



Book The Entrepreneurial Cat

13 Ways to Transform Your Work Life

Mary Hessler-Key and Jazzie the Cat
Berrett-Koehler, 1999

Recommendation

When an author such as entrepreneur Mary Hessler-Key shares her byline with a feline, you know what kind of book you've got. Yes, Hessler-Key has written a cute book, but it does have some sound advice, inspired - she says - by her cats. She noticed that Sheba and Jasper possessed qualities that every entrepreneur could use, and then captured their lessons, which are appealingly illustrated here. Before you write this off as a little ball of fluff, look at the thought-provoking questions that accompany her cat-inspired tips. You can read the book in no time and devote as much effort as you want to the intriguing questions, which will tell you more about yourself than you might think. *BooksInShort* categorically recommends this book to anyone - entrepreneur or not - whose life could benefit from considering a cat's worldview, including being curious, acting instinctively, grooming carefully, hunting persistently and keeping a watchful eye on both the mice and the dogs.

Take-Aways

- You can learn valuable entrepreneurial lessons from the behavior of cats.
- Cats do what comes naturally, they're curious and find the right niche.
- Cats make the leap.
- Cats follow their instincts.
- Cats clean their litter box.
- Cats sit in the window and watch.
- Cats meander and explore.
- Cats take naps.
- Cats are "purrsistent."
- Cats groom those who groom them, they focus while hunting and they balance skillfully.

Summary

Avoid a "Catastrophe"

Your cat, or the next nearest feline available to you, has some useful lessons to teach you about how to approach life, work and aggravation.

While you're losing sleep over what everyone else thinks and wasting precious energy, creativity and peace of mind in the process, remember that cats never worry about what others think. Part of their charm is their "cattitude;" they revel in their independence and you should, too. Choose a business or career that enables you to express your talents. Do only what you love to do and do it well. Delegate everything else you possibly can: Find a dog to fetch the sticks. Ask yourself:

- What do you enjoy doing that other people may find boring or even frustrating?
- When you read a newspaper or a magazine, what ideas capture your attention?
- What do you do naturally that you assume everyone else does, too (even if they don't)?
- What common themes do you see in the answers to the above questions?
- If success were guaranteed, what would you do in life?

Be Curious and Find the Right Niche

Cats are always prowling for opportunity. They explore their territory by sight and scent. If you rearrange the furniture, cats will adapt to the new room and make it theirs. Try to take your product or service and explore old ground as if it were new. Be curious; curiosity never actually killed any cats - they thrive on it and so should you. Ask yourself:

- What opportunities do you see in your work environment?
- What do your customers want that they aren't receiving?
- If resources were unlimited, how could you improve your product or service?
- What are you doing to deliver a unique mix of value?
- If you traveled 20 years into the future, what trends or innovations would you see?

Make the Leap

Dogs trot. Cats leap. First, cats judge the distance they want to cross, and then they strategically position themselves so they can leap with confidence. They're fearless. Fear of failure can keep even the most successful people from leaping. Learn from the cat: Gauge your distance, position yourself, and then leap with confidence. Don't worry, if you miss, you'll still land on your feet, just like the cat does. Ask yourself:

- What do you want to do that presents you with the greatest challenge?
- What keeps you from leaping? What would ensure a safe landing on all fours?

Follow Your Instincts

Did you ever watch a cat pounce on a mouse? How do cats pick just the right moment to do that? They follow their instincts. When you're faced with any decisions, even the most difficult ones, don't just weigh the pros, cons and profits. Listen to the meowing within.

- How do you know when you're following your instincts? How does it feel?
- What keeps you from following your instincts or intuitions? Is there a common pattern?
- When you're faced with difficult decisions, how do you usually handle them?
- What role does intuition play in your decision making? Should it play a bigger role?
- How do you feel when you've made a good decision and listened to the "meowing within?"

Clean Your Litter Box

Cats demand fresh starts. So should you. Take time to tidy up, let go of the past, purge your disappointments, lost opportunities and old files. Get rid of anything you don't need. Cats live in the present and so can you, if you clean out the old and begin again. Ask yourself:

- What are you holding on to from the past and why?
- How can you start anew?

Sit in the Window and Watch

Cats will devote hours and hours to simply sitting in a window and watching the world. Cats study their terrain and have the ability to observe any situation without getting emotionally attached. Keenly observe your work environment with detachment, to build your strategy.

- When you step back and look at your job, what do you see?
- How would you describe your work to someone from another planet?
- What workplace or life issues aggravate you the most?
- Which ones bring you the most contentment? What takes the most emotional energy?
- How can you restructure your environment to reduce stress and increase your energy?

Meander and Explore

Wherever cats go, they make it a point to enjoy the trip, even if it's just down the hall or under the bed. They learn about their territory by meandering, exploring and enjoying all the discoveries they make along the way. Cats remain open and they don't waste their time and energy judging themselves or other creatures. They trust that somehow everything will work out in the end because nature is self-organizing. Your work and life can be like that, too if you let them. Don't worry about straying off the beaten path in business, don't lose your zest for discovery and don't be afraid to take a new path. Ask yourself:

- When was the last time you meandered and explored a new way of doing something?
- If you had the time, what new business or career opportunity would you pursue?
- What do you make judgments about?
- What would happen if you were willing to let those judgments go?
- How are you judging yourself and your performance on the job?
- Is there a better way to measure your progress?

Take Naps

When cats nap, they're considering all their possibilities. They hunt in their dreams to make themselves better hunters when they're awake. Catnap occasionally. Dreaming improves creativity, concentration and performance, and can open your eyes to different alternatives.

- When was the last time you took a catnap? How did you feel afterward?
- Do you ever record your dreams? If so, what have you learned about yourself?
- When you daydream, what are some of the ideas you come up with?
- Take a catnap. Then, brainstorm five things you could do to improve your career.
- What blocks your progress?
- Where are you stuck? Take a nap. List any ideas you get while napping or upon waking.

Be "Purrsistent"

Cats know what they like and don't like. They're assertive and "purrsistent," and they respect themselves - critical qualities if you want to reach your goals. Dismiss opportunities that don't meet your standards. And, like a cat, do it with class! Ask yourself:

- What do you value?

- What criteria do you use when assessing a goal or direction?
- How do these criteria relate to your values?
- What opportunities have you dismissed? Which ones would you pursue?
- Is there anything that keeps you from being "purrsistent" about your preferences?

Wash Often

Cats renew themselves when they give themselves a bath. So can you. But don't stop with a bubble bath; renew yourself with a massage, quiet time, a brisk walk, exercise or a vacation. Take time for the basic pleasures so you can stay relaxed in the "dog-eat-dog" work world.

- What are you currently doing to renew your body, mind and spirit?
- What would you like to be doing that you're not?
- What are the basic pleasures in life?
- How will you make time to enjoy some of these pleasures in your daily life?

Groom Those Who Groom You

Cats aren't aloof. They're actually very social and will groom their friends and acquaintances, helping each other reach the spots we can't reach alone. Be independent, but don't isolate yourself. Find other people you can trust and build relationships with them. Help others be their best and you'll achieve your best, too. Ask yourself:

- Are you currently helping anyone? What are you doing?
- Have you ever had teachers or mentors who supported your career or personal growth? What did they do?
- Brainstorm a list of ways you might support others in their work life.
- Which of these are you willing to do in the next month?

Focus While Hunting

When cats stalk their prey, they do it with great focus. Nothing else in the world exists except the critter they're hunting. Hours can pass while we wait for the bug to crawl out from under the curtain. We're ready. We're committed. That bug is doomed. Concentration is the key to such focus. Keep your mind clear, devote your energy to the hunt, don't get distracted by the phone, other people or competing demands. Once you pick your priority, focus and, like a cat, be relentless. Ask yourself:

- What things distract you the most?
- What is your vision for yourself?
- What is your vision for your business or career?
- If you had to pick one overriding goal that supports your vision, what would it be?
- How much time and concentration are you willing to devote to this overriding goal?
- What activities support your vision?
- What key strategies can you use to focus yourself and your firm on your overriding goal?

Balance Skillfully

Cats stay on top of everything and their focus keeps them balanced. even in the midst of chaos or big challenges. If they slip and fall, they land on all fours. Don't let any of your business or personal concerns trip you up. Keep your balance. List some of the opportunities or goals you would like to accomplish in the following areas: physical, business/career, financial, family/relationship, intellectual, personal development, spiritual. Now, describe your ideal day, week and month. Then, describe your ideal life. Now ask yourself, what would a cat do about achieving its "purrfect" plan?

About the Authors

Mary Hessler-Key, Ph.D., owns Mary Hessler & Associates, an organizational development consulting firm. A speaker and facilitator, she is executive director of *Inc. Magazine's* Magazine's Eagles CEO Program, where she works with entrepreneurs from fast-growing companies. Jazzie the Cat lives in Tampa, Florida with the author.
