
Preparing to Succeed: Charting Your Own Self-Development

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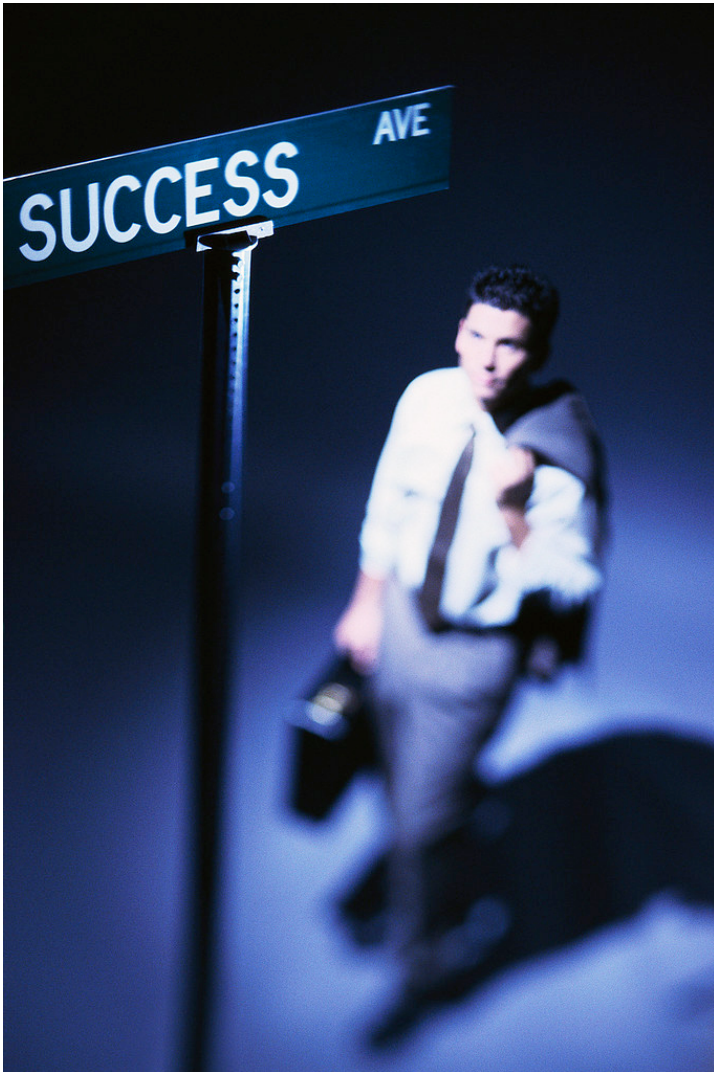
Credit: 7 PDH

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Preparing to Succeed:

CHARTING YOUR OWN SELF-DEVELOPMENT COURSE

-7 Credit Hours -

Richard Grimes

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Learning Outcomes

Students taking this course will learn to:

1. List three essential elements of self-development
2. Identify their unique work-related competencies
3. Develop a plan for building alliances with others
4. Explain why traditional networking is not as effective in career development as is building alliances
5. Examine their behavior to determine if there are “qualifiers” associated with them that may restrict career development
6. View their performance through the eyes of their supervisor looking for improvement opportunities
7. List all the written expectations of their job in terms of quality, quantity, and time
8. Analyze their daily performance to determine if they are productive or just “busy”
9. Identify some clues that they may not be performing as well in reality as they assumed
10. List some unwritten job expectations their supervisor may have of them
11. List some unwritten expectations their coworkers may have of them
12. Explain if they connect authentically with others
13. Analyze themselves to determine the extent of their orientation toward reality
14. Analyze their daily behavior to discover their potential for self-inflicting wounds
15. Analyze their internal dialogues to determine if they have self-imposed any limitations on their development
16. Analyze their behaviors to determine how effectively they deal with negative or undesirable events
17. Rethink their logical arguments when they encounter faulty conclusions
18. Gauge the impact of their behavior on others
19. View their work performance from the perspective of a customer service position
20. Identify and evaluate ‘moments of truth’ in their daily encounters with others
21. Identify aspects of their behavior that are critical to effective interaction with others
22. Prioritize those elements of their behavior to ensure the most successful interaction
23. Identify their personal working style to maximize their effectiveness in the workplace
24. Identify clues to other working styles so they can act flexibly for an effective interaction

25. Analyze and modify as necessary their typical emotional reaction to unsettling events
26. Explain the value of managing their reaction to an event when they cannot control the event itself
27. Explain the value in maintaining a sense of proportion when encountering disappointment so as not to harm their career plans
28. Lose gracefully and smartly
29. List the key elements necessary for their personal development plan
30. Break out of behavioral patterns that may be limiting their potential for career growth
31. Identify and obtain a mentor if their employer does not have a formal mentoring program

Overview

The US Army used to have this slogan: “Be All You Can Be” as a recruiting enticement because it knew many young people really did not have an idea of what their future held - or what they wanted it to hold for them. Now that the Army no longer uses it, we will borrow it as the foundation for this course.

Many people feel it is the obligation of their employer to help them develop their career. Human Resource professionals know that employers with strong employee development programs have a distinct advantage in recruiting and retaining talent.

However, employers like that are scarce. Employees with drive and self-motivation will not have to wait for their employer to act but can use this course to chart their own self-development.

The concepts presented here will get you off to a safe start in developing your career while gaining experience regardless of if the organization is public, private, or volunteer. We say “safe” as in avoiding errors that can create problems now or in the future. The model for this course is the typical high school drivers’ education program where (in theory) you learn just enough to start driving safely with minimal risk to yourself and others while you gain knowledge and experience.

Think of this course as an experienced mentor to help you understand the workplace from a position of “been there, done that” to guide your development in a logical sequence of looking inward at yourself before looking outward at the world around you.

While we do not pretend it will guarantee career success, we will promise that the learner will address many of key issues that business authors and thinkers have identified as critical for professional growth. There is a suggested reading list at the end of the course for those who want to get more deeply into the topics presented here.



Topic Sequence

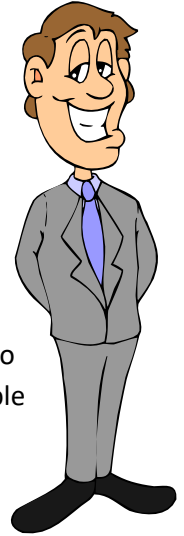
We designed this course from the inside out, meaning that before we start dealing with issues external to you, we must help you develop the “best you” possible. Your greatest asset (or liability) in your career is YOU as a person, not you as your skills.

We all may know or have read about someone who may be very skilled in work, sports, politics, or the arts but has serious character flaws outside of that skill. The company’s top salesperson who is responsible for more revenue than anyone else may not be such an asset to the company if his behavior toward female coworkers causes the spending of much company time and money investigating harassment charges from coworkers or defending him in legal actions.

Therefore, we will begin by leading you into a self-analysis and asking you to consider many facets of your character that will become more critical as time goes on. If you can work to strengthen these, you will be increasing your value to your employer. Moreover, the more valuable you are to your employer, the greater your chance for a bright career.

After we help you become more aware of the world within, we focus on the world outside and help you deal with your coworkers. The more you can understand the reasons for conflict (and their warning signs), the greater the chance you can defuse it or avoid it altogether. As you become more skillful in simple negotiations, you will begin getting more of what you want in situations while building a strong network of supporters that you will need later in your career.

If you can understand and apply the elements of motivation, you will be able to get more cooperation from others. If you can understand and apply all the concepts presented in these two critical areas of work – *understanding yourself and understanding others* – you will be an example of the wise man’s description of good luck: “Good luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”



Looking at You

If you do not possess self-awareness, you risk creating career-damaging traps for yourself that will always come back to haunt you at the worst possible times. If you will spend a little time doing some introspection and changing now, you can keep yourself from stepping into many self-created problems later. You can be assured that life, family, friends, and work will also throw plenty of problems at you that you never expected – so why add any more to the pile than necessary?

Your Three Essential Elements

Look around you and think about the people that you know who are successful. For this course, we define “successful” as those people who *maximize their skills and talents through benefiting others with minimal negative impact on those around them.*

We do not define successful as how much money they have or the extent of their power and influence. Think about some of America’s largest companies during the late 1990s such as Enron, HealthSouth, Arthur Anderson, Tyco, and WorldCom. Their leaders earned millions of dollars annually and they personally held enormous power within their organizations and the business community around them. Now, years later, what do they all have in common? Their leaders have been charged with various kinds of criminal activity, been publicly disgraced, and some are even serving jail sentences.



Were they successful? Sure, and they also successfully ran their companies to the brink of extinction, destroyed the retirement hopes for thousands of employees, wiped out billions of dollars of investments for stockholders, and ruined the lives of many innocent people associated with them or their companies. In all cases, these people of extraordinary talents also possessed fatal flaws that brought them down.

If we can help you identify three essential elements of success, and you act on them, there is a strong likelihood you can enjoy true success without the self-destructive traits they had.

#1 You must be competent in the eyes of your supervisor/employer.

Your supervisor – who is your direct link upward to the organization – must think you are competent in something. It may be specialized knowledge about the business or a particular field of interest that is useful for the business such as in-depth knowledge about computers, a photography hobby, writing the newsletter for your church or volunteer organization, or an ease in public speaking although your job description may not involve any of those right now.

For example, if your leader can count on you to write or make suggestions for a report he or she must submit, then you are competent in their eyes even though writing reports may not be what the company currently pays you to do.

However, if your specialty were an ability to name every number one song and the artist in the last 10 years, there would not be much value in that from a business perspective unless your employer was in the music business.



Think
about

List the specialties you have that can be used at work. (These can also be interests such as checking data, teaching others to do things, a joy in meeting new people, or planning events that you never considered as specialties.)

How can you make these specialties available to your supervisor?

If you do not have any specialties now, what work-related interests (see above) do you have that you can develop into specialties?

How and when will you start developing them?

#2 You must be able to build alliances with others.

You must focus on being as helpful to others as possible without thinking about “what is in it for me to do this?” If you can develop an honest attitude of service to others, you will begin leveraging your efforts into greater results than you could have achieved alone.

You can develop that service attitude by asking yourself as you look around, “How can I make it easier for them to do (or get) what they are doing (or need)? Easier to get the information they need; easier to get the results they need; easier to contact my department or my company?”

This is not about “networking” which usually amounts to a group of contacts who rely on each other for information sharing or help. Rarely, though, do these networks help members move up and out of the network. An alliance, as we use it here, is about offering a hand to others when possible because at some point, someone will offer a hand to you.



Some people call this “paying it forward” and the premise is that if someone does something nice for you, rather than just paying them back, consider doing good deeds unexpectedly for others as the payment, too. This investment in those around you will reap unexpected benefits when you least expect them (and probably most need them.) Of course, this premise assumes that you believe life is fair and that, ultimately, everyone ends up where they deserve.

Think about other departments with whom you must interact as you do your work. What opportunities exist for improving the communication and workflows between you? What work problems are there within your department that your supervisor may allow you to analyze for possible solutions? (Even if your leader does not have any for you to look at, the fact that you asked can work wonders for your career.) What value would there be in people seeing you as a valuable contributor to making their work life a little easier?

If you can help others see you as helpful and interested in their success, too, as you search for your own, you will learn the critical habit of building alliances that will become more essential as you move up in the organization.



Think
about

What alliances have you developed so far in your workplace by being as helpful as possible?

What alliances have you developed so far in your life outside of work by being as helpful as possible?

Who are others with whom you can build an alliance by being as helpful as possible?

#3 You must develop the ability to not inflict wounds on yourself or have “qualifiers” mentioned when people describe you.

An Associated Press article in January 2007 (“2 in 5 supervisors do not keep their word, FSU study finds” by Brent Kallestad) reported these results of a survey from the Florida State University’s Business School that are classic examples of self-inflicted wounds:

- 39% of workers said their supervisors failed to keep promises.
- 37% said their supervisor failed to give credit when due.
- 31% said their supervisor gave them the “silent treatment” in the past year.
- 27% said their supervisor made negative comments about them to other employees or management.
- 23% said their supervisor blamed others to cover up mistakes or to minimize embarrassment.
- 4% said the supervisor invaded their privacy.

In every case, the action of the supervisor diminished the level of trust between him or her and their employees and IT DID NOT HAVE TO HAPPEN. All of these are examples of self-inflicted wounds.

In addition, how many people do you know with special skills or talents that always come with a qualifier statement? For example, *“he is our best pitcher, but he is also such a jerk that no one else on the team can stand him.”* Or maybe, *“she sings so beautifully that it almost makes you forget you can’t tell her any secrets that you do not want spread around.”*

These qualifiers are always self-inflicted and guaranteed to limit the success of the individual.



What qualifiers do you think are associated with you?

How can they limit your success?

Think
about

What will you do about them?

If you are having trouble coming up with some, ask a few of your close friends after first explaining to them that you are trying to identify and eliminate any traits that may hold you back. **Caution – do not ask them if you are not capable of dealing with the response honestly without argument!** If you start to argue with them, you can forget ever hearing about anything useful from them in the future.

Your Job in the Organization

It is useful for you to look at your job in the organization from the perspective of your employer and ask yourself, "If I had to be rehired every day, would they hire me back every morning based on what I did the previous day?" (Of course, the corresponding question from you would be, "Based on my relationship with my supervisor as of the end of work yesterday, would I want to work here again today?")



Describe here what you are paid to do in terms that include the quality that is expected of your work, the quantity that is expected, and the time available to do it. (For example, "I am expected to process 10 documents (quantity) an hour (time) with no errors (quality).")

Think
about

(If you are having trouble identifying all three elements of quality, quantity, and time, this may be a reason you and your leader do not share agreement on your productivity. This would be an excellent opportunity to talk with your supervisor and get those three elements clarified in your mind.)



What other aspects of your job do you think are important to your success but may not be listed in the job description? (This would be a good question for discussion with some coworkers.)

Think
about

What about these:

- How do you deal with disappointment? Do you accept it, try to understand why it happened and move on or do you focus on it, keep talking about it, and have trouble moving past it?
- How do you react when you make a mistake? Do you try to learn from it, deny that it happened, or try to fix blame on anyone but you?
- What do you do when someone confides in you about some gossip? Do you pass it on, or does it end with you?

- What about the politics and “in crowd” that always exists within any organization? Do you spend much time concerned about them; do you complain to anyone who will listen that it is so unfair that they exist; do you try to get into their circle; or do you accept it as a part of work life and move on?

- Where would your “reliability score” fall on a grade from 0-10 if your co-workers could respond to that question anonymously? How much can they count on you to be on time, keep a promise, or be accountable for your responsibilities?

- When you see opportunities for improvement in the work process, what determines whether you tell anyone:
 - If there is something in it for you
 - If you like your supervisor
 - If it will make the work easier for everyone
 - Something else – what?

Why do you think we are asking you these questions? (These traits may help you move ahead faster or slow and even halt your career advancement regardless of how well you perform in your formal job function.)

Your Character

Dr. Henry Cloud, author of Integrity¹, identifies these as some of the traits essential to success in the workplace (and life itself.) Look at each one and ask yourself how your peers would rate you if they could answer anonymously.

1. **The ability to connect authentically which ultimately leads to trust.** Connecting “authentically” means, in Dr. Cloud’s terms, dealing with the people as they are without regard to race religion, sex, age, OR WHAT THEY CAN DO FOR YOU IN RETURN. If you help someone because you genuinely want to help them, then you connect authentically.



With whom have you connected authentically recently? (This does not have to be in the workplace.)

What led you to make that connection?

Think
about

Do you think that was a rare occurrence or common?

Who has connected authentically with you recently? What was your reaction to what they did? If they were a coworker, would you be willing to help them in return sometime without them asking for help?

What do you think this statement about trust means: **"Trust is historic?"**

How does that relate to you?

¹ http://www.amazon.com/Integrity-Courage-Meet-Demands-Reality/dp/006084969X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1323098814&sr=8-1

2. **The ability to be oriented toward the truth** (which leads to finding and operating in reality)

How well are your hopes and dreams anchored in truth/reality? The example we think of here is the television show, *American Idol*, and viewing the tryouts. While there are certainly people who have dreams of being successful singers and have the skills to support them, there are obviously many others who also have a dream but are not in touch with the truth, i.e., the reality that they have absolutely no talent at all.

Any viewer watching some of those tryouts as they screech and scream in a strange variety of costumes and outfits must ask himself or herself, "What are they thinking? How can they believe they actually have the talent to get on to a singing show?"

Are your career hopes and dreams solidly anchored in the truth (reality) or are they based on some false hopes that deny reality? Can you accept the fact that being tone deaf and unable to carry a tune will keep you from winning a singing contest?

Another risk of not living in reality is the danger that it can seriously harm you. Jim Collins, the author of "Good to Great"² interviewed retired Admiral James Stockdale, USN, who served on active duty in the regular Navy for 37 years, most of those years at sea as a fighter pilot aboard aircraft carriers.

Shot down on his third combat tour over North Vietnam, he was the senior naval service prisoner of war in Hanoi for 7-1/2 years - tortured 15 times, in solitary confinement for four years, leg irons for two.

Mr. Collins asked which prisoners did not make it through the years of prisoner-of-war confinement. His reply, "Oh, that's easy. *The optimists!*" When the author admitted he did not understand, the Admiral clarified by saying, "*The optimists were the ones who said, 'We're going to be out by Christmas.' Christmas would come and go. Then they would say, 'We'll be out by Easter.' Easter would come and go. Then it would be Thanksgiving and Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart.*"



Then he turned to the author and said, "This is an especially important lesson. ***You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end – which you can never afford to lose – with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they may be.***"

Another consideration is our self-imposed limitations. How many times have you heard someone (or you) say something like, "I'm too old to learn about or...I'm not smart enough to understand

² [http://www.amazon.com/Good-Great-Companies-Leap-
Others/dp/0066620996/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1323099101&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Good-Great-Companies-Leap-Others/dp/0066620996/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1323099101&sr=1-1)

that...or...I never finished high school and can't..." A fact of human nature is that if we argue hard enough for our own limitations, we will always have them.



Think
about

What limitations have you imposed on yourself as an excuse for why things are not working out for you? (Something like, "My schedule is so busy I do not have time for _____.")

What opportunities do you think you have missed in life because of these self-imposed barriers?

What do you plan to do about them?

Can you keep these barriers and still expect to achieve all the things about which you dream?

Do you expect to move upward in your career without formal or technical education beyond high school just by wishing for it or thinking you somehow 'deserve it'?

Do you think your propensity for unusual styles of clothing, body piercings or extensive tattoos will not slow down your advancement at work - at least working in a non "arts related" occupation?

Do you really think that arriving for work just in time, taking every minute available for lunch and breaks, while being the first out the door at the end of the day will help your career?



The truth/reality is simply fulfilling the job description is the least you can do to remain employed.

If you want to move upward, you must show your employers that you are worthy of consideration. In addition, you must extend yourself first without asking for what you will get in return if you want to be successful. While there is no guarantee that you will be successful if you do this, it is virtually guaranteed that you will not move upward if you do not.

3. **The ability to embrace, engage, and deal with the negative.** This is about your ability to deal with things that do not work out as you wish. Maybe you did not get the amount of a raise that you were expecting or some other ‘good thing’ that was supposed to happen did not.

Do you get angry about the result and start talking about how there is “no justice, the boss doesn’t like you; the boss has favorites, etc.” or do you ask yourself what led to your assumption that a good thing was supposed to happen?

There is a statement in logic theory that there are no wrong conclusions, just faulty premises.

This means that a wise person will not waste time whining about the wrong (in their mind) conclusion but will, instead, immediately begin to examine the factors (premises) that they thought would lead to the expected conclusion. This may lead to better preparation next time or clarification of assumptions that were not true to begin with.

The better you become in learning why things did not turn out as you expected will help you develop habits for success in the future. The wise person welcomes problems because they are an opportunity to learn something new! (If everything worked out just as you expected, what new things would you have learned?)



Think
about

When did something that was important to you not work out as you expected?

How did you react?

What possible errors did you make in your assumptions?

What did you learn from the situation (or what could you learn if you went back and examined the premises more carefully?)

How will you act differently in the future when a similar situation comes up? (Remember, you cannot do things the way you always have and expect different results!)

Your Impression on Others

Many people have probably not considered what it is like (in the eyes of others) to work with them. Like the famous cartoon character, Popeye, they think, “I am what I am and that’s all that I am...” and consider nothing more about it.



In reality, the experience of working with you can range from someone thinking, “What a jerk!” to “Wow! What a nice person. I’m glad I met him (her)!”

You may be asking yourself, “Why should I care what kind of an experience I create when working? I’m paid to work – not to create an experience.”

In today’s world, that may not be entirely true. In fact, the more positive of an experience that you create when interacting with others may do wonders for your career or, at least, make your existing job create less wear-and-tear in your own life and maybe expand your career opportunities, too.

Although your job may not have the words “customer service” in the title, anyone with whom you interact is a customer. Whether they pay for your services (such as in a profession) or your services are included in your salary (as part of a project team or member of the workforce), there is still the service provider (you) and the service customer (the person receiving your goods or services) relationship present.

We can explain all this much better if we take a customer service viewpoint. If you take that perspective through this section, you will understand the message we are trying to convey and maybe get people to like working with you.



Think
about

Suppose your retirement dinner from your organization were held tonight. What would you want people to say about you as an employee and co-worker?

What specific behaviors of yours can you list that would guarantee people will say that?

Let us begin.

This section is not about customer service because service is a 'given': it is the LEAST PEOPLE EXPECT when they deal with a service provider. Instead, it is about their experience during the delivery of that service.

For example, if you go into a bank to make a deposit, the least you expect is for the teller to take your check or cash, deposit it to your account, and give you a receipt. **The service that the bank is in business to provide is the least the customer expects.** If the teller just does that, it is nothing special from the customer's perspective.



However, their experience while in the bank during the transaction is what matters because they will do one of three things:

1. Forget it because everything about it was expected and mundane (ordinary, routine, or nothing special) and completely forgettable!
2. Remember it because parts of it or everything about it was unexpected and positive.
3. Remember it because parts of it or everything about it was unexpected and negative.

Do you think there is a connection between the amount of unexpected and positive (or negative) elements in an encounter and the extent to which it is considered positive or negative?

Why?

Do you think it takes an equal number of unexpected **positive or negative** elements to make an experience positive or negative?

Why?

(Just one negative aspect of an encounter can nullify all the positive aspects in the minds of some people. Why take a chance?)

Moments of Truth



In 1986 Jan Carlzon, the former president of Scandinavian Airlines, authored a book, *Moments of Truth*. In his book, he defines the moment of truth in business as this:

"Anytime a customer comes into contact with any aspect of a business, however remote, is an opportunity to form an impression."

From this simple concept, he took an airline that was failing and turned it around to be one of the most respected airlines in the industry.

Some examples of “moments of truth” in his book about the airline business are:

- when you call to make a reservation to take a flight,
- when you arrive at the airport and check your bags curbside,
- when you go inside and pick up your ticket at the ticket counter,
- when you are greeted at the gate,
- when you are taken care of by the flight attendants onboard the aircraft, and
- when you are greeted at your destination.

These moments can be taken farther into categories we will call:

- **Magic Moments** (something unexpected AND POSITIVE happens)
- **Miserable Moments** (something unexpected AND NEGATIVE happens)
- **Mundane Moments** (something expected AND ORDINARY happens)

Which ones do you think are remembered most (circle)? Magic Miserable Mundane

What will people usually do after having a Magic or Miserable experience?

The Power of Pleasing People

Consumers will spend up to 10% more for the same product with better service.

When people received good service, they will tell 9-12 other people about it.

When people received poor service, they will tell up to 20 other people about it.

There is an 82% chance customers will stay if their complaint is handled quickly and pleasantly.

What are some potential “moments of truth” in your business from an external (someone from outside your organization) customer’s perspectives and how do you think the customers would rate them? Use symbols for the reaction as: Magic = “+” Miserable = “x” Mundane = “?”

	Description of A “Moment of Truth”	Typical Rating	Reason for That Rating
1			
2			
3			

What are some potential “moments of truth” in your business from an internal (someone from inside of your organization) customer’s perspective and how do you think the customers would rate them? Use symbols for the reaction as: Magic = “+” Miserable = “x” Mundane = “?”

	Description of A “Moment of Truth”	Typical Rating	Reason for That Rating
1			
2			
3			

What are some potential “moments of truth” WHEN DEALING WITH YOU from an external customer’s perspective and how do you think the customers would rate them? Use symbols for the reaction as: Magic = “+” Miserable = “x” Mundane = “?”

	Description of A “Moment of Truth”	Typical Rating	Reason for That Rating
1			
2			
3			

Is there room for improvement?

Why do you think so?

What description would you like it to be?

What will you start doing differently (and when) to get “moments of truth” involving you closer to the level you want?

What are some potential “moments of truth” WHEN DEALING WITH YOU from an internal customer’s perspective and how do you think the customers would rate them? Use symbols for the reaction as: Magic = “+” Miserable = “x” Mundane = “?”

	Description of A “Moment of Truth”	Typical Rating	Reason for That Rating
1			
2			
3			

Is there room for improvement?

Why do you think so?

What description would you like it to be?

What will you start doing differently (and when) to get “moments of truth” involving you closer to the level you want?

Once Again... the Basics



The basic elements of getting people to like working with you include:

- Developing a “customer” friendly attitude
- Expanding your definition of service
- Reconsidering who your “customers” are

Developing a Customer Friendly Attitude

Think about one of the functions that define your job. (For example, if you do administrative work, you probably look for particular documents, interact with people, meet with your supervisor or coworkers, answer questions, etc.)

List some of the steps involved with that function. If it involves interaction with another human being (internal or external), identify that person by position or title. (For example, if meeting with someone from another department to discuss a common problem, the meeting would be scheduled and held, business conducted, action items identified, follow-up issues identified, and possibly the next meeting scheduled.)

The job function I am describing is: _____

Steps	What I Do at This Step	I Interact With... (Job Function)	How I Interact (Call, email, fax, etc.)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

II. Look at the steps above where you interacted with someone and analyze that interaction.

List the number of the step above when you interact with someone in your normal job duties.

Step	How I Interact (Call, email, fax)	What Do You Typically Say or Do During This Interaction?	How Would You Describe Your Relationship with That Person? Why?

Is there room for improvement in your relationship with those people you mentioned earlier?

What is in it for you to improve it?

What could you do to improve it?

What would you expect because of working to improve it?

When would you start doing that?



Can you “establish a relationship” with a customer when you are facing a short-staffed, over worked, underappreciated, etc.?

(You can still choose to be polite, smile, and pleasant because they DID NOT CREATE THE PRESSURE on you. Your reaction to the environment is always your choice – no one else controls it.)

Other Opportunities for Self-help or Self-hurt

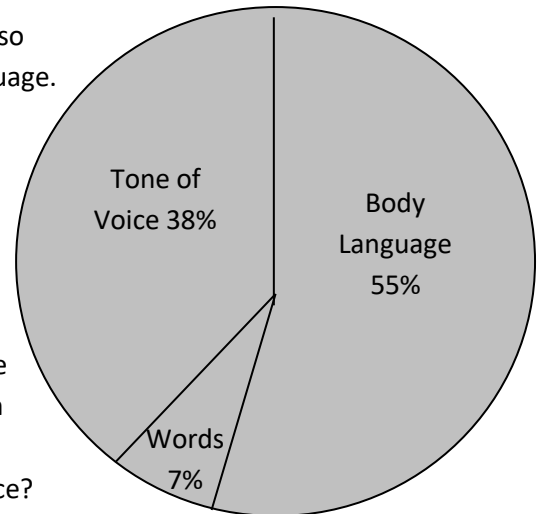
Here are other opportunities to prepare for the opportunities that may await you.

One especially important opportunity is your body language. We say so much more with our body language than we do with our spoken language.

How can you tell when someone with whom you work is not happy to see you even when they do not say anything?

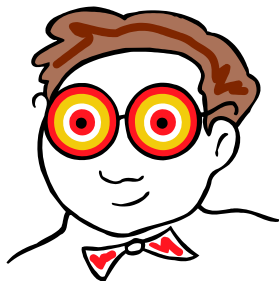
How do you act when you see someone you are not happy to see?

This graphic shows the percentage of the message we send with various parts of our behavior. How can you tell when someone on the telephone is not happy that you called even when you cannot see him or her? Which of those clues (above) do you probably display when you are not ready to deliver a “magic moment” of customer experience?



When you display them, how does that impact your value to your employer? Why should you consider your impact on the customer and your value to the company?

Visual Messages



How does “staring” differ from “looking at?” Would you rather have a coworker stare at you or look at you?

Keep that preference in mind when you deal with your customers.

When a customer is upset, what should you consider about eye contact?³

Your body posture and behavior can tell the customer so much about your interest in them. What messages do behaviors like these send to the customer?

- ✓ Leaning back or stepping away
- ✓ Turning your body away from the customer
- ✓ Looking past them at the clock or someone behind them
- ✓ Checking the vibrating cell phone to see who is calling.



³ Be careful with eye contact when a customer is upset because strong eye contact is, for many people, a challenge requiring a response. This is not the time to get them more agitated. Also, allow them to vent a little while telling them what you CAN do instead of what you cannot do which is probably what set them off to begin with.

- ✓ Looking at their watches repeatedly
- ✓ Always a big sigh before answering the question.
- ✓ Clicking a ball point pen open and closed while they talk to you.
- ✓ Virtually no body movement, no facial reaction, and staring straight ahead.

What do you do to convey you really are not interested in listening to someone?

My Space and Your Space



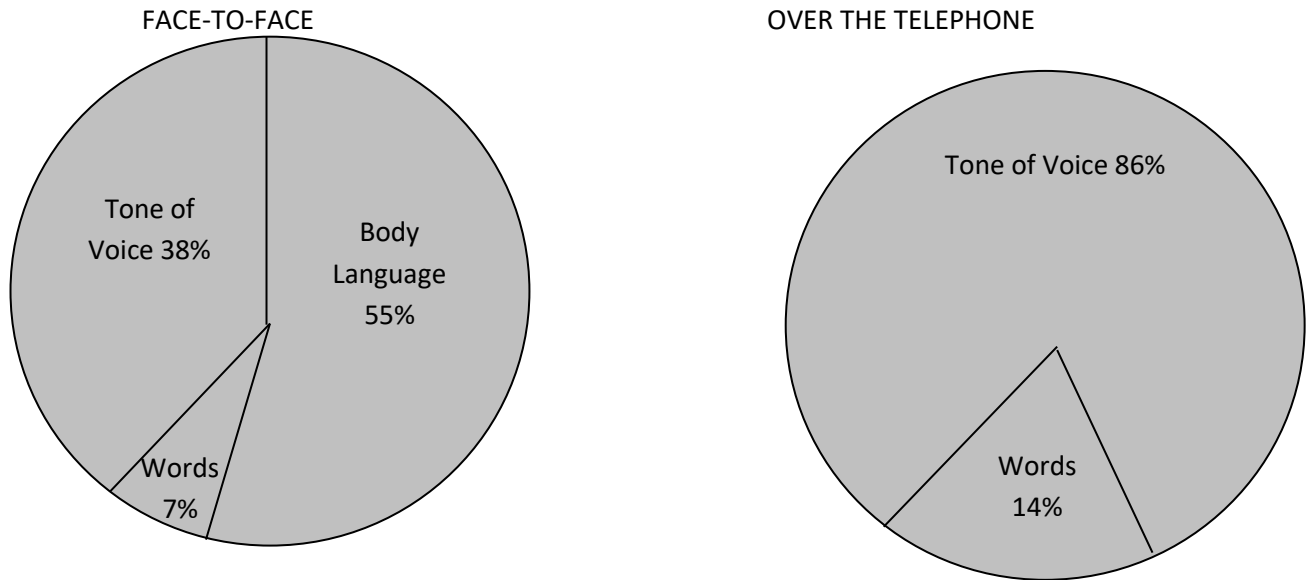
“Personal space” is the distance that feels comfortable between you and another person. If someone moves too closely into ours, we tend to back away.

How can you tell if you are invading a customer’s space? What should you do?

How can someone tell if they are invading your space? What can you do?

Phone Tone & Other Behavior

Earlier we talked about the importance of body language when we can see the customers, but how do things change when we talk to them on the telephone?



Read these statements and put emphasis on these highlighted words:

- ✓ “Thank you for calling (your company, your department, however you normally answer the telephone). This is **(your name)**. How may I help you?” (What does that sound like?)
- ✓ “Thank you for calling (your company, your department, however you normally answer the telephone). This is (your name). How may **I** help you?” (What does that sound like?)
- ✓ “Thank you for calling (your company, your department, however you normally answer the telephone). This is (your name). How may I **help you**?” (What does that sound like?)

Dealing with Angry Customers

How do you handle calls when the caller is angry, difficult, or has a complaint? Here are some things to keep in mind for now. We will get into more detail later.

Empathize (“I can see how that would be frustrating.”) You are not agreeing with them – just demonstrating you are listening.

Apologize (“I am sorry you had this problem.”) Remember agreement DOES NOT mean you admit guilt. It is just agreeing this is a frustrating situation.

Stay positive (They are angry at the problem, not you!)

Take responsibility for finding a solution and confirm your understanding (“Let me make sure I understand this correctly...”)

Then you can:

Do not overreact to “trigger words” or phrases (Such as, “Doesn’t anyone there know what they’re doing?”)

Listen completely to the complaint.

DO NOT BLAME ANYONE! (Not you, the caller, the company, or the department even if you know who did it)

Paraphrase their comments and ask questions to make sure you understand the situation (this also demonstrates to them that you were paying attention.)

Offer solutions and alternatives (if possible). An alternative gives the caller a sense of power and calms them. Why? (They feel like they have a choice.)

Confirm the solution with the caller and make sure they agree on what has been decided.



Your Working Style

You probably have many customers with whom you get along very well because they seem to be a lot like you! Maybe it is the way they present their problem or the way they respond to your answers that makes you think you have a lot in common.

Additionally, there are probably many with whom you feel absolutely no connection and it is difficult to deal with them successfully. The reason may be that your individual working style –the way you interact with the world – is like some of your customers’ working styles and quite different from some others.

Before we can help you deal effectively with the various customers you have, it is important that you know what your working style is so you can identify theirs. Once you can understand the clues and characteristics of the four major working styles, it will become easier for you to become flexible in your approach to customers who display a different style than yours.

Self-Assessment Survey

We all are combinations of the four various working styles and, depending on the situation, we may display different aspects of our individual style.

For example, at work we may allow the “take charge” aspect of our personality to lead while after work, with friends, we may pull back the take-charge element and bring out the “friendly and feelings” aspect of us. Please remember this – we are a blend of these styles and the one that we call upon most is our working style.



Circle the response in the following questions which is most likely how you would respond. The answers are neither right nor wrong. Just base your responses on how you are today, not how you think you need to be or want to be in the future.

1. When talking to a customer or co-worker....
 - a. I maintain eye contact the whole time.
 - b. I alternate between looking at the person and looking down.
 - c. I look around the room a good deal of the time.
 - d. I try to maintain eye contact but look away from time to time.

2. If I have an important decision to make....
 - a. I think it through completely before deciding.
 - b. I go with my gut instincts.
 - c. I consider the impact it will have on other people before deciding.
 - d. I run it by someone whose opinion I respect before deciding.

3. My office or work area mostly has....

- a. Family photos and sentimental items displayed.
 - b. Inspirational posters, awards, and art displayed.
 - c. Graphs and charts displayed.
 - d. Calendars and project outlines displayed.
4. If I am having a conflict with a co-worker or customer....
- a. I try to help the situation along by focusing on the positive.
 - b. I stay calm and try to understand the cause of the conflict.
 - c. I try to avoid discussing the issue causing the conflict.
 - d. I confront it right away so that it can get resolved as soon as possible.
5. When I talk on the phone at work....
- a. I keep the conversation focused on the purpose of the call.
 - b. I spend a few minutes chatting before getting down to business.
 - c. I am in no hurry to get off the phone and do not mind chatting about personal things, the weather, and so on.
 - d. I try to keep the conversation as brief as possible.
6. If a co-worker is upset....
- a. I ask if I can do anything to help.
 - b. I leave him alone because I do not want to intrude on his privacy.
 - c. I try to cheer him up and help him to see the bright side.
 - d. I feel uncomfortable and hope he gets over it soon.
7. When I attend meetings at work....
- a. I sit back and think about what is being said before offering my opinion.
 - b. I put all my cards on the table so my opinion is well known.
 - c. I express my opinion enthusiastically but listen to other's ideas as well.
 - d. I try to support the ideas of the other people in the meeting.
8. When I make a presentation in front of a group....
- a. I am entertaining and often humorous.
 - b. I am clear and concise.
 - c. I speak relatively quietly.
 - d. I am direct, specific, and sometimes loud.
9. When a customer is explaining a problem to me....
- a. I try to understand and empathize with how she is feeling.
 - b. I look for the specific facts pertaining to the situation.
 - c. I listen carefully for the main issue so that I can find a solution.
 - d. I use my body language and tone of voice to show her that I understand.

10. When I attend training programs or presentations....
 - a. I get bored if the person moves too slowly.
 - b. I try to be supportive of the speaker, knowing how hard the job is.
 - c. I want it to be entertaining and informative.
 - d. I look for the logic behind what the speaker is saying.

11. When I want to get my point across to customers or co-workers....
 - a. I listen to their point of view first and then express my ideas gently.
 - b. I strongly state my opinion so that they know where I stand.
 - c. I try to persuade them without being too forceful.
 - d. I explain the thinking and logic behind what I am saying.

12. When I am late for a meeting or appointment....
 - a. I do not panic, and I call ahead to say that I will be a few minutes late.
 - b. I feel bad about keeping the other person waiting.
 - c. I get terribly upset and rush to get there as soon as possible.
 - d. I apologize profusely after I arrive.

13. I set goals and objectives at work that....
 - a. I think I can realistically attain.
 - b. I feel are challenging and would be exciting to achieve.
 - c. I need to achieve as part of a bigger objective.
 - d. Will make me feel good when I achieve them.

14. When explaining a problem to a co-worker whom I need help from....
 - a. I explain the problem in as much detail as possible.
 - b. I sometimes exaggerate to make my point.
 - c. I try to explain how the problem makes me feel.
 - d. I explain how I would like the problem to be solved.

15. If customers or co-workers are late for a meeting with me in my office....
 - a. I keep myself busy by making phone calls or working until they arrive.
 - b. I assume they were delayed a bit and do not get upset.
 - c. I call to make sure that I have the correct information (date, time, and so on).
 - d. I get upset that the person is wasting my time.

16. When I am behind on a project and feel pressure to get it done....
 - a. I make a list of everything I need to do, in what order, by when.
 - b. I block out everything else and focus 100 percent on the work I need to do.
 - c. I become anxious and have a hard time focusing on my work.
 - d. I set a date to get the project done by and go for it.

17. When I feel verbally attacked by a customer or a co-worker....
- I tell her to stop it.
 - I feel hurt but usually do not say anything about it to her.
 - I ignore her anger and try to focus on the facts of the situation.
 - I let her know in strong terms that I do not like her behavior.
18. When I see a co-worker or customer whom I like and have not seen recently....
- I give him a friendly hug.
 - I greet him but do not shake his hand.
 - I give him a firm but quick handshake.
 - I give him an enthusiastic handshake that lasts a few moments.

1	a Driver b Amiable c Analytical d Expressive	4	a Expressive b Amiable c Analytical d Driver	7	a Analytical b Driver c Expressive d Amiable	10	a Driver b Amiable c Expressive d Analytical	13	a Analytical b Expressive c Driver d Amiable	16	a Analytical b Driver c Amiable d Expressive
2	a Analytical b Driver c Amiable d Expressive	5	a Driver b Expressive c Amiable d Analytical	8	a Expressive b Analytical c Amiable d Driver	11	a Amiable b Driver c Expressive d Analytical	14	a Analytical b Expressive c Amiable d Driver	17	A Driver b Amiable c Analytical d Expressive
3	a Amiable b Expressive c Analytical d Driver	6	a Amiable b Analytical c Expressive d Driver	9	a Amiable b Analytical c Driver d Expressive	12	a Analytical b Amiable c Driver d Expressive	15	a Expressive b Amiable c Analytical d Driver	18	a Amiable b Analytical c Driver d Expressive

Write your total score here:

Driver = _____ Amiable = _____ Analytical = _____ Expressive = _____

Working styles from Personal Styles and Effective Performance: Make Your Style Work for You by David Merrill and Roger Reid (Chilton, 1981)

Since there are four distinct Working Styles, the odds are only 1 in 4 that you will encounter someone like you. It is obviously wise to understand something about the other 75% of the world if you want them to get to like working with you.

Demonstrating Our Working Style

Our everyday behaviors can go a long way to identifying our style. If you are observant, you can pick up clues from:

- What people say - How they say it
- How they act - Their work environment

What people say: How do you express yourself? Do you use colorful phrases, “down home-isms,” or larger-than-life expressions, or do you tend to say things in a more modest, low-key manner? The types of words you use and the way you use them is a direct reflection of your working style.

How they say It: Do you speak quickly in your normal mode and speed up even more when you get angry? Or do you speak slowly and distinctly and grow quieter if you get angry? Does your voice have a lot of inflections and tonal changes or does it stay essentially the same regardless of the topic? Is there excitement in your voice or calmer and more relaxed? The way you speak tells people as much about you as how you say it.



How they act: Have people ever said to you, “If we hold your hands, you won’t be able to talk!” Do you gesture broadly when you speak or do they rest quietly in your lap or at your side while you speak? Do people have to move quickly to keep up with you or do you stroll at a leisurely pace? Your body movements are a very natural aspect of your working style.

The work environment: Do you have reports, files, and papers strewn over your desk or is it neat and tidy? Are your pictures of your family casual or formally posed? What about the wall decorations? Are they achievement oriented (#1 in the golf tournament) or (attention seeking) “here’s the governor and I at a luncheon?” The office environment can tell a lot about the inhabitant to an alert observer.

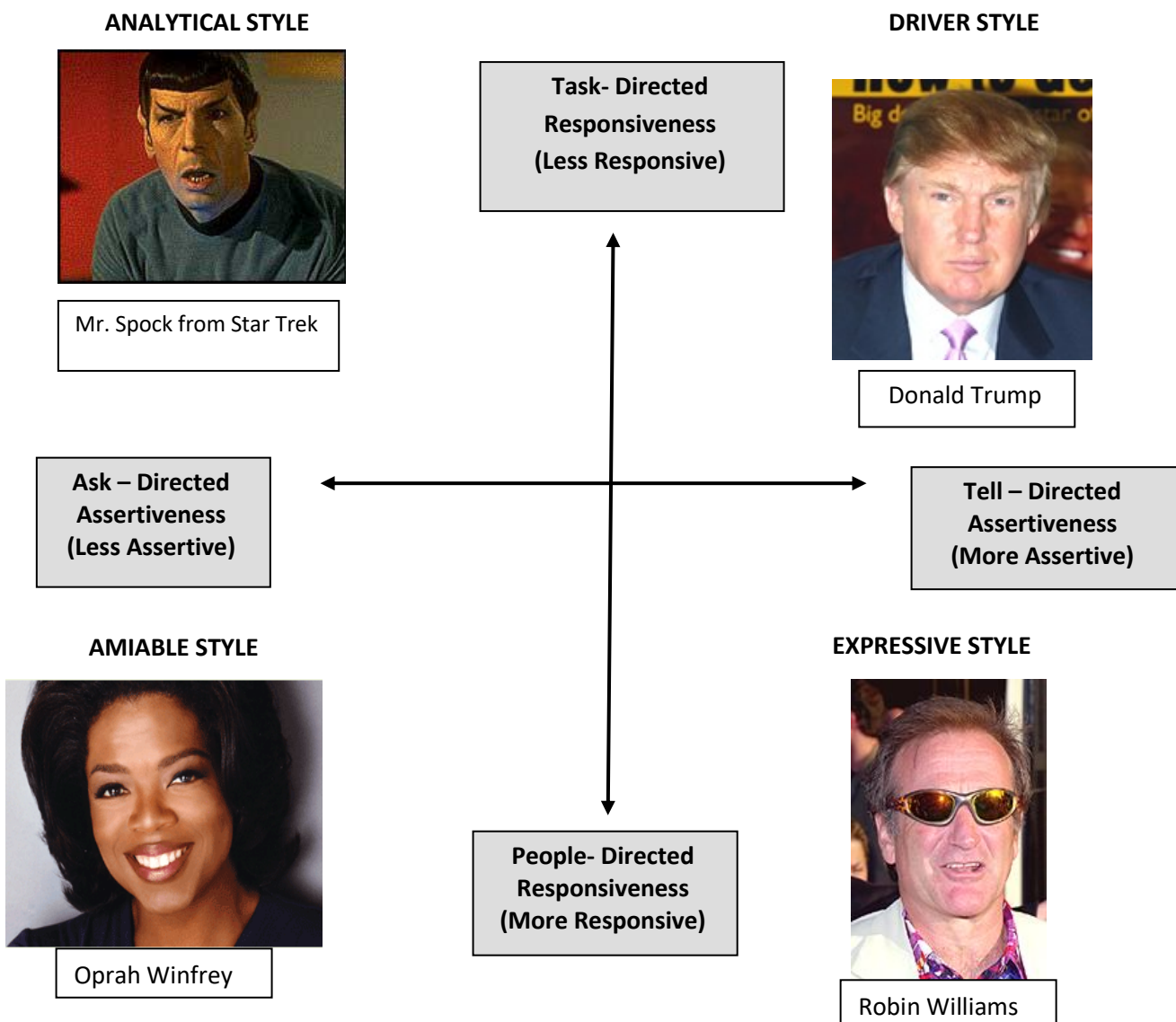
The Working Styles Grid

The concept of Working Styles is based on where people fall along two behavioral ranges. These ranges address:

1. How (or the extent to which) people **assert themselves** to others (outgoing communication meaning whether they typically “tell” or “ask”) and,
2. How (or the extent to which) they **respond to others** with focus more on people or task issues.

Here is a grid to help visualize it and these are famous people who exemplify these traits:

2021 Author’s Update: When I wrote this course originally in 2010, our culture was less politicized and sensitive. I selected these four examples because they were well-known and clear examples of the working style described. If you will focus on their business-world actions before becoming too political, they are still valid as working style examples.



The Analytical Style

Although a fictional person, Mr. Spock of Star Trek fame is the classic example of an analytical (even to an extreme).

Their working style has a low degree of assertiveness (they listen more than they speak) and a low degree of emotional expression. People with this style focus on facts more than feelings. They evaluate situations objectively and gather plenty of data before deciding. They prefer an organized work environment where they know exactly what is expected of them.



They are often perceived as deliberate, constrained, and logical. They tend to be good listeners who follow procedures, carefully weigh all alternatives, and remain steadfast in purpose. They are seen as disciplined, independent, and not aggressive, and as people who are likely to let others take the social initiative. They may be perceived as conservative, businesslike, and persistent in their relationships with others. Strongly risk-averse and pursue their goals only after they have compiled plenty of data to support a project's purpose, practicality, and policy. For them, the process is as important as the outcome.

Here are some of the phrases often used to describe Analyticals:

- ✓ Seem technically oriented, often seeking structure, certainty, and evidence before making decisions (show them the warranty!)
- ✓ Appear quiet and unassuming; may show little emotion when dealing with others (they are listening much more closely than it appears)
- ✓ Tend to take little social initiative with others; may remain guarded until a strong relationship has been developed.
- ✓ May push to extend existing ideas and procedures before going on to something new.
- ✓ Will meticulously check every word and term in a contract or agreement before signing it.

Their office environment probably includes:

- ✓ Minimal wall decorations. If there are some, they are probably off-the-shelf graphics, nothing frivolous, everything is utilitarian.
- ✓ If there are documents on their desk, they are neatly stacked, and everything looks orderly.
- ✓ Family pictures, if any, are formal portrait settings, not candid shots of vacation, the dog, etc.
- ✓ There are probably charts, graphs, or other statistical measurements in their office.

Strengths of this style include:

- ✓ Seem able to approach problems based on facts and logic and to create solid solutions.
- ✓ Tend to make the most practical decision by being thorough and open to ideas.
- ✓ Like to discover new ways of solving old problems.
- ✓ Often productively competent in working out a problem and in getting a job done right.

Professional growth opportunities for this style include:

- ✓ Realize that their need to collect data it makes it difficult to meet a deadline.
- ✓ Their need to have zero errors makes it difficult to provide an estimate or make an off-the-cuff suggestion.
- ✓ Their need for orderliness makes it uncomfortable when someone with whom they are working jumps from one topic to another randomly.

Strategies for dealing with them.

- ✓ Meet their need for data by providing charts, graphs, warranties, or statistics. Always check your data first because they will.
- ✓ Give them some room for error when asking for an estimate or opinion otherwise you will never get an answer because they are still collecting data. For example, ask for an estimate “with a 95% confidence level.” If you give them an ‘out’ (95% instead of 100%) so they do not have to be perfect, you allow them to reduce their inner drive for error avoidance.
- ✓ Set some preliminary milestones so you can check on progress instead of an all-or-nothing final date. Their drive for perfection and analysis of data may cause them to get so bogged down in the details they lose track of the overall schedule.
- ✓ Support their principles and thinking, provide evidence and service; and answers that explain HOW as often as possible.
- ✓ When explaining something, proceed in a logical sequence and do not make any leaps of logic.

The Amiable Style

Oprah Winfrey has been called, “America’s Beloved Best Friend” on the Academy of Achievement’s website. Although highly successful as a businesswoman, she has built her fortune on being perceived as a caring and friendly person.



She, as an amiable, is often seen as quiet, unassuming, and supportive. Perceived as a warm, friendly listener who seems easy to get along with, she attracts people who enjoy personal contact and shared responsibility (“teamwork” is something they enjoy.).

They tend to pursue goals by first establishing strong personal ties (first the personal relationship then the business relationship.) They may be perceived as avoiding risks and decision making unless they have strong support or data to back them up.

They like time to build relationships and to seek support and feedback from others before they make decisions (“Where do you want to go to lunch? What about you?” they will ask everyone in the group but make no decision themselves for fear of offending someone.)

They are very cooperative in their interaction with others because they want to be liked and “fit in.’

Phrases frequently used by people to describe Amiables like Oprah include:

- ✓ Seem to accept others, placing a high priority on getting along.
- ✓ Appear quiet, cooperative, and supportive as they seek approval.
- ✓ Seem easy to get to know and work with.
- ✓ Tend to minimize interpersonal conflict whenever possible.

Their office environment probably includes:

- ✓ “Happy” decorations including candid pictures of family & friends.
- ✓ “Have a Nice Day” slogan variations.
- ✓ Probably some clutter giving it a comfortable and homey feel.
- ✓ Some emphasis on teamwork in an award, a slogan, or books on the shelf dealing with relationships and or communication.

Strengths of this style include:

- ✓ May help others and provide positive strokes for other people's work and accomplishments.
- ✓ May have a deep sense of loyalty and dedication to those in their work and peer groups.
- ✓ Seem able to communicate trust and confidence in other people.
- ✓ Function very well on teams and other social settings.
- ✓ Tend to make people feel comfortable about themselves.

Professional growth opportunities for this style include:

- ✓ Amiables often have trouble asserting themselves and making decisions quickly.
- ✓ Generally, they do not like confronting disagreement with co-workers.
- ✓ Must resist the temptation to base everything on feelings and more on results.
- ✓ Their reluctance to deal with conflict means that they do not always get what they really want.
- ✓ Their frustration about not resolving such issues can turn into resentment that is directed toward the same co-worker in later interactions.

Strategies for dealing with them:

- ✓ Use a friendly tone of voice while making frequent eye contact and smiling.
- ✓ They seek approval – provide it as much as you can.
- ✓ Use no aggressive or no dramatic gestures because this may be seen as unfriendly.
- ✓ Speak slowly and in soft tones with moderate inflection (because that's how friends talk with each other).
- ✓ Use language that is supportive and encouraging with guarantees and assurances.

The Driver Style



Donald Trump is a billionaire real estate developer that has amassed a fortune through owning key New York properties (i.e., Trump Towers), and Atlantic City casinos. He has gained fame for his flamboyant deals, his run for President, and his supermodel love interests.

He is the consummate Driver because he is results-oriented, tending to initiate action and give clear direction. Drivers seek control over their environment and want to know the estimated outcome of each option when making deals.

They are willing to accept risks but want to move quickly and have the final say. They love competition – especially when they win. In relationships, they may appear uncommunicative, independent, and competitive and tend to focus on efficiency or productivity rather than devoting time and attention to casual relationships. They seldom see a need to share personal motives or feelings.

Drivers feel most comfortable pursuing their goals when they are in charge and taking the initiative. They are often seen as thriving in situations in which they can create plans and have others carry them out.

Drivers are frequently described as:

- ✓ Heartless, bottom-line oriented, will make direct eye contact to intimidate to exert influence.
- ✓ Able to move quickly and briskly with purpose while others hurry to catch up.
- ✓ Speaking forcefully and fast-paced using terms such as will (not should), can (not try), and sounding very certain of themselves.
- ✓ They seem to make things happen, take risks, and view problems as just another challenge.

Their office environment probably includes:

- ✓ Planning calendars and project outlines displayed in their offices.
- ✓ Wall decorations include achievement awards (#1 in the golf tournament).
- ✓ Furniture is “executive” style and of the best available (or best they can afford).
- ✓ Probably many communication methods available because they want to stay in touch, solve problems, and keep moving people ahead toward goals.

Strengths of this style include:

- ✓ The ability to take charge of situations and make quick decisions are what often make drivers high achievers.
- ✓ They put a single-minded focus on the goals they want and are not afraid to take risks to accomplish them.
- ✓ Often confident and strong-willed and like to initiate, control, and serve as own motivator.
- ✓ Appear efficient, hardworking, results-oriented, and direct and to the point.

Professional growth opportunities for this style include:

- ✓ When feeling stressed, drivers can be so focused on getting things done quickly that they can overlook details and make mistakes.
- ✓ They may push aside their own and other's feelings to get the job done, which can create tense situations with co-workers.
- ✓ Because of their hard-driving, competitive nature, drivers can sometimes become workaholics.
- ✓ Their failure to consider the feelings of others can drive off a lot of good employees from their organization.

Strategies for dealing with them:

- ✓ Do not waste their time – get to the point and be efficient.
- ✓ Allow them to build their own structure when possible.
- ✓ Give them choices between options and probabilities – allows them to be ‘in charge.’
- ✓ They measure value by results – show them how your product achieves results.

The Expressive Style

If the description of an Expressive is “often excitable, fun-loving, and talkative; loves an audience and applause or recognition may be a cherished reward,” then Robin Williams is the perfect example.



They are motivated by recognition, approval, and prestige. They are very communicative and approachable, while freely sharing their feelings and thoughts.

They move quickly, continually excited about the next big idea, but they often do not commit to specific plans or see things through to completion. They are better with strategy than the tactics needed for execution. Like drivers, they enjoy taking risks. When making decisions, they tend to place more stock in the opinions of prominent or successful people than in logic or research. Though they consider relationships important, the Expressive’s competitive nature leads them to seek quieter friends who are supportive of their dreams and ideas, often making relationships shallow or short-lived.

Phrases like these are often heard when describing Expressives:

- ✓ Appear to be risk-takers, competitive, and spirited.
- ✓ Often futuristic, creative, and inspirational
- ✓ They are out-going, spontaneous, persuasive, gregarious, and humorous.
- ✓ They see the “big picture” but do not care much for the details.
- ✓ Their approach toward projects may be, “Ready, FIRE, aim!”
- ✓ They think quickly and are more solution than process (like Analyticals are) focused.

If you had a large project, the styles would broadly work like this:

- ✓ The Expressive dreamer lays it all out.
- ✓ The take-charge Driver leads it and makes it happen.
- ✓ The Amiable team builder keeps the workforce together.
- ✓ The Analytical data manager maintains the records and documents.

Their office environment probably includes:

- ✓ Pictures that shout “look at me” such as with celebrities, unique locations (The Golden Gate Bridge), or exciting events such as skydiving. (The Driver’s pictures would show competition or achievement like #1 in the golf tournament. The Expressive’s would be ‘Here are the Governor and I playing golf.’)
- ✓ Bright colors
- ✓ Candid pictures of the family and their dog
- ✓ Many different projects or topics that they are working on.

Strengths of this style include:

- ✓ Their lively nature allows them to motivate and generate excitement in others.
- ✓ They work at a fast pace and are good at building alliances and relationships to accomplish their goals.
- ✓ They are well suited for high-profile positions that require them to make public presentations, such as trainers, actors, salespeople, and so on.
- ✓ Like to share dreams and may stimulate creative exchange of ideas.

Professional growth opportunities for this style include:

- ✓ When upset, they can often communicate their feelings with considerable intensity, and if criticized, they may lash out with a verbal attack.
- ✓ They may seem overwhelming to less assertive styles, because when they are enthusiastic about an idea, they press for a decision and may overlook important details.
- ✓ They may need to stay with a project longer than just the initial start-up phase to make sure everyone understands the concept.
- ✓ Rely less on intuition at times and dig for more facts.

Strategies for working with them:

- ✓ Start by focusing on generalities rather than on details.
- ✓ They usually respond well to playful people who focus on the big picture.
- ✓ It is important to make direct eye contact, having energetic and fast-paced speech.
- ✓ Be sure to allow time in the meeting for socializing, talking about experiences, people, and opinions, in addition to the facts.
- ✓ Ask about their intuitive sense of things will help.
- ✓ Support your ideas with testimonials from people whom they know and like.
- ✓ Paraphrase any agreements made and maintain a balance between fun and reaching objectives.

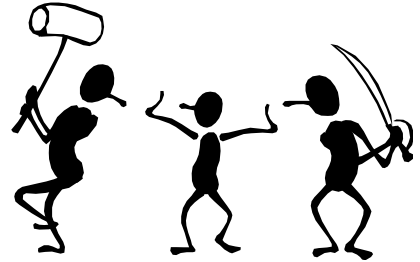
Your Emotions

There are too many self-help books about emotions on the market for us to get into another rehash of all the same topics although there is a need to consider a few specific elements from an employment perspective.

SEPARATE THE BEHAVIOR FROM THE EMOTION.

If you are ever asked to describe a behavior you have witnessed, do not use words that describe emotions or attitudes and be sure to focus on behaviors.

For example, do not say a co-worker was “rude and unprofessional” when he or she hung up on the customer because there are no universal definitions of rude or unprofessional. The chance that someone else would understand the extent of the situation exactly as you meant when you said rude and unprofessional is very slim and someone may think you are trying to paint a worse picture than it was.



However, if you said, “her voice became louder, her face got red, and then she slammed down the telephone,” you will be more accurate and credible because everything you said was an observable behavior. Anyone else witnessing the event would agree that her voice did get louder, her face became redder, and she hung up the telephone forcibly.

Whether or not they would agree it was rude is not addressed because being rude is subject to opinion. Everyone will agree to what they saw (behaviors), but may not agree to what it means (rude or well deserved?)



Think
about

Think about someone you have seen recently (in real life, television, or the movies) become very agitated and act out. Write out a description of the situation using behavioral or objective terms as much as possible.

**ALTHOUGH YOU CANNOT CONTROL THE UNEXPECTED,
YOU CAN CONTROL YOUR REACTION TO IT.**

Sometimes bad, undeserved, unwelcome, or unexpected things will happen to us without warning: that is just part of life and we cannot do much about them.

However, we can do something about the way we react to them. The wise person will remember that the reason for the reaction will soon be forgotten by coworkers and management, but they may remember your reaction to it for years to come depending on the event and how you reacted.



Think about

Think about a recent situation at work, home, or in the community where you reacted in a way that you later regretted. What do you think was the impact on others as they watched your performance? How long do you think they will remember it? If you could replay that event, what would you do differently?

If you had acted differently, what do you think the witnesses would think about you now?

**MAINTAIN A SENSE OF PROPORTION AND
DO NOT ‘GLOBALIZE’ WHEN DISAPPOINTED**

Everyone has probably had a friend who was overly dramatic over seemingly small matters or about those with which we have no control.

For example, we may have known someone who could not get her braces off before the homecoming dance as she had planned and become nearly hysterical sobbing to her friends, “it’s the worst day of my life – my life is over – I just want to die, etc.”



Obviously, it is important to that girl but is it worse than the car accident she was in when she was younger, or will her life not continue past 16 years of age? Of course, not and she probably felt all the drama was necessary to demonstrate her disappointment. But, from an observer’s perspective, what does it tell us about her ability to handle disappointment?



Think about

If a similar disappointment happened at work and she over dramatized for all to see, what lingering memory would any member of management have if they had witnessed it? What would they think of her prospects as a future leader?

Think about a recent emotional outburst that you witnessed that was overly dramatic and, in your opinion, overdone. If that person were a coworker of yours, what affect would that

performance have on your opinion of their ability to handle pressure within the department?

If you were their supervisor and they put on that show at work, what would be your reaction?

LEARN THE ABILITY TO ADAPT TO A CHANGING WORLD WITHOUT WEARING BLINDERS.

Have you ever heard the saying, “you can’t go home again?” It does not mean that you cannot physically travel back to your home, of course, but rather that home will never again be what it once was. Your childhood friends have grown up, their (and your) view of the world has broadened (we hope) and our interpersonal relationships are now diluted with the experiences we had AFTER we all went our separate ways. Obviously, we are not the same people at our high school reunion that we were when we graduated ten years ago.

Unfortunately, some people are not able to move past their ‘glory days’ whether it was in their youth or when they were an “all-star” producer in the department years ago before we introduced computers. If you are not willing to adapt and stay current with the organization’s plans for growth or its innovations in technology, policies, and procedures, you are effectively asking to be left behind when the next reorganization occurs.

If your response is, “It will not happen to me because I have been here too long,” or “My job is too important – I am the only one who knows how to do this,” then you are wearing blinders and living in the world as IT WAS.

Think about this situation. Historically, before the 1970s, the Swiss were the center of the world trade for watches. They made the finest watches with their artistry of miniature gears, balance wheels, and all the associated machinery that made a watch work. They owned hundreds of patents on the mechanisms and believed they were invincible.

Moreover, when one of their imaginative designers came up with a design that used the vibrations of a quartz crystal to move the watch hands instead of the fine springs they had always used, they laughed and never even filed the patent because, in their minds, that is not how watches are “supposed to work.”

Later that year, a representative from Texas Instruments saw that new design at a trade show and discovered that the inventor did protect it with a patent. The rest is history as more than 98% of the world’s timepieces are now “quartz” watches. (Your watch is probably quartz and is a descendent of that Texas Instruments discovery.)

The point of that story is, “Do not ever assume it cannot happen to you because it can.” Do not wear blinders to the changing world and be sure to keep asking yourself, “If I applied for my job today, would

they still hire me?” That question becomes more important as time passes between when you were in your glory days of the past and the reality of today.



Describe a time when you had to adapt to a change in your life that may not have been comfortable but was necessary for your continued growth.

What enabled your decision to adapt and not fight the change?

Think
about

Describe the situation of someone you know who did not adapt well to a change and has brought on problems for themselves ever since.

What do you think kept them from adapting gracefully?

LEARN HOW TO LOSE GRACEFULLY AND SMARTLY.

This goes back to the reality that in life we end up losing more often than we win. We do not necessarily mean BIG LOSSES all the time but smaller ones like not getting the parking space we want, having to send two dozen resumes out to get one interview, not finding the perfect outfit we wanted when we go shopping. Often, things do not always go our way.

A good guideline to remember is Kenny Rogers’ song, “The Gambler” when he told us,



“You gotta know when to hold ‘em,
Know when to fold ‘em,
Know when to walk away,
And know when to run!”

Many times, in life, things just do not work out and we must learn to accept that. We must “know when to fold ‘em” and “know when to (gracefully) walk away.” Unfortunately, many people who are not well-grounded in reality have trouble letting go of things (or situations) and keep trying to force their desired outcome - which only makes the situation worse. Losing gracefully means you have learned when to “fold ‘em” and when to “walk away” to resume making progress in your life without being anchored to an outcome that is not going to change.



Think
about

Describe a time in your life when you did not know when to fold ‘em and walk away. What problems did that cause for you?

Why do you think you did not know when to fold ‘em?

What is different about you now? Why?

Losing “smartly” requires the strength to do some introspection and remembering what we said earlier about there are no false conclusions, only faulty premises. If you understand and believe that, then you can become “smarter” by asking yourself what mistakes you made with one of the premises that led to your faulty conclusion (the undesirable outcome).

Perhaps you did not get the promotion or choice assignment that you wanted. Instead of whining and complaining that, you were cheated, or that “office politics” had a hand in the decision, ask yourself, “were you REALLY as deserving of the desired outcome as you thought you were?” Maybe you need to ask an objective (and honest) friend who is familiar with the situation if they can help you see something you may have overlooked.



Perhaps the other person was more skillful in doing the job or had a greater knowledge of the work. In addition, even if you were cheated or office politics had a hand in the decision (but you cannot prove it), the outcome will not change regardless of how much you whine, complain, or threaten. SO WHY WASTE THE ENERGY DOING SO?

Now your choice of response may also include asking yourself, “Do I really want to work in a place where things like this can happen?”



Think
about

Describe a situation in your life when you did not get the result you expected.

What possible flaws were there in your assumptions that led to the faulty result?

Describe a time in your life when you went back, examined your original assumptions (the premises), and discovered a flaw in them before the faulty result occurred.

Your Activity: Busy or Productive



Just as there are three critical elements necessary for fire (fuel, heat, and air), there are three critical elements necessary for productivity (which is much different from just “being busy”): quality, quantity, and time. Occasionally we will abbreviate them into QQT as we discussed back on page 11.

Productivity means people clearly understand how error-free the work must be (quality), how many products you require, and by when (time.) People whose activities are not defined by those three critical elements risk having their supervisor question their productivity, which is never good for high career aspirations.

If you cannot define those three elements in your work, be sure to ask your supervisor to clarify them for you. It will assure that you are being productive (not busy!) and give your supervisor an unexpected treat when you take the initiative to ask (which ALWAYS looks good for a career plan!)



Write a description of one part of your job that uses the elements of quality, quantity, and time to define the requirements. (If you have trouble defining each element, ask your supervisor for some ideas.)

Think
about

Write a job description using quality, quantity, and time that would be useful in providing expectations to teenagers about cleaning up their room.

PLEASE NOTE THIS: If you do not know if your activities are “busy” or “productive,” there is a strong possibility that your career may not grow as quickly as you would like. Make sure you always know the difference, are always being productive, and can prove it to anyone by describing the quality, quantity, and time elements of your task.

Your Development Plan

There are three distinct references we must make to lay the foundation for this next section on self-development.

One is, "Be all that you can be!" This is what we base this course upon.

The second comes from physics. It is the Second Law of Thermodynamics which states (paraphrased) that a "closed system winds down over time if there is no outside energy coming into it."

Finally, the third is from a children's story that goes, "One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. "Which road do I take?" she asked. "Where do you want to go?" was his response.



"I do not know," Alice answered.

"Then," said the cat, "it doesn't matter. When you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there." (Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass or the Adventures of Alice in Wonderland)



What do you want to be doing in your career in five years? What field of knowledge would you want to know a lot about? What kind of accomplishments would you like to have accomplished?

Think
about

What do you want people to say about what it is like to work for you?

What do you want people to say it is like working with you?

Be All That You Can Be

Before you can think about moving ahead, it is essential that you look back over all the topics we mentioned earlier to eliminate (or reduce as much as possible) the negative impact of any habits, beliefs, or idiosyncrasies you have identified within yourself, so you are not doing anything to restrict your development.

Next, consider a statement that we introduced back on page 14: “Argue for your limitations and they are yours.”



Think
about

Write here what you think that statement means.

List here any self-imposed limitations that you can remember you had since childhood. (If you are having trouble thinking of any, complete this sentence for as many different situations as you can think of “If only this were different about me (or my situation) _____, I could do (or have) this _____.”)

Learn to keep asking, “What else?” A caution here is that we are not focusing on material or selfish things such as “what else have you gotten me for my birthday” or “what else are you going to do for me?”

We mean, instead, think of it in terms of expanding yourself by asking, “What else can I learn now that I know this?” or “What other uses can I find for this skill or knowledge that I have?”

Grow your potential like a garden by keep asking yourself, “What else?” As soon as you stop looking to expand your horizons, you become frozen in time and the world will pass you by.



Think
about

What skills or special knowledge do you have that you have not used for a while?

Where could you apply some of your existing skills or knowledge (perhaps in a non-conventional manner) that would benefit your employer?

What skills or special knowledge have you always wanted to have but, for some reason, have never gotten around to pursuing them?

The Second Law of Thermodynamics

This law states (paraphrased) “a closed system winds down over time if there is no outside energy coming into it.”



Think of a lighthouse keeper as a “closed system” back before the days of radio, television, and the Internet. His job required him to live on an island offshore and keep the light bright and shining at night. There was virtually no contact with other humans and, even if he had an extensive library, there were still limitations to his potential for emotional, intellectual, and sociological growth. In short, over time, he would “wind down” without some external input of energy from other people to keep his (internal) system developing.

A modern-day example of this is people who become so self-absorbed in their world that they almost become a closed system. All they can talk about is sports, the talk shows, fashions, etc. to the same people over and over, or spend most of their time on the internet’s MySpace (Its webpage describes it as “A Place for Friends”) or Facebook (“A social utility that connects you with the people around you”). They keep checking their friends’ entries or uploading pictures and stories from their lives to share with everyone else while precious, irreplaceable minutes of their lives keep ticking away.

While it is certainly important to have friends and interact socially with them, an obsession with being so focused on these non-developmental interests will stunt your potential for career growth. Spending hours surfing the net checking to see who said what, what they look like, or the latest gossip reinforces the closed system that prevents personal growth. Without taking frequent and consistent steps to expand their knowledge of the world around them and develop new skills and interests with others that we do not know, these individuals run the risk of limiting their personal development.

A student of this course should ask themselves (if he or she, too, is a frequent visitor to these ego sites or spends most of their free time talking about the same things with the same people), “When considering all of the time I spend focused on these social topics, reading about others and uploading material about me that others may or may not care about, how much more employable am I now than I was before I spent so much time talking about my team, gossip, or visiting those sites?” If the honest answer is ‘none,’ you have an opportunity for improvement.



If there are a finite number of hours allotted to your life, which would serve your desires better to move ahead in your career?

Think about

Continue spending most of my non-sleeping time interacting socially with my peers who are pretty much just like me as we spend more time doing the same things over and over. Break out of that non-developmental cycle and take your future in your hands by some honest introspection of your talents (and weaknesses) and developing your strengths as much as possible while minimizing the potential impact of your weaknesses on your career.

Your “developmental muscles” are just like your physical muscles: the more you use them, the more they will grow! You must take the initiative TO CREATE YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITIES!

The Lesson of the Cheshire Cat



Think
about

How does the conversation between Alice and the Cheshire cat (page 48) relate to your personal development?

(All this talk about developing yourself will be just busywork instead of productivity unless you have an idea of where you want to go.)

We suggest that you not focus on a particular position (department supervisor or making a specific salary) in the future as a target but rather on a specific preparation that would make you the best candidate for that position if the door of opportunity opened.

This is because you cannot control when that opportunity will come. Typically, we become frustrated when we think we can control things when we cannot. (Our eagerly awaited golf outing is finally here, and the biggest thunderstorm of the season arrives at the same time. While we are certainly disappointed, there is no reason to become agitated because we cannot control the weather. We can only control our reaction to it. Look back at the topic on page 42 as a review.)



You can control, however, the extent of your preparation for that moment when the door suddenly opens. When that happens, will you be invited in or will you hear, “Thanks but we are not interested” as the door closes in your face?

So, you can identify your destination by asking yourself, “What skills and knowledge should a person in that position have” and then set out your personal quest to acquire them.

Finding a Mentor

www.dictionary.com defines 'mentor' as

1. a wise and trusted counselor or teacher.

2. an influential senior sponsor or supporter.
 –verb (used without object)

3. to act as a mentor: She spent years mentoring to junior employees.
 –verb (used with object)

4. to act as a mentor to: The brash young executive did not wish to be mentored by anyone.

Many organizations realize the value of having a mentoring program as an excellent way to preserve their “human capital” (collective corporate knowledge), retain talented younger employees, attract new employees, and develop their future leaders internally with little expense. This is a great idea if an individual is (a.) fortunate enough to be in an organization where a program like this exists and, (b.) fortunate enough to be invited to participate in it.

However, the reality is (a.) most organizations do not have these programs and (b.) a motivated individual does not have to be at the mercy of the employer to determine whether he or she has a mentor even if the organization has such a program.

If your organization does not, why not select one (or more) for yourself? It is easier to do than you think.



What traits do most people have in common regardless of age, sex, race, national origin, etc.?

(They love to show how much they know, they love to get attention, and they want to be valued are three common traits.)

Think
about

Now we will look at you:

What are the skills or knowledge from the previous section (page 51) that you identified as important to your professional growth and development?

Who are the people within your organization that you think possess these now?

How can you get them to share these with you?

One way would be to look at the situation from their perspective and ask yourself, “Why would they want to share their skills and knowledge with me?”

If you do not come up with any answers, ask yourself, “Why would I want to share any special skills or knowledge I have with someone else?”

(Possible reasons may include:

- ✓ Ego – it is nice to be considered as an ‘expert’ in something.
- ✓ Self-esteem – it makes you feel good to help others.
- ✓ The concept of legacy – it is nice to think that you can leave something behind.
- ✓ Helping others – watching them become something new and better because of your gifts.

Our point here is this: the same reasons that would motivate you to help someone else will probably motivate them to do the same thing for you. All you have to do is give them the chance to experience the gratification they seek (ego, self-esteem, etc.) by working with you. When you think about it, **YOU ARE DOING THEM A FAVOR, AREN'T YOU?**