career training and informal self-study with books, other publications, classes and seminars, you will benefit greatly by being in the 'getting ready for my next, better position' mode all the time.

Three proven ways to job security, wage increases and promotions

Out-perform your job

It may take a bit longer than you would like but no one doing truly excellent, outstanding work can go unnoticed or unrewarded very long. Excellence at 'small things' inevitably leads to big opportunities.

Create opportunity in your job

Here's an interesting idea: Become an 'inside entrepreneur'. This is a way of talking about creating new opportunities within the corporate structure and environment, thus expanding the scope of the job.

In effect, the quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their efforts and commitment to excellence.

The 'inside entrepreneur' not only does assigned tasks well, but is always alert for opportunities to expand the role and bring new, carefully thought out ideas to the table. Employers will respond well to ideas that will improve efficiency or quality or move the business forward.

Become over-qualified

Sometimes people are turned down for certain jobs because they are 'over-qualified', but a sure way to move up from one job to a better one is to develop the education, thinking, habits, behaviour and image of someone who has that better job.

Should you consider 'entrepreneurship'?

There is a home-based business and entrepreneurial explosion going on all around you! By starting your own business, from home, in your spare time, you not only have an opportunity to earn extra income but also to develop new and varied skills, greater self-confidence and useful contacts. You may later find a way to grow your spare-time business into a full-time business, and become your own boss for life. Of course, not everybody is cut out to be an entrepreneur, especially on a full-time basis, but you may want to at least explore this option.

What I want to tell you today is... throw yourself into the world... live in it. Take chances. Make your own work and take pride in it – seize the moment.



By starting a home-based business you could become your own boss for life!



How to gain favourable attention for your ideas and abilities

Progress in just about any career requires the development of certain 'people skills'. Communication, persuasion, influence and leadership all play a role.

In most companies and business environments, there is competition for the attention of upper management, for recognition, raises, promotions and other opportunities. Sometimes that competition among peers and coworkers is very obvious and open. Other times it is less open and a bit more subtle. Still, from time to time, you will be thrust into a situation where you have an opportunity to 'shine'. At all times, you'll have the opportunity to 'stand out'. So, how do you gain favourable attention for yourself, your abilities and your ideas?

First – the ability to communicate effectively

You will always be judged by what comes out of your mouth – your choice of words, the level and diversity of your vocabulary, and how well organised the thoughts you express are. For starters, the kind of 'street slang' and 'verbal shorthand' we commonly use with friends is not going to gain points for you in the business world. Beyond that, any number of surveys and studies have confirmed that people do judge your intelligence and ability based on the words you use. Fortunately, there are many things you can do for yourself, to strengthen your ability and confidence as a communicator. There are books you can read and audio and video tapes you can listen to and watch.

Second – your personal image

Here is the best advice you can get about dress and personal appearance as it relates to a career – look and dress one ‘step’ better than your current job requires. If you’re a mechanic, for example, and could get away with oil-stained, dirty work clothes, you should wear clean, neatly pressed work clothes. If you can get away with a casual jacket and open-collared shirt, wear a shirt and tie. Instead of doing what you can ‘get away with’, go just one step better and always look your best under whatever conditions you find yourself in. Groomed hair, clean nails, neat clothes, it’s all important.

We had a conversation with a young woman who had applied for a job in a clothing shop and been told that she would have to dress differently and better than she had at the interview to be able to work there. She had gone to the interview in a sport-shirt with a soccer team’s name and images on it and washed-out jeans with strategically placed holes. She was outraged over this. Angry. Mad. ‘What right do they have to tell me how to dress?’

Well, they don’t have that right – unless you want to get money from them for taking care of their customers. Then they certainly do have that right. They’re not just imposing their personal ideas and preferences. They have a certain image they want their business to give. They believe their customers respond positively or negatively to different ‘looks’, and like it or not, they’re right.

It may not be fair, but employers and customers do ‘judge a book by its cover’. People make judgements about your status and importance, your seriousness about your job, even your ability based on how you dress. As a child, you may have heard the phrase ‘You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.’ It turns out there is plenty of scientific evidence to support this idea! Most people form an impression of you in their subconscious minds within the first few minutes of meeting you, and they are very reluctant to change that impression later. That impression is based on what you say as well as your appearance. Try to think in terms of ‘marketing’ yourself.

Third – be well-informed

Whatever work ‘specialty’ you find yourself in, as well as the one in which you want to develop your career, you should be an up to date, well-read, well-informed expert. This means having or getting all the related formal education you can. It also means reading the current literature in the field, any books published by people in that field, the trade magazines and journals published for that field, plus some general business information won’t hurt.

Let’s say you’re an electrician. There are trade magazines published just for electricians, others for electrical contractors, and owners and managers of such companies. You should certainly be reading the trade magazines published expressly for people in your industry. If, as your career path, you hope to move up to a manager position in your present company or another firm, or become a contractor, then you should be reading their magazines too. Reading the newspaper is important. People judge your intelligence and ability by how well-informed you are in general. You can’t just ignore the news of the day.

Fourth – personality and attitude

There are very few occupations where personality is unimportant. When company executives are asked how they choose people to promote and what they look for in people, they invariably talk about ‘attitude’ and ‘personality’ before anything else. How do you define ‘a good attitude’ or a ‘good personality’? Most people answer – I can’t define it, but I know it when I see it!

Here are some clues. People judged by others to have a good personality seem to be patient, active listeners, encouraging and complimentary to others, generally cheerful and optimistic, and curious, interested in learning and knowing about new things. If a person leaves a conversation, meeting or other encounter with you feeling that you really listened to their opinions and what they had to say, they are very likely to categorise you as someone with a great personality.

People judged by others to have a good attitude seem to be generally optimistic and upbeat, calm under pressure, very solution-oriented (as opposed to blame-oriented) when faced with problems and genuinely interested in ideas and new and better ways of doing things.

*It is your attitude more so than your aptitude
than determines your altitude.*

When should you put your best foot forward?

One day, an elderly woman came into a small furniture store, apparently to escape the rain outside. Several of the salesmen on the showroom floor ignored her, telling each other that she was not there to shop, just to get in out of the rain while waiting for the bus to come along. Talking to her would be a waste of time. So she was left to the newest salesman, a kid really. He spent time with her, showed her around the store and answered her questions patiently and courteously. When she left without purchasing, the other salesmen made fun of the kid.

It turned out that the little old woman stepping into the store to escape the storm was extremely wealthy. When it came time later that year to redecorate and refurnish her family home, she insisted that everything be purchased from the young salesman at the small furniture store.

The point of the story, of course, is that you just never know when you are going to bump right into opportunity. Some little job you do extremely well may bring you to the attention of a company president. A person you talk with, on or off the job, may surprise you and be someone important in your company or community, and so on. So, when should you put your best foot forward? When should you present yourself in a way most likely to gain favourable attention? Every time, all the time.



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