

EXECUTIVE PRESENCE



Practical Strategies to
Stand Out, Be Noticed
and Get Ahead



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WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

INTRODUCTION

It's a story common to companies large and small, private and public: the firm employs two individuals who are equally talented. However, over time, one person prospers while the other stagnates. The former becomes integral to the organization's future, while the latter never becomes a company leader.

Why does this happen? Because the successful employee (the one who prospers in their job) is not only talented – he or she is also highly skilled at creating impact, exercising influence and consistently providing value. All organizations draw their future executives from these kind of individuals.

How does an employee become part of this desirable talent pool? By identifying and increasing their executive presence to ensure advancement and ultimate success.

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

Self-confidence is the first requisite to great undertakings.

~ SAMUEL JOHNSON ~

Executive presence is the ability to win the confidence of those around you. You possess a professional magnetism that influences others; you're admired for exemplary leadership and respected as an authority. When you have executive presence your colleagues, subordinates and superiors rely on your strength and wisdom. In the article "She's Gotta Have 'It'", Michelle Conlin says, "When leaders with executive presence speak, people listen--because the talk is filled with conviction instead of equivocation. They inspire that I'll-follow-you-anywhere loyalty, conveying an aura of warmth and authenticity to everybody from the receptionist to the CEO." (*BusinessWeek* July 2002)

With executive presence, you transform self-doubt and uncertainty into self-assurance, energy and the conviction to successfully navigate the corporate landscape and advance up the corporate ladder.

Having executive presence infuses you with confidence about yourself and your abilities. You're able to evaluate and ultimately eliminate the roadblocks that have kept you from rising to the top of an organization and contributing to its success.

When you have executive presence you think in new ways that help you reframe your relationship to work. You redefine your goals for yourself and your place in your company. You alter your perspective so that a different, more productive and positive attitude and belief system can be created.

Executive presence is about creating a consistent view of yourself as a compelling force inside an organization. You are known as someone who doesn't just rely on your authority or title, but your influence to shape and positively affect the outcome of situations. In the book, *The Leader of the Future*, Charles Handy says, "A career is now not so much a ladder of roles, but a growing reputation for making things happen. Influence, not authority, is what drives the political organization today in all organizations" (Jossey-Bass, 1996)

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

As you learn to identify and increase your executive presence, you:

- Convey confidence as a business leader.
- Increase your responsibility and value to the company.
- Master the art of visibility and self-promotion.
- Gain the confidence and respect of your co-workers and supervisors.
- Dispel any doubts regarding your abilities, influence and advancement.
- Navigate company politics and use them to your benefit.
- Eliminate the roadblocks that keep you from rising to the top of an organization.
- Boost visibility for your contributions to your company's success.
- Be recognized as capable and competent by upper-management.
- Identify advocates who will endorse your advancement.
- Advance confidently up the corporate ladder.
- Chart a decisive career path to maximize your potential.
- "Downsize-proof" your career.
- Recognize opportunities for positive exposure.
- Be assigned meaningful, high-profile projects.
- Broaden your sphere of influence.
- Accomplish and surpass your professional, personal and financial goals.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

This book is for anyone wanting to become a leader or to move to higher levels of leadership in the organization. To increase your current status, you need to know how to advance, what is needed at that next level and how to act that part. The higher you go, the more executive presence is required for success.

Executive presence can also help you succeed on a new job. The first 18 months are critical and it's not unusual to stumble. In fact, statistics reveal about 35% to 45% of leaders fail during this time frame. Most supervisors want immediate results and don't have the patience to see people grow and mature in their new roles. Having a strong executive presence before starting a new position will help you create immediate impact, a positive perception and lasting success.

This book is also for anyone who aspires to become an executive – whether a young professional just beginning a career - or a more experienced worker who wishes to make a stronger contribution to his or her organization (which may or may not entail rising in the ranks). The "pre-executives" represent some of the most promising and talented in the company. They are the future of the organization. Most senior leaders are drawn from the talent pools outlined in these three pre-executive career phases. All three phases are described below – which phase are you in?

PHASE 1: YOUNG PROFESSIONAL – LOWER LEVEL LEADERSHIP (AGE 25-30)

- You are beginning your career, an explorative time in which many jobs are interesting to you. You are not yet established in your career direction, employer and industry. You're open to job-hopping among companies and exploring various career possibilities.

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

- Some young professionals get MBAs and other advanced degrees during this time because they are not sure of their focus and hope the advanced degree will provide additional career opportunities.
- During most of this phase you are an “individual contributor.” You don’t have employees reporting to you and you have limited influence in the organization. You accomplish your assignments and meet your level of responsibility without much recognition.
- Toward the end of this phase, you adapt yourself to a career direction and begin feeling more grounded and sure of your choices. You have increased your professional skill sets and gained more confidence in your capabilities. You might even become clear on your career identity, which comes from expertise gained over a period of time.

PHASE 2: MIDDLE MANAGER – MIDDLE-LEVEL LEADERSHIP (AGE 30-40)

- As an individual contributor, you have seen the fruits of your labor. You have become a proven commodity and people are impressed with your work. You are realizing the importance of establishing yourself within the organization. You are now ready to begin managing projects and people. Your level of responsibility is increasing. You will be moving from a tactical, day-to-day focus to a more strategic and big-picture perspective.
- Your experience and expertise are becoming more defined and your confidence is growing. As your skills are recognized and valued by others, you have begun to establish yourself in your industry and company.
- You begin to see the importance of building relationships, creating influence, gaining positive perception from others and being recognized for your work. Your visibility to higher management is increasing.
- You are now ready to enter the next phase: proving yourself as a manager. You have supervised people as a mid-level manager or team leader. You’ve had bottom-line responsibility and been in charge of important projects. You are on the verge of stepping into a higher leadership position that involves more executive responsibility.

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

PHASE 3: EXECUTIVE – SENIOR-LEVEL LEADERSHIP (AGE 40-55)

- This phase involves taking an active leadership role in the organization. You interact with top management and impact the direction of the firm. You are focused on the more strategic and value-oriented components that are directly related to the bottom-line success of the organization. You are making a major contribution through the high degree of value you provide.
- You have a clearly defined expertise that is leveraged and needed in the organization. Your skill sets are seen as valuable to the success of your group.
- You have employees reporting to you. These people manage individual contributors.

This book isn't for senior executives because they should already have a high dose of executive presence. If they don't, they will most likely not last very long in their positions. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Some companies have leaders who have almost no executive presence and still keep their job due to longevity in the company, political savvy and connections to the owner/founder.

Executive Presence Is Possible For You?

You can cultivate executive presence through training and practice. This involves drawing upon your (1) business intelligence, (2) risk-taking ability, (3) interpersonal relationships, (4) performance improvement and (5) self-development skills. These five business characteristics are the focus of the first half of this book.

You may have natural talents that have already established for you a certain level of executive presence within your organization. However, most people with innate executive presence don't leverage it to its full capability. Without consistent training, increased knowledge, and direct guidance, your natural talents may limit you—or disappear altogether—as you are promoted into higher management positions.

Many professionals I have coached created an executive presence that dramatically enhanced their careers and had a positive impact on their colleagues and companies. Clients have approached me with the following challenges:

- “I’ve been at the same level of responsibility and pay for many years. I want to advance, but am unsure how to move forward and command the level of respect I deserve.”
- “I feel I can do much more for my company and career, but I don’t know how to deal with the politics. I wish someone would teach me the rules.”
- “When opportunities for advancement come up, I’m competing with dozens of others. I know I need to increase my visibility... but how?”
- “I get excellent performance reviews, but I haven’t been promoted in four years. I need someone in upper management to champion me and my capabilities.”

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

If you identify with one or more of the above scenarios, you're in luck. Boosting your executive presence will help overcome those challenges and give you the tools to create a successful career strategy tailored to your skills, interests and aspirations.

When you have finished this book, you will manifest the 16 traits common to those with executive presence. You will gain a clear sense of self-worth and have the ability to communicate that worth to others. Thought-provoking questions, anecdotes and worksheets will help you build the foundation for your Career Plan, which will map out your journey to stellar executive presence.

Let's get started!

Current Work Evaluation

Look at the list below, which describes 20 common corporate scenarios. Place a checkmark next to the ones that accurately describe your situation at work.

- ☐ I want my salary to quickly rise, but that doesn't seem possible in my current position.
- ☐ I know there's a political game to be played, but I don't understand its rules.
- ☐ I believe my work speaks for itself and I cringe when others shamelessly promote themselves. Yet they seem to be getting the promotions and I'm not.
- ☐ Although my performance reviews consistently are positive, my colleagues have been promoted right past me.
- ☐ I used to work on highly visible projects and received positive feedback. But now I am assigned less meaningful work and get little recognition.
- ☐ I like what I am doing, but my work doesn't play to my strengths. I feel underutilized.
- ☐ My organization always seems to be restructuring and cutting costs. I don't want to be the next victim.
- ☐ I'd like to focus on ways to increase my responsibility and get promoted, but my current tasks require all of my time and attention.
- ☐ My self-confidence sometimes exceeds my supervisor's confidence in me.
- ☐ There are times I second-guess my ideas, my convictions and myself.
- ☐ I realize I need more skills before I can advance in my company. But I don't know what those skills are or how to acquire them.

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- ☐ I've been involved in a lot of key projects, but my visibility in the organization is not high enough to receive major recognition.
- ☐ My supervisor is a control freak. He won't give me more responsibility or talk me up.
- ☐ I've always been one of those people whose abilities exceed their confidence.
- ☐ I am not recognized as capable and competent by upper-management.
- ☐ There are many roadblocks that keep me from rising to higher levels in the organization
- ☐ I lack opportunities for positive exposure and visibility.
- ☐ When I try to assert myself, people often push back hard and tend to take advantage of me even in situations where I should have authority.
- ☐ The company says they are committed to growing people, but there are no defined processes or roadmaps to help me advance.
- ☐ I am too young, too old or have the wrong ethnic background to allow me to advance in the organization.

These scenarios are common to middle- and upper-management and can be mitigated by increased executive presence. If you made a lot of checkmarks, don't be distressed!

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

How many items did you check? _____

- 1–6 *You already have a significant degree of executive presence. With it comes the responsibilities, visibility, respect and income you desire. You have surpassed your professional goals, but you are ready for new challenges and you want to broaden your professional network – not to mention ensure you continue to have a successful career.*

Reading this book will help you strengthen your leadership abilities and boost your confidence. It will help you gain increased trust and respect from top executives, increase your authority and the likelihood of receiving high-profile projects. You'll continue to master the five key business characteristics: business intelligence, interpersonal relationships, performance improvement, self-development and risk-taking – the keys to sustaining your executive presence.

- 7–13 *You have successfully begun to cultivate and use your executive presence. However, you haven't leveraged its full capacity. You have done just enough to maintain the status quo and haven't been able to reach your full potential.*

Reading this book will help you learn how to engage upper-management advocates to help with projects, resources and advancement. You will be recognized for high-profile projects and use company politics to your advantage. You'll learn to apply the five key business characteristics (business intelligence, interpersonal relationships, performance improvement, self-development and risk-taking) so you benefit from a high-level executive presence.

- 14–20 *Your low degree of executive presence undermines your confidence and causes you to second-guess yourself and your abilities. This results in limited recognition and visibility, with little chance for advancement.*

Reading this book will teach you the secrets of standing out, campaigning, visibility, promotion and advocacy. You will learn to dispel doubts regarding your abilities, influence and advancement and to implement the five key business characteristics (business intelligence, interpersonal relationships, performance improvement, self-development and risk-taking) to advance your career and long-term success.

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Executive presence is imperative for professional success. No matter what your position, the more of this valuable asset you have, the more others will seek your support and leadership. The higher you are in an organization, the higher your executive presence must be. Without executive presence, you'll find yourself hitting an impenetrable ceiling. You'll become frustrated and fail to achieve your full potential.

People who have responsibility, work on high-profile projects, impact the bottom line and are trusted with confidential and important information have significant executive presence. It is often the key consideration in determining promotions and responsibility.

A survey commissioned by Robert Half International Inc. asked top-level executives what is most likely to cause valuable employees to quit their jobs. The primary reason cited was lack of advancement opportunities.

If you focus exclusively on merit and hard work as foundations to advancement, you'll never achieve your full potential. The unfortunate truth is that career advancement is determined by the perception you create, not just skill and merit. Working on executive presence creates the right perception so valuable employees stay in their jobs and receive the promotions they deserve.

Having an executive presence helps you create a successful career, move upward and reach your full leadership potential. You won't become sidetracked by these common distractions:

- Fear of the possibility of a merger or downsizing
- Limited advancement opportunities
- Company's prospects look bleak
- Company's culture isn't inspiring and brings you down
- Industry's prospects aren't positive
- Boss is not supportive

A study by Towers Perrin of more than 86,000 employees found that only 14% were fully engaged in their jobs. When you build and focus on your executive presence you will be more engaged in your work. You will feel like you are making an impact in the company and that you are working on value-oriented projects. Engaged employees also results in lower turnover.

Executive Presence – Helps You Effectively Handle A Promotion

A study conducted by Development Dimensions International, a consulting firm, found that one in five managers said getting a promotion is life's most challenging and stressful event. It ranked higher than divorce, death of a loved one and raising a teenager.

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

A promotion can cause a tremendous amount of stress and pressure. These include:

- possibility of failure
- exposure and visibility to higher levels of management
- demanding work load
- increased job complexity
- navigating the office politics

By developing your executive presence, you'll learn how to be more effective in your new position and better equipped to handle your promotion. Matt Pease, a DDI vice president, advises, "Promotion means finding new ways of being successful - and walking away from the old ways that defined success...A leader who tries to be the same leader across all levels is not going to be successful at all." (California Job Journal, July 29th, 2007)

Executive Presence – As Important As Your Current Job

Look at the training programs offered by your company. Is developing executive presence on the list? Probably not. Very few companies educate employees to develop executive presence. They fail to recognize its vital importance. So it is up to you. Creating an executive presence doesn't happen by accident. You need to mentally, emotionally and spiritually frame and contort yourself for what you will become. Executive presence sometimes doesn't feel natural and easy. It is something that is practiced and learned over time. What is it going to take for you to commit to making the necessary changes so that executive presence is a vital part of your work life?

Creating an executive presence and focusing on career advancement is a separate, part-time job that deserves almost as much attention as your current assignment. Phylis Esposito, the executive vice president and chief strategy officer at Omaha-based TD Ameritrade, emphasizes the need for a proactive approach. She advises, "Doing nothing and just hoping your next promotion will somehow take care of itself is really the biggest risk," says Esposito. "Don't forget that there are people coming up behind you who want your job." (Fortune Magazine, August, 2006)

Although executive presence requires a tremendous amount of effort, time and energy, the end result will be an extraordinary career. You will fully realize your professional, personal and financial goals and improve the quality and quantity of your contributions to your company.

As Roger Enrico, PepsiCo's former CEO, noted in *BusinessWeek*: "The way I look upon it is that leadership is a skill like many others. Whatever leadership ability an individual has can be made better through practice and honing." (October, 2003)

Practicing your leadership skills is vital to boosting your executive presence. You will increase your competence and confidence, as well as the level of contribution to your organization. Like an athlete who runs several additional miles a week, strengthening your executive presence is an undertaking that requires dedication, repetition of key elements and time spent beyond the typical workweek.

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

For example, in Harvard Business School's newsletter, *HBS Working Knowledge*, associate professor Scott Snook described an interaction with Bobby Knight, the winningest coach in men's college basketball:

"I was in high school and what I remember was he'd throw all the balls out [of the gym] and lock the doors. He'd only do defensive positioning drills. As a young kid all you want to do is shoot the ball and play games. But for a half day, he would just have us doing defensive positioning drills, never touching a basketball, and he'd run around and cuss us out and keep us in the right defensive position. It was all about drills, it was all about discipline. In retrospect, he got us to work on the fundamentals of basketball, the things we didn't want to do. We dreaded the day that he would come to camp. In the end he made us all better defensive players because of it."

Snook continued, "There are skills in the workplace that you only get through repetition, drill, habit and discipline. A lot of times we're not real good at those, so having an external force, whether it's a leader or a compensation system, forces you to do something you wouldn't ordinarily do, the mundane things that make you a better person, a better leader or a better basketball player. Coach Knight was good at it..." (August 14, 2006)

Just as Knight's insistence on practicing fundamentals gave his team a strong foundation upon which to build their basketball skills, your own efforts to practice the skills and habits that support a strong executive presence will lay the groundwork for your becoming the best leader possible.

Developing your executive presence may seem like a daunting task. There is a lot of work involved, but it's the kind of work that will have far-reaching, long-lasting benefits. You will become more motivated, you'll learn how to recognize and promote your own value and you'll develop a meaningful and effective career plan. These are all things you can accomplish on your way to becoming a better leader.

Leadership is something that can – and must – be learned. As Michael Useem, director of the Center for Leadership and Change Management at Wharton, says, "Leadership at the front, mid and top lines alike is not innate. It is true some people have a huge head start. They're exceptionally clear minded. They communicate well. They're exceptionally persuasive. They look physically like a leader should, at least in the idealized Hollywood version. But the real skills of leadership at every level must be acquired in our lifetimes. There are no biological advantages. You have to learn those skills. And any organization, by implication, has to provide a chance for everybody to be a leader." (*Knowledge@Wharton*, December, 2003)

Someone Is Always Watching You

As a working professional, you always are being observed, judged and evaluated. With every interaction, your peers, bosses, vendors, clients and others are consciously and unconsciously forming opinions of you. All of these interactions create positive or negative images and everyone knows that it takes just one negative opinion to destroy whatever positives you have built. So you must represent yourself well. Other people's perceptions can support or limit your advancement and success within a company.

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

Executive presence means creating a solid reputation and public image. You must know that what you wear, what you say, how you interact, your work space, how motivated you are, and how much you care about your job and the company. Your attitude, as well as your behavior, are always under scrutiny.

To be productive and efficient, you must know how to prioritize what is most important. Pay attention to your communication and interactions, including both verbal and non verbal.

Laura Morgan Robert, an assistant professor in the Organizational Behavior unit at Harvard Business School, says, “People are constantly observing your behavior and forming theories about your competence, character and commitment, which are rapidly disseminated throughout your workplace. It is only wise to add your voice in framing others’ theories about who you are and what you can accomplish.” (*HBS Working Knowledge*, June 20, 2005)

When Promotions Are Out Of Your Control

Promotions often can be out of your personal influence. Regardless of how deserving you are, many circumstances beyond your control can derail your progress and affect your chances of advancement.

These circumstances might include: a job opening or future opportunity is cancelled; a re-organization occurs within the company which directly or indirectly affects you; last-minute departmental recommendations receive precedent above your situation; office politics or personality conflicts sway the decision; the position isn’t a good fit for you; or you have been on the verge of promotion, but had your “clock reset” when a new manager took over the department.

Along with these internal, company-specific situations, there are circumstances outside the company that can limit your advancement opportunities: new opportunities at other companies are equally scarce; feeling trapped in the same job; few companies are hiring; workers are staying put; or streamlined management and obsessive cost-cutting.

Despite these situations, all of which you cannot personally control, executive presence will help you view them in the context of the bigger picture. You will need to build upon this viewpoint by working to increase your visibility by campaigning and promoting yourself. Executive presence, over time, will directly impact the advancement and success of your career. It will help you remain steadfast in your commitment to an impending promotion and in your determination to more fully contribute to your organization.

Although you cannot control whether or not you are promoted, making your utmost effort to build executive presence will pay off in increased respect, responsibility and relationships with colleagues in your organization and industry. Working to create your own destiny will strengthen your career even as it enhances your current situation – and your future.

Performance Appraisals: What are Their Limitations?

Most people rely on loyalty, merit or a company appraisal system to advance in their organization. Unfortunately, managers often give short shrift to annual performance because they are too busy and don’t devote time to the reviews. They often don’t know how to effectively conduct reviews and don’t

like the confrontation involved in them. Also, company appraisals are considered less important in evaluating whether someone deserves a promotion or not. It’s nearly impossible to rely on an established

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

company system to identify improved performance and give appropriate monetary rewards and promotions.

You'll enjoy the most career success and contribute more to your company when you rely on developing your executive presence, instead of performance appraisal systems. Take charge of your career and act as if you will never get reviewed. Focus on informing others of your outstanding achievements, impact on the organization and desire for advancement. By developing the executive characteristics discussed in the next section, you won't have to rely on loyalty or merit to advance. You'll perform at the highest level possible for your personal and your company's success.

INTRODUCTION – REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

- ☐ Review the material in this chapter.
- ☐ Understand how to identify and increase your executive presence.
- ☐ Complete the current work evaluation.
- ☐ Change your current work situation so that executive presence and career advancement are receiving almost as much attention as your current job responsibilities.
- ☐ Identify the various company-specific situations that have hindered your progress and affected your chance of a promotion.
- ☐ Understand why company appraisal systems are limiting in helping to advance in an organization.

SUMMARIZE KEY POINTS

Summarize the key points you learned in this chapter and jot them down below.

SECTION I:

SIXTEEN CHARACTERISTICS OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

*“EXECUTIVE TRAITS ARE THE
CHARACTERISTICS NEEDED TO GET
NOTICED, BE PROMOTED AND TO STAND
OUT IN A POSITIVE WAY.”*

Section I – Introduction

One only gets to the top rung of the ladder by steadily climbing up one at a time, and suddenly all sorts of powers, all sorts of abilities which you thought never belonged to you— suddenly become within your own possibility and you think, 'Well, I'll have a go, too'.

~ MARGARET THATCHER ~

Executive traits are the characteristics needed to get noticed, be promoted and to stand out in a positive way. These characteristics represent the ideal behaviors, mindset and habits of a successful businessperson. When well-honed and used in a strategic, thoughtful manner, these traits will have a positive impact on you and your company. It will be readily apparent that any time and energy spent developing them will be well worth it. In fact, these traits are priceless, powerful enhancements to every employee's career.

To be an essential member of your department and to advance through the management ranks, you need to act the part. Learning and using these traits will quickly move you toward the levels of management and responsibility that you desire and set you apart from your peers. In addition, you will make a strong contribution and have a powerful impact on your company's bottom line. Possessing these traits will make you a more valuable employee and, in turn, help you boost your company's value.

Before you begin developing your strategy for enhancing your executive traits, you must ensure that your performance is up to par and that your current job is being done well. Your loyalty to your company and your diligence in your job should always be beyond reproach. If you continue to do your current assignment effectively, you can move beyond your job description to hone your executive presence without risking your status at your organization.

Executive traits fall into five categories necessary to developing a well-rounded executive presence:

1. Business Intelligence
2. Risk-Taking
3. Interpersonal Relationships
4. Performance Improvement
5. Self-Development

Each trait will help you become a more confident and powerful business leader. You will gain a strong knowledge base that will enhance your ability to stand out, make a difference and have impact in the executive environment.

These are the five major categories of Executive Presence. They encompass the 16 Executive Traits. As you read this book, you will learn more about these categories. Case studies, quotations from industry leaders, quizzes and **Take Action Now!** exercises will help you add these traits to your career arsenal.

5 CATEGORIES OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE AND THE SIXTEEN EXECUTIVE TRAITS

1. Business Intelligence Characteristics

- (1) **STAND OUT BY THINKING STRATEGICALLY:** Elevate your sights by taking a strategic approach to your work. Your “big picture” perspective will prove you’re a leader, not just a manager.
- (2) **TAKE A WHOLE COMPANY PERSPECTIVE:** Think outside the cubicle and learn the ins and outs of your organization. You’ll discover opportunities to demonstrate your value and advance your career.
- (3) **LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF FINANCE:** Speak the language of leaders. Understanding and communicating in financial terms allows you to show your worth where it matters most – the company’s bottom line.

2. Risk-Taking Characteristics

- (4) **CAPITALIZE ON AMBIGUITY AND CHANGE:** Stand confidently above those who waver or are threatened by uncertainty. Leaders are revealed and careers are made for those able to navigate stormy seas.
- (5) **EXCEED YOUR EXPECTATIONS...AND THEIR’S:** Catapult your career by being proactive and looking for opportunities where others aren’t looking. Champion innovative improvements and you’ll speed your ascent to higher levels of responsibility.
- (6) **MOVE BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE:** Challenge yourself and stretch your capabilities. Conquer self-doubt and break through self-imposed limitations by seeking out opportunities to move beyond your comfort zone.

3. Interpersonal Relationship Characteristics

- (7) **COMMUNICATE CLEARLY:** Build confidence, trust and credibility by speaking clearly and persuasively. Your reputation as a top notch communicator will place you in high demand for challenging and rewarding assignments.
- (8) **LEAD, DON’T JUST MANAGE:** Move beyond the manager role to influence events and those around you. As a leader, you’ll inspire and motivate others by advocating what’s best for the organization, not just your work group.
- (9) **SHARE THE LIMELIGHT:** Enhance your reputation as a confident leader by sharing recognition with others. You’ll boost morale, trust and teamwork, as well as opportunities for your advancement.

4. Performance Improvement Characteristics

- (10) **PRIORITIZE YOUR PROJECTS:** Improve your productivity, influence and reputation for high-level achievement when you focus on the things that matter most. Not only will you be a peak performer, you'll maintain a healthy balance in your life.
- (11) **REFINE YOUR THINKING SKILLS:** Make the best decisions thanks to your solid thinking skills. You'll get noticed (and rewarded) for your ability to understand and solve complex tasks, analyze issues and concerns and think back from the desired outcome.
- (12) **DEVELOP DISCERNMENT:** Navigate stormy, difficult waters when you steer by your inner compass. Follow the truth that is inside and you'll make the most ethical decisions for you and your organization.

5. Self Development Characteristics

- (13) **KNOW THYSELF:** Understand what drives you, who you are and what you can do. You'll find personal fulfillment and professional success by capitalizing on your strengths and minimizing your mistakes.
- (14) **SEEK FEEDBACK:** Encourage feedback to demonstrate your passion for self-development and desire to contribute to your company's success. You'll achieve your full potential and help others achieve theirs, as well.
- (15) **GAIN CONFIDENCE:** Build your confidence by influencing decisions, motivating others and improving your performance. As a confident, self-developed leader, you won't be intimidated by failures or self-imposed limitations.
- (16) **SHARPEN AND EXPAND YOUR SKILLS THROUGH TRAINING:** Increase your growth potential by investing in the most important asset you possess – yourself. You'll be more marketable within your company, as well as the increasingly competitive global marketplace.

CHAPTER 1.

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

*Knowledge has become the key economic resource
and the dominant, if not the only, source of competitive advantage.*

~ PETER DRUCKER ~

Business intelligence is understanding how your company does business and how it can be a more effective organization. This involves such things as improving how your department is run, working smarter, understanding your customers' and clients' needs, seeing how you can differentiate yourself from your competition and partnering more effectively with others.

Business intelligence is vital in a competitive environment. In today's workforce, people often fail to develop this talent because they are consumed with their more immediate, day-to-day responsibilities.

Expanding your business intelligence enables you to:

- find the right information to create the best result
- create new and innovative ways to do your work and conduct business
- improve decision-making skills when faced with critical business choices
- operate more efficiently
- increase the quality and effectiveness of your communications
- heighten your performance level
- make a significant impact in the overall efficiency of how you work



STAND OUT BY THINKING STRATEGICALLY

*People who are constantly looking at the whole picture
have the best chance of succeeding in any endeavor.*

~ JOHN MAXWELL ~

As a manager and future executive, it is essential that you assess your organization's resources, goals and plans for the future and align your leadership strategies accordingly. A leader with true executive presence can assess a company's business model and growth strategy, as well as the capabilities of its people and processes, and use this information to out-think the competition.

Every company has a strategic, big-picture plan of action to achieve success. As you strive to increase your executive presence, your challenge is to think strategically and not get dragged down by a tactical

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mindset. Being strategic is thinking from a high level perspective. You aren't focused on immediate actions. Your point-of-view, work ethic and professional interactions must be aligned with your supervisor's vision, the goals of your division and the company's greater mission.

Executives without presence spend much of their time buried in tactical details, focusing on smaller tasks, day-to-day deadlines, reacting to email messages and responding to daily problems.

Every job requires a certain degree of tactical responsibility. However, it's imperative you are not consumed by these details. To avoid the tactical quagmire, you must prioritize, delegate and reschedule or postpone responsibilities. Creating time to address what is strategically important should take priority over seemingly "urgent" issues that constantly cross your desk.

By increasing the responsibility of others, you'll have the time to focus on what is strategically important (e.g., things related to planning, a future-state mind-set, doing projects that move the company forward). By relying on your staff and coworkers, you'll effectively leverage your resources, which, in turn, will enable you to focus on the high-level perspective. You will provide long-term value to your company by thinking strategically.

The strategic perspective focuses on where your company and group are going and how you will get to that destination. Knowing the future state of your company helps you identify opportunities and challenges early.

Strategy – Important for Everyone

The first step in developing a strategic viewpoint is to understand its importance. This is valuable not just for yourself, but for everyone working with you. Thus, it is important that you share this strategic perspective with others, especially your direct reports. Discuss the strategic goals of your company and division in meetings, group discussions and during one-on-one interactions with employees.

Remind yourself and others that the company's greater purpose should take priority over individual, tactical issues. Your whole department, from the people right below you to your second, third and fourth subordinates, should all understand the importance of focusing more time on being strategic. Every member of your team should understand that his or her job duties – from devising a marketing strategy to creating a financial report for senior executives – ultimately benefits the company.

If every employee understands the importance of their actions as elements of a larger whole – and thus, how their work affects the company's bottom line – they will treat their work differently. They'll have a greater sense of purpose and motivation and a willingness to take on more responsibility. This ultimately results in a stronger, more effective organization. As a business professional, know what you need to communicate so others understand the impact of their actions in relation to the company's strategy and goals. This will improve your employees' business intelligence – and demonstrate your own awareness of the numerous factors that impact your company's performance.

Joel's Coaching Clients

SUSAN CHOOSES HONESTY... AND BUILDS A BETTER TEAM

Susan Davis, a newly appointed senior manager for a major pharmaceutical company, was concerned about her latest promotion. In her earlier years at the company, excelling at tactical skills was what was

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required to get the job done. Strong strategic skills didn't seem necessary and her supervisors never stressed their importance. Within the first few weeks in her new assignment, Susan began to realize that her lack of strategic perspective was limiting her team's production. Senior managers began taking notice, too. She immediately reached out to get help so she could improve her skills, her team's production and her reputation at a leader.

Susan sought out a mentor named Bob Rayes. Bob had years of experience on the team and was well respected by peers and superiors. She was honest about her situation and the challenge she was facing. Together, they decided to capitalize on that honesty. Susan's forthrightness and fairness were qualities her colleagues had always admired.

With her plan in mind, Susan gathered her team and told them she was aware of the challenges that she faced in her new role. She outlined her strategy for improvement and asked for their help in reaching her goals, explaining that ultimately they would all learn and benefit from working together.

Her team was surprised and pleased that Susan had chosen to confide in them and ask for their help. She immediately gained the group's trust and was able to quickly pull the team together to identify the steps necessary to improve the team's performance.

Take Action Now!

To develop a strategic mindset, commit one hour per month to consider the bigger picture. Make a monthly, one-hour appointment with yourself to examine the trends, issues and interactions that are affecting your organization's overall plan. Do it right now: add the time and date of your one-hour commitment into your calendar for at least the next six months.

During your one-hour commitment, consider the following questions:

Where is the organization heading and what is its future desired state?

What are your company's long term goals?

What is your company doing to achieve those long term goals?

How is your company's strategy positively affecting your work?

How is your company's strategy negatively affecting your work?

How consistent is the overall strategy to the specific tactics (the day-to-day operations) within your department?

What actions, communications, different ways of thinking and overall strategic planning can you do differently based on how you answered the above questions?

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As you move forward, remember that you may still lose this strategic focus over time. That's why it's important to schedule time at least once a month to focus on the bigger picture and long-term trends of your company. Make a one-hour strategic appointment with yourself for this week. Honor this appointment as if it were a performance appraisal with your boss. You wouldn't cancel on your boss, would you? So do not cancel on yourself, either.

In between your strategic appointments, try this exercise: Take a sheet of paper and divide it into two columns. At the top of the left column write "Strategic" and at the top of the right column write "Tactics." In each column, write down at least 10 examples of actual, current situations for both. For example, in the strategic column, list your business unit's strategic objectives, your supervisor's vision, your company's mission and industry trends that affect the company. Under tactics, you might list your short-term goals, day-to-day responsibilities, urgent issues, tactical details and daily deadlines.

Strategic**Tactics**

Next, compare the two columns to see how they differ. It's important to prioritize the strategic column. However, you must balance strategy with completing your tactical, day-to-day responsibilities. The key is learning to avoid being bogged down by them.

Select three items in the strategic column and three items in the tactics column that you can implement now.

Strategic

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Tactics

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

TAKE A WHOLE COMPANY PERSPECTIVE

We think too small, like the frog at the bottom of the well. He thinks the sky is only as big as the top of the well. If he surfaced, he would have an entirely different view.”

~ MAO TSE-TUNG ~

Consider your goals and challenges not only how they impact you, but in terms of a big-picture perspective (What are the goals and challenges facing the entire company? How do your contributions affect the bigger picture?). To accomplish this, you first must be clear on your company's long-term vision. Then train yourself to look through that whole-perspective lens regarding your responsibilities, interactions and departmental goals. To maintain this whole-company perspective, you need accurate business knowledge regarding the company, its stakeholders, the customers, the board of directors and the industry.

The Company

Understanding how the entire company works allows you to identify and focus on what is most important. With this perspective, you can observe the workgroups within the organization, see how each one operates and interacts with one another.

Most problems can be solved more effectively if they are considered within the context of how the rest of the company is operating, rather than solely based on what an individual department is doing.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are the people who care about the timeline, cost, efficiency and outcome of your projects. They may be managers, users, designers or the client and they are all invested in the progress and result of your work.

Having a whole-company perspective ensures that stakeholders are kept in the know regarding your project or system. Getting them involved up front will win their buy-in and they will become advocates of your project.

Customers

The customer – sometimes referred to as the client, buyer or consumer – buys your services or products. You must understand the needs of your customers so you can implement the strategies and processes that allow you to provide them with what they want or need.

Do you understand what is important to your customers and how you can continue satisfying their needs? Do you know why they actually buy your product or service? You want to have direct access to your customers so you can understand who they are and what they want. You also want to be aware of your competitors to make sure you are doing what is necessary to keep the customer happy. With this information, you will be able to constantly improve the service or product and contribute to your company's bottom line.

Board of Directors

Understanding the priorities and goals of the board of directors is essential, especially when their choices directly affect you and your department. Decisions of the board are most often based on how best to govern the organization, oversee the company's top management and ensure that shareholders' interests are properly served. Their decisions provide insight into your company's direction and how it directly affects business, particular divisions and your career.

The Industry

Keeping a finger on the pulse of your industry provides you with inside knowledge regarding its current economic strength, future trends and strategic direction. You'll also be aware of your industry's top competitors and significant leaders.

By learning from others in the industry and being in step with future trends, you'll develop a broader and deeper perspective that contributes to your company's success. You'll understand how the company can improve its weaknesses, leverage its strengths and exploit new opportunities. Assessing business rivals and identifying areas that need fine-tuning (as well as those areas in which your company surpasses its competitors) will ultimately lead to improvement. You'll identify trends that your company will want to take advantage of or avoid and you will provide invaluable counsel on how your company can grow and prosper.

Garry Kasparov, a legendary chess grandmaster, draws a fascinating parallel between chess and the business arena: "At the highest levels of chess, before you touch a piece, you are playing out an entire game of moves and countermoves in your head. In effect, you are thinking for two people. In business, too, successful strategists think not just about their own new products, pricing and marketing but also about how their rivals will respond -- and how to respond to them. Can you imagine not doing so?"

Kasparov continued, "Smart executives, correspondingly, must understand that their competitors are at least as smart as they are. Only the most arrogant fail to acknowledge that they do not have a monopoly on brainpower, ideas or will. In chess, I know that my rival sees everything I see. Even if I do the unthinkable -- a bold, unprecedented move calculated to leave him gasping -- I must assume he has anticipated it and will have an equally daring answer. Call it the courage to accept humility." (*Fast Company*, September 2004)

Take Action Now!

The mindset that helped you advance early in your career is different from the mindset necessary to succeed at the executive level. Many of the characteristics that benefited you as an individual contributor will not translate to being an effective, strategic manager – and may, in fact, get in the way of your role as a high-level manager. You need to shift your perspective from someone climbing a narrow ladder alone to supporting and encouraging a group that must scale a mountain.

To shift perspectives, try this exercise. First, list below 15 to 20 traits and abilities that have helped you to rise within your organization or industry. Think back to each job you've had and its responsibilities. What helped you succeed? For example, did you work long hours, practice strong communication, pay attention to detail and successfully run projects? Once you start the exercise, you'll be surprised at how many items you identify.

Traits and Abilities of Successful Executives:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

After you complete the list, notice that some of these traits served you well in past positions, but currently hinder your ability to be an effective high-level executive. For example, working long hours at your desk will still be necessary, of course, but as a manager you also need to make time to interact and network with your employees, superiors, company stakeholders, etc.

Next, think of two to three executives you most admire. Picture them in your mind. Ideally, they are people you have read about or with whom you have worked. Think about how they maintained a whole-company perspective. Focus on how they upheld a whole-company perspective of their organization,

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customers, stakeholders, board of directors and the industry. Add to your list above the traits you believe made these executives successful.

Step three is to circle all the items on your list that limit your ability to be a successful executive. For example, focusing too much on day-to-day operations gets in the way of having a whole-company perspective. As you review the list, all the traits that are not circled should be traits that a high-level executive needs to maintain a whole-company perspective at work. Rewrite the list of all of the non-circled traits below and add any additional whole-company traits that you think are necessary.

Non-Circled and Whole-Company Traits:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Now it's time to take action. The final step is to select two traits from your final list and focus on them this entire week. Schedule time in your calendar and make sure these two traits have high visibility and awareness all week. Use simple exercises to help you bring these two traits into your consciousness.

For example, if one of your focus-areas is to have strategy sessions with your highest management (e.g., the top three vice presidents), schedule this into your work week. Continue working through each of the traits on your list by prioritizing them in your weekly schedule.

LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF FINANCE

If you're going to be an entrepreneur, in a corporation or on your own, you should get a background in accounting. In so many ways, analysis of a profit and loss statement or cash flow can be useful. Any bottom line is reached by addition and subtraction and is read in dollar signs and decimal points.

~ VICTOR KIAM ~

Communicating from a strong financial framework is a common characteristic of today's executive leaders. They speak about almost everything in terms of finances, including accomplishments, goals and requests.

An article "How to speak like a CFO" in Purchasing Magazine offers helpful suggestions on how to develop a financial mindset:

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- “First, make sure you understand profit and loss statements and working capital,” says David Hope-Ross of Oracle.”
- “Learn how costs are developed in your company so you can make informed decisions on cutting them,” says Michael Horricks of Clemmer Steelcraft Technologies.
- “Don’t talk about cost avoidance. Translate your cost savings into profitability,” says Chris Sawchuk of The Hackett Group.
- “...talk about how you’re increasing your company’s competitiveness,” advises Dennie Norman of SAS.
- “Think in terms of risk. For example, understand what inventory does to a company’s return on assets and cash flow, and know how to assess the mergers and acquisitions,” says Brett Mauser of NCR.
- “Understand return on invested capital (ROIC) and earnings per share. Those concepts drive C-level attention because they are what Wall Street and bankers are interested in,” advises Bob Rudzki of Greybeard Advisors. (*Purchasing*, May 2006).

The higher you advance, the more bottom-line, financial responsibilities you’ll assume. It’s imperative you know how to communicate accomplishments in terms of specific, measurable results. This will clearly demonstrate your value and enhance your credibility. Effective financial communication will help you gain more resources, receive the appropriate financial backing, acquire the desired head-count and secure the necessary buy-in so your projects can be successful.

Financial communication isn’t difficult. It is a learned skill that everyone can develop. Remember: when speaking about professional or departmental goals and accomplishments, explain in concrete financial terms exactly what has been gained, such as the amount of money you saved or the percentage of dollars earned.

To speak the language of finance, you’ll need to understand such financial terms as:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Balance sheets | • Liabilities and risks |
| • Cash flows | • Gross profit and ratios |
| • Net present value | • Performance ratios |
| • Accruals | • ROI (return on investment) |
| • Budget planning | • EVA (economic value added) |
| • Capital vs revenue | • ROIC (Return on Invested Capital) |
| • Free cash flow | • Cost of capital |
| • Discounted cash flow | • EPS (Earnings per Share) |

If you can’t provide actual numbers, give an idea of how your efforts financially benefited the company. Executives typically care about absolutes, as measured by unit sales and profit. Always have hard facts and know them off the top of your head. At a minimum, here are the questions you should be able to answer:

- Did you generate revenue?

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- Did you reduce expenses?
- How did your department improve the company's bottom line?
- What type of profitable growth did your department experience last quarter?
- How much time did you save doing a project efficiently and quickly?
- Did you improve customer retention?
- Did you help create higher profitability, better service or improved sales?
- Did you improve time-to-market?
- Were all of your financial goals met?
- Did you increase productivity?
- Did you identify new opportunities for growth?
- What is the revenue potential for these new opportunities?

Developing strong financial communication skills requires asking yourself the right questions. Write the following questions on a Post-It note and stick them to the side of your computer or in your calendar or handheld computer. That way, whether you're on the phone, writing a report or talking to a colleague, you'll be reminded:

- How do your division's accomplishments contribute to company profit?
- How can your division be seen as a money-producing one?
- How does your work financially benefit the company?

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JIM USES EXAMPLES TO DEMONSTRATE HIS TEAM'S FINANCIAL WORTH

Jim Feagan worked for one of the top design firms in the world. His department showed incredible leadership skills in overseeing a high profile design project. This project had an impossible deadline, tight budget and lots of unrealistic demands.

Nonetheless, Jim's group effectively managed the project so it was delivered on time and under budget. The team saved more than \$150,000 in design costs by improving procedures that enhanced efficiency and production. They also hit every milestone and deliverable that was expected of them.

By giving specific examples that demonstrated the tough decisions they made to keep the project on schedule, Jim's team illustrated the financial impact their work had on this very successful project. It resulted in repeat business from that client. In addition, Jim communicated from a financial perspective to his superiors and they were able to see how his department made a positive difference in the company's bottom line and future sales.

Your Company's Money Is Your Money

One way to develop a financial framework is to spend the company's money as if it were your own. Often, employees take advantage of their perks (e.g., going out to lavish, expensive dinners because the

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company is paying; using expense accounts for personal things). If you viewed the company's money as your own, you might not have made the same decisions.

Likewise, you might be more stringent about how you work with your department's budget. For example, you might hire differently, looking for quality and not just the hottest (and most expensive) person on the market. You might consider purchasing used equipment instead of new to reduce expenses. Viewing the company's money as your own helps ensure that your company is well represented, treated fairly and isn't taken advantage of by customers, clients, vendors, employees and top management.

Finally, if you regard the company's money as your own, you will be inclined to strive toward making the company a profit – and to encourage your colleagues and staff to do so as well. You'll be motivated to identify innovative ways to make your company money because, of course, the more profitability you bring to the organization, the more successful the company will become.

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ANN REALIZES THE VALUE OF A FINANCIAL MINDSET

Ann Jackson was promoted to senior manager at a technology firm and now directly reports to the president of the company. After six months in this new position, she realized the president and the CEO frequently discussed how to allocate the budget to the various departments.

Interestingly, Ann learned that the department and projects that gained the most support communicated from a financial perspective. Ann researched and talked to other vice presidents and senior managers at major corporations and found this was often the case. Even human resource departments, normally considered "expense centers", were working to increase awareness of their financial value and bottom-line success.

As a result of her research and observations, Ann recognized how important it was to have a financial mindset. She began to exemplify this financial framework in her daily work life and teach it to others in her department.

Take Action Now!

The first step to developing a financial framework is to keep track of your responsibilities, job duties and accomplishments. Whether it's your department or a single project, measure and communicate your progress and accomplishments in financial terms (e.g., money saved and percentage of dollars earned).

Ideally, your list below should have at least 40 items and no fewer than 20. Make sure to look through a money-producing lens as you make your list. Review the bulleted financial questions in the preceding pages to help develop the list. Remember, you are a money-producing vehicle that directly and indirectly affects your company's bottom line. Writing this list will help you practice thinking about your work in financial terms and help you better describe your accomplishments from a bottom-line perspective.

(See Chapter 6 for more detailed information on tracking your accomplishments.)

**Use Financial Terms to Create a List of Your Responsibilities,
Progress, Job Duties And Accomplishments:**

Let's Recap:

Listed below are the Business Intelligence Characteristics we've discussed and explored in the preceding pages. They are key to developing executive presence. You've learned new ways of thinking about strategy, whole company perspective and how to communication from a financial perspective.

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE CHARACTERISTICS

- 1) **STAND OUT BY THINKING STRATEGICALLY:** Elevate your sights by taking a strategic approach to your work. Your "big picture" perspective will prove you're a leader, not just a manager.
- 2) **TAKE A WHOLE COMPANY PERSPECTIVE:** Think outside the cubicle and learn the ins and outs of your organization. You'll discover opportunities to demonstrate your value and advance your career.
- 3) **LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF FINANCE:** Speak the language of leaders. Understanding and communicating in financial terms allows you to show your worth where it matters most – the company's bottom line.

CONCLUSION

By applying business intelligence to your work, you will create an immediate and distinct advantage that will help you get noticed, be promoted and make a positive impact on your company's strategies, goals and finances. You will learn how to maintain a higher, whole-company perspective, be strategic in your thinking and communicate from a strong financial framework. You'll have a deeper and wider understanding of your company, its stake holders, customers, board of directors and the industry. Today, and in the coming weeks, observe closely each decision you make, how you specifically manage your time, prioritize actions, organize pertinent information, and be strategic in your thinking.

CHAPTER 1 – REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

- ☐ Review the material in this chapter. Focus on your answers.
- ☐ Understand how to be strategic in your thinking without getting bogged down by a tactical mindset.
- ☐ Know the five categories of executive presence and the sixteen executive traits.
- ☐ Schedule one hour per month to consider the bigger and more strategic picture (make sure you review the strategic questions discussed in this chapter).
- ☐ Select three items in the strategic column and three items in the tactics column that you can implement now.
- ☐ Integrate a whole-company perspective by being aware of your company, its stakeholders, the customers, the board of directors and the industry.
- ☐ Review the suggestions on how to have a financial mindset that are featured in the article *How to speak like a CFO*.
- ☐ Review the list of financial terms and learn to speak the language of finance.
- ☐ Review the bulleted financial questions in the preceding pages to help you develop a list of accomplishments expressed in financial terms.
- ☐ Spend the company's money as if it were your own.

SUMMARIZE KEY POINTS

Summarize the key points you learned in this chapter and jot them down below.

CHAPTER 2.

RISK-TAKING

Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.

~ T.S. ELIOT ~

Risk-taking is a catalyst for successful businesses in the 21st century. Companies that do not skillfully navigate risk are quickly superseded by more innovative businesses. The same is true for future executives. To remain on the leading edge, employees must learn to embrace risk.

Many fear that taking risks is detrimental to their careers. They prefer to remain comfortable and not make any changes. Without risk, however, employees stagnate. They produce substandard work and become ineffective decision-makers and project managers.

Employees with risk-taking zeal pursue opportunities within and beyond their scope of work. They look for opportunities to seize new markets, to improve their bottom line, enhance existing business operations and functions, make smart decisions and have a fresh ability to communicate and lead.

Risk-taking employees rarely stall out in their careers. In fact, with consistent innovation and risk-taking, they increase their job security and rank because of the significant impact they have on their companies. This is particularly true in today's business climate, in light of the fast pace of technological advancement and the increasing globalization of business practices.

For an employee, having a risk-taking edge involves navigating ambiguity and change, excelling beyond the expected, and moving outside your comfort zone.

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DAVE TAKES A CHANCE... AND MAKES \$1 MILLION FOR HIS COMPANY

Dave Higger, for example, developed an aggressive new customer service initiative that involved a high degree of risk. Unfortunately, the initiative failed and cost the company nearly a quarter of a million dollars. Top management, however, supported Dave's efforts because they appreciated his ability to be innovative, think outside the box, make a decision and run with an idea even with the chance of failure.

The next project Dave implemented was successful – it brought in more than a million dollars. Dave was rewarded with a substantial bonus.

CAPITALIZE ON AMBIGUITY AND CHANGE

*The ultimate measure of man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience,
but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.*

~ DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. ~

You're guaranteed to encounter ambiguity and change in today's executive environment. Frequent acquisitions, mergers and consolidations create tumultuous waves of uncertainty that threaten job security and comfort. Company reorganizations also create constant change in the work environment, including new organizational strategies and overall direction, updated computer systems, individual or company relocations, changes in organizational structure and more.

Companies are also outsourcing to foreign countries. This generates a constant flow of shifting job responsibility and security.

An article on Andy Grove in the December 2005 issue of *Fortune* magazine illustrates how one firm dealt with a crisis:

"Intel kept denying the cliff ahead until its profits went over the edge, plummeting from \$198 million in 1984 to less than \$2 million in 1985. It was in the middle of this crisis, when many managers would have obsessed about specifics, that Grove stepped outside himself. He and Moore had been agonizing over their dilemma for weeks, he recounts in his book, *Only the Paranoid Survive*, when something happened: 'I looked out the window at the ferris wheel of the Great America amusement park revolving in the distance when I turned back to Gordon, and I asked, 'If we got kicked out and the board brought in a new CEO, what do you think he would do?' Gordon answered without hesitation, 'He would get us out of memories.' I stared at him, numb, then said, 'Why shouldn't you and I walk out the door, come back, and do it ourselves?'"

People who have a strong executive presence welcome ambiguity and change and rely on risk-taking as a pathway to new ideas. They are flexible, accepting and aware, while maintaining a calm and composed demeanor under all circumstances. You will learn a technique on how to create calmness and composure in the Cultivating Grace and Composure section later in this chapter.

Flexibility and Acceptance

Flexibility and acceptance are fundamental to dealing with ambiguity and change. When you're flexible and you accept change, you can more quickly ascertain why change is occurring and determine how you and your company can benefit from it. You'll have a clearer idea of the situation and a neutral perspective, which will help you identify the best strategy to survive the storm. You'll be able to take calculated and smart risks and avoid reacting to your circumstances prematurely or incorrectly.

Be aware of and keep track of the resistance you, your team, your superiors or the company are experiencing regarding ambiguity and change. This allows you to maneuver around it or to eliminate it altogether. You'll be able to:

- be thorough in your thinking
- gain perspective on the entire situation

RISK-TAKING

- be less reactive
- know the best strategy for minimized risk
- break down your situation into manageable parts
- best communicate your perspective and recommendations

Brad Anderson, CEO of Best Buy, says, “I’ve found that times of great turmoil and change are actually the places where opportunity is created for people who might not otherwise be able to see it. I just have this overall theory that there’s a lot of folks who have an enormous contribution to make who either don’t know how or can’t find a way to get into the right place to be able to make the contribution. Change helps from an organizational standpoint. It helps you reevaluate what you’re doing so that normal organizational lethargy doesn’t stop people from making that contribution. I’m a real zealot about that.” (*Fast Company*, March, 2005)

Viewing change in terms of opportunity is an excellent way to increase your flexibility and improve your team’s performance. One way to do this is to create a communication medium that invites a two-way dialogue, encouraging individuals to freely express their resistance or concerns to change. This can be accomplished via email, voicemail, team meetings or one-on-one management discussions. The first step is proactively communicate the impending changes within the organization. This will encourage clear and open discussions ensuring that the people being affected will have ways to voice their concerns. It may be beneficial to review examples and case studies of organizations that have responded successfully to change and those who have not. That way, everyone in the two-way dialogue can envision themselves, the team, the superiors and the company in the examples.

Cultivating Grace and Composure

Operating with grace under pressure will help you adjust to challenging and difficult situations. Adrenaline can be helpful when a pressure-filled situation arises. However, graceful and calm demeanor relaxes you, creates less tension and helps keep you open, expanded and creative. Others will appreciate your clear mind, innovative perspective and poise under pressure.

An example of this poise comes from Super Bowl XXIII in 1989. The 49ers were trailing 16-13 with 3:20 left in the game with the ball on their own eight-yard line. Joe Montana came into the 49ers huddle and realized the pressure the team was under – they were playing in front of a sellout crowd of 75,129 and an estimated 110 million people watching on TV. Montana knew he had to calm his teammates down. He pointed to the back of the end zone, where he’d spotted the late actor John Candy and said, “Look, isn’t that John Candy?” Montana’s lighthearted comment helped break the tension and the 49ers drove the ball 92 yards and won the game 20 to 16.

Another example is Gen. Lewis “Chesty” Puller, the most decorated U.S. Marine in history. When his unit was surrounded in the Korean War, Puller told his men, “Here’s the situation: They’re on our left. They’re on our right. They’re in front of us. They’re behind us. They can’t get away from us this time.”

Take Action Now!

One way to cultivate grace and composure is to take short breaks during your workday. When your energy level drops or you find yourself becoming too reactive to people or situations, take time to rejuvenate by taking a break. This may involve physically moving away from your work area and getting some fresh air or a quick pause of 20-30 seconds to just catch your breath. You want to do something that helps you recharge. The exercise below, “breath-by-breath,” will help you cultivate grace, composure, steadiness, strength and intelligence during times when most executives may wilt under pressure.

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Breath-by-Breath

The breath-by-breath exercise will help you manage your reactions during stressful situations. You can do this exercise sitting in the car, at your desk, in a meeting room or outside the office on a five-minute break. Breath-by-breath only takes a few seconds and immediately generates a positive sense of calm.

To begin, sit in a comfortable position and allow your body to relax. Breathe slowly and deeply. As you breathe in, focus on feelings of being calm, collected and accepting. As you breathe out, focus on allowing your body to relax, your thoughts to release and your tension to be removed.

Do this for at least five to seven minutes. If you can only do it for a few seconds, it still has a direct affect on feeling calm. As you become more relaxed, continue with this exercise. Doing this daily before, during or after work will help you achieve and maintain an accepting and collected mindset. You'll feel more relaxed, lessen the weight of the demands being placed on you, and gain mental clarity.

Breath-by-breath is best done in private and without distraction, such as a closed office, car or non-interruptive conference room. If you can't find a private location, you can do aspects of this exercise at a coffee shop or outside your office building on a walk. Even during a presentation, with a lot of people around, you can find a time to take at least one deep breath in and out. This could occur during the Q&A, when people are instructed to do an exercise or when you are pausing to make a stronger point.

| a) EXCEED YOUR EXPECTATIONS...AND THEIR'S

...so don't be timid. Load the ship and set out. No one knows for certain whether the vessel will sink or reach the harbor. Just don't be one of those merchants who won't risk the ocean!
~ RUMI ~

Ascending the corporate ladder and leaping ahead within a company is about exceeding expectations. Doing everything right -- such as attending appropriate meetings, accomplishing what is asked of you and performing your responsibilities -- is just enough to be average, to meet the status quo. Advancing up the organization is about excelling beyond the expected level, standing out and making an impact. Doing so can catapult you to the next level of your organization -- which takes concerted effort and a willingness to try new things and take risks.

As Phylis Esposito, executive vice president and chief strategy officer at Omaha-based TD Ameritrade, says, "If you're in middle management at any age...you have a big decision to make. Do you really want to break into the senior echelons? If so, you have to find a way to stand out. You have to get more visible, which usually means taking a risk -- sometimes a big risk. It's tough, because you may even have to put everything you've already earned on the line in order to do it." (Fortune Magazine, August, 2006)

Taking risks is nothing new for Cirque du Soleil, a half-billion-dollar global company that has dazzled audiences for 21 years by getting its performers to go beyond what is expected. Cirque's founder, Guy Laliberte, is famous for asking his people to stretch beyond the great to the jaw-dropping. "It's a commitment to a degree of sophistication and performance that distinguishes Cirque du Soleil productions from their less-demanding peers," says coach Boris Verkhovsky. (*Fast Company*, July 2005).

Once you have proven you can do your current job well, you have a strong foundation from which to exceed expectations. Having an outstanding work record and a reputation for reliability will help you when you suggest new ideas, ask to take on more challenging projects or assume other work-related

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risks. Colleagues and superiors are more likely to listen to or take a chance on someone who has already proven themselves an asset to the company.

Here are six avenues to pursue to help you identify areas in which you can make a difference and have impact in ways that others will notice. You will become more visible, your job will become even more interesting and you'll find yourself leaping ahead.

1. Innovative Improvement

One key to exceeding expectations in your career is to always be on the lookout for innovative improvements regarding your company, division and the projects you work on. Innovation is a well-used tool in many areas, but many employees mistakenly save their best ideas for trouble spots and star products. To cultivate extreme innovation, take smart risks by revolutionizing your core products or services, not just those that are flagging.

When is the last time your division had a brainstorming session where everyone creatively thought aloud and came up with different solutions and ideas for current problems or challenges? Although not a new concept, brainstorming efficiently and quickly produces a slew of innovative ideas. If you want to improve your product to meet specific customer needs, for example, a brainstorming session with your team would most likely yield more than twenty innovative ideas. By meeting's end, you would have at least one that could immediately be implemented or studied further. In addition, you would be able to identify the most creative thinkers on your team.

An April 24, 2006 *BusinessWeek* article, "The World's Most Innovative Companies," describes a fruitful brainstorming session at Southwest Airlines: "Southwest recently gathered people from its in-flight, ground, maintenance and dispatch operations. For six months they met for 10 hours a week, brainstorming ideas to address a broad issue: What are the highest-impact changes we can make to our aircraft operations? The group presented 109 ideas to senior management, three of which involve sweeping operational changes."

Bill Campbell, former CEO of Intuit and mentor of many Silicon Valley executives including Google's Eric Schmidt, says, "Many company founders really want to be inventors. They want to break new ground with products and services that haven't been done before. Google wants to let a thousand flowers bloom. It gives its engineers personal time to work on things of their choosing—potentially breakthrough stuff than can make a difference. These projects are reviewed and evaluated and have the opportunity to become mainstream Google products." (*The McKinsey Quarterly*, April 15, 2007)

It may not always be possible to have a large-scale brainstorming session because others may not be available. However, you can always choose to brainstorm with just one colleague who you like and trust. You can also talk with individuals outside your company (e.g., other friends, family members or colleagues) whose ideas are innovative and resourceful.

One innovative brainstorming technique is to use teams from the "far side" of the organization to bring "crazy wisdom" to bear on the problems of another department. For example, have your operations team brainstorm your new product rollout. Or ask a salesperson for their ideas regarding ways to increase production in your manufacturing plant. Innovation doesn't take long when you put fresh minds into a room together and give them the leeway and the whiteboards to think up something new.

Look for ways to create "constructive conflict," suggests Deborah Mills, head of the early-stage marketing team at Corning. According to CNNMoney.com story on "The Best Kept Secrets of the World's Best companies:

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“few times a year, the company (Corning) runs half-day brainstorm sessions at its New York headquarters to kick off the quest for innovations. First, managers from a special marketing group--a 15-person unit tasked with identifying \$500 million-plus business opportunities--gather for several hours to listen to outside experts, from renewable-energy gurus to nanotech engineers.

The group then breaks into teams of five, each assigned to drum up ideas related to the talk. After that, the most promising ideas are handed off to teams of two employees: one with a marketing background, the other with technical expertise. The two spend up to four months hashing out feasibility and market potential, and then present the plan to execs, who give it the go-ahead or send it back for more research. In October 2004, one team devised a method for making water desalinization faster and cheaper, using carbon electrodes. Up to \$74 million has been set aside to bring that project, and several others, to market.” (CNNMoney.com, March 16, 2006)

2. Lean Into Your Fears

When you think past your fears and take risks implementing these ideas, you’re likely to exceed expectations and leap ahead in your career. Fears recede when you focus on the future and its possibilities. Thinking of the past, negative outcomes, fears and possible failures will lead you to routine, predictable actions.

FEAR is an acronym: False Evidence Appearing Real. The only antidote to this false evidence is action. Action can reveal the positive truth of the situation. Each day, deliberately set your fears aside, refocus your positive vision of the possible future and take the action that will transform your perspective.

Ask yourself, “What’s the worst that can happen?” Then ask, “What’s the best that can happen?” In most cases, you’ll find the risks aren’t as great as you feared, while the potential benefits almost compel you to take action.

Take Action Now!

To lean into your fears, try the following exercise:

1. Identify one action at work to improve your department’s performance that involves an element of fear or risk.

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2. Write down why you have not taken action and the barriers that have kept you from doing so.

3. Write down the worst outcome or outcomes you can imagine—your greatest fears. Assess the likelihood of these outcomes and list some steps you can take to reduce the chances.

4. Now write the positive reasons for taking the risk. Visualize the positive outcomes you expect to occur.

You're now ready to take action and not allow fear to stand in your way! You have prepared yourself to take a risk and, by visualizing a positive outcome, you exponentially increase your chances of achieving one. In addition, this preparation will make it easier for you to take risks in the future.

3. Reflect Well On Others

Be sure your work reflects well on those around you. Each decision you make, how you represent yourself at meetings, and your overall productivity should make a positive impression. Your actions should say you are a leader who takes initiative, has self-confidence and can handle the responsibility required to do top-notch work. Of course, keep in mind that all of your work directly affects the reputation of your boss—and you want to ensure he or she looks good. The next time you are in charge of a high-profile project, realize the implications it will have on your own career as well as the career of your supervisor. Take charge of the project, delegate effectively, oversee your team, professionally manage the project and acknowledge the support of your superiors. Together, you will exceed expectations in your careers.

4. Increase Responsibility

If you take on added responsibilities and do more than what is asked of you, executives will take notice of your initiative. Employees who stand out are rewarded and promoted. By increasing your responsibility and doing more, you're less likely to stagnate in your position and you raise your chance of finding more challenging projects.

You can take your career to the next level by increasing your leadership and responsibility. Look for opportunities to make higher-level decisions. You can ask your immediate boss to assign you more challenging and high profile projects. The goal is to take action, make decisions and show that you can

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do more than your current job description. You're more apt to be promoted when you prove that your ability and talents are a level higher than your current position. And you're likely to be paid more for doing a bigger job than a smaller one.

Dave Barger, president and COO of JetBlue, encourages people to increase responsibility and become multi-dimensional. One of his vice presidents, Dave Bushy, says, "Take the pilots: At most airlines, they're seen as one-dimensional technicians... [Barger] prods JetBlue pilots to participate in the business. One pilot creates elaborate airport diagrams to help orient colleagues. Another pitches in doing financial analysis for the company. And another is making an inventory of her fellow pilots' skills in hope of identifying other abilities that might be useful to the airline." (*Fast Company*, May 2004)

5. Be Proactive

Take initiative every time the opportunity arises. Refuse to accept the comfortable, stable, and existing environment. Train yourself to always improve a situation. To be proactive, look for opportunities and find creative ways to make them better.

In an article on Dick Brown, former CEO of EDS, he described how important it is to take initiative and increase your responsibility:

In December 1998, EDS's board of directors recruited Dick Brown from British telecom Cable & Wireless, making him the first outsider to lead EDS in the company's 36-year history. He arrived with an unambiguous message:

"A company's culture is really the behavior of its people. And leaders get the behavior they tolerate."

Brown quickly signaled that he would not put up with the old culture of information hoarding and rampant individualism. In one of his first meetings, Brown asked 30 top managers to email him the three most important things that they could do to improve the company and the three most important things that he could do. He made his request on a Monday and asked the managers to email him their action items by the end of the week -- at the latest. "I was interested in what they'd send, but I was more interested in when they'd send it," Brown says. "This was a litmus test on urgency."

Ninety percent of the managers waited until Friday afternoon to reply to Brown. "It never crossed their minds that they could email me within the hour," Brown says. "They just did it at the last minute. And that's the message that they sent to their people: Do it at the last minute. In the end, almost all of them loaded up on what I needed to do. They were pretty light on what they needed to do."

Today, most of those managers are gone from EDS. (*Fast Company*, September 2001)

6. Look for Opportunities Where Others Aren't Looking

To notice and identify unique or unknown opportunities, think differently than your peers. Liberate yourself from the confines of your current way of thinking and be creative and unconventional. This involves how you evaluate business conditions, demand, competition, industry knowledge and technological advances. Approach each situation with a completely different perspective. Business leaders seek opportunities where others aren't looking.

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Richard Branson of Virgin Atlantic Airways, for example, was a contrarian in the airline industry. He hired massage therapists to work on his company's planes, added more legroom, wider seats and a video screen for each seat in the economy section. His willingness to spend money, energy and time on services that went beyond the norm was hugely rewarded – Branson is now a billionaire, and he and his companies (such as Virgin Mobile and Virgin Records, to name just two) enjoy global success.

Michael Dell, founder of Dell, the world's leading computer systems company, decided to ignore the distribution channels necessary to sell personal computers. Instead, he sold personal computers directly to the customer by using mail-order catalogs, email campaigns and numerous lucrative media partnerships.

Being innovative, taking risks, leaning into your fears, reflecting well on others, doing more than what others expect and identifying new opportunities will all help you exceed expectations in your career. It takes initiative, commitment and persistence to exceed expectations, and it involves doing more than your current responsibility and job description.

Nurturing an exceeding expectations mindset will advance you more quickly than your peers. You'll find opportunities to be a change-maker, have high amounts of responsibility and an attractive salary and reach your full potential.

Oftentimes, innovations made by individuals significantly impact the company's culture and reputation among its employees and customers.

In the *Fortune Magazine* 2006 "100 best companies to work for" you will learn what makes these companies so great. This list will inspire you to come up with ideas so you can exceed expectations in your career.

- Starbucks: New president and CEO Jim Donald keeps in touch with the "partners," as employees are called, by randomly calling a dozen district managers and several stores each day.
- Procter & Gamble: Now here's an innovation – The consumer-products giant pairs junior female employees with a senior manager for reverse mentoring to help the mostly male higher-ups understand the issues women face.
- Booz Allen Hamilton: This management consulting firm is big on flexibility. From 2000 to 2003, it spent \$10.8 million on remote access and laptops for its professional staff. In 2002, two-thirds of the staff enjoyed a flexible work arrangement.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers: Its policy is to pay generous referral bonuses that average a whopping \$8,000 for new hires.
- Nordstrom: Act as if "it's your name on the door" is the motto at this chain of upscale specialty stores, where salespeople have the power to make decisions about refunds or exchanges.
- W.L. Gore: When it comes to managing employees, the privately held maker of Gore-Tex fabric does things a little differently. For example, workers evaluate fellow team members each year to determine compensation.
- S.C. Johnson & Son: Workers in the manufacturing division of this consumer-products company get performance reviews determined by peers, not by management. Apparently employees like that kind of power: Turnover is negligible.

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- Aflac: Many moms and dads love working at this insurer, and for good reason. As long as their college-age children or grandchildren receive a GPA of 2.5 or higher, the company will pay 100% of their tuition, up to \$20,000 per year.
- Network Appliance: President Tom Mendoza makes 15 to 20 calls a week to thank employees for their contributions.
- Sterling Bank: This commercial and retail bank has an unusual inverted-pyramid hierarchy: Workers essentially manage themselves. Promotions, for example, are determined by a panel of peers rather than by managers.
- Cisco: CEO John Chambers stays in touch with the staff. He meets with groups of new hires to welcome them soon after they start, and at monthly breakfast meetings workers are encouraged to ask him tough questions.
- Four Seasons: Employees get a chance to walk in customers' shoes at this luxurious hotel chain. Any worker (and the immediate family) can stay free at any location in the world (subject to availability and seniority); meals are discounted 50%.

MOVE BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Move out of your comfort zone. You can only grow if you're willing to feel awkward and uncomfortable when you try something new.

~ BRIAN TRACY ~

Stretch your capabilities, take risks and go beyond your comfort zone. Maintaining the status quo – and settling for being average -- will allow others to pass you by, regardless of talent or skill. When you take risks, being scared comes with the territory. As Kevin Sharer, Amgen CEO, said, “You are trying to engender a passion and a desire to do something new. And new is scary. As a leader, you are putting your ass on the line to make it happen. So you should be scared.” (*Fortune Magazine*, December, 2005)

How will you know when you've gone beyond your comfort zone? You will likely feel uncomfortable or anxious and unsure you can do your project or task. Can you imagine overriding the fears and the challenges that limit you from doing something you know will benefit your career? If you worked through these fears and got to the other side of this self-doubt-inducing situation, what would happen? You would have more control of a potentially limiting situation and feel more competent and comfortable. As a result, you would perform well and be better compensated for your newly improved skills. This would ultimately enable you to have more freedom to achieve what you most want.

As we advance in our careers and move up within our organizations, we increase our responsibility and leadership abilities – and find new ways to go beyond our comfort zones. With practice, you will view these situations as exciting challenges rather than situations to be feared. You'll know you've adopted an exceeding expectations mindset when you embrace opportunities to go beyond your comfort zone, rather than viewing them as limiting.

In fact, you may realize moving beyond your comfort zone can be quite profitable. As Meryl Golden, The Progressive Corp.'s Northeast Agency general manager says, “You want to know how to get noticed? Take on the riskiest projects. I turned around the business losing the most money at Progressive and you can bet I got noticed. Now I have such a network inside the company that I can get anything done. Also, keep in touch with all the smartest alumni of your company. They will become your

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competitors, your future employees, your future bosses. Stay friends with smart people. It will be worth it.” (*Knowledge@Wharton*, January, 2005)

Michael Useem, the Director for the Center for Leadership and Change Management at Wharton School adds, “...put yourself in situations that get you out of your comfort zone...The more you can force yourself to do things 30% different from what you’ve already done, again and again, the better you’ll be prepared to stretch under huge duress.” (*Fast Company*, September, 2004)

One way to uncover opportunities to be in charge is to work with your supervisor to identify ways to provide you with more responsibility. Arrange meetings with other influential company executives who can recommend that you be put in charge of projects or assignments that are beyond your current comfort zone. Ask to be invited to meetings where opportunities that interest you will be discussed and you can volunteer to help. Explain to the managers that shifting some projects to you will lessen their workload – and allow them more time to pursue important projects and further their own careers.

Rely on support when stretching yourself

When stretching or trying something new, seek the support you need from your supervisors (and peers) so they are aware of the risks involved and can help you reach your goal or objective. Relying on the support of others while you plot a course of new experiences will help you reduce the risk of failure and self-doubt.

Additionally, enlisting the support of others helps you to stretch yourself and go beyond what you might think is possible. Asking for and receiving support from your supervisors creates a great opportunity for visibility and recognition. Support validates your own ability, creates the best possible plan for limited risk, gives you the clearest perspective, provides you with the necessary resources, helps you strategize the most effective approach, makes you aware of others’ viewpoints and increases your confidence.

Be consistently aware of opportunities to take on new challenges. Each time you embrace these opportunities, you are given a chance to grow and deepen your executive abilities. As a doer who stretches beyond your comfort zone, you will be noticed, rewarded and promoted.

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Let's Recap:

Listed just below are the Risk-Taking Characteristics we've explored. In your quest to develop executive presence, you've learned new ways of thinking about ambiguity and change and gained strategies for moving beyond your comfort zone and exceeding expectations in your career.

RISK-TAKING CHARACTERISTICS

- 1) **CAPITALIZE ON AMBIGUITY AND CHANGE:** Stand confidently above those who waver or are threatened by uncertainty. Leaders are revealed and careers are made for those able to navigate stormy seas.
- 2) **EXCEED YOUR EXPECTATIONS...AND THEIR'S:** Catapult your career by being proactive and looking for opportunities where others aren't looking. Champion innovative improvements and you'll speed your ascent to higher levels of responsibility.
- 3) **MOVE BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE:** Challenge yourself and stretch your capabilities. Conquer self-doubt and break through self-imposed limitations by seeking out opportunities to move beyond your comfort zone.

CONCLUSION

Taking risks is a requirement if you want to accomplish and surpass your personal, professional and financial goals.

Risk-taking will help you:

- increase your responsibility and respect
- be assigned high-profile projects
- gain recognition for your capabilities and competence
- downsize-proof your career, regardless of organizational or industry changes

Take pride in seeing yourself as a risk-taker -- someone who excels beyond the expected level, thinks outside the box, takes initiative, is innovative, goes beyond their comfort zone and stretches their own capabilities

CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

- ☐ Review the material in this chapter. Focus on your answers.
- ☐ Understand how to be a risk-taker.
- ☐ One way to keep track of resistance during ambiguity and change is to create a communication medium that invites a two-way dialogue, encouraging individuals to freely express their concerns.
- ☐ Try the “breath-by-breath” exercise which will help you manage your reactions during stressful situations.
- ☐ Implement short breaks during your workday as easy ways to cultivate grace and composure.
- ☐ Integrate at least three of the six ways (innovative improvement, lean into your fears, reflect well on others, increase responsibility, take initiative and look for opportunities where others aren’t looking).
- ☐ Conduct a brainstorming session to cultivate innovation.
- ☐ To lean into your fears, complete the four-part exercise.
- ☐ Review the list of companies highlighted in the 2006 100 best companies to work for and choose one idea that you can bring to your organization.
- ☐ Find one or two opportunities to try new challenges and go beyond your comfort zone.
- ☐ Choose a couple of people to rely on for support as you stretch or try something new.

SUMMARIZE KEY POINTS

Summarize the key points you learned in this chapter and jot them down below.

[illegible]

CHAPTER 3.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Accept the fact that we have to treat almost anybody as a volunteer...

~ PETER DRUCKER ~

In an increasingly global, diverse society rife with technological advances and rapid change, interpersonal relationship skills are highly important. These skills will enable you to influence others and effectively manage conflict. A wide variety of workplace relationships offer numerous opportunities to practice and enhance these skills: manager/employee, peer/peer, individual/team, customer/client, senior management/middle management and more.

Interpersonal relationship skills are directly related to company morale: when people share common ideals, perspectives and values, the resulting group harmony enables an organization to achieve more. This, in turn, has a positive impact on company profits, productivity and job satisfaction.

However, many people have difficulty creating and nurturing strong interpersonal relationships. They don't know how to share recognition with their peers, take feedback and direction from upper management, manage conflict, mentor and coach their subordinates or effectively deal with diversity issues.

Supportive and empowering relationships occur through effective communication, strong leadership and sharing the spotlight.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

*Take advantage of every opportunity to practice your communication skills
so that when important occasions arise, you will have the gift,
the style, the sharpness, the clarity, and the emotions to affect other people.*

~ JIM ROHN ~

Clear communication is exchanging thoughts, information and ideas between people or groups in which the message is understood. A workplace characterized by open communication is a dynamic one, flexible and open to change and welcoming of new ideas. Such a workplace can thrive only if open communication is supported and rewarded. As an employee developing executive presence, you can have a direct impact on the degree of openness in your company by modeling effective communication and encouraging open discussion on a regular basis.

Whether you're just making small talk or closing the biggest deal of your career, the art of communicating clearly and effectively should not be taken lightly.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In fact, when employers are asked what qualities and skills are most critical when considering job candidates, the ability to communicate is tied with honesty and integrity as most important. According to a survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, communication skills are rated higher than a strong work ethic, teamwork, analytical skills, computer skills, leadership and self-confidence.

The benefits of clear and effective communication are countless – and not hard to achieve as long as you as keep your message simple enough to be understood, interesting enough to be remembered, and, most importantly, respectful enough of others to be appreciated and accepted.

Clear, positive communication establishes rapport, increases trust, improves productivity, enhances joy and improves the quality of work. Without clear communication, relationships between departments and team members can become challenging. Although most employers cite communication as one of the most important skills for employees to have, it is one of the weakest areas of development within organizations.

Thus, honing your communication skills will not only improve the quality of your working relationships – and your work – but will also ensure you’ll find yourself in high demand. A clear and effective communicator is a valuable commodity to an employer. Use these tips to refine your communication skills:

6 Tips for Effective Communication:

1. Stay on Message

What ideas you are trying to express? What message must you convey to the person you are communicating with? What do you most want them to understand?

2. Make It a Two-Way Conversation

Try to really hear and understand where others are coming from. What messages are they trying to get across? Ask yourself, “Do I really understand them?” and work on confirming to them exactly what you heard them say. Pay special attention not just to what they are saying, but to what isn’t being said. Tune in to the other person’s body language: is their posture open and welcoming or do they seem stiff and closed off to your ideas? Take these nonverbal cues into account and adjust your message accordingly.

3. Making Sense of it All

Always ask yourself, “Does what I’m saying make sense? Does the feedback I’m receiving make sense? What is the perspective they are trying to get across? Does it make sense that they have this perspective?” When both parties are able to say they understand or that “it makes sense,” clear, effective communication has been achieved.

4. You’re Responsible for Any Failure to Communicate

As the primary communicator, you are 100% responsible for the other person’s understanding of your message. If you don’t feel you are being understood, you have not completed the job

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

of communicating. Don't blame the other person for not understanding. Instead, look for ways to clarify or rephrase what you are trying to say so it can be understood.

5. Repetition, Repetition, Repetition

An effective way to ensure others understand what you are communicating is to ask them to repeat what has been said or asked of them. To achieve the results you want, make sure the person you are communicating with can give you a clear explanation of what is required or expected.

6. Respect Who You Communicate With

To be a clear, effective communicator, you must first recognize your message is not just about you or what you want. You must believe in your message – and sincerely care about the needs and the unique perspectives of those to whom you are communicating. After all, they took the time and trouble to hear what you have to say, so it's important to recognize that we all have different perspectives based on our positions, motivations and needs.

In addition, you must learn to positively present yourself to people with influence, learn to communicate in difficult situations, be persuasive and develop presentation and public speaking skills. Here's how.

Identify and Impress People of Influence

You can achieve or improve executive presence by using your communication skills to effectively interact with influential people within your company. Your first step: identify these influential individuals. Start with top management and move down from there – and don't forget to consider the more subtle key players, perhaps the longtime executive assistant to an influential VP or the mailroom manager – a former golf instructor who occasionally hits the driving range with your links-loving CEO.

Each communication to these people needs to be carefully crafted, because influential people are often hard to reach, have limited time and don't like being distracted with unimportant issues. Be direct and up-front, address the reader in crisp, clear and tight language. Demonstrate that you have well-thought-out ideas and are considerate of their time and importance in the company.

When you address a person of influence, whether via email or face-to-face, consider what's in it for the person – why does it benefit them to get to know you? How might your question, suggestion or proposal improve their work life? Keeping their perspective in mind will enable you to make your ideas or requests more targeted and persuasive.

Remember, too, these communications will not solely be requests – you may wish to provide an update on a project's progress, for example. In doing so, you are acknowledging the influential person's interest or investment in the project and letting them know the role you are playing in its success.

Joel's Coaching Clients**KAREN SHOWS HER SAVVY AND GETS
A NEW BOSS – PLUS NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

Karen Wiley never leveraged influential people to help her career because she had so much success without any effort. She didn't realize her advancement potential was limited until, during her annual performance review, her manager jokingly said, "We're not sure what to do with you!" Karen realized she needed to interact and communicate with others who had influence within the organization and get creative about how she might further contribute to her organization – and advance her career in the process.

For the next six months she researched the organization to find the most influential managers in the departments that most interested her. She targeted the key person she wanted to work for and contacted him. She informed the manager of her career aspirations, her strong record of success and promotions and her untapped potential.

The manager responded, "I always look to move people up and to make sure everyone is progressing and growing. The bottom line is I get paid by the number of projects and programs I oversee. The bigger my portfolio, the more responsibility I have -- which will create more opportunities for people to move up. And when people move up, it creates more opportunity for the next person." He added that her ability to juggle numerous projects – and make her deadlines – made her an appealing candidate.

He agreed to schedule monthly chats with Karen. This ongoing, open communication enabled the manager to learn more about Karen – and gave her the opportunity to demonstrate her skills, savvy, trustworthiness and dedication. Six months later, Karen achieved her goal: she was indeed working for him.

Communicate in Difficult Situations

Everyone experiences difficult situations, conversations and interactions at work that can negatively affect relationships. These include dealing with a disgruntled or underperforming employee, a critical performance review, negotiating with a demanding customer, saying no to your supervisor when asked to work overtime, asking for increase salary, requesting vacation time during the final important phase of a high priority project or saying no to a request made by senior management. Sometimes the most difficult situation can involve a misunderstanding with your boss or when a peer is angry or frustrated at something you did. Your goal is to resolve these situations with minimal disruption and maximum support.

10 Steps to Making the Most of a Difficult Conversation:**1. Assess and identify the actual predicament.**

Think about what happened. Why are you frustrated or what happened to cause the problem? Evaluate the facts and content, rather than the people or emotions involved.

2. Understand what you want to accomplish.

By clearly understanding your objective, you'll be able to put together a message that helps you achieve your desired end state. Your objective comes from understanding what needs you have and how to meet them.

3. Remove your heightened feelings and emotions about the situation.

When you're frustrated or angry, don't let these feelings get in the way of coming up with an honest and clear objective. Remember, you probably are having a heightened state of intense emotions that are making it difficult to see clearly.

4. Think about the other person's situation.

Step into the other person's situation and consider what they are feeling. Why did they say or do what they did that caused the frustration or difficulty? It's important to understand their point of view. It will help you during the actual dialogue. You will surprisingly begin to have compassion for the other person when you can step into their experience.

5. Prepare for the actual communication.

Develop a couple different solutions in case the first one doesn't work. These solutions you propose should satisfy all involved individuals. Thus, it's important that you have solutions that acknowledge the needs of everyone.

6. Hear and understand the other person during the actual dialogue.

What are they trying to say? What is the point they are trying to make? Do you really understand them? Don't only consider what they are saying, but also evaluate what isn't being said. Ask yourself, "Does what they are saying make sense?" When you make sure the other person is heard and understood, you begin diffusing the difficult situation. This will help move toward reconciliation.

7. Understand what is being spoken by repeating what is said.

Once you have completely listened to the other person, repeat exactly what you heard without adding your interpretation. Listening and mirroring helps both parties in the dialogue. It helps the other person feel understood and helps you understand the other person's point of view.

8. Communicate what you experienced that caused the difficult situation.

Use "I" statements when communicating. If you start using "you" statements, the other person may feel like you're blaming him or her. Blaming just causes a defensive stance and erodes any chance of reconciliation or understanding. Take as much responsibility as you can for what you did that caused the problem in the first place.

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9. Work towards a solution.

Once you have a true understanding of the entire situation, you can work out an arrangement that is suitable for both individuals. You may not resolve the situation the first time you begin the dialogue. Depending on how difficult the issue is and how willing both of you are toward solving it, patience will be key in determining the time and number of discussions needed.

10. Taking action toward change.

Ask each person to come up with specific ideas they are willing to do to make reconciliation a reality. Be sure to follow through with what you both agree on: periodically check with the other person or persons, and closely monitor the situation's status so the challenging circumstance doesn't flare up again.

Persuasive Communication

Persuasive communication is when your message, idea or information creates a desired action or persuades another person toward your perspective. Harvard Business School professor David A. Garvin says, "The ability to tell a compelling story, to marshal evidence, and to craft persuasive arguments is essential to success." If you wish to be persuasive, you need to understand the other person, what their needs are, and why they would want what you are proposing. A persuasive discussion understands and builds both sides of the argument, not just one side. To change a person's perspective or belief, it is vital your message be enthusiastic, compelling, convincing, strong and clear.

The most important aspect of persuasive communication is: Be prepared. Create a logical outline that builds your case for the outcome you desire. Be sure to describe your ultimate objective. And don't forget to finish with a call to action. When persuasively communicating, the action you are requesting must be strong enough to counter any rejection while creating buy-in and acceptance.

A great example of persuasive communication comes from the chairman of Starbucks, Howard Schultz. Carmine Gallo says this about Schultz in the *Business Week* story:

"His powerful communication skills define a leader who knows not only what he stands for, but also the values he promotes, and who knows how to make an emotional connection with his listeners. In fact, Schultz majored in communications in college, took public-speaking courses, and credits much of his ability to win over investors, customers and employees to his communication skills." Howard Schultz persuasive communication all starts and ends with his ability to share his passion. Schultz says, "So whether I'm talking to a barista, a customer or investor, I really communicate how I feel about our company, our mission and our values. It's our collective passion that provides a competitive advantage in the marketplace because we love what we do and we're inspired to do it better..." (*Business Week*, May 2006).

Develop Presentation and Public Speaking Skills

Many executives fear public speaking, but it is vital for success and career advancement. If you want to be influential and have your ideas heard and understood, you need to know how to publicly present them. There are many benefits of becoming an effective speaker, including the ability to lift others' morale, gain large-group consensus, increase your visibility and accomplish more with the assistance of others.

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There are many books solely devoted to the art of public speaking. The basics for preparing and delivering a speech are included below. However, if you're interested in truly honing your skills, read books that go into more depth than can be covered here. Here are some resources that can help improve your public speaking skills and presentations – take a speaking class or course, review speaking articles, listen to audio tapes on speaking, hire a coach for this area and join professional organizations that directly relate to improving your public speaking ability. Some professional organizations can be used to practice and improve your speaking and some will use resources to learn from experts in the field. Here are three recommended organizations: National Speakers Association is the leading organization for those who speak professionally. Toastmasters International helps you improve your public speaking skills and American Society for Training and Development is dedicated to workplace learning and performance.

Preparation is the foundation of effective communication. A good rule of thumb is it requires five hours of preparation for every 30 minutes you plan to speak.

Besides being prepared, you also need to be aware of these key points:

1. Be clear about your objective and what you want to gain from your speech or presentation.
2. Understand your audience and their needs.
3. Content for the speech includes these three parts:
 - (a) A dynamic opening that grabs your audience's attention
 - (b) Three interesting main points for the body of the presentation
 - (c) A powerful ending that leaves the audience wanting more
4. When you deliver your speech, focus on body language and gestures, voice pitch and rate, eye contact and posture.

These ideas will help you exude confidence and gain respect as you create and deliver speeches that communicate your message with clarity, impact and action.

Here are 10 public speaking tips from Toastmasters International:

Tips for Successful Public Speaking:

Feeling some nervousness before giving a speech is natural and healthy. It shows you care about doing well. But, too much nervousness can be detrimental. Here's how you can control your nervousness and make effective, memorable presentations:

1. **Know the room.** Be familiar with the place in which you will speak. Arrive early, walk around the speaking area and practice using the microphone and any visual aids.
2. **Know the audience.** Greet some of the audience as they arrive. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to a group of strangers.
3. **Know your material.** If you're not familiar with your material or are uncomfortable with it, your nervousness will increase. Practice your speech and revise it if necessary.
4. **Relax.** Ease tension by doing exercises.

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5. **Visualize yourself giving your speech.** Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear and assured. When you visualize yourself as successful, you will be successful.
6. **Realize that people want you to succeed.** Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They don't want you to fail.
7. **Don't apologize.** If you mention your nervousness or apologize for any problems you think you have with your speech, you may be calling the audience's attention to something they hadn't noticed. Keep silent.
8. **Concentrate on the message -- not the medium.** Focus your attention away from your own anxieties and outwardly toward your message and your audience. Your nervousness will dissipate.
9. **Turn nervousness into positive energy.** Harness your nervous energy and transform it into vitality and enthusiasm.
10. **Gain experience.** Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking. A Toastmasters club can provide the experience you need.

LEAD, DON'T JUST MANAGE

*The manager administers; the leader innovates.
The manager is a copy; the leader is an original.
The manager maintains; the leader develops.
The manager focuses on systems and structure; the leader focuses on people.
The manager relies on control; the leader inspires trust;
The manager has a short-range view; the leader has a long-range perspective.
The manager asks how and when; the leader asks what and why.
Managers have their eyes on the bottom line; leaders have their eyes on the horizon;
The manager imitates; the leader originates.
The manager accepts the status quo; the leader challenges it.
The manager is the classic good soldier; the leader is his own person.
The manager does things right; the leader does the right thing.*

~ WARREN BENNIS ~

Members of successful organizations realize the importance of both managing and leading. However, many managers have not yet learned how to think like leaders. As every organization deals with constant and inevitable change, a leadership mindset is vital to an organization's survival and success. Leadership energizes an organization's processes so that its culture, environment and structures shift and innovate toward what is necessary in a climate of change.

Andy Grove, former CEO of Intel, shows what a leader needs to do in a clipping from his notebook, as cited in a 1969 Time magazine story titled "Vision to Inspire." The clipping was how to be a director of a movie. It said, "Any director must master formidable complexity. He must be adept at sound and camera work, a soother of egos, a cajoler of the artistic talent. A great director has something more: the vision and force to make all these disparate elements fuse into an inspired whole." Above the clipping, Grove wrote with a red pen: "My job description?" (Fortune Magazine, December, 2005)

Managing Isn't Enough

Most likely, the managers you admire also are strong leaders. Individuals who do not stretch beyond managerial duties toward leadership roles complete their daily tasks and responsibilities in a robotic manner. They fail to understand and embrace their organization's constantly changing dynamics. They operate from a limited perspective that exclusively prioritizes stability, safety and comfort.

Without leadership skills, managers are incapable of influencing their department or company. They find it is near impossible to generate enthusiasm, motivation or sincere buy-in regarding departmental projects and companywide direction. Managers who are not leaders tend to focus on their own advancement and job security, instead of what is best for the entire team or organization. By being focused exclusively on their own jobs, these managers fail to understand how their work affects others inside and outside the company.

Strong Impact of Leaders

Conversely, great leaders are capable of influencing other people, even when they don't have authority. If you are a leader, your perspective goes beyond current job responsibilities and reaches toward the future of the company. You are able to inspire and positively challenge people by helping them to overcome obstacles.

Hank Paulson, the Goldman Sachs CEO, said this about what it takes to make a great leader: "I started work at Goldman Sachs in 1974, watching people who were successful and people who weren't. And the things that make a good leader are being open-minded, having a willingness to really ask for and accept advice, showing a sense of humility and putting the right people in the right seats." (Christopher Tkaczyk, "Follow These Leaders," *Fortune*, December 2005)

Ten Leadership Skills

To help you develop leadership potential, assess these 10 skills common to great leaders. Each is accompanied by a simple exercise designed to help you develop that particular skill. If you already possess one or more of the skills on the list, take note of its importance and read on. If you want to develop a certain skill, take time to incorporate the exercise into your workday.

1. Lead by Example

You lead by example whether you are instructing others, providing direction, communicating verbally or nonverbally, and interacting with management, employees, coworkers, vendors or clients. This is true whenever you exchange information or ideas. You're always being watched. People are taking in and making judgments based on your attitude, appearance and so forth. They are reflections of you.

To lead by example, follow your own directives – if you encourage your team to come to you with questions, make sure you keep your office door open and be receptive when they do. This will indicate that you mean what you say, and that itself is an indication of character. These traits create a natural magnetism that others instinctively want to emulate. When someone is respected, people have a natural tendency to want to be and act like them.

The late Ray Kroc, McDonald's Chief Executive Officer and founder, led by example by traveling to a variety of his restaurants. He would pick up the trash throughout the parking lot before going inside. Once inside, he would again pick up the trash. He was modeling the type of cleanliness he expected throughout his organization. This is one example of how a top executive led by example. He used this

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approach with everyone from drive-thru clerks to top executives, regarding everything from cleanliness to strategizing. As a result, he created the world's leading fast-food service retailer with more than 30,000 restaurants in 119 countries.

All 12 directors of home-improvement giant Home Depot are required to make unannounced, daylong visits to their outlets. They stop customers in the parking lot, asking about their likes and dislikes. They go inside and compare notes with managers and staff and make spot-checks of customer service and inventory. Then they report their findings at the next board meeting. (Paul Kaihla, "Best-Kept Secrets of the World's Best Companies," CNNMoney.com, March 16, 2006)

Take Action Now!

To lead by example, identify your characteristics and values that influence the people around you. By knowing yourself and what is most important, your influence will come from honest, genuine behavior. You will lead by modeling behavior that others will imitate.

Make a list of at least five or more characteristics and values that others would benefit from emulating. Examples include:

- Get-it-done and result-oriented attitude.
- Treat colleagues, team members and employees with respect.
- Do the right thing and act with integrity and honesty.
- Conduct yourself professionally by how you dress, behave and interact with colleagues and clients.
- Be a selfless executive who praises and operates with humility and confidence.
- Accept full responsibility for your actions.
- Be fair and reliable to others.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

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Circle one of the five you want to implement right now. Make it a priority to model this trait for an entire week. Then select another one and begin working on that for another week, until you have finished implementing all five.

2. Communicate with Comfort and Confidence

Great leaders communicate with comfort and confidence. They're able to concisely communicate their message to motivate those around them to greater achievement. When you communicate with comfort and confidence you feel less nervous and you know how to get your point across so that it is well received. Preparation is key: organize your thoughts and identify key points before you speak. This will ensure you are familiar and comfortable with your material and confident in your ability to convincingly present your points. From comfort comes confidence – when you speak, you'll be respectfully received as an engaging speaker with credibility and authority.

Take Action Now!

Consider a project in which you are a participant or leader and are comfortable with the subject matter. Choose one that gives you an opportunity to influence, direct and guide others.

What project did you select?

Identify one aspect of the project you can communicate with comfort and confidence.

Next, communicate this project to team members, project managers, senior management, vendors, clients and others impacted by the project.

List of people with whom you'll communicate:

<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Your comfortable, confident communication will enable others to learn from you – and to take action that will move the project forward.

3. Inspire Confidence in Others

Inspiring confidence in others is an essential leadership skill. Jack Welch, the former Chairman and CEO of General Electric, says, “Giving people self-confidence is by far the most important thing that I can do. Because then they will act.”

Those around you may doubt their ability or they may lack confidence in their performance. As a leader, you can provide a level of confidence and certainty. Here are some ways to do this: share stories that

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motivate, communicate the company's vision, speak with passion and excitement, and make sure all of your messages inspire conviction. People respond to leaders they respect.

When you use words to inspire confidence, your message should include clear and direct statements that encapsulate your desired objective. The words, tone and overall energy directly affect the degree of confidence and inspiration you awaken in others.

Being generous with praise and recognition will earn leaders what Stephen Harrison, chairman of Lee Hecht Harrison, calls "psychic income." An example he cites is the chairman and CEO of Campbell Soup who "at the end of every day gathers his people to hear about neat stuff done that day and then handwrites thank-you notes to the people who did it. If you go around Campbell Soup, all over the world, you will find those notes framed." (Knowledge@Wharton, August 22, 2007)

Take Action Now!

Here are some ways to motivate others:

- Create a sense of purpose and meaning for their work.
- Recognize their efforts.
- Praise and compliment.
- Publicly and privately acknowledge others' achievements.
- Provide monetary awards.
- Give out certificates of achievement.
- Create opportunities for others to make a difference in their work.
- Identify a clear career path so employees know how to advance in a company.
- Provide letters of recommendation.
- Identify what is most enjoyable about the job and create new projects that incorporate these qualities.

Create ten ways that you can motivate others through your words, the messages you communicate and the behavior you inspire at work (you can leverage the list above or come up with new ones):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

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5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

4. Prioritize the Company's Vision

Great leaders are focused on what is best for the organization. They don't fixate on day-to-day responsibilities or problems. Rather, strong leaders prioritize and share with others the company's vision and overall strategic plan.

Ultimately, effective leaders increase the morale of an organization by articulating a vision that others can buy into. This encourages employees to be less obsessed about putting out daily fires and to focus on the company's long-term goals. Employees at all levels are motivated to work toward a common objective that is greater than their current job responsibilities and day-to-day tasks.

Take Action Now!

How can you clearly describe your company's vision in a way that inspires and is remembered? Ask others to explain the company's vision and its importance and how their work directly makes it happen. Be sure you are implementing the vision on an active level – prioritizing your work responsibilities—to ensure the company's vision and direction are given top priority.

In the coming weeks, instead of focusing on a project's complexity or visibility, think about how this project affects your company's future and bottom line. What project are you working on now? Describe it below.

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Next, consider the ways this project impacts your company's future. How might it affect the bottom line? Are there other projects or initiatives that will benefit from your work on this endeavor? How does this project relate to your company's mission? Write the answers to these questions below:

Use this exercise as a way to reframe your thinking about the value of your responsibilities and your job. You're not just completing Task A or attending Meeting B, you're having an impact on the future of your company!

Here's another tip: Whenever you schedule a meeting, spend the first two or three minutes discussing how your agenda is directly related to your company's mission. If you can't make the link, cancel the meeting.

5. Be Guided by Intuition

Leaders don't second guess themselves or their decisions. Instead, they develop self-trust and allow their intuition, or gut feeling, guide them through uncharted terrain. A leader's intuition is indispensable. Education and experience help leaders make strong decisions. However, trusting intuition will lead you to greater success most of the time.

Relying on your intuition will help you:

- make better decisions
- be more confident and trusting of yourself
- become a clearer thinker
- be a better problem solver
- read between the lines with business interactions and decisions
- be more innovative and creative
- identify employees who are not a good fit
- hire the perfect candidate
- make big-picture decisions that have company wide impact

Many people tend to push aside intuition in favor of rational thought. As you develop your intuition, try to temper your emphasis on reasoning, facts, figures and logic and be less skeptical of the adage "go with your gut." Make decisions based mostly on a gut feeling, rather than logic or reasoning, and the majority of the time this turns out to be the right decision.

Colin Powell, former Secretary of State, United States, said, "You have to learn the technique of informing your instinct, of educating that little place down in your stomach where instinct resides, so that it is not blind instinct, but informed instinct. Built into each of us is a little calculator that can make judgments that will never appear on a piece of paper. And sometimes you just know something's right - you can't prove it to anybody-- or you know something's wrong. Little ethical circuit breakers you carry

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around inside of you, or little right and wrong circuit breakers you carry around inside of you. So I go with my instinct a great deal.” (Academy of Achievement, May, 1998).

Warren Bennis, the University Professor and Distinguished Professor of Business Administration at the University of Southern California, told this story about Howard Schultz, the founder of Starbucks, illustrating the importance of listening to your intuition:

Recently, [Schultz] wanted to move Starbucks into a particular international market. He was discouraged by all sorts of consulting studies and analysis, all the advice he could muster. He called me. Without telling me any details, he said, “I have something I want to do, but for the first time almost all of my direct reports are against the decision. What do I do?” I said, “Well, how far have you gotten on your instincts, your gut, your heart?” I could hear him smiling on the phone. So I said, “Why don’t you just follow your heart?” Which is another way of making a brave decision.

However, I did counsel him to spend at least a couple of hours with his direct reports getting out all of their concerns. “Listen to them,” I said. “You may change your mind. But if you don’t, then tell them, ‘Look, this is what I think is right, I want your support, and let’s do it.’” “That’s what happened.

Schultz had spent over half a million dollars on consultants telling him not to go. But courage is giving people a direction that’s unusual and then getting people to enroll and mobilize behind that decision. He listened to all the concerns. But he went on his heart. (*Fast Company*, September, 2004)

Take Action Now!

Executives, managers, supervisors and employees develop intuition by creating a place for inner reflection and observation. Many executives have little time to be alone and intuition is hard to hear amidst the strident voices, noises and external distractions that surround you (e.g. television, radio, newspapers, meetings, email, voice mail, etc.).

To help you cultivate intuition, try any of the following: schedule quiet time, meditate, journal, record your inner thoughts and feelings, take a bath or hot tub for relaxation, practice art, listen to music, do physical exercise in which the mind rests and you can become clear. Walk in nature, walk around the block or talk to a friend or colleague who can spark your intuition.

Select three from the list above or come up with your own:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Realize that subtle is significant. Learn to pick up on those subtle feelings, body sensations, images and thoughts you experience from slowing down. As you begin to hear your intuition, you may be surprised to notice it speaks up more than you realize.

6. Seek Advice and Support

Some executives shy away from seeking advice and support. They believe they don't need guidance or input from others. Their ego may stand in the way of them asking for help. They think they can do it alone or they feel they already have all the answers.

Great leaders rely on advice and support from people they trust. To make effective choices, leaders bring into their circle people who can provide necessary counsel.

Throughout your career as an individual contributor, you may have spent most of the time relying on yourself for production, results and success. Now, as a leader with executive presence, it's imperative to admit that you need assistance. It is impossible for you to have all the answers. You need to reach out and receive support, advice and help from others.

Take Action Now!

One way to seek advice and support is to create a personalized Leadership Support Team list. Identify seven to ten people you trust, whose opinions you value, who can offer insight and perspective on your situation. They are able to provide resources and help you be the best leader you can be.

Your Leadership Support Team can consist of coaches, mentors, other leaders, family members, colleagues, people inside your organization or your network and business associates

Leadership Support Team List:

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

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Next, identify the key issues about which you need advice and support.

Key Issues: _____

Finally, match the issues with the right people on your Leadership Support Team.

ISSUE	PEOPLE
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

After you have identified the issues and names, contact these people. Ask to spend quality time with them so you can gain the necessary advice and support. Before you call, realize that this process is mutually beneficial. The person you are contacting wants to share their experience and knowledge with you. This makes them feel important, as if their legacy is living on with you.

7. Take Risks

Great leaders possess the courage to move ahead even in the most uncertain times. They take risks, daring themselves and others into new dimensions and directions. When leaders are clear on what must be accomplished, they take the necessary risks needed for success. They are willing to make mistakes, experiment without an assured outcome, and try something new. Leaders who take risks are confident as they look for new opportunities and ways to innovate and challenge current systems.

In a Fortune article, *Chaos by Design*, Sheryl Sandberg, a 37-year-old vice president at Google admitted committing an error costing several million dollars. She discussed her mistake with Larry Page, Google's co-founder and told him, "God, I feel really bad about this." Page responded with, "I'm so glad you made this mistake," he said. "Because I want to run a company where we are moving too quickly and doing too much, not being too cautious and doing too little. If we don't have any of these mistakes, we're just not taking enough risk." (*Fortune*, October 2006)

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**Take Action Now!**

To increase your risk-taking ability, identify three different decisions you need to make in which you are only about 50 percent certain of the outcome.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

After you have identified these decisions, take steps to implement them, even with your certainty only at 50 percent. This approach isn't fail-proof, but then, risk taking never is. Still, regardless of the outcome, you'll be able to move ahead with confidence and learn how to be more comfortable taking risks.

8. Exude Passion

Great leaders also love what they do and exude a passion that rubs off on the people around them. A leader's passion for an idea, person, concept, product or industry creates an energy that pulls people forward, boosts buy-in, and increases desired results. Passion also helps to propel individuals through challenges and overcome setbacks. The morale of an organization is energized and uplifted up by a passionate leader.

Passion for your work isn't something that's nice to have – it's something you must possess or you cannot hope to succeed. As Mark Thompson, Stewart Emery and Jerry Porras, authors of *Success Built to Last*, said, "When we interviewed people for our book, we learned that whether you are Jack Welch or the Dalai Lama, it is dangerous not to do what you love. If you don't have a level of passion that drives your thinking about what you're doing day in and day out, there will be others out there who are passionate who will overtake and outrun you. People who care will take the initiative away from those who are half-hearted. So loving what you do is a competitive imperative, not simply a nice thing to have." (*Knowledge@Wharton*, October, 2006)

Take Action Now!

To exude passion, identify something in your work that you enjoy the most. What aspects of your work make you excited and enthusiastic?

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After you have identified the enjoyable work, inspire others to be apart of it. Leaders who communicate their passion create an infectious energy and sustained commitment from others.

9. Learn From Other Leaders

No one can run a company or a department alone. Strong leaders learn to lead by following others. They trust and are loyal to those who are in authority. They are inspired by their superiors and may even try to emulate them. This applies to actual individuals with whom you interact or can be drawn from someone who represents qualities you admire. This inspiration figure can be living or dead... or even fictional. You can learn as much (if not more) about leadership from reading Shakespeare than you can from perusing today's business best sellers.

Unfortunately, many executives stop modeling other leaders once they feel they are leaders themselves. This often occurs when executives are promoted to head a division or company. Great leaders, however, don't stop once they are successful; instead, they continue to emulate and model others who can teach them new tricks, provide fresh insights and increase their awareness about themselves and leadership. It's important to continue to learn from other leaders, even while you are being a mentor and role model for others within the organization.

Take Action Now!

Select the top leaders who inspire you. Make a list of those leaders you read about in the media or books, and ones that surround you in daily life and at work. Identify at least five individuals.

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

For each person, identify the specific qualities you admire most (e.g., risk taking, confidence, inspirational, relationship builder, etc.).

LEADER

QUALITY

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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Once you have identified four to six qualities for each leader, select the top two, and commit to demonstrating them at work this week.

TOP TWO QUALITIES

1.

2.

Post them on your bulletin board or your computer. Use them as inspiration and a reminder of the leader you are determined to become.

10. Embrace Obstacles

Great leaders embrace and overcome obstacles. They have a “nothing stands in my way” mindset that focuses on solutions and achieving positive results. Gene Kranz, the veteran NASA flight controller and the lead flight director for Apollo 13, is a prime example of this mindset. In April 1970, the Apollo 13 had an on-board explosion. This caused life-threatening problems for the three astronauts who became stranded in space. If the astronauts couldn’t perform the necessary maneuvers following the explosion, they would be unable to come back to Earth safely and would perish.

This situation unfolded for three intense days. The world knew what was happening and waited anxiously to see if the damaged spacecraft would return to Earth with its three heroic astronauts.

Fred Haise, one of the astronauts aboard Apollo 13, said the following about Gene during this life saving mission: “Gene made a very strategic decision that enabled the success of Apollo 13, setting up a brain trust to work through all the problems and devising an ultimate plan for solutions. ... They worked and enabled us to get home.”

In the most critical moment of the three days, Kranz showed how to embrace and overcome obstacles when he told his fellow ground crew members in Mission Control, “We’ve never lost an American in space and we sure as hell aren’t going to lose one now. ... This crew is coming home.” In the 1995 movie *Apollo 13*, Kranz, portrayed by Ed Harris, says, “Failure is not an option!”

Take Action Now!

As a leader with executive presence, you must have an innovative style and offer creative solutions to obstacles. If at first this approach seems too unconventional for you, rely on your colleagues and team members to help you.

The next time you are faced with an obstacle, schedule a one-hour meeting with three of the most unconventional thinkers in your company. These are the people in your organization who think nonlinearly, use the right side of their brains, and are creative and clever in how they come up with solutions for problems. Pose your problem to the team. Creating a one-hour time limit will create a comfortable tension to discovering an effective solution. These sessions most often are enjoyable and fun for everyone.

In addition, over time, they will improve your own creative solution abilities as well as strengthen the relationships with the unconventional thinkers—that is, leaders—of your company.

To lead people, walk beside them ... As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate ... When the best leader's work is done the people say, 'We did it ourselves!'

~ LAO-TSU ~

SHARE THE LIMELIGHT

If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, then we did it. If anything goes really good, then you did it. That's all it takes to get people to win football games.

~ COACH PAUL “BEAR” BRYANT ~

Sharing the limelight with others is also imperative to developing executive presence. Most executives know that their success rests on other people's shoulders. Even if it feels like you are the only person who puts in long hours of hard work, no project is ever completed by just one person.

Your challenge is to create opportunities for your entire team to gain visibility and recognition from top management. Making clear to executive management the impact that your team has on the company will directly help you gain more influence, support and appreciation.

If you don't report directly to executive management, you will still make an impact by sharing the limelight. Letting your boss and others in your division know how well your group is doing spreads goodwill – and calls attention to the positive contributions you and your colleagues are making.

Shared limelight will lead to higher morale and lower turnover in your department, advancement in your career, and increased salary and responsibility.

Stephen Harrison, chairman of Lee Hecht Harrison, tells a story about having dinner with his old college roommate, Ruben Mark, CEO of Colgate Palmolive. Harrison asked his friend how he explained his success. “He leaned across the table and said, ‘That’s easy. I make absolutely sure nothing creative or important is ever identified as my idea,’” said Harrison. (Knowledge@Wharton, August 22, 2007)

Sharing the limelight can be both obvious and subtle, depending on the circumstances.

Obvious Limelight

Sharing the limelight in an obvious way can help you to empower others so they grow and reach their potential. Also, it tells management that this person has the capability to do their job, has great talents, and is a future star employee. When you obviously share the limelight, you are giving up sole power and including others. This helps you to accomplish more and experience greater success than by going at it alone.

An obvious way to share the limelight is to invite others to voice their viewpoints during meetings, which will generate respect for their efforts. Also, you can assign them as team lead, ask them to represent you at meetings or request they respond on your behalf to a communication from an influential executive. Inform others in management that the person with whom you are sharing the limelight is actually in charge and should be treated with the same respect you would receive.

Tell others who have influence and power how well this person is doing and the impact they are having on the organization.

On the flip side, if you wish to be placed directly in the limelight, you'll have better luck if your manager is vocal, has good visibility and is willing to speak on your behalf. A simple "Joe, you have a management meeting coming up, right? It'd be great if you could get in a mention of how well the Johnson Project went. Thanks!" could go a long way toward demonstrating to your manager (Joe) that you'd like to boost your visibility.

Another tactic: inform your manager about your success. If you sent a congratulatory note to your team after completing a major milestone, cc: your manager so he or she is up-to-date on your team's progress. That way, it's much easier for your supervisor to share it.

Subtle Limelight

Subtle limelight is necessary for executives with presence who work in more passive, less visible corporate environments. People who work in this type of culture are less vocal about promoting others. To gain visibility and recognition from senior management, you'll need to leverage subtle limelight, which allows you to appropriately receive recognition so that others in the organization are aware of the impact you are having on the company.

If you wish to help a team member gain positive attention, a subtle way to share the limelight is to allow them to be involved in high-profile projects, but assigned to minor responsibilities that are less visible. For example, instead of providing a team member with high visibility during a meeting, have them send out a follow-up email summarizing the meeting's key points. This way, they will gain visibility in a subtle way and, over time, others will notice their impact.

If you wish to subtly share the limelight, your quest will be well-received by two types of managers: those who are not very vocal, avoid attention and prefer hard work and results without needing overt acknowledgement and those who are more controlling, regularly override your opinions and do not see the benefit and value of the work you are doing.

The first type of manager is not comfortable commanding attention (even if it's on your behalf), and the second type simply doesn't see a need or reason to talk you up. If you wish to circumvent these challenging managers, whether on behalf of your employees or yourself, follow the steps mentioned above. For example, volunteer to send follow-up emails after meetings or assign that task to your under-recognized employee. Present your team's accomplishments at the all-hands gathering or suggest your valuable team member do so.

Let's Recap:

Listed below are the Interpersonal Relationship Characteristics we've explored in this chapter. You've improved your communication skills, learned to tell the difference between leading and managing and gained valuable ideas for sharing the limelight.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

- 1) **COMMUNICATE CLEARLY:** Build confidence, trust and credibility by speaking clearly and persuasively. Your reputation as a top notch communicator will place you in high demand for challenging and rewarding assignments.
- 2) **LEAD, DON'T JUST MANAGE:** Move beyond the manager role to influence events and those around you. As a leader, you'll inspire and motivate others by advocating what's best for the organization, not just your work group.
- 3) **SHARE THE LIMELIGHT:** Enhance your reputation as a confident leader by sharing recognition with others. You'll boost morale, trust and teamwork, as well as opportunities for your advancement.

CONCLUSION

In your workplace, you interact with all types of people from different backgrounds, cultures, and levels of management. With each working relationship make sure you communicate effectively so you deliver the right message. Your ability to communicate powerfully to influential individuals in the organization is vital to your success.

As we learned in this chapter, developing executive presence requires honing your interpersonal relationship skills. These skills will improve your communication abilities and help you to become a top leader. Your interpersonal skills will support you during the ever-changing and complex future of business relations.

CHAPTER 3 – REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

- ☐ Review the material in this chapter. Focus on your answers.
- ☐ Understand how to create cooperative, supportive and empowering relationships.
- ☐ Choose at least three ideas from the list of six tips for effective communication so you will become a clear and effective communicator.
- ☐ Identify at least two influential people and communicate with them.
- ☐ Choose a difficult situation, conversation or interaction at work and apply the ten steps to resolve the situation.

- ☐ Choose a situation which you need to create a desired action or persuade another person toward your perspective.
- ☐ Identify a situation where you need to speak publicly and apply the ten tips for successful public speaking.
- ☐ Understand the distinction between managing and leading.
- ☐ To help you develop leadership, assess the 10 skills common to great leaders and apply the simple exercise for each leadership talent.
- ☐ Learn how to share the limelight to gain visibility and recognition from others.

SUMMARIZE KEY POINTS

Summarize the key points you learned in this chapter and jot them down below.

CHAPTER 4.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

"The individual who wants to reach the top in business must appreciate the might and force of habit. He must be quick to break those habits that can break him—and hasten to adopt those practices that will become the habits that help him achieve the success he desires."

~ J. PAUL GETTY ~

Performance improvement stimulates an employee's productivity and effectiveness while ensuring the company maintains its competitive advantage. Three performance improvement skills are necessary for strong executive presence:

- Prioritizing projects
- Solid thinking ability
- Developing discernment

In this chapter we'll explore how to continually improve these vital skills and learn how to identify and address any deficiencies. Fine-tuning your performance improvement skills requires a time investment, but the payoff will be knowing you are making the best use of your skills, capabilities and experience. Performance improvement also helps make your job work for you, so you can be at your best. It will turn you into a peak performer who operates at the highest level of productivity.

PRIORITIZE YOUR PROJECTS

Set priorities for your goals...a major part of successful living lies in the ability to put first things first. Indeed, the reason most major goals are not achieved is that we spend our time doing second things first.

~ ROBERT MCKAIN ~

We all know that strong time-management skills are essential to productive, effective work. Prioritization – or assessing the relative importance of your projects and assigning time and deadlines to them – is key to effective time management. Keen attention to priorities will enable you to complete the projects and excel in the areas that matter most. This skill allows you to make informed decisions about how you use your time, interact with others and best leverage your talents. It will also help you to be more balanced, less overwhelmed and more in control at work.

Employees are always gaining responsibility, taking on new tasks and adding more requirements to their to-do lists. So it's vital to know how to organize, implement and prioritize these responsibilities.

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GE CEO Jeff Immelt cites 10 keys to great leadership, including the importance of alignment and time management. He says, “There is no real magic to being a good leader. But at the end of every week, you have to spend your time around the things that are really important: setting priorities, measuring outcomes and rewarding them.” (*Fast Company*, April 2004)

1. Get Organized

Getting organized will bring order, efficiency and productivity to your projects. The time you invest now into organizing your projects will save you huge amounts of time in the future. Organization will maximize your opportunities and contribute to successfully completing your projects on time.

Choose a simple process that effectively organizes your schedule and workload. Modify any organizational process according to your needs and what you are trying to achieve. The organizing process should not be too complex. You must commit to using and maintaining it for an extended period of time. If you don’t make that commitment, your quest for organization will likely fail.

Take Action Now!

Plan your work and work your plan. Organize your projects on a weekly basis. For most executives, the best times to organize and plan priorities for the week are Friday, Sunday evening or first thing Monday morning. Learn to integrate aspects of your long-term ventures into your weekly and daily to-do lists. This will help you to move ahead on your prioritized projects by spending at least a portion of each day focusing on them.

At the start of the day or just before you go home, set aside 10 to 15 minutes to create a to-do list for your upcoming activities. This advanced planning can save you more than an hour a day.

Like Victor Hugo said, “He who every morning plans the transactions of the day and follows out that plan, carries a thread that will guide him through the labyrinth of the most busy life.”

2. Learn to Prioritize

Next, learn to prioritize your projects so you can identify what is most important and, as a result, budget your time appropriately.

To carve out time for your most important responsibilities, determine which projects and tasks are least significant. As you assess these projects and tasks, think about which ones are *not* necessary for you to do your job and which ones are *not* vital to boosting your executive presence. These are the tasks you should delegate to free up time to devote to the projects and tasks that are central to your goals.

When you engage in this prioritization process, keep in mind your wish to maintain a whole-company perspective and increase visibility. It’s important to keep these strategic factors in mind when planning and organizing your projects and time.

Now that you’ve determined which task is your top priority, focus on it until it’s completed. Then, focus your efforts on the next most important activity. By diligently following this process and adhering to your priorities, you’ll have a greater sense of accomplishment at the end of each day. Consider scheduling appointments with yourself to work on the projects that are most important.

Take Action Now!

Less is more: focus only on three major projects. Most people limit their success by juggling too many assignments. While multi-tasking is admirable, handling too many tasks at once can sometimes backfire and result in confusion and substandard work.

Make a list of all your projects and delegate or temporarily suspend everything except the three most important. This means focusing on the high return tasks/projects and delegating the low return. Give yourself the opportunity to do great work on the three that matter the most.

Delegating allows you to concentrate on what is most important. You take the time to understand the big picture and overall direction of your career and your company. At the same time, the people to whom you delegate benefit from the increased responsibility. It provides an opportunity to show others what they are capable of. They will be in better position for advancement because of their increased knowledge, responsibility and influence. You will also be regarded as the person who recognized and supported such talented people!

Once you've narrowed your immediate responsibilities, decide which ones are most important. Once a day-- either at the end of your workday or first thing in the morning -- write out a list of tasks in order of priority. Then review, adjust and change this list as necessary.

Ask yourself these questions as you compile your list:

1. If I can only accomplish one item today, which will it be?
2. Does this task make the best use of my time?
3. Am I making the most of my knowledge, creativity and experience?

3. Take It One Step at a Time

Implementing involves taking the tasks required to complete a project and breaking them into manageable steps to achieve a desired outcome. When working on long-term projects that seem intimidating, it's imperative you implement this step-by-step process without delay – right at the beginning.

Hesitation, fear and self-doubt can cause you to procrastinate. Many long-term projects are indefinitely postponed because the endeavor seems so daunting. To combat this, take small steps you know you can accomplish. The more realistic your expectations, the better.

When you gain momentum, you can let the energy and excitement of the project take over. You'll be fully engaged and make excellent progress. After all, energy cultivates action and action, over time, will always produce results.

Keep in mind this formula for success: Momentum + Energy + Action = Results!

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Take Action Now!

Identify a project you've already organized and prioritized. Break it into manageable pieces by creating a list of all the individual tasks that must be accomplished to successfully complete it.

Project Name: _____

Individual Tasks:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Each of these parts is its own smaller task within each project. Now, analyze these tasks and establish realistic but ambitious completion timelines for each.

Create your timeline here – use the tasks you've listed above and refer to your calendar as you create realistic due-dates. When doing so, consider whether you tend to “over-promise” (say things will be done by a certain date...but you typically finish projects a day or so later than you think you will) or “under-promise” (give due-dates for which you tend to be early), and schedule your tasks accordingly.

Task**Due Date**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

By creating a realistic timeline you will be more focused on accomplishing your tasks on time.

To complete your prioritized projects, say no to activities that appear urgent but will ultimately distract you from accomplishing your important long-range goals. Frequently refer to your task-list and timeline to keep your projects front-of-mind. Review certain projects on a daily basis (those with a larger task-list and/or more immediate deadlines) and revisit others on a weekly basis.

12 ways to save time.

1. Success doesn't come from having more time, but from using the time you have more effectively.
2. Avoid activities that seem urgent but distract you from accomplishing your important long-range projects.
3. Spending 10 to 15 minutes every morning mapping out your day can save up to six hours a week. For every hour of planning, three to four hours are wasted while waiting for information, not being prepared and poorly managed tasks.
4. Review your top goals at the beginning of every week and plan your activities around them.
5. The first hour of your workday sets the pattern for the entire day. Make sure it is productive.
6. At the end of each day, review your to-do list and examine what you accomplished, what you could have done more efficiently and what still needs to be done.
7. Each of us has but 168 waking hours each week. Use these precious hours to accomplish what is most important.
8. At the end of the day or first thing in the morning, update your to-do list so your plan will be clear as you start the day.
9. The average executive wastes an hour a day looking for important papers, totaling more than six weeks annually. Based on an \$80,000 annual salary, the cost of this search is \$10,000 per year. (Vicki Norris ©Restoring Order, 2002). Keep a detailed time log this week and learn how much time you waste.
10. Handle activities and problems as they occur rather than putting them aside for later.
11. You can't really "save" time, but you can productively use time that would otherwise be squandered.
12. Determine what resources are needed (people, equipment, materials), how much of each you need and when you need them. Then research what resources are available and delegate accordingly.

REFINE YOUR THINKING SKILLS

Think like a man of action, and act like a man of thought.

~ HENRI BERGSON ~

Executive presence is characterized by solid thinking skills. You observe, interpret, analyze, evaluate, process and problem solve to make conclusions on situations at work. Your intuition, the lessons you've learned from past experiences, and the information you glean from research work together to ensure you are able to make the best decisions about your career. Whether you're deciding how to parcel out tasks or wondering if you should ask your boss about the best approach to win over your client, solid thinking skills will see you through.

Solid thinking allows you to make the best decisions. With ever-increasing global competition and technological advancement, it's essential that executives possess flexible, superior thinking skills, especially regarding management, technology and organization.

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As you visualize your career aspirations, you also must be able to identify the steps required to reach your goals.

One way to identify those steps and prepare for your future is to assess what has and hasn't worked thus far in your career. Also consider what's worked for an executive you wish to emulate (Bill Gates, Jack Welch, Meg Whitman, etc.) who's had ups and downs from which you can learn.

And, of course, every experience is a learning opportunity – thus, it's a good idea to regularly review your actions and decisions. For example, Michael Useem, the Director for the Center for Leadership and Change Management at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, says, “The number-one way to prepare for future tough moments is to do what the military calls an ‘after-action review.’ Do it routinely, not only in your operation but for you personally. I’ve spoken with entrepreneurs who routinely sit down at the end of their week and look at the decisions they’ve made. It’s almost meditative. They get rid of all other distractions and review what they did, what they might have done differently, and what lessons came out of that, for future reference.” (*Fast Company*, September, 2004)

Understand Complex Tasks

Solid thinking skills come from your ability to understand and work through complex tasks. Complex tasks are, by definition, complicated, involved and can be difficult to understand or resolve. Thus, it's important to allow yourself enough time and energy to focus on complicated projects and tasks. Bear in mind that organization and prioritization, as discussed previously, will help you free up more of your time.

To solve complex tasks, break them down into sub-parts so each action is clear. Take immediate action on the parts that require little analysis and investigate the actions that need further attention.

Seven Ways to Break Down Complex Tasks

1. See the big picture.

This will help you know the overall objective you are trying to achieve. Begin at a high level before you break down complex tasks.

2. Recognize the common feelings of resistance.

Feeling overwhelmed, confused and even intimidated by a complex task is natural. Acknowledging these feelings will help defuse their intensity so you can move forward.

3. Make a list of all the steps.

This extensive list will help you to break down the complex tasks. Listing all the steps gives you a comprehensive view of the situation.

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4. Organize this list in the most sensible order.

Having a list in logical order will help you know what needs to be done first and what is done second.

5. Identify the first step you will take.

Choose the easiest step so you can be successful and create momentum. By focusing only on this step, you will not become overwhelmed by all that needs to get done.

6. Set a specific time when you want to complete each step.

Make sure you know the length of time needed to complete the step and what might hinder its completion.

7. Tap into the positive feelings you have.

When you take steps forward, you will notice positive feelings of momentum and energy that encourage you to take the next step and the next one until you finish.

Five Possible Ways to Solve Complex Tasks:

1. Team Approach

Putting together a team or committee can often help to solve a complex task. Teams offer a wide range of perspectives, talents, abilities and mindsets that create innovative solutions that individuals are likely to come up with on their own.

2. Group Support

If a team is not possible, you can still seek help to understand and resolve complex tasks by gathering less formal support from individuals who can provide insight, perspective, intellect, knowledge, resources or information. Call upon anyone you respect whose expertise can help solve the complex tasks.

3. Mentor Advice

Identifying and asking for the assistance of a subject matter expert can also be beneficial to resolution. These individuals act as temporary mentors who provide invaluable insight and information from first-hand (and hard-earned) experience.

4. Imagination

Before moving forward with your plan, try imagining possible actions to solve the complex task. This helps you to anticipate, predict and consider possible actions without timelines, pressure and other feelings that can be overwhelming when you begin implementation.

5. Past Experience

Identify a successful process or method from the past that is similar to your situation and was successful. Leverage this example to discover solutions to your complex problem. Often, people who

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refer to past examples become more confident in their abilities and are able to conjure up the creativity to find solutions of their own.

Take Action Now!

Select one overwhelming task that seems daunting, challenging and complex. This task can be one of your current responsibilities or one that you may face in the future.

To solve this task, choose at least one or possibly a few of the solutions listed above. Identify, contact and schedule time with the necessary people needed to implement the solutions you have chosen. If you have chosen a solution that doesn't involve others, schedule time in your calendar for implementation.

Once you have chosen the solution and started to work through the complex task, you will be propelled forward with the energy, confidence, knowledge and determination to solve the problem.

Analyze Issues and Concerns

Effective analysis is when you thoroughly investigate and examine a situation or problem to come up with a solution. Effective analysis is invaluable for addressing challenging issues and concerns at work. This critical thinking tool helps you discover quick and efficient solutions by identifying problems, analyzing the issues and assessing the information.

You can boost your analytical skills in several ways. Here are a few ideas:

- A. Stay informed about your company and industry – read news and trade publications relevant to your business and position at your company.
- B. Study your competitors – consider what makes them unique, analyze their strengths and weaknesses and learn from them.
- C. Stay informed about what industry analysts have to say about trends and new developments in your industry.
- D. Look to your mentors and coworkers. Do you have a coworker or superior who possesses analytical skills you admire? Ask them about their thought processes and closely observe them in meetings to see what you can learn.

With study and practice, you'll sharpen your analytical skills, which will help you make strong, timely decisions. This will benefit you, your team and your company.

When it comes to decision-making, most people overanalyze information and have a hard time pulling the trigger and taking action. We often collect large amounts of information, which tends to make it difficult to actually take a stand and make a decision.

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Most of the time, the initial information we gather will be enough for us to make the correct decision. It's important to honor the initial "hit" that we get and to pull the trigger quickly before we get caught in trying to make a perfect decision.

So going with your instincts and knowing what to do early on in the decision-making process is key to figuring out an unanswered decision, issue or concern.

Terry Lundgren, Federated CEO, says this about the importance of listening and then pulling the trigger, "I have always been a pretty good listener and I am quick to admit that I do not have all the answers. So I am going to listen. But shortly after I listen, the second piece is to pull the trigger. I have all the input and here is what we are going to do. People need closure on a decision. If you listen and then noodle on it, people get confused, and that's not effective leadership." (*Fortune Magazine*, December 2005)

Take Action Now!

The first step in effective analysis is identifying and understanding the problem. When the specific problem is clear, you're able to effectively move toward solving it. It's important to identify the problem in its entirety, including its cause and effect.

Once you have identified the problem, develop a detailed plan – one that contains action steps, and addresses specific issues so you can move toward a solution. A sufficiently detailed plan will include all the work that needs to be completed through planning and execution. Begin by identifying all the specific activities necessary for solution. Next, break down each task into specific details. Once you have identified the details, create the milestones for each task. As you're developing your timeline and milestones, keep in mind you and your team's other projects and duties. This will help you create a more realistic schedule, one that will help you stay on target for completion. As you implement the detailed plan, determine the resources you need and to be aware of the limitations you encounter during each step.

Finally, document and use the process you have created. By effectively analyzing problems, creating solutions to solve them and documenting the process, you can eliminate similar problems from happening in the future. Use the lessons you learn on this project to do a better job on planning and implementing future ones. You may want to share your lessons learned with colleagues and superiors – your experience and insight will likely benefit other workers, departments and your company overall.

Think Backward from the Desired Outcome

To think backward, you must first define the ideal future state you want to achieve. Once the desired objective is clearly defined, you undertake the steps needed to produce the outputs necessary for the end result. As you look at your current state, keep your future goals in mind – this will help you decide on specific actions and create strategies that are directly connected to the desired end result. As a forward-focused leader, you will achieve your desired outcomes based on an effective strategic planning.

People often focus on putting out fires, taking the next obvious step or complaining about present circumstances. They shortchange their future by eating up time and energy that would be better conserved for longer-term, more complex endeavors.

By leaving these linear, problem-focused modes of thinking behind and focusing on the desired outcome, you demonstrate executive presence. Focus on the best solution for all concerned, and then think backward to outline an action plan. This will lead to more creative solutions that aim higher and are more likely to hit their targets. In addition, a positive, forward-thinking approach may motivate your "fire fighting" peers and give you a chance to showcase your leadership skills.

Backward-designed plans include more thorough analysis of potential problems and pitfalls. Thinking this way will not only help you to avoid the pitfalls, but also open doors to unforeseen potential.

Take Action Now!

To use end-to-beginning outcome thinking, refrain from asking “forward-from-here” questions like, “What’s our next step?” and “How do we get there from here?” Instead, ask, “Describe the most amazing outcome. How could it be even better?” The actions generated from this process will be very different from those that take place when we say, “What’s next?” or “What do we need to do?” as a first question.

Throughout the process, remember that even though you’re beginning with the outcome in mind, an even better outcome is always possible, so don’t be rigidly attached to the original solution you envisioned.

Once you’ve described in detail the outcome you desire, begin to work backward. Study what components are required to create such an outcome. Team members? Resources? Policies? Culture? Attitude? Action?

As the ingredients for this outcome become clearer, move back in time toward the present. Documenting different stages between the present and this ideal result will give you a timeline. Finally, the very first steps will become clear, and those are the first actions to take toward the outcome.

DEVELOP DISCERNMENT

*It is not by muscle, speed or physical dexterity that great things are achieved,
but by reflection, force of character and judgment.*

~ MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO ~

Discernment is the ability to have sound judgment when making decisions. Leaders with executive presence use their inner compass of moral judgment when making decisions. After all, each decision directly affects the lives of an entire organization and its employees.

When discernment isn’t used, an Enron-like scandal (which resulted in the destruction of a corporation and the loss of billions of dollars in market value), can easily happen. It is the leaders’ responsibility to act ethically and with discernment so they can make the best decisions possible – ones that serve the integrity of their hearts and their organizations.

The key to discernment is to not be influenced by others’ opinions or do things based on how it would look. You must be in touch with the truth inside of you, with what you are feeling inside...your gut instinct or intuition. When you know intuitively that your decision is a true, ethical one you will know what to say and when to say it, and what not to say. If you don’t listen to your internal voices you’ll make decisions that can lead to acts that can damage your organization. (See chapter 3, point #5 in the ten leadership skills for information regarding intuition.)

Discernment sometimes must be applied to dilemmas needing to be solved quickly, without time for analysis and reflection. This is when you will need to rely on your foundation of moral judgment needs. Without this foundation, poor decisions may be implemented and have a negative impact on your career and those of others.

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Discernment must constantly be committed to by management and used for all decisions, whether large or small. You must take the necessary responsibility for the moral judgment of your employees by modeling yourself to others.

Educate and coach your employees to know how to use discernment, including teaching others how to have outstanding character, acceptable moral conduct and knowledge of what is right or wrong. The ethics of an organization and the morality of each individual are vital to the sustainability of any business.

Take Action Now!

To practice discernment in decision-making, be more conscious of your inner moral judgment. Become a detailed and specific observer of each decision you make by jotting down notes and analyzing how you reach your decisions. Do you make decisions based on your values, the inner morality and truth that reside inside you? Are you influenced by others' opinions? Have you ever chosen to do something because of how it would look?

Consider a major decision you need to make and develop as many solutions as possible. As you determine the solution that best solves the problem or meets the challenge, select the decision that honors the soundest judgment and highest morality possible. If a decision is made with discernment, you'll make the best, most viable decision from a place of integrity.

Let's Recap:

Listed just below are the Performance Improvement Characteristics we've covered in this section. You've begun to further develop your discernment and solid thinking skills and have established useful ways to prioritize your projects.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT CHARACTERISTICS

- 1) **PRIORITIZE YOUR PROJECTS:** Improve your productivity, influence and reputation for high-level achievement when you focus on the things that matter most. Not only will you be a peak performer, you'll maintain a healthy balance in your life.
- 2) **REFINE YOUR THINKING SKILLS:** Make the best decisions thanks to your solid thinking skills. You'll get noticed (and rewarded) for your ability to understand and solve complex tasks, analyze issues and concerns and think back from the desired outcome.
- 3) **DEVELOP DISCERNMENT:** Navigate stormy, difficult waters when you steer by your inner compass. Follow the truth that is inside and you'll make the most ethical decisions for you and your organization.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, you have learned how to prioritize projects, gain solid thinking ability and develop discernment. This has helped you to increase your productivity, improve your performance and become more effective at work. Your overall quality of work has improved and you know how to constantly exceed expectations by implementing these skills.

With the constant change of the workplace, advancing technology and global competition, it is vital that each working professional have a competitive advantage that helps create a strong executive presence.

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

Using your performance improvement skills provides this advantage. By developing these skills, you will become more of an asset to the organization and you will feel more engaged in your work.

CHAPTER 4 – REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

- ☐ Review the material in this chapter. Focus on your answers.
- ☐ Schedule your projects on a weekly basis by choosing the best time to organize and plan priorities for the week (e.g. Friday, Sunday evening or Monday morning).
- ☐ List the projects and relevant tasks you are working on, identify which one is most important and focus on it until you've completed it.
- ☐ Identify a project that has already been organized and prioritized. Break the project into manageable pieces by creating a list of all the individual tasks that must be accomplished to successfully complete it.
- ☐ Review the twelve ways to save time and choose those you will implement this week.
- ☐ Choose a complex task and leverage the seven ways to break it down.
- ☐ Identify an overwhelming task that seems challenging or complex and use the five possible ways to solve it.
- ☐ Choose an issue or problem that needs solving and use effective analysis to come up with a solution.
- ☐ Identify a situation for which you can use end-to-beginning outcome thinking.
- ☐ Make an important decision by leveraging your moral judgment and discernment.

SUMMARIZE KEY POINTS

Summarize the key points you learned in this chapter and jot them down below.

CHAPTER 5.

EXECUTIVE SELF-DEVELOPMENT

There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self.
~ ALDOUS HUXLEY ~

Employees who focus on self-development feel a responsibility to learn and develop themselves. Although self-development is a necessity for all employees, the higher you rise in an organization, the more you need to increase your knowledge of yourself and others.

Workers who aren't self-aware and don't focus on self-development have a misperception of themselves. This is often evident to colleagues and employees and if the person isn't willing to increase his or her knowledge of their work-self, it will become increasingly difficult to motivate and lead others.

Self-development contributes to a stronger executive presence by improving your sense of worth and confidence. You gain a better understanding of your inner world and are able to bring more of your true self to your work. You feel more comfortable and confident in your interactions with others and are more in touch with your emotions and thoughts. This comfort and confidence shows and will encourage others to have a more positive, supportive view of you.

KNOW THYSELF

Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.
~ ARISTOTLE ~

The first and most important step in gaining self-awareness is knowing yourself. *Harvard Business Review* agrees, as evidenced by a December 2001 article saying: "Leadership's First Commandment: Know Thyself."

It's true: to be a self-aware leader with strong executive presence, you must know what you feel and think and be aware of how you act. Be in touch with your needs, values, belief systems, emotional and intellectual intelligence, strengths and limitations. Understand what drives you. Be truthful and honest about who you are and what you can do: your capabilities, performance and potential.

In a *Harvard Business Review* article, "Managing Oneself," management legend Peter Drucker said, "Success comes to those who know themselves – their strengths, their values and how they best perform."

EXECUTIVE SELF-DEVELOPMENT

When employees leverage self-awareness, they are able to improve their performance by capitalizing on their strengths and minimizing the number of mistakes. Employees who are self-aware develop excellent decision-making abilities as a direct result of their self-knowledge. They look for and identify opportunities for success that help them thrive in their careers.

Self-aware employees also improve performance in poorly developed areas. They communicate, motivate and work with people more effectively because they understand themselves and the feelings and needs of others. They are also better able to handle challenges and complaints.

For example, one of my clients, a manager at Hewlett-Packard, worked with a difficult boss. However, my client was, through his own self-awareness, able to keep tabs on his emotions and closely monitor his frustration. As a result, he became aware of the reasons for his frustration and learned effective strategies for working with the individual – strategies that proved useful later on when dealing with a challenging coworker.

As a self-aware leader, you will be clear about your long-term goals and able to block any undermining issues, frustrations or situations from getting in the way.

Here is an example of a client who leveraged his self-awareness into a much-deserved promotion:

Joel's Coaching Clients

JACK USES SELF-AWARENESS TO KEEP HIS EYES ON THE PRIZE

Jack Montoya requested a promotion and 18 months passed before his request was granted. During this period, Jack's boss assigned him menial tasks, limited his visibility and kept interfering on his projects. Meanwhile, despite being less deserving, Jack's colleagues in other departments were promoted, largely due to their bosses' support.

Jack remained patient, summoning his self-awareness to help him remain focused, calm and determined to achieve his long-term goal. His self-awareness made him less reactive, blaming, defensive and frustrated in his less-than-ideal situation. He focused on completing his tasks (even the menial ones!), boosting his visibility and relationships with others in the company. Most important, he remained positive. Ultimately, Jack was awarded the promotion he deserved – and was able to work with a more-supportive boss, to boot.

Self-aware leaders understand what matters most to the people with whom they work. Employees feel a connection and rapport with this type of leader and are comfortable about approaching them.

For many, however, there is a barrier to self-awareness: most corporations care only about the bottom line results—making money is the primary goal. This drives the individuals inside the company toward a bottom-line mentality, rather than encouraging the contemplation and communication that aids in self-awareness.

Additionally, employees are distracted by their day-to-day responsibilities. Many believe they don't have the time or energy to focus on self-development. They may also be influenced by people who question the need to develop self-awareness and are judgmental about those who focus on self-development. These short-sighted individuals are driven to achieve bottom-line results that ultimately end up costing the company more in terms of turnover, low morale and other negative aspects of a company or team led by those with low self-awareness.

Take Action Now!

Review the nine self-awareness practices listed below. Choose at least one that you want to implement right now. If you are drawn to more than one, choose as many as you like. Even though some practices might already be a part of your routine or you may have done them in the past, include them in your daily routine now. As you put these practices into action, pay special attention to how they affect your own self-awareness.

9 Self-Awareness Practices at Work:

1. Create a work diary.

Create a work diary to document what you learn at work. Look for patterns that provide insights to help you grow and develop. Write about obstacles, weaknesses, strengths, accomplishments and areas of improvement.

2. Be in solitude.

Once every quarter, spend a couple hours or half a day in solitude to assess how you are feeling about work and your overall performance. Evaluate your behavior, feelings and thoughts about your current situation. Identify what drives you, your limitations, strengths and capabilities. Bill Gates, who is the head of Microsoft and one of the world's richest men, spends time in complete seclusion twice a year for seven days in what he terms "Think Week".

3. Consider everyone at work who interacts with you.

This includes all of the employees who work for you, your manager, top executives, vendors, clients, peers and customers. Think about their needs, values and feelings. How can you improve these relationships and create stronger alliances? What are you doing that is working well with some of these relationships? Where are your shortcomings?

4. Develop a long-term career plan.

Your long-term career plan should focus on your aspirations over the next five or more years. Using this long-term plan, you'll be able to identify the most valuable abilities, characteristics and behaviors necessary for your future success. This type of self-awareness improves your performance today and in the short term, and will help you make a stronger contribution to your company. (See chapter ten for more information.)

5. Understand your core work values.

Focus on what you cherish and value in your job. Work-based values are the internal standards you set for yourself based on who you are. Gain a clear understanding of what matters most to you at work. Be aware of the activities, beliefs, people and possessions you most value. Values reflect your core self...the real you. They are unique and highly personal.

6. Create a personal and professional development plan.

This plan focuses on your entire life, including areas such as health, money, family, friends, intimate partner, leisure, personal/spiritual growth and career. This whole perspective will help you see what areas you want to develop and where to focus your self-awareness.

7. Take advantage of professional and personal organizations and associations.

These organizations are related to your work and interests. Your self-awareness will be enhanced through the presentations, networking opportunities, conferences, publications, education and training.

8. Identify helpful professional and personal print media.

Websites, magazines, journals and books will help you stay up-to-date with your profession, develop leadership abilities, and learn more about yourself through self-help and inspirational content. You'll read stories about people whose work or values you admire. They can serve as role models as you look to expand your executive presence and further your career.

9. Take personality tests/assessments and aptitude/skill tests.

These include tests such as the Myers-Briggs and Enneagram. They help you understanding your skills, personality and work style. Be warned: although it may seem easier to become self-aware through testing, it isn't as effective as doing your own self-reflection.

Which two self-awareness practice do you choose to implement right now and when will you commit to getting it done?

1. _____

2. _____

SEEK FEEDBACK

Make sure you have someone in your life from whom you can get reflective feedback.

~ WARREN BENNIS ~

The employee who is committed to self-development and self-awareness understands the importance of feedback and appreciates receiving it. He or she is proactive about encouraging feedback, rather than simply waiting for it.

Everyone benefits when providing feedback becomes part of the culture of the company. A work environment that strongly supports and endorses a high degree of feedback will directly improve the effectiveness of an employee. The responsibility isn't just on the organization, however, but on all those in positions of authority. Employees should seek open and honest conversations regarding their performance and ability to manage.

Self-developed and self-aware leaders don't allow their egos to get in the way of feedback. They have enough self-esteem and confidence not to be intimidated or fearful about what the feedback might reveal. The employee who feels a false sense of security and doesn't see the benefit of feedback will be more defensive, resistant and closed. These employees will grow more slowly, put limitations on their career success and restrict the quantity and quality of the contributions they can make to their organizations.

Employees who aren't committed to self-development will not appreciate the importance of feedback. They will feel they don't need the information because they aren't interested in growing and developing themselves. When they do receive helpful feedback, they will seldom act on it and will avoid making changes because they feel things are fine just the way they are. This is why self-aware individuals are a powerful asset to the organization. They encourage feedback because they want to grow. They look for opportunities to expand their abilities and provide support to those around them.

One of the greatest challenges in seeking feedback is hearing something about yourself that is negative, needs improvement or is a behavior that needs to be changed. Self-aware individuals are more open to this type of feedback because they understand the purpose, meaning and benefits of receiving it. As leaders, they make others around them comfortable in sharing feedback that is direct and candid. If the leader doesn't actively seek feedback and make others around them comfortable in sharing negative information, they won't receive an accurate assessment of themselves.

The higher you advance in an organization, the more people you'll have working for you. Your subordinates will work best and want to give you the most when they feel they can trust you and are able to share honest feelings with you. As a manager, you'll receive powerful feedback from them that directly informs you how best to lead and work with your employees to reach their potential.

Kevin Sharer, the Amgen CEO, underscores this point: "You have to get ongoing constructive feedback to push you out of your comfort zone. This is never more important than when you are CEO. My direct reports go off every year and write my performance review. I also write each executive a two-page letter over Christmas that summarizes their performance and what I want them to focus on next year." (*Fortune Magazine*, December, 2005)

Take Action Now!

Executives can solicit feedback in many ways. Review the nine feedback-seeking practices listed below and choose the one that you want to implement right now (you can choose more than one practice).

9 Feedback-Seeking Practices

1. Invitation Feedback Meetings

Hold large meetings with employees so they can ask questions, make suggestions and give constructive feedback to management. These sessions can be conducted with the entire senior management and all the employees or be an intimate gathering of your immediate employees and the boss. When the gathering is smaller, more people are comfortable speaking up and sharing. As a manager you can hold meetings exclusively for your direct reports so they can provide feedback directly to you. In this type of environment, when employees feel they won't be judged and that management will actually listen, the possibility for change is apparent.

There are other things to consider when planning such a meeting – for example, if employee morale is low or if there is a single employee who has a negative outlook and also tends to monopolize conversations, take a more active role as a meeting-facilitator. Encourage everyone to speak. If one person monopolizes the conversation, that's your cue to say, "Thanks, Murray, for letting us know about the challenges you see here," and then ask others to share what they think.

If the feedback is largely negative, acknowledge that, and suggest one or two things that can be done in the short-term to improve circumstances. Then, schedule a follow-up meeting to talk about the improvements and identify further areas to address.

Regardless of the tone and content of the feedback, assess the possible paths to success beforehand so you can manage expectations. For example, there may be changes that would greatly benefit the team – but you don't have the authority to implement them. Think about the changes you do have the power to implement and keep them in mind as you enter the meeting.

Other ideas: if people are skeptical and afraid they'll be punished for asking tough questions or giving honest feedback, invite them to submit their questions on cards. When you've proven to them you're willing to take on the toughest questions, your answers are honest and straight-forward, they'll be less skeptical in future meetings... and you won't have to rely on cards.

2. Email Loops

Create a feedback email system for employees to ask questions of top executives, provide feedback and openly express their concerns. This can be done with your own small group or with top executives who have many direct reports and hundreds of employees working for them.

Another option: set up an anonymous-reply mechanism, if you feel your office-climate warrants it. The promise of anonymity may help employees feel more comfortable about being honest with the executives who hold sway over their earnings and position in the company.

3. Mentor Relationships

Identify one or two mentors who can provide candid and direct feedback to support your career success. (See the section on mentors in Chapter 9 for detailed information.)

4. 360-Degree Feedback

360-degree feedback is the process of soliciting feedback from people who work with you. This can include employees, management, peers, clients and superiors. When you receive this type of honest feedback, you'll gain a realistic assessment of the way others perceive you. The disadvantages of 360-degree feedback are some people might focus too much on the negative, it's more time consuming and you can't ask the person (who responded anonymously) for specific examples.

Hank Paulson, Goldman Sachs CEO, praises this type of feedback: "One of the things we have done for years is 360-degree reviews. It's amazing when you go to a leader and say, 'There are 30 people who reviewed you and 30 of them trust you. But all 30 say you don't listen well.' It has an impact." (Christopher Tkaczyk, "Follow These Leaders," *Fortune Magazine*, December, 2005)

5. Trusted Relationships

Identify three or four trusted relationships you have with people at work. These are individuals who aren't afraid to speak the truth and share their opinions about you, whether positive or negative. Ask them what they think of your management style, how you are perceived at work, what areas need improvement and what they consider are your strengths. This type of candid feedback can provide true insights into how to perform better at work and become a successful leader.

6. Hire an Executive Coach

Hire an executive coach who can provide objective outside opinions and support. (See Chapter 9 for detailed information about Executive Coaching.)

7. Performance Feedback Reviews

Seek performance feedback reviews from your supervisor or Human Resources department. These reviews help you learn more about what you are doing well and what needs to be improved. Reviews can be used to elicit opinions that can improve your behavior, gain specific information on how you can improve your leadership ability and to understand the future goals to move toward. At the end of an effective review, the employee understands how to improve behavior, is able to perform at the highest level possible and understands what is most important to focus on.

8. Personal Relations

Reach out to family and friends who know you well. They can provide non-work feedback about your behavior, personality, strengths and weaknesses.

9. Learn from Others

Identify three executives who you respect, who have self-awareness, and constantly solicit feedback from them. Discuss with them how they seek feedback and compile a list of at least five to 10 ideas you can implement.

GAIN CONFIDENCE

If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning.

~ MAHATMA GANDHI ~

You are truly confident when you are secure in who you are and understand your talents and limitations. You know how to leverage your abilities to achieve the best results. Your self-confidence comes from a high level of self-awareness and authentic perspective.

Some people think they can identify a confident leader by his or her swagger, influence and power. However, the traits that distinguish a truly self-aware leader are humility, respect and honest self-evaluation.

Confidence in the workplace sometimes gets confused with power. Often, senior executives can be the most insecure and least confident. They overcompensate by misusing their authority, becoming bullies who demand respect and results. In the short term, this tactic can gain results, but in the long term, little respect and high turnover will damage their overall success.

When you are committed to self-development, you gain confidence through your experiences at work. You cannot gain confidence by what you read or the courses you take. You need to experience your abilities and talents used in your actual work. Confidence increases when you do something that influences decisions, motivates others and improves performance.

As a confident, self-developed executive, you aren't intimidated by failures or self-imposed limitations. You feel comfortable with yourself. You see your failures as opportunities to learn rather than something to be taken personally. You also learn from your limitations, viewing them from an objective and clear perspective.

As your confidence grows with each accomplishment, you will begin to identify and look forward to future successes. You believe in yourself more and more. You will not be as discouraged by mistakes and failures because you believe in yourself.

Your subordinates and peers will become more loyal to you because they see how you believe in yourself. They feel your confidence and that leads them to becoming confident in themselves. With each success, the subordinate builds confidence and he or she becomes less concerned about making mistakes and is inspired to take more risks. Subordinates trust leaders with genuine self-confidence and want to go the extra mile for them. This type of commitment and effort brings top results and great success for the entire group.

However, there will be times in your career, especially when starting a new job or assignment, when there is little momentum and the possibility of failure feels way too close for comfort. You will have doubts; you might even question your ability or talents. However, you must be dedicated and committed to who you are, what you believe in and what you want for yourself. Don't be discouraged or let down by any missed opportunities. If you are confident in yourself, you will ultimately succeed. So staying on-course, focused, committed to your vision and not getting derailed or discouraged is essential.

Bill Walsh, the legendary San Francisco 49ers Hall of Fame football coach, didn't begin to achieve his full potential until the age of 47. That's when he became a head coach and general manager. The beginning years with the 49ers were extremely difficult and brought a lot of self-doubt. Walsh

EXECUTIVE SELF-DEVELOPMENT

admitted, “In those first three years, we were trying to find the right formula. We went 2-14 that first year (1979). The next year we won three and then lost eight in row. I looked out of the window for five hours on the plane ride home from Miami after the eighth straight loss and I had concluded I wasn’t going to make it. I was going to move into management.” The following season Walsh’s 49ers became the first NFL team in 34 years to have the worst record and turn it into the best record in just three years.

What’s interesting about Walsh is that he got passed over for many opportunities. Many thought he wasn’t head coach material. One important opportunity was being passed over for the head coaching job at the Cincinnati Bengal’s. He was devastated and questioned whether his promotion would ever happen. He even considered leaving football all together. “Nobody would take me seriously,” he recalled. “It was beginning to look as if I would never make it as a head coach.” (San Francisco Chronicle, July 31st, 2007)

Yet, Walsh proved his critics wrong. Overcoming his self-doubts, he went on to win three Super Bowl Championships.

Trust Yourself and What You Believe In

Being a confident executive or employee involves trusting yourself and having the conviction to believe in your ideas, even in the face of self-doubt or skepticism from others. Employees are often fearful of challenging the logic of a superior. Their title or influence may cause them to avoid speaking up even when they know they have something useful to contribute. It’s important you become comfortable making your point, no matter with whom you’re talking.

Jeff Immelt, CEO of General Electric, said, “...I was 32 years old at the time and came to see [then-CEO] Jack [Welch] and believe me, the meetings were brutal. But I learned to tell the truth all the time. I had only bad news. I’d say, ‘Here’s the Weibel curve, Jack, it’s going like this.’ And he would say, ‘No, it isn’t. You can’t be right. You can’t possibly be right.’ And I would tell him, ‘Well, actually, Jack, I am right, and it’s going to cost us a couple of hundred million bucks.’” (*Fast Company* July 2005).

Jeff didn’t back down from Jack Welch. He spoke the truth, backed it up with data, and took a stand. This earned him respect and a feeling of empowerment. The focus wasn’t on the personalities or who might feel rejected – it was about the information and the impact it could have on the company. Immelt put himself on the line because he represented important information he believed in. This is probably one reason why (13 years after the exchange he described) he succeeded Welch as CEO.

When it comes to touchy topics or trying times, believe enough in your idea to put it on the line. You might be viewed as a contrarian, but all companies need more leaders willing to stand up for what they believe and to tell hard truths. If you do this respectfully and with integrity you will gain the respect of others. They might disagree with you, but, most important, they’ll respect you.

When communicating something you believe in, stay true to the facts and information you are offering. Don’t get caught up in thinking about the personalities and the reactions of the people in the room. If someone challenges you, counter with the facts and information you have and keep building your case.

If they keep pushing back and offer a case that is stronger than yours, you can back down. Challenge it for as long as you feel you have solid enough content, facts, figures and knowledge to back up your case. Remember: it’s not about creating conflict for its own sake, it’s about sharing points of view that you believe in and feel compelled to share with others.

Take Action Now!

Here's a list of 10 ways to lift your self-confidence: actions, mind-sets and tools that will boost your knowledge, strengthen your confidence and bring about positive outcomes at work.

10 Ways to Lift Your Self-Confidence

1. See only a positive and successful outcome.

Focus your attention on successful results and not the possible negative outcomes. By believing you can actually create the outcome you desire, you'll be in a better position to make it happen. By this point, you've learned numerous techniques for doing research, communicating with others, identifying your goals and organizing the steps to achieve them (to name a few!). Knowing you have these powerful tools at your disposal should bolster your self-confidence, enabling you to see a positive outcome – and know it is well within your reach, because you are so well-prepared.

2. Infuse your mind with positive knowledge.

Find uplifting stories, quotes and books that make you feel good about yourself. Tear out or bookmark magazine and website articles about executives or other leaders you admire. Peruse case studies and success stories achieved by individuals and companies. You will increase your knowledge of your industry – its trends, players and technology. You'll also be encouraged to move forward and overcome any obstacles.

3. Speak and act confidently.

Temper your doubts by acting more assured. Make sure your spoken words and behavior come across as confident, even when you may not feel that way. By acting like a confident person in situations in which you have doubt, you will train yourself to become a more confident person.

4. Find role models through print media.

Biographies and stories about successful people can inspire, providing perspective and an overall increase in confidence. And remember, you don't have to read just about business leaders. Are you trying to increase your serenity? Perhaps a book about a spiritual leader or a trip or adventure that changed someone's perspective would be helpful. Are you concentrating on your stamina and looking to learn how to think and act in a way that will bring you success in the long run? A book about a successful Olympian might inspire you, demonstrating the benefits of steady, determined effort. Think outside the (book) box – and ask people in your life, coworkers or not, for recommendations. You will also learn from the people you read about and feel energized by their life stories.

5. Examine and re-live your past successes.

Your confidence is lifted when you think about past successes. Some people keep a scrapbook of articles and memos about their success, while others maintain a "mental file." Choose the approach that works for you, that best reminds you of your past achievements and what you learned from them. Reliving your triumphs will remind you just how good you are at your job and give you new energy to take on fresh challenges.

6. Visualize your future success.

Visualize yourself at the end of the activity with a positive outcome. This visualized outcome will become your true reality instead of a product of your imagination. Positive thinking is incredibly powerful and visualizing success will make your resolve even stronger. Do you have an important presentation coming up? Envision yourself standing at the podium, smiling and nodding as your colleagues shake your hand and congratulate you on a job well done. This image will give you a confidence-boost that will help make your vision a reality.

7. Evaluate your past failures.

Learning from past failures is key to improving your present situation. Reviewing past failures will bring new insights and greater clarity about any past behaviors that might be undermining your current efforts. Every failure is an opportunity to adjust and change your future so you can increase your success.

As noted in a February 2005 *Fast Company* article about Eli Lilly, learning from failure is an essential part of the company's culture: "Every failed compound gets a thorough examination, which can lead to new insights or, in some cases, survival of another drug...and Lilly keeps on staff a mathematician, Clet Niyikiza, who studies how complex systems fail. In 2004, Lilly initiated Project Phoenix, which gives every failed Phase I compound not just a second, but a third pass. 'You have to look at failures, because that's the only way you can move forward in the future,' says Niyikiza, who knows all too well the danger of missing weak signals. He grew up in the savannahs of East Africa, where small movements in the grass may suggest a predator. 'What may be fatal is what is not so obvious,' he says.

8. Minimize self-criticism.

Many employees are motivated by self criticism. However, this often has a negative effect on their true sense of confidence. Be extra conscious about the critical voice inside you that is constantly undermining your efforts, behaviors and mindset. Challenge those criticisms by creating clear evidence that argues against their validity and ultimately proves them untrue.

9. Reach out to and learn from confident people.

If you spend time with others who are confident, you can learn from them and model their behavior. Their confidence is contagious. Identify colleagues, superiors, friends or leaders you admire and pay attention to the way they behave in various settings (meetings, presentations, one-on-one interactions, etc.).

10. Minimize comparison to others.

When we compare ourselves to others (who seem greater), our confidence is eroded. There will always be someone who is "better." Comparison is a losing game. However, if you focus on what makes you unique, including your strengths and talents, it's impossible to compare because no one is created and acts like you. Have confidence in your own authentic style and ability.

SHARPEN AND EXPAND YOUR SKILLS THROUGH TRAINING

Success in business requires training and discipline and hard work. But if you're not frightened by these things, the opportunities are just as great today as they ever were.

~ DAVID ROCKEFELLER ~

Training is important to your development because it improves your skills, makes you more marketable and thus better equipped to compete in the increasingly global marketplace.

It's up to you to take responsibility for gaining the training necessary for a successful career. Organizations, unfortunately, are becoming less responsive and unable to provide the necessary executive training needed in today's environment. In addition, many managers view training as something that isn't vital to self-development. They feel it takes away the focus and attention needed to get results and is a waste of time.

Nothing could be further from the truth – training is not a waste of time. On the contrary, it is vital to the overall productivity of the organization and directly impacts the bottom line. Training is often the first thing to go when an organization is trying to cut costs, but this can negatively impact the productivity and efficiency of the organization.

Fortunately, some companies do realize the importance of training. Organizations that provide the appropriate support and training have lower turnover, employees are more engaged in their work and productivity is increased.

The ideal level of training is determined by what each employee needs to do his or her job more effectively and productively. Some courses are required and others can be taken by choice in the pursuit of gaining deeper knowledge about an interesting topic or enhancing skills that directly impact your work.

When selecting a training program, consider your professional goals and choose what will best help you achieve your desired end result. Most types of training aren't customized, but you can choose the best courses and seminars for your needs. If you take advantage of every training opportunity, you will improve your skills and develop into a top-performing employee on the way to reaching your full professional potential.

The classroom setting isn't your only option: distance learning is becoming increasingly common, with a variety of course providers, formats and topics. Employees who don't have time for classroom training can easily participate in online training when it's most convenient to them.

Some of the topics corporations make available for formal training include decision-making, presentation skills, finance, communication skills, team building, delegation, project management, mastering leadership, dealing with problem coworkers, how to define a career path, performance improvement, and maintaining life/work balance.

Need help deciding which training will best serve your goals? Assess the gap between where you are today and where you want to be. What skills do you need to acquire to close that gap? What training will help you grow into the executive you most want to be? Answer these questions in the space below.

If your company doesn't offer training, ask your supervisor if your department will provide financial support and allow the time for a program you find on your own. If you focus on telephone or web-based classes, finding the time for training shouldn't prove to be an obstacle. And if your company won't cover the cost, consider investing in your own career by paying the fee yourself. Your future success may depend on it (and you may be able to deduct the fee on your income taxes!).

Joel's Coaching Clients

TRAINING TURNS NANCY'S WEAKNESS INTO A STRENGTH, AND BENEFITS THE COMPANY.

Nancy Ruddell had amassed 12 years of technology solutions experience by the time she joined her new company as director of marketing. Six months later, she realized that most of the senior executives had finance experience. Not having a financial background was one of her biggest weaknesses. She wasn't able to take on any projects with budget responsibility.

So she approached her supervisor about paying for one of the top finance classes at the leading business school. At first, her boss didn't see the value of this type of class for her position. But after Nancy explained how it would improve her work and allow her to take on more responsibility, she agreed to the training.

After completing the course, Nancy immediately applied what she learned and turned her greatest weakness into one of her assets. She stood out from her peers and gained increased visibility and recognition from other executives. She also was a strong example of the benefits of training, which inspired others to seek out learning opportunities to benefit themselves...and the company.

Let's Recap:

Listed just below are the Self Development Characteristics that will help you improve your Executive Presence. You have learned to increase your self-awareness, ask for feedback, capitalize on training opportunities – and feel more secure about yourself and your capabilities.

SELF DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTICS

- 1) **KNOW THYSELF:** Understand what drives you, who you are and what you can do. You'll find personal fulfillment and professional success by capitalizing on your strengths and minimizing your mistakes.
- 2) **SEEK FEEDBACK:** Encourage feedback to demonstrate your passion for self-development and desire to contribute to your company's success. You'll achieve your full potential and help others achieve theirs, as well.
- 3) **GAIN CONFIDENCE:** Build your confidence by influencing decisions, motivating others and improving your performance. As a confident, self-developed leader, you won't be intimidated by failures or self-imposed limitations.
- 4) **SHARPEN AND EXPAND YOUR SKILLS THROUGH TRAINING:** Increase your growth potential by investing in the most important asset you possess – yourself. You'll be more marketable within your company, as well as the increasingly competitive global marketplace.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, you have learned how to improve your self-awareness and bring more of your true self to your work. You have learned about your needs and values, strengths and weaknesses, and identified what motivates you. You're beginning to know yourself and how you can maximize your overall potential. Your sense of self-worth and confidence are growing due to this increased knowledge of self, and you have begun to implement practices that will dramatically increase your awareness.

You now understand the value of feedback in improving your chances for success. You have learned how to receive open and supportive feedback that helps improve behavior. And you know several ways to encourage feedback and have a better sense of which practices best suit you.

Your confidence continues to increase with each experience at work. You have learned many different ways to gain confidence so you can easily and effectively increase yours. You now believe in yourself and your potential. Your faith will dramatically improve your chances of success.

You understand the importance of training and can take the initiative to get the training that will have the greatest impact on your career. You know how to identify training opportunities to help you do the most effective and productive job possible.

SECTION I – CONCLUSION

It is our duty as men and women to proceed as though the limits of our abilities do not exist.

~ PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN ~

Congratulations! You are well on your way to putting together all the pieces necessary to be at the top of your game. You are ready to exert your executive presence and realize your full potential at work.

You have developed the 16 executive traits that will help you become the most competent businessperson you can be, with the most influence possible. As you continue to use, grow and build on each of the five categories of executive traits, you will see your executive responsibility rise and your contribution to your company will grow.

Each category guides your overall career so you can become one of the most influential executives in your organization:

- First, you gain the business intelligence to help you improve your performance and the quality of your work by thinking strategically. You adopt a whole-company perspective and communicate your worth in financial terms.
- Second, you become a skilled risk-taker who is willing to confront ambiguity and change and go beyond the expected levels of responsibility and influence.
- Third, you learn how to develop solid interpersonal relationships and use your communication skills to act as a strong leader.
- Fourth, you improve performance by developing sound thinking skills, discernment and the ability to prioritize.
- Fifth, as you develop and know yourself, you improve your confidence and understand how to maximize your inner potential and that of others.

Implementing all 16 characteristics will help to create an executive presence that provides the leadership necessary for you to become your most successful self.

Your efficiency, energy and focused approach will contribute to the success of the company. You'll find new ways to improve the company's operations and bottom-line performance. And, as you use and develop each trait, you'll enhance your job security and career advancement opportunities. You'll better equip yourself for the intense competition from other companies, globalization, technological advances and the complexity of business practices.

Right now, you have the tools you need to exceed expectations and be the top executive you desire to be. You are ready to reach your full potential and go beyond your own self-limited perspectives. In the second half of this book, you will learn ways to apply the principles of executive presence to create a dynamic career progression and reach your goals in the fastest time possible.

SECTION II:

MAKING EXECUTIVE PRESENCE WORK FOR YOU

*“NOW IT’S TIME TO APPLY WHAT YOU’VE
LEARNED. IN SECTION II, WE’LL LAY OUT
A PLAN FOR PUTTING THOSE TOOLS AND
TRAINING TO WORK FOR YOU AND FOR
YOUR COMPANY.”*

Section II – Introduction

Start by doing what's necessary, then to what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

In Section I, you learned about the characteristics of executive presence. Action steps, points to ponder and stories from industry leaders gave you greater insight into those theories and concepts.

Now it's time to apply what you've learned. In Section II, we'll lay out a plan for putting those tools and training to work for you and for your company.

As you have discovered, executive presence is essential to professional success – the more executive presence you have, the more others will seek your advice, support and leadership. But first, you must know your worth – you must have a clear idea of your tangible and intangible value to your company.

You'll learn how to communicate that worth to others. Once you have devised your communication strategy, you'll put yourself in a position of greater visibility. You'll be given more high-profile projects and more people at your company and industry will know you by name – and by extension, your value and the impact you are having on your company's success.

Next, you'll learn about the value of self-promotion – and, if you're hesitant about talking yourself up to others, you will identify strategies and approaches to make you comfortable (but will still enable you to reach your goal of increasing your visibility and ensuring others know your worth).

Later, you will gain a fuller understanding of the value of supportive relationships with advocates, mentors and executive coaches who are invested in your success. You'll become an expert at recognizing and drawing out those colleagues and superiors who can cheer you on your way to becoming a stronger executive – an executive with presence, who realizes his or her professional, personal and financial goals.

And finally, you will gain the information and approaches to creating a strong, fulfilling career development plan.

Here's a preview of what will be covered in the chapters to come.

CHAPTER 6: KNOW YOUR WORTH

- **TRACK YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Track your accomplishments to provide powerful evidence of your value to the company. You'll gain confidence, as well as identify opportunities for growth and improvement.
- **FOCUS ON FOUR AREAS TO IDENTIFY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Focus on the value you provide to the company, accomplishments that enhance your prospects for promotion, ways you've strengthened your executive presence, and projects you've successfully accomplished.
- **PERSONALIZE YOUR EXECUTIVE PRESENCE:** Personalize your executive presence so those around you will understand what makes you a unique, valuable professional.

MAKING EXECUTIVE PRESENCE WORK FOR YOU

CHAPTER 7: COMMUNICATING YOUR WORTH TO OTHERS

- **DEVELOP YOUR SUCCESS STATEMENT:** Create a brief, compelling story that leaves a lasting mental picture of you and your capabilities. Your “success statement” will enhance your chances of getting promoted or recognized for your accomplishments.
- **LEARN TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY:** Leverage every communication channel at your disposal. Use email, face-to-face, voice mail and other modes of communication in creative ways to demonstrate your flexibility, while getting the response you need.
- **CONNECT WITH DIFFERENT EXECUTIVE PERSONALITIES:** Recognize and adapt your style to the different executive personality types. You’ll increase their comfort level and willingness to listen to and support your ideas.

CHAPTER 8: POSITION YOURSELF FOR GREATER VISIBILITY

- **BRAND YOURSELF:** Brand yourself to stand out from the competition. Reinforce your brand by the projects you undertake and the accomplishments you promote.
- **MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY:** Make the most of every opportunity. Raise your profile in the organization by aggressively seeking out assignments that showcase your talents and potential.
- **GAIN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE:** Gain political advantage to get the attention and support of key decision makers. Take on additional responsibilities that relate directly to the position for which you aspire.
- **TAKE THE FEAR OUT OF SELF-PROMOTION:** Overcome the fear and embarrassment of self-promotion. Be comfortable and confident in marketing yourself and your skills to others.
- **OVERCOME RESISTANCE FROM OTHERS:** Get noticed and promoted by overcoming resistance from these notorious career-stoppers: the “just-do-your-work” manager, the “jealous type,” the “cautious boss” or the “promotion preventer.”

CHAPTER 9: HARVESTING SUPPORTERS

- **ENLIST SUPPORTERS:** Cultivate supporters who show an interest in you and your career. They’ll help you reach the next level by providing valuable resources, insights and knowledge.
- **UNLEASH THE POWER OF A MENTOR:** Ride to success on the shoulders of a mentor. Benefit from their advice and counsel to navigate even the most challenging corporate landscape.
- **FIND ADVOCATES TO SUPPORT YOUR CAREER:** Rely on advocates to actively champion your cause. These valuable individuals will encourage your growth and challenge you to reach higher levels.
- **BENEFIT FROM A PROFESSIONAL COACH:** Reach your potential in less time with the help of an executive coach. Benefit from honest, objective third-party feedback to develop the skills and mindset you need to move beyond limitations, resistance and doubt.

CHAPTER 10: CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- **CREATE YOUR CAREER PLAN:** Chart your future with a systematic career development plan. By reviewing your past, assessing what you've learned and creating goals and a plan of action you'll position yourself to excel in your areas of strength.
- **PARTNER WITH MANAGEMENT:** Partner with management to achieve your goals and aspirations. Their experience will provide the expertise and insight you need to focus on the right activities and ensure company buy-in along the way.
- **SECURE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES:** Secure the resources you'll need to make your career development plan come alive. You'll achieve your goals by taking advantage of training and development, educational opportunities, credential programs, qualification training and testing, workshops and conferences, and an executive coach.
- **CONSIDER OTHER OPTIONS BESIDES A PROMOTION:** Consider other career options beside a promotion. Position yourself to "move up" by pursuing a lateral move, a downward move or a job at a new location or a new company.

CHAPTER 6.

KNOW YOUR WORTH

I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. The proper function of a man is to live, not to exist.

~ JACK LONDON ~

You know you're good – you deserve recognition, increased responsibility and a promotion to the next level. But does anyone else know? Many employees are passed by or completely overlooked simply because senior management doesn't know how valuable they are – or because senior management doesn't know these employees are looking for more responsibility. When executives don't give deserving and talented employees a promotion, those employees often will leave for a new job at a competitor because they believe they will be more valued. Thus, to make the most of your talents, you must know your worth and be comfortable communicating it to others – particularly if a promotion or recognition is what you need to feel valued.

Knowing your worth entails being aware of all you've accomplished. This level of awareness isn't possible without a process for recording and tracking information about your achievements. Of course, to successfully track this data, you must be committed to documenting everything you accomplish, and willing to devote the necessary time and effort to the process. The first step of the process is determining the type of information to track.

Because bottom-line responsibility increases as you advance up the ranks, accomplishments that can be stated in financial terms are especially useful. Those aren't the only accomplishments worth tracking, of course, but whatever information you capture should be based solely on facts.

Focus on four primary areas when you track your accomplishments:

1. The value you've provided to the company.
2. Accomplishments that are relevant to the promotion you want.
3. The development of your executive presence and its 16 traits.
4. Project-based accomplishments.

Although this tracking requires you to focus on your past successes, revisiting these achievements and documenting how you handled changes and obstacles helps you learn to convert setbacks into accomplishments, too.

Your current position is a rich resource because you have the opportunity to gain experiences that will propel you toward your next promotion. Look beyond your current responsibilities to the tasks and projects you've undertaken in other arenas and on behalf of others. Similarly, actively pursue experiences outside your job duties to showcase abilities that might not get a lot of exposure in your current position.

KNOW YOUR WORTH

If you can't identify many opportunities outside of your job description, try joining a professional association. Serving on a board of directors or a participating in a committee (whether for an event, such as an awards ceremony or a subject area, such as marketing or membership) will give you opportunities to try different things and develop experience that can help you get promoted.

Above all, knowing your worth means being – and valuing – yourself instead of developing a false image that imitates someone you consider successful. Identify and track your own unique abilities and accomplishments and use them as a springboard to create success for your own career.

In a Newsweek article, Sharon Allen, Chairman of the board, Deloitte & Touche USA, said the following:

“Take responsibility for your own career. Don't assume that others are aware of the good work you're doing. When I was a young accountant, I was unhappy about not getting a promotion. I went to my supervisor and told him all of these things that I thought I should be given credit for and he said “Well, gee, I didn't know that you had done all of these things.” It was a real wakeup call. You don't have to be a bragger, but I think it's very important that we make people aware of our accomplishments...” (Newsweek, October 2005)

■ TRACK YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

It is important that you recognize your progress and take pride in your accomplishments.

Share your achievements with others. Brag a little.

The recognition and support of those around you is nurturing.

~ ROSEMARIE ROSSETTI ~

Your accomplishments are the currency you use to calculate your value to the company. Unfortunately, many employees are so focused on their next task that past successes get lost in the process. Those successes contribute to future opportunities only when the right people know about them.

Not only does tracking your accomplishments create concrete examples of your value, the tracking process itself will give you confidence. As you review your accomplishments and become aware of your progress, you will become more comfortable telling others, in specific terms, how you can provide value to the company.

Your accomplishment list will help you identify areas of strength and growth, as well as opportunities for improvement. It may also reveal talking points for discussions with your supervisor and others in senior management. You'll be able to say with confidence, “I have accomplished X, Y and Z in the past month and, in addition, I have taken advantage of an opportunity to leverage my talents and make a significant impact beyond my current job responsibilities.”

When you're sidetracked by a hectic schedule and tempted to let the tracking process slide, remember that this isn't just about your current job. You are positioning yourself for the next career opportunity. The information you gather is useful in many ways: to beef up your resume, to make you shine when it's time for your performance review, and to land that plum promotion. It's not a matter of stretching yourself too thin, but effectively leveraging yourself for present and future success.

Key points to consider when you track your accomplishments:

KNOW YOUR WORTH

- All accomplishments are worth tracking and communicating.
- Track them on an ongoing basis.
- Tracking accomplishments helps others to view you and your work in a favorable light.
- Once you track your accomplishments, you can promote them so that others become aware of your impact on the company.
- Familiarizing yourself with your list of accomplishments will give you a basis for communicating your value to others.

Eric Schmidt, the CEO of Google, says this about the process, "...each Googler e-mails a snippet once a week to his work group describing what he has done in the last week. This gives everyone an easy way to track what everyone else is up to, making it much easier to monitor progress and synchronize work flow." (*Newsweek*, December 2005)

Start documenting your accomplishments today. Begin by listing everything worthwhile you've completed in the last week, month and year. Add to this list whenever you're reminded of something you accomplished in the past. Meanwhile, track every success from this point on. You could list reading and embracing the principles in this book as the first accomplishment on your list.

Joel's Coaching Clients

MUKESH TRACKS HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS YEAR-ROUND, AND BOOSTS HER VISIBILITY.

Mukesh Premji, director of a small business unit within a large company, always waited until his performance review to track accomplishments. He didn't look for opportunities to share the impact he was having. Instead, he sat back and hoped his work would speak for itself. He assumed that senior management knew what he was doing and was aware of his contributions to the company's success.

This passive approach did nothing to advance Mukesh's career or earn him any visibility. He finally realized this when he attended a meeting where his peers were praised for projects for which he had done most of the work. It dawned on him that senior management wouldn't know what work he was doing or what contributions he was making unless he told them. But how should he go about it?

Through our work together, Mukesh realized the importance of being proactive. He realized that every day he has an opportunity to sell himself by informing management of the impact he makes on the company. But, first, Mukesh needed to boost his own awareness of his past successes and track his current projects.

With his accomplishments-list and action plan in hand, Mukesh began to inform influential leaders what he was doing, the impact he was having, and how his work benefited his department. He represented himself in the best way possible, reaping the benefits of his efforts. Colleagues began to praise him openly and offer to help on larger projects. Senior managers chatted with him in the hallway and mentioned him at meetings. As Mukesh's visibility increased, so did his job satisfaction – and his chances of receiving a promotion that would propel his career forward and allow him to make an even stronger contribution to his company.

KNOW YOUR WORTH

4 Reasons Why I Don't Share Accomplishments

Why do people like Mukesh have difficulty identifying and sharing their accomplishments? Here are some common roadblocks and ways to overcome them:

1. "They don't have time to talk with me."

You think your boss and other influential people are too busy to want to hear from you. Thus, you discount your own worth. Instead, see yourself as a key catalyst and necessary component to their overall impact in the organization. You are helping them achieve their goals. They need to make time for you because you are important.

2. "I don't have anything worth talking about."

You feel you don't have anything of value to share. Instead, realize you have a lot of valuable things to contribute and what you want to share is important. See the value in who you are, what you have done and why this should be shared with others.

3. "If I do get a chance to talk with them, I will blow it and not say the right thing."

You fear you will say something that will harm their opinion of you. So you play it safe by avoiding any conversations discussing your success or accomplishments. It can feel a bit risky to put yourself out there and say things that might be questioned or judged. However, you must initiate the conversations and express yourself to become known. So when you talk with them, you will be confident in your ability to say the right thing. You will be articulate, to the point and not doubt your message.

4. "People will think I'm a brown-noser."

Another reason people "hold their light under a basket" is they fear being perceived as a bragger or brown-noser. One way to overcome this is to credit others on your team or committee while making sure your supervisor knows your role in the accomplishment.

Too often you have a hard time promoting yourself because you minimize what you actually have done. You don't acknowledge how much of a key catalyst you were to the overall result. You tend to say things like, "It was easy," "I didn't do much" or "I was lucky." You might even convince yourself that your success had nothing to do with you or your work (when it actually did). It's important to see what you did do and the impact you made. Take ownership of your work and your success.

Take Action Now!

One solution is to create a file on your computer titled "Accomplishments." Use this file to track all your accomplishments on an ongoing basis. A PDA or other calendar/planning system (for example, ones by FranklinCovey or Filofax) can be useful tools for tracking and gathering your accomplishments, especially if you're away from your computer and want to jot down ideas and memories that pop into your mind. You can also use a paper-based system – whatever is most comfortable and convenient for you. Just make sure that, ultimately, all of your accomplishments are organized and filed in one location.

Add to the list whenever possible. However, at the least, schedule a weekly 15-minute appointment with yourself to add the following:

KNOW YOUR WORTH

- recent accomplishments
- goals met
- projects completed
- problems solved
- experience gained
- positive feedback and praise
- successes of your group or department

Each item should show four things: the accomplishment, its measurable result, the actions taken to create the result, and the impact it has had on the firm. You'll be surprised. In a short amount of time, you'll create an impressive list of accomplishments.

Once you have a solid list of accomplishments, let others know about them. The key is to have the information at your fingertips and to be precise.

A Little Extra Effort

Tracking your accomplishments won't happen without focused, determined action. This needs to become a part of your daily responsibilities. Yes, it will take time. But you won't regret the time-investment when you're able to demonstrate in concrete terms you are, without question, the best person for that promotion.

To create more time in your week, arrive at the office earlier. If you typically arrive at 8:00 am, start showing up at 7:00. You'll gain an extra five hours a week to use these ideas, concepts and perspectives to develop your executive presence and start each day on a positive note.

Include in your to-do list a weekly and monthly review of your work. Schedule these times in your calendar and honor them as you would any other important appointment. Whenever you're tempted to pass up a tracking appointment, remind yourself that a comprehensive list of accomplishments just might be the key to help you advance and have a stronger impact on your company's success.

What You Should Track

As you track your accomplishments, be specific about what you document. Focus on fact-based, concrete details and the specific feedback you receive from others. Quantifiable data is especially persuasive, in part because it measures the impact of your accomplishments.

When in doubt, include the item on your list. You can easily eliminate it later.

Track events such as:

- Comments from your boss when you've accomplished something positive.
Example: "JoAnne told me how impressed she was with the thoroughness and quality of my sales presentation, which resulted in 20% increased profit for the company."

KNOW YOUR WORTH

- Projects that have been successful. Look at the entire project and break it down into its successful components.
Example: “Developed and managed online marketing initiatives and strategies including webcasts, e-store, and major trade shows to drive profits from \$13 million to \$18 million.”
- Positive results that occurred due to your actions.
Example: “Created synergy with European & Asia Pacific marketing/business development teams to introduce new products to their markets, resulting in 30% increased revenue.
- Responsibilities you have fulfilled for your position, the department or the company.
Example: “Increased product launches by 20% by working as liaison with Sales Dept. to promote awareness of software solutions among external customers.”

Joel's Coaching Clients

DAVID BECOMES FLUENT IN HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND BECOMES A GO-TO GUY FOR VPs.

David Beck, a senior manager at a software company recognized the importance of tracking his accomplishments. However, he rarely updated his list and was inefficient in gathering the information. He never developed a format or process and devoted minimal time to this endeavor.

However, David realized that if he wanted to see positive results, he needed to put in a good effort. We worked together to identify ways he could make more time for this important task and discussed examples like those listed above. David used these techniques as a basis for his reenergized accomplishment-tracking effort: he began to track in measurable terms his recent accomplishments, problems solved and projects completed. After a few weeks, David assembled an impressive collection of information that he kept handy so he could refer to it whenever inspiration struck.

These efforts paid off: when the senior vice-president in charge of the department paid an unannounced visit to David's office, David was able to rattle off a bunch of accomplishments from his newly updated list. The SVP was impressed, especially when they had a similar conversation two weeks later. Word got around, and David found himself receiving visits from other VPs interested in what he was working on, and curious about his thoughts about other initiatives. These visits from senior leaders resulted in more visibility for David and earned him increased respect within the organization.

KNOW YOUR WORTH

Communicate Accomplishments in Measurable Terms.

After you have identified your accomplishments, review them to see how they can be conveyed in measurable terms, including:

- money saved
- money earned
- time saved
- enhanced efficiency
- higher employee retention
- increased morale
- greater profitability
- better customer service
- increased sales
- shorter time-to-market
- financial goals met
- increased stakeholder involvement
- new opportunities for growth
- boosted productivity
- improved leadership effectiveness

For each accomplishment, break it down into its parts:

- What exactly did you do?
- How did you do it?
- What was measurable?
- What were the results?
- How did you directly affect the company's bottom line?

Whenever possible, express your accomplishments in financial terms and include information about improved percentages, numbers, economic value and/or measurements.

Your goal is not only to educate others about your accomplishments, but to highlight the financial impact they have had on the company. If you increased profits by \$450,000, make sure to document the exact amount and its successful impact on the organization. If you decreased suppliers by 25% resulting in lower costs, make sure this is documented.

If you can't provide actual numbers, illustrate how a particular accomplishment impacted the company.

Just the Facts, Please!

Don't record emotionally based or ego-driven information in your accomplishments. Emotions can distort the truth, which can lead to self-doubt. Emotions can also prevent some individuals from clearly seeing what they have accomplished. For example, a shy person might be afraid to talk about his or her successes and achievements. These emotions get in the way of expressing things from a fact-based perspective, because they can obscure the truth of an issue.

If you increased sales by a certain dollar amount or reduced employee turnover by a certain percentage, those facts tell the success story more strongly than general comments such as "my staff really responds to my leadership." Likewise, a fact-based perspective can boost your confidence and convey the truth of an accomplishment. When you rely on clear, defined and specific facts, others can't argue with your success. They hear your fact-based communication as the truth. A leader with an executive presence bases his or her acts and decisions on facts.

KNOW YOUR WORTH

Too many employees talk themselves up in ways that can't be proven (not based on fact). This practice stems from insecurity and can take the form of bragging, over-extending themselves, displaying bravado and the like. What braggarts don't realize is their behavior actually demonstrates their insecurities to others. Although grandstanding may be rewarded in the short term, over time people will recognize this ego-based pattern and realize it's an act. Displays of ego seldom garner long-term rewards. Share facts and information you can support with examples and numbers, but keep your ego to yourself.

Pay attention to what others say to and about you. What do they say you do well? When do you hear the most positive comments? Take it all in—and document everything. What other people say about you, especially those in power, can help demonstrate why you are a valuable asset to the company.

For example, if a client emails you praise, forward the email to your manager. If you get a nice thank-you note, save it in your accomplishments file. Or if your boss tells you how well you performed on a project, ask your boss to clarify his feedback so you can get a more detailed, specific comment that can be documented and put in your file.

Take Action Now!

Although you are updating your accomplishments list weekly, you should highlight key accomplishments on a quarterly basis. To do this, schedule a 30- to 60-minute accomplishment meeting with yourself four times in the coming year. Plug these dates into your appointment calendar and honor them. Go through your file, select five accomplishments that had the most powerful financial impact. Then follow this three-step process for each:

1. Write a brief overview of the problem you faced or project you managed.
2. List the key action steps you took to address the problem or specific approaches to the project.
3. Detail the measurable results that underscore the financial impact your accomplishment had on the company. Remember to use financial terms whenever possible.

This process will provide you with the tools to communicate your accomplishments. Now it is simple to inform others of your accomplishments, how well your division is doing, how well your projects are going, what impact you are having, and how well the company as a whole is doing. When someone asks what is new in your department or you are in the elevator with the CEO for 35 seconds, you have the ability to briefly and effectively share your accomplishments – and get noticed.

FOCUS ON FOUR AREAS TO IDENTIFY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

*Achievement is largely the product of steadily
raising one's levels of aspiration and expectation.*

~ JACK NICKLAUS ~

Find activities within your current scope of responsibility that had an impact and illustrate great achievement. Create a list of everything you have accomplished in your job. Focus on these four areas:

1. Determine the value you have provided to the company.

This includes the division, your boss, your boss' boss and yourself (since the beginning of your current job). Whatever you have done that received or deserved notice should be included.

KNOW YOUR WORTH

Think of any action you have taken – large or small – that created value for your company. Use your daily planner, past emails and update-reports to your boss to jog your memory. Start at the beginning of this year and look for hints about your contributions to projects, meetings, discussions, finances, operating procedures and other activities. Did you:

- Suggest a way to streamline a complex procedure?
- Come up with a money-saving alternative to a proposed expenditure?
- Lead a brainstorming session that resulted in an idea for a profitable new product?
- Find a less-expensive vendor?
- Put in extra hours to make sure an important project was completed on time?

Other sources of information include project folders, the minutes of meetings you attended, and past performance reviews. Be resourceful. Mine every scrap of data available for details about the value you have provided.

2. Document accomplishments that directly relate to potential promotion.

List everything that supports your suitability for the position or offers evidence of your ability to do whatever the next-level position requires.

- If you don't already have a copy of the job description for your next position, get one. If no formal job description exists, create your own based on what you know about the requirements of the position. Then take the job description apart, requirement by requirement. Examine each activity and find evidence in your accomplishments that reflect your ability to excel at that task.
- If strong communication skills are required, list the fact that you presented a workshop at last year's conference. Also note that you successfully defused antagonistic relations between two departments by facilitating a problem-solving session.
- If the position demands attention to detail, include your current boss's positive comments about the thoroughness of the annual report you developed.
- If you must be a team player to excel in the position, add to the list all the committees you've served on and the accomplishments you helped them achieve.

As you complete new projects or take on additional responsibilities, be sure to add them to your growing list of promotion-related accomplishments.

3. List your executive presence traits.

Now is the perfect time to start documenting the changes you're undertaking. List all the improvements you've made that are translating into executive presence. Focus on these five areas: business intelligence, risk-taking, interpersonal relationships, performance improvement and self-development. Review the Sixteen Executive Traits outlined in the beginning of the book and think about how your accomplishments demonstrate the executive presence traits you possess. Use this list to identify areas where you have improved (or need to improve).

An easy way to keep track is to use a weekly executive presence journal or log. Start a notebook or computer file and create a category for each step in the process. Ask yourself questions such as:

- What have I done to develop my business intelligence this week?

KNOW YOUR WORTH

- In what ways have I maintained a whole-company perspective?
- How have I communicated my accomplishments in measurable terms?
- What risks have I taken in the past week?
- How have I increased my comfort level with ambiguity and change?
- What have I done to excel beyond the expected?
- How have I gone beyond my own comfort zone?
- How have I improved my communication skills?
- What leadership skills have I enhanced?
- Have I shared the successes of others with people of influence?
- Have I prioritized my projects and accomplished what is most important?
- What have I done to help solve complex tasks?
- How have I leveraged sound judgment when making key decisions?
- What have I done in self-development and knowing myself better?
- How have I encouraged feedback to boost my confidence?

You'll find that keeping track of your progress will help you proceed faster and more effectively because you're paying close attention to the process – and holding yourself accountable for developing executive presence.

4. Itemize project-based accomplishments.

Review every project you've completed over the last year or two and record each success. Note the small things you did that helped move the project forward. For current projects, compare where you were a week or a month ago to where you are today. You may be surprised to realize how much you've accomplished.

Itemize the great things you have done. Break each accomplishment into the following:

- What did you do?
- How did you do it?
- What data did you generate?
- What were the results?
- How did your actions directly affect the company's bottom line?

Review each project and the documentation others have sent you or you have initiated. Sometimes, when you look closer, you'll find even more specific results than you initially listed. This kind of detailed tracking will demonstrate your direct involvement in the success of your projects. It gets you noticed and, very likely, promoted.

KNOW YOUR WORTH

OTHER TIPS FOR MINING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Nothing stops the man who desires to achieve. Every obstacle is simply a course to develop his achievement muscle. It's a strengthening of his powers of accomplishment.

~ ERIC BUTTERWORTH ~

In addition to uncovering the excellent results you have achieved, read between the lines for hints about your strengths and abilities. Pay special attention to the extent and nature of your involvement in projects and note those you've seen through from start to finish. Be sure to highlight accomplishments in areas that are especially important to the company.

Everything that appears on your list should also be added to your resume. It's a great way to keep track of past accomplishments and demonstrate to future employers what you're capable of in the future.

Finally, to ensure you have a positive and accurate perspective on your accomplishments, pretend you are presenting to a jury of your own peers: you must prove (beyond a reasonable doubt) you deserve to be promoted because of your involvement in a particular project over the last six months. Tell them specifically what you did and what you have accomplished. Your goal is to have them reach a unanimous verdict: "Absolutely, you should be promoted!"

You might enlist a trusted colleague or friend to play the "jury" role. Practice presenting your case to them and listen closely to their feedback.

TURN SETBACKS INTO ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict.

~ WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING ~

Not every project is successful from start to finish. Almost all have their setbacks and challenges. When you're tracking your accomplishments, don't shy away from documenting the challenges and how you turned them into achievements.

For example, record how you handled changes in direction or setbacks that threatened to extend the timeframe of a project.

As you review projects and record your accomplishments, document these situations as footnotes (e.g., the project deadline was changed three times and I still brought it in under budget). Make notes about the small things you did to keep a difficult project moving forward. The entire project needs to be understood (what you had to overcome and what was gained), not just the end result.

KNOW YOUR WORTH

SEEK BEYOND YOUR CURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Success on any major scale requires you to accept responsibility In the final analysis, the one quality that all successful people have is the ability to take on responsibility.

~ MICHAEL KORDA ~

Don't limit the list to your current responsibilities. Identify projects outside your current job duties that had an impact and show great accomplishment or achievement. Look for actions that took extra effort, had influence or created visibility.

Perhaps someone needed help on their own project. You volunteered your expertise even though you could have declined to focus exclusively on your own job. Thanks to your valuable help, the project had a significant impact on the company's bottom line.

In addition to documenting contributions outside your area of responsibility, actively seek more of those opportunities. Focus on projects that showcase your talents, especially those that are likely to lead to promotions and enhance your career path.

VALUE YOUR EXISTING POSITION

The only source of knowledge is experience

~ ALBERT EINSTEIN ~

It's important you spend enough time in your present role so you gain the depth of knowledge and experience necessary for the next level within the company. Avoid advancing so quickly that a lack of knowledge and experience hinders your performance in the new position.

Spending more time in your current position assures you'll be able to see the projects you are leading to fruition. In the process, you'll gain more confidence in your decision-making ability and your skill in leading projects. You'll also make a lasting impression as someone who worked hard to make a difference – any processes you improved or created may be used for years to come and your accomplishments will be remembered by your colleagues. This will also contribute to your awareness of your worth. Of course, you might also have to face failures that teach you what works and what doesn't. Learning to move forward in the face of apparent failure is a valuable lesson.

Gaining experience also improves your ability to manage your subordinates effectively. You'll learn how to increase their confidence levels, help them make decisions, improve their project management ability, and handle failure when it occurs.

Joel's Coaching Clients

ALISON REAPS THE BENEFITS OF KNOWING – AND COMMUNICATING – HER WORTH.

Alison Redmond, an employee at a major biotechnology company, was uncomfortable with any form of self-promotion. She needed to understand the benefit of tracking accomplishments and learn how to share them in a way that didn't feel like she was bragging.

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When Alison came to me, she said she felt invisible in her organization. Despite the fact she didn't do anything to promote herself, she expected others to somehow just know what she'd achieved. She told me, "I'm hired to do my work and do it well. I'm not hired to promote how well I'm doing my job."

Although Alison did not understand how her attitude was contributing to her career stagnation, she knew something was wrong. She was frustrated with a lack of acknowledgement, minimal salary increase, and few advances in her career. Meanwhile, other colleagues who were less talented progressed because of their ability to self-promote.

Through our work together, Alison began to understand why she needed to track accomplishments for more than just annual reviews and asking for a raise. She needed to become a more active participant in her own career success. She got over her hesitancy of self-promotion by realizing that sharing her accomplishments wasn't bragging, it was actually providing useful, fact-based information that demonstrated clear and measurable results.

By communicating each accomplishment in financial terms and how it impacted the company, Alison placed the focus on the organization, not on herself. Gradually, she increased her self-promotion comfort level and enjoyed the positive results of doing so. More managers asked for her opinion and her request for a raise was met with enthusiasm.

PERSONALIZE YOUR EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Insist on yourself; never imitate.

~ RALPH WALDO EMERSON ~

Although there are 16 key traits that lead to executive presence, each person's interpretation of these traits will be different, depending on how long they have been in their career, what goals they wish to achieve and their feelings about their company.

And, of course, you are an individual with talents, skills and experience that are uniquely yours. Thus, you must strive to personalize your executive presence, to develop yourself and convey your accomplishments in ways your peers and superiors will understand what makes you a unique, valuable professional. This will ensure they clearly understand your worth (or your value to the company) and the qualities that make you stand out from the pack.

Be true to yourself

One of the keys to creating an executive presence is ensuring that, throughout every exercise and action step, you remain true to yourself. It's important to learn from successful business leaders in your company, industry and the global business community – and, when appropriate, emulate them – but it's also important you don't go so far as to copy your role models.

Rather, incorporate the lessons you learn from your experience, training and observation into a holistic approach that works for you. This will boost your confidence and you will be able to embrace success, knowing that you are meeting other executives on equal ground.

Take Action Now!

Consider the skills, experiences and other attributes that set you apart from your peers. What makes you different from others who hold the same title? Did you work in another industry before joining your

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current company? Have you lived in another country? Are you excellent at using humor to defuse a tense situation? Does your common sense encourage others to turn to you for advice?

List five to ten of these attributes below, and consider how they might have a positive impact on your role at your company.

Attribute	How can I leverage it in my company?
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Leveraging your attributes helps you achieve executive presence by relying upon your unique talents, the innate qualities that set you apart from others. Personalizing your presence allows you to be successful and confident, while meeting other executives on equal ground.

Your work-worth...and self-worth.

Your worth isn't (or shouldn't be) based on the opinions of others, your performance evaluations, your salary or your bonus structure. Determining your true worth is about valuing things you normally don't consider valuable to the company. These include the 16 characteristics that make up your executive presence.

The way we are normally viewed and judged is quite limiting. Presenting all of ourselves is something few people learn how to do. Move beyond the constraints to define your worth and present yourself as a three-dimensional picture – help others truly see what you do in a broad perspective. Demonstrate the value provided by each characteristic so your worth can be apparent at its full capacity.

What qualities do you possess?

I recently worked with a client who told me he admired a certain CEO who, he said, "...had answers for employees, an ability to drive people at warp speed and get people to listen to him."

My client acknowledged he didn't have those qualities. I explained to him that the real question is not what qualities you lack, but what qualities you HAVE. Rather than focusing on what you perceive yourself to be lacking, learn to identify and appreciate the attributes you possess.

Pay attention to what others have done to become successful (best practices are helpful as learning material), but not at the expense of taking yourself out of the equation. Your own style and motivation

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will work well for you, and declaring your worth is about embracing this. Get to know yourself and leverage who you are and what you do best.

If you can allow all of yourself – not only your skills and strengths, but all your unique attributes – to shine through at work, you will feel freer about expressing yourself. A more truthful and honest self will show up, and your career will be the better for it. Your capabilities, performance and potential – in short, your worth -- will be seen in a more complete picture of who you are.

Take Action Now!

Let's take a look at the qualities you possess – and also examine the attributes of leaders you admire. Then we'll use this information to create a list you can refer to for information and inspiration.

First, based on the senior managers you know or have known and on stories you've read or media reports, make a list of all the traits and qualities you think make a great executive:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

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10. _____

Make a list of all the traits and qualities you believe are your strengths. Be as specific as possible. What makes each of them unique?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

As you work with your list of traits and qualities, you'll learn to value your own abilities. You'll be inspired by the abilities of others, rather than being discouraged you don't share the same traits they do. You'll appreciate and feel confident about your own unique qualities. This realistic self-confidence will make you stand out in a way that mimicking others can never do.

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Highlight your skills, strengths, talents, and gifts.

It's easy to take our innate abilities for granted. It's not that we don't value them; they're simply overlooked as we strive to develop more noticeable accomplishments, such as landing the big account. However, the less noticeable gifts can be equally valuable. As you document your accomplishments, devote some time and attention to the qualities that come naturally.

People often confuse skills and gifts. Consider the points below and remember the distinction between the two when you are documenting your accomplishments and conveying them to others:

- A skill is an acquired ability developed and learned through practice, training and experience. Skills are the things you do well that produce favorable outcomes.
- A talent or gift is deeply fulfilling. It is something with which you are born. A gift comes from within you, and the doing of it comes directly out of you. There is learning involved, but it feels more like polishing something you already have rather than creating a whole new ability. It is effortless; the task at hand barely seems like work at all. A gift is something you enjoy doing – after all, we enjoy doing what we are naturally good at.

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Define and claim your innate gifts, then work to enhance your natural abilities. Once you've identified rewarding activities, decide what qualities or characteristics each activity involves. For example, if you feel great about yourself when you write proposals, you might be an excellent writer, with a strong eye for detail and a knack for analysis. Acknowledge those gifts and find ways to develop them even further, perhaps through seminars or simply by using them more often. Once you've become acquainted with your gifts, come up with a plan that will showcase them at work.

Learn how you can use your skills and abilities to excel at your job. Your skills are valuable only when you use them. And those abilities are valuable to others only when they contribute to successful performance on the job.

For example:

- If your innate gifts include both the ability to put others at ease and a talent for coordinating events, consider volunteering to plan and host an in-house kickoff event celebrating your company's new product line.
- Are you naturally analytical? When your boss mentions he's considering a new software purchase for your department, offer to test the product and make recommendations about whether it's right for the job.
- If you delight in organizing, put this gift to work by taking the lead in solving your company's filing headache. Is your company in the process of, say, transferring files from local computer drives to a more centralized system (or perhaps the intranet)? Volunteer to make these central files as organized as your own.
- Is creativity one of your gifts? If so, keep an ear out for brainstorming sessions. Is your company branding a new product or perhaps trying to come up with a slogan? Join in the discussion, and have fun while using your talent for a creative turn of phrase.

Gifts show us why a person is drawn to an activity. It's the "why" factor that most of us can't identify. For example, when a client told me he loved helping others at work, I asked him to pinpoint exactly why

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-- and he didn't know. Most of us don't know why we like what we are drawn to. This is what the purpose of the gift is - to help you get completely clear on the essence of why you love any activity. After you've identified these essences, these gifts, you can bring them together to make up the type of activities at work that bring fulfillment.

As another client noted, "I had never taken the time to examine why I choose to do something or why it pleases me. After identifying and thinking about my gifts, I discovered a common thread that ties together many of the activities I choose to do. This revelation is guiding me toward being more fulfilled at work."

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, you have learned how to track your accomplishments and to understand why the process of documenting your accomplishments is so important to knowing your worth. You've also learned the type of information that should be included and how to state your accomplishments in terms of financial benefits. The things you've done that have no financial basis are important, too, but should be stated in unemotional, factual terms that will be regarded by others as the truth.

Tracking your accomplishments creates a record of all you've done to provide value to your company while giving you a deep sense of confidence and self worth. You've learned to convert your setbacks into accomplishments and to use your existing position as a springboard to promotion. You know how to engage in projects outside your current job, leveraging them to provide experiences consistent with the abilities required by the position you hope to land next.

Perhaps most importantly, you've learned to present an executive presence that reflects who you really are rather than an echo of someone you consider a role model. You've begun to acknowledge and strengthen the gifts you already possess as you develop new abilities and talents.

Discovering and tracking your accomplishments enables you to see, in clear and certain terms, why you are well qualified for and worthy of promotion. In Chapter 7, you'll learn to communicate your worth to others in ways that gets the positive attention that leads to a successful career.

CHAPTER 6 – REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

- ☐ Review the material in this chapter. Focus on your answers.
- ☐ Choose at least three of the nine self-awareness practices and implement them this week.
- ☐ Put together a file on your computer titled “Accomplishments.” In that file, gather and track all of your accomplishments on an ongoing basis.
- ☐ Create a list of everything you have accomplished in your current job by focusing on the four areas highlighted in this chapter. Add these to your accomplishment file.
- ☐ After creating your list, review your accomplishments to see how they can be conveyed in financial terms. Choose two influential people you could share the financial impact you have had on the company.
- ☐ Schedule a weekly 15-minute appointment in your calendar to review and add to your accomplishment list.
- ☐ Schedule a 30-to 60-minute accomplishment meeting four times in the coming year to review your accomplishments file. Select five that have the most powerful financial impact and follow the three-step process outlined in the chapter.
- ☐ Identify one reason it’s difficult for you to share accomplishments and turn this into a positive experience.
- ☐ Personalize your executive presence so you can convey your accomplishments in a way your peers and superiors will understand what makes you a unique, valuable professional.
- ☐ List five to ten of the unique attributes that set you apart from your peers and consider how they might have a positive impact on your role at your company.
- ☐ Identify your innate gifts and work to enhance them by coming up with a plan that will showcase them at work.

SUMMARIZE KEY POINTS

Summarize the key points you learned in this chapter and jot them down below.

[illegible]

CHAPTER 7.

COMMUNICATING YOUR WORTH TO OTHERS

If You done it, it ain't bragging.

~ WALT WHITMAN ~

In Chapter 6, you learned the importance of knowing your worth. You began to track your accomplishments and learned what to track and how to document your successes. In this chapter, you will learn how to communicate your worth to others. You'll make yourself visible to the people who have the power to influence your career.

By the end of the chapter, you will understand how to effectively communicate in person, by telephone, through voice messages and email. Because communication is influenced by the personalities of the individuals involved, you will learn about the various types of executives and how best to communicate with them.

In addition to learning to communicate with those in a position to support your advancement, you'll create a brand for yourself by creating a success statement. You will learn to create impact, develop relationships with top executives and position yourself for political advantage.

Finally, you'll be warned about several potential pitfalls that could trip you up as you publicize your accomplishments and desire for promotion. These include self-doubt, unrealistic expectations, the resistance of others, jealousy, negative self-promotion and becoming too self-serving.

DEVELOP YOUR SUCCESS STATEMENT

Hide not your talents, they for use were made. What's a sundial in the shade?

~ BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ~

A Success Statement (SS) is a 30-second communication that commands attention and creates influence. This carefully constructed message should be delivered in a brief, concise and clear manner and tell the listener about you as a professional: your background, skills, achievements, and the like.

Here are a few examples of Success statements:

- “Sales are my forte – I thrive on the pursuit of a client and get a charge out of researching and creating targeted and persuasive presentations. My enthusiasm is infectious. My team has surpassed our targets seven years in a row.”
- “I was hired in 2004 to create an employee learning center. Since then, I've established Our Company University, which has a staff of 12 as well as 75 expert instructors from across the

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company. We've implemented several mandatory curricula targeted to various career tracks and will be launching an online ethics class next month."

- "I'm known around the office as 'Brainstorm Bob' – I seem to have a knack for conducting very fruitful brainstorming sessions. Meetings I've led have resulted in three new product names for our software division and a revamped motto for our Japanese affiliate...and that was just in the last two months."

A SS can be enhanced by creating a "story" that can easily be remembered by others. A compelling story that describes you and what you have accomplished creates a lasting mental picture. By creating a picture, your SS boosts your chance of getting promoted or being recognized for incredible results. Anne M. Mulcahy, CEO of Xerox, describes the importance of stories this way: "Stories exist at all levels of the corporation. You talk to tech reps and they'll tell you what they did to help turn this company around. Whether it was saving a buck here or doing something different for customers, everyone has a story." (*Fast Company*, June 2005)

Your SS can be helpful in numerous situations. For example, you might attend a meeting and find yourself sitting next to an executive in the company. This unexpected opportunity allows you to make a strong on-the-spot impression that can help you increase your visibility within the company.

You could communicate many facts to this influential executive, including:

1. the impact you are making in the company
2. the value you have demonstrated in your work
3. the measurable accomplishments you have achieved
4. the excellent work your team is doing and its impact on the organization's success
5. your division's wins and achievements
6. the ideas you have that could enhance the company's profitability or effectiveness

A Success Statement can be written (for use in emails and letters) or verbal (for use in meetings, face-to-face interactions and voicemail). Every moment you have an opportunity for influence is a moment of truth. Use that moment to deliver a powerful SS that gets you noticed so you can gain the appropriate visibility and recognition.

A June 1998 *Fast Company* article featured an interview of a man who knows the value of a good story: "Peter Orton, who spent 15 years as a Hollywood scriptwriter and story editor before enrolling at Stanford to write a Ph.D. thesis on the effects of story structure on audiences, says, 'Stories enhance attention, create anticipation, increase retention. They provide a familiar set of hooks that allow us to process the information that we hang on them.'" (*Fast Company*, June 1998)

Take Action Now!

Regularly update your Success Statement based on the new activities you are working on, projects you have accomplished and ideas you want to promote. It's important that your SS stay current and fresh. To accomplish this, schedule a 30-minute SS meeting with yourself once each month in the coming year.

Plug these dates into your appointment calendar and honor them. Use the time to review and, if necessary, revise your statement. You can use the time when you are jotting down your accomplishments (which is already scheduled in your calendar) to create and update your SS.

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How do you create your Success Statement?

Just follow the steps below:

1. List an accomplishment that stands out and has benefited the company.
2. Describe the results attained or problems solved due to this accomplishment. Focus on the following things (this is identical to the three-step process used in tracking accomplishments):
 - a. Overview of the problem or situation
 - b. Key action steps taken to address the problem or situation
 - c. Measurable results showing the financial impact the accomplishment had on your company. (Remember to state this in dollar amounts plus percentages, numbers, economic value, facts, figures and/or measurements).
3. Name anyone else (other departments, peers, vendors, clients, partnerships, management) who worked with you during this project and the benefits gained by your actions.
4. Combine the above steps into a 30-second, four- to six-sentence Success Statement so you'll be ready to tell your story whenever you find yourself in the position for a moment of truth – an instance when you can briefly, yet powerfully, convey your value and achievements to a person of influence.

Here are a couple more examples of an SS:

“Customers complained about being transferred to several different people when they called for assistance and had to repeat their problem to each new person. I headed a team charged with finding a low-cost solution. We implemented an instant messaging system so the customer could record the issue on the first contact and it would be instantly sent to the next representative. The reps now spend 25% less time on each trouble-call and our customer satisfaction ratings have improved by 50%.”

“As a project executive for several federal government clients, a key responsibility is setting up a secure construction site. This involves obtaining and meeting extensive, specific requirements of agencies including the FBI and the National Security Agency. I've taken numerous classes on security and have developed a reputation as an executive who is knowledgeable and can be trusted. That word of mouth has helped our firm get a long-term contract with the Center for Disease Control – a high-profile, lucrative one.”

Once you've created one SS, you'll find it easy to come up with others. It's a good idea to have two or three to choose from depending on the person you're talking with and the most appropriate topic for the situation.

- **Demonstrate ability to get results:** Spearheaded Project X and brought it in on time and under budget to save the company \$200,000 in annual costs.
- **Highlight strong communication skills:** (a) Delivered key presentation at important industry conference and (b) hosted tours of visiting Wall Street analysts (which resulted in positive comments in their reports).

LEARN TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

To listen well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well.

~ JOHN MARSHALL ~

Our hectic business-based culture is becoming increasingly fast-paced. How can you gain visibility and exposure with executives who have little time or energy to recognize your abilities, performance and accomplishments? Very simply, you tell them. Communicating your worth by talking with influential people is a fast way to create visibility at the top levels of your company.

The most effective communication is a face-to-face conversation. Unfortunately, scheduling time with a busy executive isn't all that easy. Try combining the various modes of communication – in person, phone, voice message and email – in creative ways, to demonstrate your flexibility and increase your chance of getting the response you need.

For example, send an email with your project report attached and follow up with a phone call. This approach will demonstrate you're attuned to the benefit of giving the executive time to read the report (email) and are willing to make it easy for him or her to respond (follow-up call).

Let's explore the four ways to communicate and identify the best ways to use them. Whether talking in person or on the phone, leaving a voicemail or sending an email, it's crucial you prepare and communicate effectively.

4 Ways to Communicate

1. Talk In Person

If you really want to create a connection, establish rapport, and gain recognition for your accomplishments, in-person communication is the most effective method.

Because more physical senses are involved, the other person will be more likely to pay close attention to what you say, remember you after the meeting and be motivated to help advance your career. You will have an opportunity to read his or her facial expressions, gestures, and body language and adjust your approach accordingly.

All this can occur in a planned interaction, such as an appointment or meeting, or during a more casual conversation in the normal course of business. Both scheduled and casual conversations can be effective if you're prepared and use the time wisely.

Schedule Meetings

While there is always the possibility you'll be interrupted by phone calls or other people popping in to ask a quick question, you'll have a better chance of capturing an executive's undivided attention if you can arrange an individual meeting.

Try to schedule one-on-one time with anyone who can help your career, including your boss, your boss' boss, peers who have influence in the company, and other decision-makers who might affect your career. Top executives and senior leaders should be high on your list, but you can start with management a level (or two) above you to fine-tune your communication strategy.

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When you request a meeting, suggest two or three possible timeframes and offer to send a reminder via email. Remember, it's your responsibility to make this meeting happen!

Leverage Senior Management

If you have regular contact with managers at this level, you can easily ask for 15 minutes or half an hour of their time for an informational interview. If you're not in regular contact with senior management, but do exchange greetings when you encounter them in the elevator or hallway, leverage that contact to ask for a short chat. When you talk with senior managers, you are taking advantage of their insight regarding the inner workings of your organization. Often, these managers can dispel your internal doubts and questions about how to get promoted and increase your career success.

In an informational interview, you'll be asking most of the questions. Your goal is to learn more about the company and how you can get promoted. Let the individual know your purpose for the conversation and why you selected him or her.

For example, you can say:

"I feel strongly about my ability to deliver results that will not only help my department, but the entire organization. For that reason, I'm very interested in positioning myself to assume greater responsibilities. You're familiar with the company and what they look for, so I'm hoping you can share some information that will help me improve my chances for advancement."

Once you have a positive response, you can ask the questions you prepared prior to the interview. Think of the quandaries and concerns you have about being promoted. Suggested questions include:

- In your position, how do you interact with top management?
- What's the best way to gain visibility in the company?
- How do you let the top executives in the company know what you have accomplished?
- What are you doing to promote yourself and increase your visibility?

Meet with Top Executives

Your approach with top executives may be more formal, especially if you have little contact with them in the normal course of business. You may have to call the CEO's administrative assistant to schedule a meeting. Be prepared to explain the reason for your request and be sure to mention the benefit to the executive. You might say:

"I'd like to schedule 30 minutes of Ms. Executive's time to tell her about a project I just completed that will save the company \$150,000 in the next quarter." Or perhaps, "I was talking with Mr. Management about some ideas I have for improving customer retention and he suggested I discuss them with Ms. Executive."

Don't bait and switch. Any reason you offer for the meeting must be positive and it must be absolutely true. This will serve as a springboard for the rest of the discussion and allow you to smoothly transition into a discussion of your qualifications and desire for advancement.

If your immediate boss feels threatened by this, manage the situation according to your intuition. Inform your boss about the purpose of the meeting and if he still has a concern, invite him to come along. You don't want to let an insecure or obstructive boss prevent you from forming important relationships – but

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you don't want to threaten your current position, either. Keep your office climate in mind when pursuing meetings with higher-ups.

Prepare carefully for the meeting and be very clear about your purpose. Do you want to boost your visibility at the top levels of the company? Are you hoping to gain an advocate in your bid for promotion? Are you looking for feedback about your prospects within the company? Each of these targets (visibility, advocacy and feedback) requires a slightly different approach. And remember, whatever your purpose for the meeting, you will have limited time to accomplish it. So write down two or three primary points you want to emphasize and collect specific examples to support each.

Practice delivering the information in a clear, concise manner so you use this valuable time effectively. This meeting should be mutually beneficial and be remembered in a favorable light.

Engage in Casual Conversations

Opportunities for face-to-face communication don't always require a planned meeting. Sometimes they just happen as you naturally interact with management and, occasionally, with top executives. Don't waste a single opportunity to shine—and to use your Success Statements.

You can often create deeper connections when you have casual conversations with people during off hours. This can include going to dinner, lunch, getting drinks or a social event.

Preparation is the key to effectively using these chance encounters. Use the same outline you prepared for the scheduled face-to-face conversations. Just pare it down to the essentials. In a casual conversation, stick to just one point. You won't be regarded favorably if you make the person late for her next meeting or steal the time she'd planned to look over the notes for a conference later that day. If the person looks rushed or annoyed – or if there are people or other distractions nearby – wait for another time. If the timing feels right, go for it! Weave the point you want to make into the conversation.

When communicating your worth in casual conversation, be careful you don't come across as bragging. Keep everything low-key and natural. For example, in response to a comment about employee morale, you might say:

“We've had great success in our department in boosting morale. At the first of the month, we implemented a new idea that has everyone eager to get to work early each morning.”

At this point, most people will take the bait and ask for more information about the new idea. If not, just continue explaining what you did and the results you're seeing. The only way this casual conversation differs from any other discussion is who you're talking with and why. If you know your purpose, plan a few introductory sentences, and talk with the right people, you can easily use casual conversation to further your career.

2. Use The Phone

When you talk to people face-to-face, you have the advantage of seeing their reaction to your comments. That way, you can modify your message or your delivery and, hopefully, obtain a better result. In telephone conversations, visual clues are absent, so you must rely on voice alone. Nevertheless, the phone can be a very useful tool when you want to communicate your worth, especially when it's unlikely you'll be able to meet with the individual in person.

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The preparation that you undertake for in-person discussions applies to phone interactions, as well. In fact, it's even more crucial since you must rely on words alone to get your message across. But you can use your notes to guide you since the person on the other end of the line can't see your notes.

You may have to get past a secretary or other gatekeeper to speak directly with a high-level executive, so be prepared to state your name and a persuasive reason for your call. Here's one approach:

"I'm working on a project that could lead to big cost savings for the Mr. Executive's department and I'd like to get his advice. I only need 10 minutes of his time."

Be truthful, but creative, in the way you present your case. If you'd like to do an informational interview or need more than 5-10 minutes, schedule the conversation in advance so you're assured you'll have the individual's full attention.

Once you're connected to the executive, be cordial, but come to the point quickly. You have just a few minutes to accomplish a lot. If you're conducting an information interview, have your questions in front of you. If you're relaying information about your accomplishments or potential for promotion, have the points you want to cover listed, along with examples of each.

Be aware of the person's tone throughout the conversation. Does she sound rushed? Frustrated? Distracted? If so, allow her an opportunity to table the discussion for another time. Ask, "Is there a better time for us to talk?"

If you've scheduled a specific time limit for the phone conversation, stick to it even if the other person seems fine with continuing. Say, "I promised that I would only take 10 minutes of your time and we just passed the 10-minute mark." If there is more you need to cover, you can suggest another time to talk. It's likely the individual will be impressed you are protecting his schedule. If the executive indicates a willingness to keep talking, continue. But be brief.

At the end of the conversation, quickly summarize what you discussed and thank the person for his time and, if appropriate, his help.

3. Leave a Voice Message

Although it's best to communicate directly with someone who is in a position to advance your career, hectic schedules can make it difficult. Rather than give up on communicating your worth to this executive, leave a voice message.

Don't just say, "Hi, this is Joe Smith I have something I'd like to discuss with you. Could you call me back at 123-4567?" There's nothing in your approach that would compel that individual to return your call.

Instead, summarize what you want to say in a way that allows you, even if you don't get a return call, to relay the gist of your message. The goal, of course, is to pique his interest so he's eager to call you back.

Here's an example:

"Hello, Mr. Executive. This is Joe Smith in Marketing. I'm calling to tell you about an idea we've just implemented in our department that has increased productivity by 25% while boosting staff morale. I thought it might be helpful to other departments in your division. If you'd like to discuss it, please give me a call at Ext. 1234. I look forward to talking to you. Thanks!"

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To leave a coherent and persuasive message, write it out ahead of time and practice several times before placing the call. Consider running it past your executive coach or a trusted colleague to get an objective opinion.

When you make the call have your full outline in front of you as well as your voicemail message. You don't want to be caught unprepared if you have the unexpected opportunity to talk directly with the executive.

4. Send an Email

Email is listed last as a way of communicating your worth only because it's not the preferred method for most people. Email strips the visual and verbal clues we've come to appreciate from other forms of communication. Email is also more "permanent" than a verbal conversation. This has both positive and negative implications. For example, having an email record can be helpful in a smaller sense (refer to it to double-check the meeting time or location) or larger one (were key points listed in the email? Save the information and use it to your advantage). On the flip side, an email sent in error – or a badly written one – could live on indefinitely in someone's in-box. E-mails can also be subpoenaed in legal cases.

That's why it's important to pay attention to grammar, spelling and punctuation when writing an important email message. Grammatical and spelling mistakes can undo all the good your message might otherwise have done. Read and reread the message to be sure it says what you want to say. Have someone else read it and give you his or her opinion. You don't want the reader to perceive a tone that you hadn't intended.

One benefit of sending an email message is the ability to include attachments. If you have an impressive report that supports your accomplishment, make your message more impactful by including the report. Here's an example that uses the email message as a base:

"Hello, Ms. Executive. I'm sending this message to tell you about a new process we've implemented in our department for tracking the lessons learned and information shared at our monthly marketing staff meetings. I've included a link to our workspace on the intranet, as well as an overview of the process. I thought it might be useful for your regional managers' meetings or other departments, too. If you'd like more information or to discuss how this worked for us, please give me a call at Ext. 1234. Also, I'll be in your area for a meeting on Thursday morning; if you'd like me to stop by then, I'd be happy to. Thank you, (name, title)."

As with a voicemail message, you can use email as an initial contact and suggest a face-to-face or phone discussion. By attaching supporting material, you'll help them prepare for your meeting so it can move along quickly and smoothly. In addition, including your attachment ensures you are getting your key points in front of the executive – and saves her from having to ask for information. So, you're being helpful, assertive, and efficient. What's not to like?

And don't overlook the importance of your email's subject line. You want to capture the executive's attention, but not have your message regarded as spam. Research shows that the more informational your subject line is, the more likely your message will be read.

Busy executives are swamped with email every day, so don't be surprised if you don't get a speedy response or even a response at all. In the case of the latter, you may wish to follow up two to three days after your initial contact.

CONNECT WITH DIFFERENT EXECUTIVE PERSONALITIES

We must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.

~ ANTHONY ROBBINS ~

Personality is the driving force behind communication. If your personality is energetic and forceful, your communication pattern is likely to be similar. You may be very direct and talk quickly. Other high-energy types will feel comfortable talking with you because they resonate with your style. However, someone who is quiet and reticent may feel bullied in conversation with you.

If you want your discussions to be positive and productive, learn how to recognize personality types and modify your style to match. When you increase another person's comfort level, he or she becomes more open to your ideas and more willing to help.

Just as there are many types of people, there are many types of executives. Ideally, you'll match the executives you most want to impress in terms of energy, personality and outlook. When that's not the case, you'll need to temporarily transition to a communication style that more closely resembles the other person's.

This section summarizes the six common executive personality types and offers suggestions for interacting positively with them.

6 Common Executive personality Types

1. The Critical Executive

The critical executive is a perfectionist and very difficult to please. Everything and everyone is judged and often comes up lacking. He feels the shortcomings of the people around him reflect negatively on him, so he criticizes in an attempt to build up his own image.

Although he is certainly critical of you in private, he may also criticize your performance, behavior, intelligence and work ethic to others. When you're building visibility and communicating your worth to others, the critical executive's disparaging remarks can be catastrophic. If you don't stop the criticism, it can limit your upward movement within the company.

This individual isn't likely to appear on your list of people to contact about your abilities and desire for promotion since the potential for a backlash is too great. But if his criticism is too frequent or damaging, you may need to directly address it to limit the adverse effect it can have.

How to Communicate Effectively

Ask to meet privately with the critical executive and ask what, specifically, he finds objectionable about your performance. Listen quietly and attentively, as there may be some merit to his claims. Then ask what changes he'd like to see. Again, listen carefully. Then briefly summarize your successes and the benefits they've provided to the department and the company. Ask him if he disagrees with your assessment of any of those accomplishments.

As long as you remain calm and open to what he has to say, the critical executive may be receptive to your comments. He may even see that your successes reflect well on him. Toward the end of the

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discussion, thank him for his time and let him know you welcome his constructive comments in the future. Ask that he restrict any negative feedback to a private discussion between the two of you, and assure him you will remain open to his suggestions for improvement.

If the public criticism continues, you may have to take more drastic steps, such as referring your concerns to his boss or transferring to another department to limit your contact with him.

2. The Reserved Executive

The reserved executive tends to be quiet, restrained and cautious. It's not unusual for top executives to appear reserved. This is true even for companies who have a visionary CEO who is passionate and willing to take risks, such as Richard Bransen of Virgin and Steve Jobs of Pixar and Apple.

A reserved executive pays attention to the details and is careful to avoid any financial or time-related dilemmas. When others might react with excitement, the reserved executive remains calm and appears not to react at all. He or she provides stability and steady forward momentum, with a minimum of disruption.

If your personality style is equally reserved, you're in familiar territory when talking with the reserved executive. But if your energy level runs high, you become engaged and excited about what you are doing. You communicate with passion and excitement, directly opposite from the reserved executive.

How to Communicate Effectively

To communicate effectively with this individual, tone down your enthusiasm. It's fine to convey your excitement, but add some restraint so you don't overwhelm the other person. Since she tends to be cautious, your over-the-top energy may not gain her trust.

Tone it down a bit, focus on your reliability and solid track record of accomplishments and you can easily win the reserved executive to your cause.

3. The Conservative Executive

The conservative executive has a lot in common with the reserved executive, especially in the way he communicates. Where the conservative differs is his distrust for anything beyond the tried and true. He doesn't trust what appears to be excessive passion and is put off by cutting-edge ideas. Anything new may be perceived as a threat to the status quo, which the conservative executive typically defends.

As his trust level grows, the conservative executive may realize he needs someone with plenty of energy to lead the charge into the future. But be sincere when communicating with this type of executive. If you betray his trust, even once, he may never trust you again and will certainly not support your bid for advancement.

How to Communicate Effectively

When communicating with the conservative executive, mirror how he talks and acts to increase his comfort level. For him to hear your message, he must believe you (and your ideas) can be trusted. So don't bowl him over with your approach. Instead, filter your energy through his mannerisms and style of speech to increase his understanding and create buy-in.

Once trust has been established, you can gently and gradually introduce your new, dynamic concepts. But be sure you back them with plenty of facts and figures that demonstrate their validity. Where

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appropriate, point out that your ideas don't involve a departure from the status quo, but an improvement on the strong foundation that already exists.

4. The Energetic Executive

The energetic executive tends to lead the charge, whether it's as the head of a company, division, project or team. She has high energy, lots of ideas and a vision for the future. The energetic executive is often the rainmaker for a company, driving profitability and expansion. She brings the fuel of energy so ideas can flourish.

She can get so caught up in her passion and excitement that she has difficulty understanding those who don't share her high-energy style. The train is leaving the station and she's eager for everyone to get on board. If you share the energetic executive's style, you were probably on board one step behind her. But if your style is more subdued, you may feel you're sprawled on the tracks.

How to Communicate Effectively

To communicate your worth to the energetic executive, step up your own energy level. Borrow some of her excitement when you talk with her and maybe even use more gestures than you usually do. Get her attention by focusing on your most visible and biggest successes. If you started something new, let her know about it.

Keep in mind that you both contribute to the company's success, but in different ways. Confidence is a language the energetic executive understands. So demonstrate your confidence at every opportunity.

5. The Egotistical Executive

For the egotistical executive, it's all about him: what he's done, how well he's done it and the great things he'll do in the future. Other people in the company exist solely to help him reach the next level. Deep down inside, he may or may not believe his own press, as egomaniacs are often insecure beneath the surface. They feel good about themselves only when they score visible wins. So everything they do is geared toward amassing as many wins as possible, at whatever cost is necessary.

Egotistical executives can have difficulty communicating with one another. Discussions quickly become contests as each wants to be perceived as the best. For others, communicating their worth to the egoistical executive can be very uncomfortable. He may claim responsibility for their successes, downplay their wins or simply focus the conversation on his own accomplishments.

For that reason, this executive is seldom included on a list of potential supporters to contact. The only situation this person can become a powerful advocate is when doing so will directly promote his own goals.

How to Communicate Effectively

When you must communicate with the egotistical executive, allow him plenty of time to talk about his favorite subject: himself. Agree with him as much as possible. When you communicate about your wins, be careful they don't overlap or take away from his wins. Highlight the accomplishments that reflect positively on him. It might also help to cite how his influence or expertise led to your successes.

6. The Jealous Executive

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Of all the personality types, the most dangerous is the suspicious, jealous executive. She sees the success of others as a threat to her own and readily takes an adversarial position fearing someone may advance past her. Those with the greatest number of accomplishments and the most talent are her greatest threats.

Due to her personality style, the jealous executive makes a poor advocate for anyone seeking promotion. She may agree to support you and then find many subtle ways to hinder your advancement.

Unfortunately, it isn't easy to identify the jealous executive. Her jealousy is usually internalized. She may outwardly applaud the success of others while hiding inner envy and fear of failure. However, there are usually signs that jealousy is hiding in the wings. The jealous executive may make disparaging remarks about promising staff members behind their backs, downplay others' successes, and play a serious game of one-upmanship (or one-up womanship).

If you suspect an individual on your list of potential advocates is a jealous executive, consider replacing his or her name with someone who won't be threatened your success. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to convert this type of executive to your side, and your time would be better spent elsewhere.

How to Communicate Effectively

If you must interact with this type, approach her as you would the egotistical executive – comment on her successes and give her time to discuss her projects and initiatives. Focus on the question or task at hand and avoid sharing extraneous information that might be “saved” and used later in a negative way. Keep the conversation positive...and brief. Be circumspect, yet professional. Building trust is key – as is having a witness who can serve as your advocate (or reinforce to the jealous executive that you are a positive person).

CONCLUSION

Communicating your worth to others is one of the most effective and important ways to advance your career and demonstrate executive presence. It is also one of the most difficult for many business professionals to master. We may not feel comfortable blowing our own horn, especially with people at higher levels in the company. So we hold back. In the process, we may be holding back our career progression.

This chapter has provided several ways to communicate your worth without the fear or discomfort you may have come to expect. You've learned to create a Success Statement (SS) to command attention and create influence. And you know how to use it as a brief, but powerful, way to introduce yourself and summarize your accomplishments.

You've learned how to plan for formal and casual face-to-face communication so you can get your message across clearly, succinctly and persuasively. This chapter also introduced you to effective methods for getting your message across in phone calls and voicemail. You've also learned how to use carefully crafted email messages and attachments to generate interest and excitement.

Because the personalities of the people will affect their perception of your message, you have been introduced to six typical executives. You learned how best to communicate with critical, reserved, conservative, energetic, egotistical and jealous executives.

The goal of this chapter is to help you communicate your worth to others to make yourself visible to those who have the power to promote you to the next level. Communicating your worth builds a foundation for your career advancement by increasing awareness of your abilities and boosting your credibility. In Chapter 8, you will take the next step as you learn techniques for positioning yourself for even greater visibility.

CHAPTER 7 – REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

- ☐ Review the material in this chapter. Focus on your answers.
- ☐ Develop your Success Statement (SS) so you can communicate your aspirations and be viewed positively by people who can advance your career.
- ☐ Regularly update your Success Statement based on the activities you are working on, projects you have accomplished and ideas you want to promote. It's important that your SS stay current and fresh in your mind.
- ☐ Schedule a monthly 30-minute SS meeting with yourself to review and revise your statement.
- ☐ Choose the most effective way to communicate your worth by talking in-person, using the phone, leaving a voice message or sending an email.
- ☐ Schedule one-on-one time with at least three people who can help your career, including your boss, your boss' boss, influential peers and any other decision-makers who might affect your career.
- ☐ Prepare carefully for the meeting with top executives by writing down two or three primary points you want to convey and collect specific examples to support each point.
- ☐ Choose one of the six common executive personality types that you deal with and implement the suggestion for interacting positively with them.

SUMMARIZE KEY POINTS

Summarize the key points you learned in this chapter and jot them down below.



CHAPTER 8.

POSITION YOURSELF FOR GREATER VISIBILITY

*If you don't get noticed, you don't have anything. You just have to be noticed,
but the art is in getting noticed without screaming or without tricks.*

~ LEO BURNETT ~

Developing greater visibility is important to creating a strong executive presence. You must actively plan steps that enhance your career and position yourself in ways that showcase your contributions. Often, implementing your plan requires directness: you must be straightforward about what you want and hope to achieve. However, everyone has a different style. With that in mind, this chapter will discuss both direct and subtle approaches so you can create a self-promotion strategy that matches your personality, style and work environment.

The subtle methods of achieving visibility do, however, require a constant awareness of opportunities to promote your accomplishments and demonstrate your talents. Be prepared to take advantage of whatever opening presents itself – even if you have just a moment's notice.

In this chapter, you will learn how to always be on the lookout for opportunities to create impact and influence. You will prove you are excelling at your job, position yourself for political advantage and become associated with executives in positions of power.

In addition, you will discover ways to create your own brand and take advantage of opportunities to promote yourself. In doing so, you will gain political leverage, have the confidence to act as if you've already arrived and educate top executives about your value to the company. You'll also learn ways to avoid becoming too self-serving and strategies for overcoming internal and external resistance.

BRAND YOURSELF

*Your premium brand had better be delivering something special,
or it's not going to get the business.*

~ WARREN BUFFETT ~

Branding is simply the process of setting yourself apart from the competition and making it clear that you're the best. No matter what position you hold in your company, you can brand "you" and market your brand for advancement or put yourself on the fast track for assignments that will make an even stronger contribution to your organization.

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Doug Lattner, CEO at Deloitte Consulting, knew that the best way to set his organization apart from others was to not be all things to all people. “We’re not going to out-Accenture Accenture, we’re not going to out-IBM IBM, and we’re not going to out-McKinsey McKinsey,” he said. “We’re going to be very good at what we do.”

You can create your own brand by focusing on the characteristics that make you unique. Become an expert on something that will help you stand out and prove your worth to the organization.

Peter Montoya and Tim Vandehey in their book, *“The Brand Called You”*, define a brand as, “a personal identity that stimulates precise, meaningful perceptions in its audience about the values and qualities that person stands for, personally and professionally.”

Your primary goal in building your visibility is to persuade those who can influence your career that you’re the right person for the job you want most. Since there are probably others with the same idea, you have to find ways to prove that you are absolutely the best person for the assignment. If it’s not a particular job or promotion you’re after – perhaps you want to someone in senior management to know your name or you want your boss’s boss to have a clearer picture of the contributions you make – you can still apply these strategies to increase your profile in your company.

How do big corporations demonstrate to their customers they are the best? They establish an appealing brand that provokes interest, excitement and loyalty. While those huge companies typically hire expensive ad agencies to create and promote their brands, you can accomplish the same thing -- on a smaller scale -- at no cost at all.

Management guru Tom Peters suggests you, “start by identifying the qualities or characteristics that make you distinctive from your competitors – or your colleagues.” “What,” he asks, “have you done lately – this week – to make yourself stand out? What would your colleagues or your customers say is your greatest and clearest strength? Your most noteworthy personal trait?”

Here’s another question to ask yourself: “If you were a car, what kind would it be?” According to CIO Magazine, “Last December, Michael Iacona decided he was ready to raise his visibility within his industry. But first the CIO of TMP Worldwide Advertising and Communications thought about what he wanted his name to connote. To focus his thinking, he went through an exercise to identify his personal brand. Iacona sent a survey to his peers, colleagues and even people he had just met to determine the impression he makes. A sample question: If he were a car, what kind would he be?” Iacona explains, “This is not about creating an image of who you want to be, but identifying the unique value that you bring.” (Martha Heller, *“Cue the Spotlight,”* CIO Magazine, December 1, 2006)

Here are some examples of famous companies’ brand statements:

- **Disney** – To make people happy.
- **Boeing** – To push the leading edge of aviation, taking huge challenges doing what others cannot do.
- **3M** – To solve unsolved problems innovatively.
- **Microsoft** – To enable people and businesses throughout the world to realize their full potential.
- **Wal-Mart** – To offer all of the fine customers in our territories their entire household needs in a manner in which they continue to think of us fondly.
- **Apple Computer** – To bring the best personal computing experience to students, educators, creative professionals and consumers around the world through its innovative hardware, software and Internet offerings.

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- **Levi-Strauss** – We will market the most appealing and widely worn casual clothing in the world. We will clothe the world.

Think in terms of your top talents and the value these can provide to the company. Does your attention to detail ensure nothing falls through the cracks? Do you have a knack for solving complex problems, a skill that has saved time and money? Are you good at defusing conflict? Those might be your branding points.

Play around with your brand traits, experimenting with different ways of expressing them. Imagine you're creating an ad or business card. How can you express your value in a single, brief statement? Come up with something that is easy to remember, short and to the point. Your statement should inspire you toward greatness, be a vision of who you most want to become – and be practical.

Branding is key to establishing executive presence because executive presence is all about perceptions. So consider traits that not only help you stand apart, but above, the crowd.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Nothing falls through the cracks – ever.
- If I can't find the perfect solution, I'll create one from scratch.
- From conflict to cooperation in just one meeting.
- Strategies that will save you time, money...and sanity!
- Strong communication skills, even stronger results.
- Innovation, not exasperation.

Here's a couple of examples of personal brands adopted by successful businesspersons:

Sallie Krawcheck, the CFO and head of strategy for Citigroup, has enhanced her career by building on a clear brand. A *Knowledge@Wharton* article observed, "Krawcheck's insistence on corporate ethics, honest numbers and solid, research-based reporting has earned her a reputation as Wall Street's 'Mrs. Clean.'" (*Knowledge@Wharton*, November 1, 2006). She even landed on the *Fortune* cover with the headline, "The Last Honest Analyst." She has branded her reputation as being someone who focuses on ethics, honesty and being frank. Thus, the "Mrs. Clean" reputation is the brand she has built and is known for.

In the January 2005 edition of *Knowledge@Wharton*, the Progressive Corp.'s Northeast Agency general manager Meryl Golden said her personal brand is best described as "work hard, play hard." She added, "I'm a direct communicator and my 'work hard, play hard' attitude keeps my job in perspective. It also means I nurture other people who work hard, and I sell them within the company to help them find opportunities - which makes them more loyal to me."

Once you create your brand statement, you can use it as a focal point when you communicate your worth to others. Find opportunities to demonstrate your style through the type of projects you undertake and the accomplishments you promote. If it's your top-notch attention to detail you want others to notice, showcase the complicated, multi-step project you coordinated that went off without a hitch. To demonstrate your talent for solving problems, focus attention on the issue you brilliantly resolved after everyone else had given up. Or promote your ability to circumvent conflict by describing the collaboration between opposing factions you brokered in a single meeting.

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If you can offer sound ideas or advice that reinforce your personal brand, all the better. As David F. D'Alessandro, chairman and CEO of John Hancock Financial Services and author of *Career Warfare: 10 Rules for Building a Successful Personal Brand and Fighting to Keep It*, says, "Make yourself valuable to a boss by offering good advice. Timing is important," he says. You have to figure out when it's appropriate to speak and when something is probably too far gone to be challenged." But if your advice is good – and if you sometimes show yourself willing to stand out in stark contrast to the crowd – you polish your brand." (*Knowledge@Wharton*, January, 2004)

Branding promotes you as a valuable commodity within the organization. You are perceived as needed and in demand. For example, one of my clients was a technical engineer with a unique talent for technical sales and presentations. He realized this skill was the element that set him apart from his fellow engineers, the majority of whom didn't have an aptitude for sales or public speaking. So he began to brand himself by generating more awareness about this unique talent and became more visible because of his unusual combination of skills. This skill set afforded him greater visibility and garnered him more opportunities, which in turn boosted his value to the company. His masterful approach to creating and promoting his brand was vital to improving and personalizing his executive presence.

Take Action Now!

Just like the engineer with the knack for sales and presentations, you have a combination of skills that makes you uniquely valuable to your company. These skills can be technical in nature or can be people-related. What you will be creating in this exercise is your Brand Statement.

Make a list of five to ten skills or traits you possess that are directly related to your job, such as project management skills, a talent for design, excellent people skills, an outstanding vocabulary or high-level technical expertise:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Now think of five to ten skills or attributes that are drawn from what you've learned in your career and from your dominant personality traits, such as stamina, determination, a positive attitude or organizational skills:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What interesting, unusual and powerful combinations can you create by drawing from your two lists? For example, you may excel at time management and have four website launches under your belt. So you have scheduling savvy and an excellent understanding of user experience -- plus technical skills and the stamina required to see a complex project through from start to finish.

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Now, take the combination you've created and use it as a basis for your own brand statement. Refer to the examples listed above for inspiration and list your brand statement(s) here:

Commit that brand statement to memory and talk it up – use it to boost your visibility!

Note: If you feel your brand statement still needs a little work, there's no rush. Take the time to review this section and come up with your own steps toward developing a brand that represents you. You may ask a trusted colleague for input, too – if you're feeling a bit stuck, asking someone else for advice might spark some fresh ideas. Also review your last few performance appraisals. Your supervisor may have identified strengths you have overlooked. In fact, if you look closely enough, he or she may have written your brand statement for you!

MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.

~ SENECA ~

Opportunities for visibility occur every day. Your challenge is to become aware of those opportunities, be open to them and be prepared to take full advantage of them. Focus on situations in which you can:

- create impact,
- exercise influence, or
- be recognized for your accomplishments.

At Tasty Baking Company, a \$250 million company, one of the senior executives quit the company. During the discussion of how to replace this executive, Autumn Bayles made the most of this opportunity by raising her hand and saying, "Why don't you let me do this?" After some deliberation, Tasty Baking executives divided up the former executive's responsibilities, giving Bayles a share. "I was grateful for what I got. I dug in and did it to the best of my ability. Then they gave me another piece, and finally they gave me the whole thing. So raise your hand, ladies and gentlemen, because that's the way you're going to get the opportunities you want," said Bayles, who is now Tasty Baking's senior vice president, strategic operations. "It's not always going to be handed to you."

4 Ways to Make the Most of Every Opportunity:

1. Volunteer for Projects

Rather than waiting for opportunities to come to you, actively seek out projects that will showcase your talents. Take the lead in a project, if possible. If you hear about a new idea management is considering that might require your special skills, volunteer your help. Or come up with a project on your own that could solve a problem in your department.

For example, if you're in a meeting and the senior executives are providing information about long-term plans for your department or company, pay close attention. They may mention a project for which you are well-suited. Even though assignments will be made weeks or months later, you can certainly say, "I think my skills and interests would make me an asset to that team. I hope you'll keep me in mind when you're making the assignments."

Speaking up will show you are a forward-thinking, enthusiastic team player. Follow up with management, perhaps by inquiring about the status of the project or emailing leaders a newspaper or magazine article that is relevant to the endeavor. This will keep you on the radar screen and reinforce your willingness to volunteer.

2. Participate in Meetings

There's an old saying, "If your company is run by committee, get on the committee." Get involved in meetings that can showcase your expertise, particularly with people in higher-level positions. Meetings provide excellent opportunities for visibility and they can also result in new contacts with influential people. If you don't already know the individuals in the company who have great influence, you're likely to meet them during such meetings. Be sure to write down the names and positions of everyone at the table and take note of any clues as to their interests, pet projects and so forth.

After the meeting, think of reasons to contact these people. What information could you send to them? What do you know that might be helpful to them? Perhaps something is discussed during the meeting that you can follow up on.

Within 24 hours of the meeting, send these individuals an email sharing information. They will probably reply, which will open the door to a dialogue. You could soon be on your way to creating a relationship with someone you hadn't met before the meeting. Eventually, you may set up an informational interview with some of these individuals. Ask them about the best way to advance in the company or solicit their advice about increasing your visibility or impact in the company. Once you've established a relationship through your email exchanges, arranging an in-person meeting will be much easier.

3. Offer Suggestions

When appropriate, offer suggestions to management that might help the organization improve product quality, financial stability and customer service or employee morale. Thoroughly prepare before sharing your ideas so what you say will be heard, understood and respected. Gain in-depth knowledge of the situation and understand the pros and cons of your proposal. And be as articulate as possible.

Offering innovative, workable ideas can earn you a reputation as someone who makes a difference. But be ready to take ownership and responsibility for your suggestions. You don't want to be viewed as an idea person who fails when it comes to follow-through.

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4. Involve Your Boss's Boss

One of the most effective ways to increase visibility is to have your boss inform his or her boss about the important things you are working on, your successes, and the impact you're having in the department. If your boss isn't willing to do this, take it upon yourself to copy your boss's boss on some of your projects and accomplishments. Your boss's boss needs to know you and the work you are doing. You can find subtle ways to promote yourself inside the department by sharing the successes that directly impact him or her. But make sure the accomplishments are expressed in measurable, results-oriented language illustrating the financial benefit and impact on your organization's bottom line.

When your boss shares with his or her boss how well you are doing, it creates a positive perception of you. Others will take notice and realize what an important commodity you are in the organization. It's surprising how many supervisors aren't even aware they could be sharing the wins of their employees. This sharing has even more influence because so few do it.

GAIN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE

Even if they figured out what the politics game is, people avoid it and the worst thing you can do is avoid it. It will catch up to you, and it will bite you in the rear.

~ MARILYN PUDER-YORK ~

When it comes to career advancement, aptitude, talent, experience and politics are equally important. There are many more ambitious and talented people than there are great positions, so it's vitally important you inform others what you have done, what you can do, and why you are the best person for the job. The likelihood you'll be promoted into the position you want may hang on your ability to persuasively present your value to the right people.

Politics is about perception and gaining favor with the people who help get you where you want to go. It's important to present the right image and create the energy that gets people to notice you. Stand out from the crowd in the best way possible.

Being perceptive and savvy at networking are key to gaining political advantage. Diane McGarry, Xerox's chief marketing officer, confirms this, "success at a big company such as Xerox requires an understanding of the many layers of office politics as well as the confidence to put your best ideas forward." She adds, "You have to know which people you need to get your ideas in front of in order to get those ideas advanced. Every time you make a move in a big company, you expand your network of people who are in your corner. (Knowledge@Wharton, February 2008)

8 Ways to Position Yourself for Political Advantage:

1. Undertake activities that allow you to do things that others (especially your bosses) find beneficial.
2. Understand the problems facing your supervisors and do things to make their jobs easier.
3. Involve yourself in high-profile projects so your name comes up frequently (and positively) in discussions at the top levels of the company.
4. Get top management to believe in your abilities so they will recommend you for future advancement.

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5. Ask for feedback from those above you, so you know how you're perceived. It's better to know in advance what people are saying about you.
6. Create as many advocates as possible. The more people who recognize the value you provide, the better your chance of influencing your advancement and the opportunity to make a bigger contribution to your company.
7. Communicate your accomplishments. If others don't hear about them from you, they can only operate from perception and second-hand information.
8. Don't ignore the business units outside of your department. Build bridges and create alliances so you'll be prepared to act quickly when a project requires coordination between various levels and teams in the company.

When an opportunity arises to position yourself for a job vacancy, take advantage of it. If, for example, your manager is leaving the company and you'd like to take his place, ask him directly for his feedback and potential support. Let him know about your abilities, talents and accomplishments so that he'll take an active interest in the success of your career.

DO YOUR CURRENT JOB...EVEN BETTER

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.
~ ARISTOTLE ~

As you've learned in earlier chapters, building executive presence takes time, focus and planning – plus patience. As you pursue your goals, strive to do your absolute best in your current position by reenergizing yourself, focusing on your duties and responsibilities, and looking for opportunities to demonstrate your talents in new ways.

After all, people tend to put more faith in what you've already done (or are currently doing) than in your potential for future accomplishments. Those in the executive suite are no different. Although they want to believe you can deliver on your promises, it's your track record that gives them confidence and underscores your value.

The most powerful way to prove that you can handle the job is to do it superbly. Here's how:

1. Find specific assignments or responsibilities within your current position (and even outside your position) that enhance your strengths and downplay your weaknesses.
2. Take on more challenging responsibilities. Ask for assignments your colleagues shun because they require too much effort. Just be sure that
 - you can excel at those duties,
 - your involvement will impress the right people, and
 - the abilities required are related to the duties of the job you aspire to.

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3. Determine which of your current job responsibilities would be most valuable in the position you most want. Then shine so brilliantly in those areas you become the obvious choice for promotion.
4. Find opportunities to redeem past poor performance by achieving excellence with a similar project.
5. Dress a level above your current position to visually convey you are ready to move up.

ACT ABOVE YOURSELF

What we truly and earnestly aspire to be, that in some sense we are. The mere aspiration, by changing the frame of the mind, for the moment realizes itself.

~ ANNA BROWNELL JAMESON ~

Gandhi said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” That’s a powerful way to say that if you want something to happen, act as if it’s already happened. In other words, if you want to land a better position, do what you can now to act as if you are already performing at that level.

Look for opportunities in your current job with responsibilities that relate directly to your target position. For example, if you are a senior manager who wants to become a VP, attend meetings where VPs will be present and choose tasks that allow you to make the decisions and perform duties a VP would handle. Let people with the power to promote see how well you fit into the position you aspire to. Make it obvious that promoting you to VP would create an effortless transition.

Every day, ask yourself, “How can I act more like [whatever position I want] in my current job?” Get to know the type of people who hold those positions. What qualities and characteristics do they exhibit? What are their backgrounds? How do they dress, talk, behave? How do they conduct meetings? How do they respond to questions? How do they interact with those above them, their peers and with their staff?

Compare where you are to where you want to be. Decide what needs to change and do so. In the meantime, do as William James suggested: “Act as if.” Act as if you already have changed and those changes will soon become a part of you.

As a manager who wants to become a VP, wake up each day and say to yourself, “Today I am going to act as if I’m the VP of this company. I am not going to wait for my company to recognize I am capable of doing the job.” At first it might be quite a stretch and may move you out of your comfort zone. Perhaps VPs in your company are required to do a lot of public speaking. If you’re uncomfortable with that, you’ll have to practice until it’s second nature to you.

Start living what you expect will become your reality. Eliminate anything you are doing that limits your ability to act like a VP. Experiment with behaviors at your current level so when you actually become the VP, you’ll make fewer mistakes and succeed effortlessly.

You might be surprised to find people start treating you with more respect. They may pay closer attention when you speak. Your manager may give you more important assignments and seek out your opinions. People react positively to genuine confidence, and that’s just what you’re exhibiting.

EDUCATE TOP EXECUTIVES

All Leadership is Influence.

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~ JOHN C. MAXWELL ~

As you create and promote your brand as part of building your executive presence, remember you need to put that brand in front of your company's high-level executives. Your objective is to be noticed, recognized and remembered so those at the top see you as an valuable member of the company and a high-potential talent ready to step up to the next level.

When the topic of hiring staff comes up, remind the top executives -- who will be catalysts for your career advancement -- that outside hires can present more of a risk than promoting people like you from within. New hires can have difficulty integrating themselves into the culture of the company.

Don't forget to talk up your unique skills so top executives will find you memorable. If you discover you have an interest or experience in common, mention it when you see executives in the hallway or the elevator – establish a connection, which will position you as “one of us.”

■ STAND OUT WITHOUT BEING TOO SELF-SERVING

Stop trying to fit in when you were born to stand out.

~ OLIVER JAMES ~

When people first learn all the ways they can communicate their worth and gain exposure, they're so excited that they may get carried away. They can become self-serving, with too much “I” and not enough “we.” Instead of focusing on the people working for them, they put personal goals above team goals, and the company's success takes a backseat to personal gain.

The antidote to self-serving promotional activities is to always act with integrity and earn the trust of those reporting to you. Care enough about the people in your group so that you do everything you can to help them move up through the ranks even as you promote yourself. Devote as much time to helping them as you do to promoting your own career. You'll be considered an ally instead of a braggart.

■ TAKE THE FEAR OUT OF SELF-PROMOTION

There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium; and be lost...

~ MARTHA GRAHAM ~

It's been said we are our own worst enemies. That's certainly true for people who want to advance their careers but who avoid, consciously or subconsciously, taking the necessary actions to succeed. Their resistance may be the only thing that stands in their way. But before someone can overcome the tendency to resist, they must become aware of it in themselves. The reasons most people don't self-promote is because they don't want to be seen as bragging or showing off. Let's look at a few common forms of resistance to self-promotion and ways to overcome them.

Banish Self-doubt and Lack of Confidence

If you don't believe in yourself it can be nearly impossible to convince others that you have what it takes. Self-doubt persuades you to keep a low profile and blend in so no one will challenge you to prove

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yourself. You tend to play it safe and avoid the limelight. This kind of behavior is at the opposite end of the spectrum from behavior that is necessary to be promoted.

If your lack of confidence spills across every facet of your work life, it will take a lot of time and effort to be recognized as worthy of promotion. Perhaps you don't have enough experience, education or exposure. That's something that can be addressed over time.

If, on the other hand, there are just a few areas where self-doubt creeps in, focus on areas you're most confident and expand them. Doing this as you implement a systematic program to overcome self-doubt will help you achieve a good balance of feeling excited about what you are learning to do – and confident about what you already know to do.

For example:

- If you're uncomfortable talking to large groups, start with a very small group of people and give the same presentation to increasingly larger audiences. Also, even if it feels silly, practice in front of a mirror at home, too. You'll get used to the sound of your own voice and become more comfortable talking animatedly for a longer period of time.
- Don't like promoting your accomplishments? Practice on your family, friends or trusted colleagues. When they ask, "How's your day going?" respond with, "Great – I just got a thank you note from a very happy client!" or "Good, thanks – I just finished a complex program I've been working on for two months." Their positive responses will embolden you, so that you become comfortable promoting yourself to higher-ups at work.
- Do you tend to be self-serving when describing successes? Think of two or three recent accomplishments that you plan to tout to your superiors. Before you communicate them, take some time to write brief descriptions of each one. Review what you've written – do you see many "I's" and few "we's", even though these were team projects? Adjust your accounts accordingly and keep this perspective in mind when you're promoting your (and your team's) achievements.

Avoiding Contact with Executives

Do you avoid communicating with high-level executives because you fear they will resent intruding into their busy schedules? Do you assume executives prefer to talk with people at their level? This fear is a spin-off of lack of confidence. You are, in effect, saying the executive's time is more important than yours and what you have to communicate isn't important to justify the interruption.

You can resolve this in two ways:

1. Learn to value your time and what you have to offer. While your salaries may greatly differ, what you produce with your time has value to the company and, thus, to the senior executive.
2. Learn to present information in a way that respects the executive's time. Plan your communication in advance so you can get right to the point and make your case clearly, succinctly and persuasively.

Adopt the attitude that what you have to communicate and offer are highly valuable commodities. It's to their benefit for executives to hear what you have to say. And it's your responsibility (perhaps even your duty) to give them the opportunity to hear you.

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Too Busy to Promote

We're all so busy these days. But if you're too busy to promote yourself, you could end up stuck in your current position longer than necessary. It's tempting to let the daily grind take over, hoping that at some point you'll have time to prepare for your next position. But what usually happens is that more work just gets piled onto your already overflowing plate. What is immediate (e.g., responding to email, or someone coming into your office and needing something right now) becomes more important than what is most important over the long-term. Make your career advancement and promotion plan a top priority. It demands as much attention as your other responsibilities, perhaps even more so.

Commit to self promotion on a regular basis. If you truly can't find time to do it, come in an hour early two or three times a week. Initially, use that time to determine what activities can be delegated to someone else. Identify tasks that can be eliminated altogether. Then set up a schedule that allows you at least half an hour a day for self-promotion and use it wisely. You must make self-promotion a part of your daily work life – put it in your daily planner, Blackberry and/or calendar!

The Passive Approach

Do you feel awkward about communicating your worth because you believe that excellence should be recognized for its own merit? Do you find it distasteful when others “toot their own horns”? If so, you probably feel a twinge of resentment every time those people are promoted above you. Like it or not, it's the people who make themselves visible who advance.

While you may never feel comfortable making a grand gesture, there are many subtle ways to promote yourself, such as volunteering for high-profile projects that perfectly suit your abilities or following up on your conversation with a top-level executive by emailing information to her.

Focus on communicating the impact you made and the benefits gained by your division as a result of your contributions. If you focus on the facts and give credit to others on your team you'll feel more comfortable sharing because you won't be focused so much on yourself. Find (or create) ways to communicate your worth that suit your style, while still letting those at the top levels know that you exist – and are worthy of their consideration.

When you present the right image, create positive exposure and gain access to others who have influence, you'll increase your visibility in the company and directly impact the success and ease of your current position.

OVERCOME RESISTANCE FROM MANAGEMENT

*Stand upright, speak thy thoughts, declare the truth thou hast, that all may share;
be bold, proclaim it everywhere. They only live who dare.*

~ VOLTAIRE ~

Sometimes it's not your own resistance that holds you back from increasing your visibility, but the resistance from upper management. All it takes is one determined individual at a high level to block your bid for promotion. His or her efforts can range from quietly undermining your reputation to becoming an outspoken critic of your work.

It's easy to identify the outspoken critics, since they're open about their opposition. The more clandestine resisters do their damage underground where it may remain undetected until it's too late. To counteract

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either type of critic, it helps to understand what's behind their behavior. It's also important to realize their motives may not be as evil as you imagine.

4 Types of Managers

1. The “Just Do Your Work” Manager

The person who resists your advancement may be a supervisor who wants you to focus on your work...exclusively. It's likely this individual prefers to work in isolation, behind a closed office door. These supervisors view social events as an inconvenience rather than an opportunity to appear on the company radar screen. They tell you that if you just do a really good job, you don't need to seek out interaction with executives.

This type of resister not only dislikes social interaction, but fears your work will suffer if you participate in “distracting” social events.

You can respond by saying,

“I want to take advantage of opportunities to interact with important people because it's valuable to my career. It helps me to understand the company, the competition and the people at every level. It also makes me better at my job. As long as I'm getting my work done, and done well, I don't consider it a problem.”

With this type of resister, the solution will probably be a compromise. If you can demonstrate your promotional activities aren't having a negative impact on your job performance, this resister may relax a bit.

2. The Jealous Type

Peers and superiors who tend to feel jealous, threatened or suspicious can become a serious obstacle to your bid for promotion. When you interact with the top people in the company, there will be some who misunderstand your intentions. They assume you're so busy rubbing shoulders with the top brass that you're not doing your work. They may become jealous because they aren't doing the same, especially if they don't know how to do it. Their sense of inadequacy may cause them to consider you a threat.

If you think your supervisor might be suspicious of you, try this:

1. Get feedback about your performance. If you don't receive feedback on a regular basis, ask for it.
2. If you learn that your supervisor has an issue with your networking activities (but is otherwise on your side) take the direct approach. Say,

“I enjoy interacting with my peers and people who are above and below me. I have done this with every job. It has always helped me do an even better job because others in the company know things I don't know. If I'm ever going to take on a leadership role in the company, it is vital that I understand the bigger picture, which I get from talking with people above me.”

3. If the feedback indicates your supervisor sees you as a threat, it might be best to keep a low profile. Confrontation might push her from neutral to antagonistic.

3. The Cautious Boss

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Your immediate superior or someone else at a level higher might express concern about the exposure you're getting from your self-promotion activities. One of my clients was cautioned to stay within his sphere of influence and advised to reach out only to people one or two levels above him. His boss said that talking up outside contacts and promoting my client's experience "came across as bragging."

This type of response is rare, but it does happen. It's a sign you are stretching yourself in ways your manager doesn't like. What your boss (or anyone else who is negative) is saying is probably accurate. Even if it isn't bragging, it's best to err on the side of caution and proceed in ways that don't raise the ire of your superior – after all, you must still report to him while you're developing your executive presence.

While you need to take feedback like this seriously, you shouldn't completely halt your promotional activities. Just carry them out on a more subtle and lower key level. With experience, you'll learn how to effortlessly do this and others will admire your actions instead of criticizing or judging them.

4. The Promotion-Preventer

When your boss values your work and doesn't want you to leave, she may actively block your promotion. While her actions might seem selfish, her behavior is fueled by a perception of you as an asset she doesn't want to lose.

This type of resistance is likely when you efficiently manage important projects and fulfill a role involving a lot of responsibility. Your boss knows she will have to make up for the loss of leadership when you move on and believes that keeping you in place is the best thing not only for her, but for the department.

The solution is to help your boss see the bigger picture. As you rise to higher levels in the organization, it will positively impact her career. You will become an important asset for her -- someone at a more influential level who can provide resources and support to enhance her success.

Be diplomatic, but make your boss aware she is limiting your career prospects to serve her own needs. Explain your aspirations and how important advancement is to your goals. Then help her understand that helping you become more visible and letting you go on to a new position is vital to her success, as well as yours.

If your manager continues to block your promotion, tell her you'll continue to do an excellent job with your current project and you will table your bid for promotion until it has been completed. Assure her you will aid in finding a qualified replacement and work with that individual to guarantee a smooth and successful transition.

It's likely she will appreciate your efforts to make her job easier. And she will be more willing to help you achieve your goals when she knows that you will assist her with the transition.

CONCLUSION

Gaining visibility – directly and subtly – is critical to your career advancement and desire to strengthen your value to your company. In this chapter, we focused on subtle way to becoming visible to the top executives at your company.

You have learned how to brand yourself to stand out from the competition and position yourself as the most qualified person for the next promotion. You know how to take advantage of every opportunity for increased visibility by volunteering for projects, participating in meetings and offering suggestions to

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management. You understand that company politics is a perception game and it involves gaining favor with the people who can help you reach your career goals.

You have become aware of the importance of doing your current job in a way that proves you already have what it takes. You understand that acting the part before you're promoted can help decision-makers envision you in the job you aspire to. And you've learned how to educate top management to view you as someone with executive presence who can step into the next level so smoothly that there is little, if any, disruption to the organization.

On the way to your next promotion, you know it's easy to get so carried away with your own career goals that you focus too much on yourself and not enough on others. But you are well aware of the importance of positive self-promotion and you've learned several methods for overcoming any resistance you encounter.

In Chapter 9, you will attain even more support for your promotion strategy and career success by recruiting a variety of people to help further your cause.

CHAPTER 8 – REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

- ☐ Review the material in this chapter. Focus on your answers.
- ☐ Develop your branding statement so you can communicate your worth to others. This will help you promote yourself as a valuable commodity within the organization.
- ☐ Find and create opportunities for visibility by choosing one of the four ideas listed in this chapter and implement it over the next month.
- ☐ Select two of the eight ways to position yourself for political advantage and implement them over the next couple of weeks.
- ☐ Choose one of the five suggestions on how to do your best in your current position and implement this in the upcoming week.
- ☐ Identify a higher level position and determine what needs to change now so you can act as if you are already at that level in the company.
- ☐ Identify a couple of reasons why you have resisted promoting yourself and create solutions to overcome them.

- ☐ Identify which of the four types of opponents are limiting your path toward promotion and work towards a positive solution.

SUMMARIZE KEY POINTS

Summarize the key points you learned in this chapter and jot them down below.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. In the bottom right corner, there is a small black square. The entire page is framed by a thin black border.

CHAPTER 9.

HARVESTING SUPPORTERS

*And this road is full of footprints! Companions have come before.
They are your ladder. Use them!*

~ RUMI ~

When you communicate your assets and accomplishments to others, it's primarily a one-way endeavor. Little, if anything, is received. In the process, you may overlook a vitally important facet of your promotion strategy and career success: gaining support from others.

Support is a valuable commodity in any situation, but it's a necessity when you navigate the corporate landscape. Without it, you risk being stuck in your current position indefinitely, overlooked for promotion and passed by others who are well connected and better supported.

As many people have pointed out throughout history, no one really does it alone. It might appear that way at first glance, especially when we hear about "self-made" successes. But even those individuals had a boost here and there from people who noticed their abilities and trusted them with important projects that got them noticed. Experience and advancement depend at some point on the actions of others.

Those other people can be a valuable source of feedback, information and encouragement. This chapter is designed to help you find and harvest supporters who are not only willing to help you advance, but become invested in your success, as well. You'll learn how to enlist supporters, mentors, advocates and an executive coach in your bid for success.

Steve Ballmer, Microsoft's CEO, talks about how important it is to get support from others when he reflects on having lunch with Jim Donald, who runs Starbucks. During these valuable support meetings Steve says, "you exchange stories and you learn from other guys' experiences." Steve discusses such things as, "How do you do that? How much time do you get? What are you trying to do at your board meeting? What's your strategic planning process look like? What are the cultural issues? What are the PR issues? How does crisis management work? What's the best way that you've found to communicate internally, externally?" (USA Today, April 30th, 2007)

HARVESTING SUPPORTERS

ENLIST SUPPORTERS

There is no such thing as a self-made man. You will reach your goals only with the help of others.

~ GEORGE SHINN ~

Supporters show an interest in you and your career and invest the time to explain what it takes to advance within the company and get the job you want. They help you reach the next level by providing resources, insights and knowledge.

They also serve as role models for top-notch executive behavior and presence. Supporters can provide feedback, criteria and expectations to help guide you along a clear path toward success.

Most executives I work with are highly respected and produce top-notch work. However, they have failed to cultivate enough company support to advance within their organizations.

Gaining Support from Supervisors

First, make a list of supervisors, managers and others in your organization who you might contact for support. Start at the top of the organizational chart and work your way down. Don't forget about the people in less visible roles who nonetheless have a substantial amount of influence. Elicit opinions, ideas and encouragement from all of these people. If they have influence, they can help you advance.

Below is a list of topics regarding the type of advice or support you can receive from the people on your list. Use these topics as a starting point for discussion during your meetings.

- learn how to be an effective leader and manager
- communicate clearly and effectively
- deal with challenging situations
- present yourself with confidence
- develop sound business judgment
- network inside/outside the company
- delegate responsibilities
- assist management with unconventional ideas
- offer opinions and make recommendations
- help management evaluate risks and weigh alternatives
- find timely, practical answers to business questions
- increase your effectiveness on projects
- provide a clear career path
- identify opportunities to excel
- explain what's required for you to advance in the organization
- create short- and long-term career plans

It's your responsibility to ask for and get more recognition. Let superiors, management and even peers praise you for things you have done well. Ask them to send you written notes or to verbally inform you of positive things you have been doing.

HARVESTING SUPPORTERS**Take Action Now!**

Review your list of potential supporters with the list of topics (just above). Consider which people might be the best targets – or resources – for the types of support you need to develop your career.

Make a note of five to ten of these people and the type of support they might provide below. Then use this information as a starting point for setting up meetings (or sending emails, making phone calls, etc.) to begin to build and strengthen your support network.

Who?	Support type
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Consistently Seek Feedback

Give special consideration to your boss and anyone else who oversees your work. Ask your supervisor for support during performance evaluations or any time you feel he or she might be willing to listen and motivated to help. Request feedback on a regular basis between performance reviews. Also ask about any areas you should improve and obtain concrete suggestions for making the necessary changes.

Contact your manager, supervisors and top management for the right resources to help you stay motivated and engaged in your bid for promotion. Learn which books senior executives recommend in the areas of executive development and presence as they relate to climbing the corporate ladder (and positively affecting the bottom line).

Approach potential supporters directly, saying, “I need your support. May I contact you once a month to share my progress?” Once you have permission to contact a few people, update them periodically. Report what you’ve done and what you hope to achieve. Then ask for suggestions. Your goal is to receive specific, detailed feedback that helps you learn exactly how to move up within the company by doing everything your supporters ask of you.

HARVESTING SUPPORTERS**Get Face-Time with Executives**

Whenever possible, put yourself in situations where you can interact with executives you admire. That's because they best represent an ideal executive presence. Seek out new projects and opportunities, volunteer for task forces, and attend meetings in which these executives might participate. If you're rarely in meetings with people even one level above you, ask supervisors for guidance. Seek ideas to land invitations to meetings that provide high visibility. In addition, use the information from the Take Action Now exercise above to schedule and follow up on informational interviews, email exchanges and conversations with the people you put on your potential supporters list.

Also, take note of the outside activities popular with influential people in your company. For example, are many of the top executives (or others with whom you wish to develop a relationship) avid golfers? Do they participate in charity events or does your company sponsor tables at professional associations or other luncheons? Pay a few visits to the driving range or find out who hands out the tickets to the lunches. Often there are empty seats and a last-minute invite could result in your sitting next to your company's CEO.

Gaining Support from Corporate Confidants

A confidant is someone with whom you are comfortable disclosing information about your experiences at work. Because these discussions often involve fears, frustrations and your innermost doubts and concerns, a confidant must be completely trustworthy. This kind of trust takes time to develop, but it starts with taking risks and being willing to share. Confidants are there to listen, to provide honest feedback and to support you as you face major challenges.

Your confidants shouldn't be your direct supervisor or someone at a higher level in the organization. You can't be completely open and honest with these people because their own career needs may conflict with yours. And a confidant absolutely can't be someone who judges you or who presents the possibility of betrayal.

Executives often choose their confidants from outside the company. Some have found a neutral person within the company who has served as a trusted sounding board, but these people are rare and much harder to cultivate. When looking for confidants, find someone who truly cares about you and wants you to succeed. They can't be overly concerned about their own interests or focused on what they might gain from the relationship. A confidant will be completely honest and direct with you. No matter how important or influential you become, he or she will continue to see you as you truly are and speak honestly.

Gaining Support from Peers

Don't limit your search for support to those in positions above yours. Your peers and colleagues can be a rich source of feedback and assistance. Do you know someone on your level who can provide honest feedback? You might ask, "From your perspective, what areas can I improve on to develop my presence as an executive?"

Also ask for feedback in areas in which you feel you're doing well. You will probably get far different information from peers than from your boss and people at the highest level of the company.

Collaborate with others by building partnerships and finding opportunities to work together inside and outside your group. Perhaps you're in marketing and you'd like to partner with a colleague in the Information Technology department. Talk with her about current initiatives in her area of responsibility

HARVESTING SUPPORTERS

– you’re sure to obtain valuable information you might not otherwise have been privy to – and see if there’s a way you can pitch in. For example, is the department struggling with finding a way to communicate the benefits of a new software release to technology-resistant people in the company? Your marketing and communication skills could be useful, so take this opportunity to offer your assistance and advice.

When seeking help from colleagues, be eager to reciprocate. Look for opportunities to pass on the support you’ve enjoyed. Do your part to offer tips, ideas, inspiration and encouragement to your peers whenever possible.

Turn your new manager into support

A new link in your chain of command can occur when there’s a new hire, a promotion or a departmental reorganization. However this new person joins your management hierarchy, it’s important that you present yourself in the right way so that his or her first impression is positive.

Most people wait in the wings until they’re invited to meet with a new manager. Don’t follow their lead. Make sure you’re one of the first to be introduced. The earlier in the hiring process this occurs, the better. You want him or her to recognize your face and name and be aware that you’re a valuable player in the organization.

Use your one-minute Success Statement to tell this new manager about your experience, the projects you’ve worked on and the assets you bring to the team. Highlight your accomplishments and results. Then ask, “What can I do to help you? How can I make your job easier?” Be prepared to demonstrate your knowledge of past and current projects, the department and the other players on the team. Ask if there are any tasks he might delegate, including additional staff you could manage. Target activities and projects that are in line with the position you’d like to move into. Let him know that you’re there to help him succeed.

Share ideas that can help him get up to speed quickly. By revealing yourself as an expert resource and a key player, you will create visibility and exposure. When a new endeavor is about to be launched, the new manager will naturally think of you as a potential leader for the project.

Stay in frequent contact with this new manager. During every interaction your goal is a promotion to the next level. Present yourself so he will view you as the perfect fit for that opportunity. Demonstrate your executive presence as a key contributor who wants to make a difference and is ready to take on more responsibility.

Your new manager is someone who has the power to create greater visibility and opportunities for advancement for you. Become his advocate and he’s likely to return the favor. Be cautious, however, not to appear too self-serving. Come across as someone who cares not only about your success, but the company’s success, as well. While developing a relationship with your new manager, emphasize the results and accomplishments that have occurred on projects in which you participated. If you present your involvement in the right light, he will realize your influence and how it has benefited the company.

Welcome this change in leadership. Gaining a new manager can be one of the best ways for you to be recognized as an indispensable asset. Make the most of this golden opportunity to position yourself for future advancement by being seen the way you want to be seen.

UNLEASH THE POWER OF A MENTOR

People need role models at every stage of their lives... not just when they are kids. Don't expect a role model to come along all by him or herself. There are classy people out there who want to help. Instead of waiting for somebody to take you under their wing, go out there and find a good wing to climb under.

~ DAVE THOMAS ~

A mentor is a special type of supporter. Like a supporter, a mentor provides specific information and guidance to help you improve your performance and productivity. You will, however, have a closer relationship with a mentor. This individual will take a personal interest in your career and play a more active role in helping you meet your goals for advancement and professional success. (To ensure your mentor is unbiased, it's helpful if he or she comes from a different department.)

James M. Citrin and Richard A. Smith in their book *The Five Patterns of Extraordinary Careers* state that, "People with extraordinary careers do not claw their way to the top, they are carried there." Support and advice from others are key to successfully navigate the corporate landscape. Think about your colleagues and superiors: who might be a good mentor for you?

Mentors typically have more experience and likely are senior to you in the company. Mentors may introduce you to executives and promote your talents and accomplishments to influential people inside and outside the organization. Studies have shown that a mentoring relationship with an influential individual can increase your chances of being promoted by more than 80%.

Joel's Coaching Clients

CHARLES IDENTIFIES AN EXCELLENT MENTOR...AND GETS A BIG PROMOTION

Charles Trent was a product manager at a medium-sized company and wanted to be promoted to a district manager position. He sought out a former district manager, who recently retired, and asked him to be his mentor for the next six months.

Charles was competing against four other strong candidates for this position. However, he knew his mentor could outline the necessary steps to build the knowledge and awareness needed to be most qualified. It would be very valuable to learn about the former district manager's experiences and challenges and apply them to the opportunity.

Over the next several months, Charles had numerous conversations with his mentor, who enjoyed the opportunity to share his experiences and lessons learned from his successes and failures. In addition, Charles conducted additional research – he read magazine articles about people in district manager or similar roles and took note of which qualities he admired...or didn't.

Charles also paid close attention to colleagues the district manager mentioned – people who were still at the company, who he thought were innovative thinkers. Charles took the time to have brief chats or phone calls with these people, too. This networking helped increase his visibility.

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Within the year, Charles' clever choice for a mentor – and his hard work networking, conducting research and implementing the former district manager's recommendations – paid off. He was promoted to the district manager position.

Benefits of Mentoring

There are many benefits of mentoring. Working together, you can learn to:

- Expand your skill sets
- Identify a clear and logical career plan
- Understand the culture and inner workings of the organization
- Improve areas of weakness
- Leverage strengths and untapped talents
- Gain supportive advocates and new contacts
- Learn to work with diverse personalities
- Effectively deal with office politics
- Increase your self-esteem and confidence

“Clearly, employees who have mentors earn more money, are better socialized into the organization and are more productive,” says Terri A. Scandura who is a dean of the graduate school at the University of Miami and management professor.

Katherine Klein, a Wharton management professor, says that mentoring is “a sounding board and a place where it’s safe to be vulnerable and get career advice. It’s a relationship where one can let one’s guard down, a place where one can get honest feedback, and a place, ideally, where one can get psychological and social support in handling stressful situations.”

Klein continues, “Mentors also should have an understanding of the organization’s values, culture and norms so they can pass these along to mentees. The mentor should be sensitive to the mentee’s needs and wishes, and enhance the mentee’s career potential, while simultaneously looking for ways the mentee’s potential can benefit the organization.” (*Knowledge@Wharton*, May 16, 2007)

Often, when initiating the mentoring relationship, the mentee feels like they are invading the mentor’s space and time. They are hesitant to reach out and ask for help. However, the mentor also gains from the relationship, says Klein “You get the satisfaction of seeing somebody develop. And don’t forget that mentees may be in a position to help the mentor at some point. Mentees may also make the mentor look good.” Scandura adds, “Dealing with a person who is your junior improves your network. Mentors know more about what goes on in lower levels when they deal with mentees. Junior people can provide information to mentors.... [They] are up on the latest technology and knowledge. So it’s an interactive process: Mentors and protégés become co-learners.” (*Ibid*)

Some corporations have a structured mentoring program where mentors are either appointed or sought out. However, most companies don’t actively engage in formal mentoring. So it’s up to you to create your own relationships to boost your professional development and growth.

In fact, Pamela Thomas-Graham, CEO of CNBC.com and executive vice president of NBC, advised participants at a management conference to find more than one mentor in the workplace. “It’s very important to have a mentor who can help you understand the unwritten rules of the company,” she said. “Try to find three or four people who can look out for you in different ways.” (*Knowledge@Wharton*, November 30, 2005)

HARVESTING SUPPORTERS

Take Action Now!

Here are some tips for seeking out a mentor:

1. When selecting a mentor, identify individuals who have influence and power in the organization, along with the knowledge, experience and competence to help you. Look for a respected person who is your senior and is willing to invest time in – and take responsibility for – your success and development. Make a list of all the executives and managers you respect and that have those credentials.
2. As you evaluate potential mentors, think about the desired outcomes for the relationship and what you expect from them.
3. Select the person you feel is most appropriate for helping you achieve your career goals.
4. Contact your potential mentor. Inform them of your career goals, why you feel they would be the perfect mentor and how the mentoring relationship will benefit them.
5. Establish the process and guidelines for your mentoring relationship. Discuss expectations and plan for the following:
 - a. time involved
 - b. responsibilities
 - c. meeting times and frequency
 - d. follow-up through coaching support
 - e. trust and confidentiality
 - f. length of the relationship
6. Make time to know each other and to establish a solid relationship. Talk openly and honestly about the following:
 - a. Career goals
 - b. Expectations in the relationship
 - c. Action steps
 - d. Career development opportunities
 - e. Strengths and weaknesses
 - f. Current work environment and professional relationships
 - g. Possible introductions to other influential people
 - h. How to be included in high-profile projects
 - i. Internal politics
 - j. Upward promotions

HARVESTING SUPPORTERS

Take advantage of all that mentoring has to offer, but be careful not to abuse the relationship. Maintain a consistently high regard for those who generously provide assistance, guidance and advice to help you meet your goals. And when the opportunity presents itself, serve as a mentor to someone climbing the ladder below you.

Finding appropriate mentors directly impacts your success, decision-making ability and productiveness. These supportive people have the knowledge, experience, training and understanding of how best to help you. Working together, you will create improved ways of doing things that speed your development and growth.

FIND ADVOCATES TO SUPPORT YOUR CAREER

*We all need someone in life's great marathon to buoy us and believe in us
when the inevitable waves of defeat try to knock us down.*

~ DIANA NVAD ~

The difference between mentors and advocates is a matter of degree. Both can provide feedback, information and encouragement. However, a mentor will not necessarily get directly involved in promoting your career. Advocates, on the other hand, will actively champion your cause to their peers (and even supervisors) in the company.

Advocates encourage your growth and challenge you to reach higher levels. They know your key accomplishments and are acutely aware of your potential for future success. Armed with this information, advocates campaign on your behalf, create visibility with senior management and directly assist you in advancing up the organization.

Think about all the people in top management, all the individuals who influence the promotion process and determine who gets promoted. Imagine ten of them are sitting around a conference table discussing you. Who will be supportive and who won't?

True advocates will positively influence the perception others have of you. With a strong advocate working on your behalf, you don't have to aggressively self-promote. An influential individual sharing how great you are has a lot more impact than you can achieve on your own. Advocates can even help you move laterally in the organization if your current job isn't challenging enough.

What about individuals in other divisions or even outside the company? Clients, vendors and customers can also serve as advocates. Whether your champions come from inside or outside the company, you want them all to go to bat for you so that you can get timely raises, fast promotions and a smooth transition up the company ladder. For that to happen, advocates have to respect you and want to interact with you.

Joel's Coaching Clients

A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH A CLIENT YIELDS AN ENTHUSIASTIC ADVOCATE

Julie Coletti works at a benefits processing company where she handles a number of large corporate clients. Within her company she is known for her leadership and her technological savvy, as well as her attention to detail. Her clients appreciate these traits – without them, their jobs would be made more difficult by incorrect or unclear benefits statements provided to thousands of employees.

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One day, when a client asked how her job was going, Julie shared that she was feeling underappreciated, despite her self-promotion and networking she did within her company. Julie then asked her, “Fran, you know how much I appreciate the thank-you notes you send me. It really makes my day when you email me a list of why I’m great!”

The women shared a laugh and Julie went on, “Would you be willing to send one of those notes to my boss, too? I share client kudos with her, but I think it would make an even stronger impression if it came directly from you. Are you up for doing that?” Fran responded, “I’d be delighted to. What’s her e-mail address?”

Later that week, Julie’s boss dropped by and mentioned that a client had sent a glowing note praising Julie’s work ethic, tech savvy, creativity and attention to detail. The client added that Julie was her No. 1 choice for a partner on this project. Julie’s boss told her she’d forwarded the email to her own superiors -- and Julie saw the benefit of having this client as an advocate. She saved her copy of the positive email and took a mental note: she will ask the client to serve as a reference when the time comes to look for a new job.

Julie Coletti’s story is an excellent example of the importance of building relationships – and taking the initiative to move those relationships to ones that promote advocacy. While Julie’s story involved an external client, as illustrated above, it’s vital to create advocates inside your company, too.

Take Action Now!

Which advocates can write you a testimonial or letter of recommendation about the quality of your work? Consider vendors, clients, partners, peers and managers with whom you worked. They will explain what you have done, the impact you have made and your overall top-notch results. Come up with at least five:

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

One coaching client of mine identified more than 20 different people and sent each of them a customized letter of recommendation. He asked them to change or edit the letter and to forward them to his boss and his boss’s boss. These letters of recommendation reminded his superiors of the incredible work he was doing and how valuable he was to his company. Also, while writing the letters, my client’s confidence soared. He felt better about his talents, the contributions he was making to his clients and company and why he deserved to be promoted.

As you consider the advocates who can support your career, take note of the ones who are changing positions or leaving the company. Before they leave, there are two things you can do to capitalize on your relationship. They are:

- **Ask them to write testimonials (see example below) so you have their positive viewpoint before they leave.**
- **Request they introduce you to people who can become your new advocates.**

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Now, make of list of advocates...who will you ask?

1. _____
2. _____

Sample Letter:

Jon,

As we've discussed, I want to increase my responsibility, get promoted and increase my salary. My hard work, excellent performance reviews, top-notch results and overall level of responsibility should have me at a much higher level than where I am currently.

So I have been working on getting a long-overdue promotion. I'm hoping you can help me by writing a letter of recommendation I can share with my superiors. I appreciate the strong working relationship we've built and hope you won't mind this request for your assistance.

For your convenience, I have taken the liberty of drafting a letter you can use as a template for creating your own. Once you have finished, please e-mail it to my director and copy me and my manager, as well. Here are the respective e-mail addresses: (my director), (my manager) and (mine).

If you'd like to discuss any of the points noted in the letter, please let me know and I will call you at your convenience. Thank you in advance for your help with this. I appreciate your taking the time to be an advocate for my career advancement.

Warm regards, Joel Garfinkle

Your letter will be a template for others to use as a foundation for the actual letter of recommendation. It can include the answers to the following questions:

- What is the person's background within – or outside -- the company (to establish his or her credibility)?
- How has this person worked closely with you?
- What does this person want to say that personally recognizes you?
- What type of person are you to work with (emphasizing the positive traits)?
- What has this person (or his or her colleagues) said about you that are positive?
- Does this person feel that your abilities and expertise are far higher than the position you currently occupy?
- How have you worked with people at much higher levels and how did you positively come across as a equal to their ability?
- What does this person respect about you?
- What characteristics or unique skills did you use to improve the team or project?

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- What projects did you work on and what impact did you have?
- How have your leadership skills benefited the team and the overall project?
- What did you lead and what did you do to be a good leader?
- What were the specific and measurable results?
- What were the problems you helped solve?
- Why does this person feel you should be promoted?

Basic Levels of Advocacy

Learn to identify the advocacy potential of everyone you meet and focus your attention on those who can help you the most. You'll find that the people with whom you interact can fit into one of five advocacy levels, from a true advocate to someone who actively works against you:

- **Advocate:** Actively promotes you and sells you to others. Champions your career.
- **Positive neutral:** Says positive things only when asked, but doesn't become a barrier to your development or promotion.
- **Neutral:** Doesn't affect you all; is neither good nor bad.
- **Neutral antagonist:** Ready to speak against you, but unlikely to go out of his way to be antagonistic unless you provoke him (i.e. you get on his bad side).
- **Active antagonist:** Actively seeks to bring you down and impose her will on you.

If an individual is already an advocate, your job is to maintain her at that level and effectively use her interest to advance your career. Then concentrate on moving anyone who is currently below the level of advocate at least one level higher. Your goal is to have as many people on your side as possible. And you certainly don't want any active antagonists in their midst.

It can be challenging to change people's minds about you, but it can be done. When dealing with someone who is antagonistic, try to understand why that person feels threatened by you. He may believe you're trying to steal his job or you've undermined his authority in some way. If you have acted negatively toward him at any time, apologize and do everything you can to prove you are not antagonistic toward him. The golden rule applies here: treat him as you want to be treated. He may or may not jump on your bandwagon, but he'll have less reason to openly oppose you and may convert from an active to a neutral antagonist.

Whenever you want to move someone upward in the advocacy hierarchy, do for that person what you'd like him or her to do for you – act as an advocate. If she truly has it in for you, a change in perspective may never come. But most people respond positively when someone goes to bat for them. Once they know they can trust you, they're likely to return the favor.

HARVESTING SUPPORTERS

Take Action Now!

Create a list of at least 5 people who are now “positive neutral” and have the potential to become your advocates. Limit the list to influential people you like and who like you.

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

These individuals are excellent candidates for advocacy. **Next, think of a person who has already acted as an advocate for you and ask yourself:**

Why has this person been your advocate?

What did you do to make this happen? List five things that directly helped the person act as your advocate (e.g., you did a project that impressed him or he likes your personality).

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

Use the list to create strategies you can implement to turn others in the organization into advocates. For example, if you realize that several people served as advocates for you because you stepped forward when they needed help with a big project, add “Watch for opportunities to volunteer for projects with potential advocates” to your strategy list.

(Strategy #1) _____

(Strategy #2) _____

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(Strategy #3) _____

Establish rapport with as many top executives as possible and personalize your relationships with them. Let them know what you are doing for the company and make sure they're aware of your intentions and aspirations. Get to know their personalities and interests. Discover common goals and help them meet their own objectives.

Make Your Boss an Advocate

Strive to get others, especially your supervisors, to acknowledge your contributions publicly. Ask them to help create opportunities for you to gain exposure to top management. At the same time, come up with ways to make those above you look good.

For example, is your supervisor always put in charge of an annual meeting or event, which he muddles through – even though it's one of his least-favorite things to do – because it's so important to the heads of the company? When you're discussing with your supervisor your desire for more visibility (or a promotion), volunteer to share or take over the duties for that event.

This will make your supervisor's life less complicated. Your excellent performance on the event will make him look clever for having selected you to handle it and senior management will become more aware of you because this event is important to them. It's a win-win for you and your supervisor, and it will demonstrate the many advantages of acknowledging your contributions.

Think through your answers to these questions:

- How will it make my supervisor look good to promote me to a senior position within his or her division?
- How can I make my supervisor's life less complicated?
- How can I show my supervisor that having me in the division will create an advocate who believes in his or her vision and direction?

Let your supervisors know you're open to sharing your expertise and knowledge with other leaders in the company. Offering your help can boost your boss's reputation, which will in turn demonstrate the value of giving you more opportunities and serving as your advocate. His speaking and acting on your behalf will not only show others how good you are, but how good he is, too, for being smart enough to have found and encouraged you. In this culture of support and advocacy, you will gain an opportunity to prove yourself and show off your talents to others who might have influence.

Your Boss May Be Your Best Bet

A strong and supportive relationship with your boss is a valuable asset in your bid for advancement. If your boss does well, chances are you will do well, too. Your boss can be an important factor in your career success because she has more exposure to top management and can share this exposure with you. In addition, she has important projects that can be shared with you – thus increasing your visibility and exposure – and can introduce you to influential people inside the company.

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If your boss isn't an advocate and you feel there is no way to change the situation, do what you can to transfer to another area in your organization. Look for a manager who has been successful in getting his or her folks promoted. Of course, this strategy works best in larger corporations. If you have other advocates in the company, they might be able to help you move laterally if your current job isn't working to your benefit.

Identify Choice Advocates

Identify the one person who has the authority and influence to make the greatest difference in your career. Cultivate that individual's desire to meet with you on an on-going basis.

If this person is your boss' boss, proceed carefully so your direct supervisor doesn't feel threatened. He may not have the power to champion your success or he may be too involved in his own projects to help, but let him know you value his advice and respect his position in the organization. Keep him in the loop and let him feel recognized. He may eventually become an advocate as well.

Return the Favor/Serve Others Well

Be prepared to serve as an advocate for others. Consider ways to advocate for your peers, your boss, your boss' boss and others in top management. This is a radical concept for most people in the workplace. To most of us, it seems backward. We're used to focusing only of our own career progression, not about helping others advance. In fact, this is a great way to counter people who haven't been supportive and turn them into advocates.

BENEFIT FROM A PROFESSIONAL COACH

Coaches are everywhere these days. Companies hire them to shore up executives or, in some cases, to ship them out. Division heads hire them as change agents. Workers at all levels of the corporate ladder are enlisting coaches for guidance on how to improve their performance, boost their profits, and make better decisions about everything from personnel to strategy.

~ TIME BUSINESS NEWS ~

In addition to supporters, mentors and advocates, another effective source of support is the executive coach. Executive coaches are to business professionals what master musicians are to aspiring performers: they guide the thriving careers of their clients to help them reach the peak of their abilities.

One of my executive coaching clients stated this reason for hiring an executive coach: "An accomplished professional from outside the company can quickly identify pertinent issues and obstacles see through defense mechanisms and more effectively determine a strategy for overcoming these barriers to greater success."

Executive coaches have the expertise, techniques and tools to assist you in achieving what you most want in half the time. They provide honest and objective third party feedback and help you develop the skills and mindset you need to move beyond limitations, resistance and self-doubt. Working with an executive coach, you'll be prepared for current challenges, increased change and future assignments.

Paul Michelman stated in the article from the Harvard Business School, *What an Executive Coach Can Do for You*, "In a 2004 survey by Right Management consultants, 86 percent of companies said they used coaching to sharpen skills of individuals who have been identified as future organizational leaders." (HBS Working Knowledge, June 13, 2005)

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It's not unusual for business people to spend thousands of dollars to hire a golf coach to take a stroke or two off their once-a-week golf game, yet won't consider investing in a coach to help improve their performance on their 40-year professional career. The payoff, over that period, may be hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of dollars. And it can mean the difference between a satisfying, fulfilling career or a dead end job.

Benefits of Working with a Coach

Executive coaches offer personalized feedback, practical solutions, real-time resources and effective strategies. An executive coach performs many functions, from helping to develop a 10-year career plan to assessing and providing feedback on a client's presentation skills.

A coach can evaluate the client's interactions with upper management, peers and subordinates. He or she can also help you:

- Evaluate risks, weigh alternatives and find timely, practical answers to business problems.
- Enhance performance through improved decision-making and increased productivity.
- Anticipate, discuss and work through any potential issues and barriers.
- Keep employees and hold onto the core talent within your organization.
- Find fulfillment in your work.
- Communicate clearly with peers, subordinates, bosses, clients and customers.
- Overcome your leadership shortcomings and fulfill your executive potential.
- Fine-tune their strategic thinking, communication, decision-making, and speaking skills.
- Reduce turnover, cultivate teamwork and inspire peak performance from your people.
- Advance up the corporate ladder by increasing exposure, visibility and perceived value to the organization.
- Chart a decisive career path that is both fulfilling and sustainable.
- Fully realize their professional, personal and financial goals.
- Balance work, family and personal time so they excel in all areas.

Hiring an executive coach may prove to be one of the strongest career moves you've ever made. Gaining an unbiased outsider's perspective on anything is always illuminating and useful in some way. Doing so in regard to your career is rewarding not just in salary, but confidence, a sense of direction and life-work balance. An executive coach will help you create successful action plans, identify obstacles that might limit your plan's success, and suggestions to implement the plan. He or she will provide support through follow-up, constructive feedback and thought-provoking questions.

Executive coaches also can serve as strong allies during times of change, whether in your company or industry. Transition and change is always an element of a successful career. As noted in the February, 2000 issue of *Fortune* magazine, "Coaches can help people come to grips with huge changes in the way we do work, in getting through big transitions."

Who Benefits from Executive Coaching?

Every up-and-coming business professional can benefit from executive coaching, but it is especially useful for employees who:

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- Are not performing at their optimum level or need to improve in certain areas.
- Are experiencing stress that may be causing performance problems.
- Are moving to new positions, assuming greater responsibility or working on high-risk projects.
- Have personal problems that are affecting their work performance.
- Would like to learn how to succeed at office politics and learn the “unwritten rules.”
- Want to boost their visibility and prospects for a promotion.
- Wish to align their positive self-image with the way that others see them.
- Need to identify ways to deal with a difficult or obstructive manager.
- Are identified as high potential and emerging leaders who want to enhance their growth prospects.
- Want to make long-term, positive behavioral changes.
- Want to get back on track after being derailed in their career.
- Wish to strengthen the perception of their value and impact on the organization.
- Want to define a clear game plan for advancing their career.

According to the November, 2003 issue of *The Business Journal*: “For years, CEOs of some of the most successful and largest companies have relied on executive coaches. Henry McKinnell, CEO of Pfizer, Meg Whitman, CEO of eBay, and David Pottruck, CEO of Charles Schwab & Co., are just a few who rely on a ‘trusted adviser.’ “

What Makes an Executive Coaching Program Successful?

You want to make sure the executive coaching program chosen focuses on these three things:

1. **Customized, individualized service.** Because the coaching and learning that occur are uniquely tailored to the individual, the process differs for each executive, manager or leader. The coach and client work together to design a unique, collaborative process that will create the desired goals.
2. **Focused, specific and measurable process.** Clients provide feedback before and after each coaching session so the relationship is constantly being tailored to meet their needs. Clients prepare a brief prep-form 24 hours in *advance* of each coaching session. This helps make the best use of their time so that the clients achieve the best results. Following the session, clients prepare a “to do” form that helps to maintain momentum and focus on priorities.
3. **Deep and fundamental changes in behaviors.** This involves finding the most important behaviors that are affecting your personal and professional growth. By understanding the actual root cause of these behaviors, deep patterned habits can be replaced with new and more effective ones.

Two Keys to an Effective Coaching Relationship

Two keys to getting the most value from the coaching relationship are making sure the client focuses on self-awareness and taking action.

First, the coaching relationship helps you understand your feelings, how you think and how you act. You’ll learn how to get in touch with your needs, values and belief systems, as well as gain a greater awareness of your strengths and limitations. You’ll understand what motivates and inspires you. The

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coaching process helps you become more honest about who you are and what you are capable of achieving.

Second, clients dedicate the necessary time required for change and are determined to take action. When obstacles or roadblocks appear, your executive coach will work with you to take concrete and positive steps forward. Remember, momentum generates energy. Energy cultivates action. And, over time, action will always produce results, change behavior and improve performance.

A Professional Coaching Plan – 11 Step Process

Garfinkle Executive Coaching works one-on-one with clients to help them achieve the highest level of performance in the work place. Our coaching approach is a three- phase process, involving eleven steps.

Phase One

Coaching Agreement and Initiative

Step 1 – – ESTABLISH COACHING AGREEMENT.

Establish commitment by the client that he/she wants to be coached. The client agrees to do the necessary work needed to change behaviors, be open to feedback and take responsibility for the desired coaching results. The terms of the coaching contract and agreement will be agreed upon before the coaching can begin.

Step 2 – – DETERMINE KEY STAKEHOLDERS.

Make sure the key stakeholders understand their role and are supportive and actively involved in the coaching process. These stakeholders can be the client's manager, Human Resources Department or senior management.

Step 3 – – DEFINE CLIENT GUIDELINES.

Agree upon expectations, commitments, timelines, ground rules and alignment of goals and objectives. Clear guidelines need to be understood by both partners. A confidentiality agreement will be signed by the coach to underscore the coach's commitment to creating a trusting and confidential relationship.

Phase Two

Information Gathering, Objectives and Action Plan

Step 4 – – IDENTIFY BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

Once the coaching agreement has been made, the client fills out the background information from the welcome packet so the process can start quickly and efficiently. The client reviews the overall structure of the coaching process outlined in the packet.

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Step 5 – – ASSESS THE CLIENT.

Information gathering involves the collecting of feedback which can come from: (1) existing and past performance reviews, (2) Interviews (client's manager, senior management, direct reports, Human Resources Department or peers), (3) interview the key stakeholders, (4) 360-degree feedback, (5) and having the coach shadow and observe the client in his/her work environment.

Step 6 – – IDENTIFY DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES.

Identify developmental objectives and goals for the client. A strategic plan is created identifying the key behaviors to be changed and the highest priority objectives

Step 7 – – DEVELOP A MEASURABLE ACTION PLAN.

A concrete, measurable, outcome-based action plan is developed that includes objectives and timeframes. That way, you'll be able to clearly identify the benefits achieved and your return on investment.

Phase Three

Implementation, Review and Conclusion

Step 8 – – IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN.

Implement the required action and behavior changes so the desired results can be achieved. The coach provides the necessary support by conducting coaching sessions and communicating via email between the scheduled telephone sessions. In the meantime, the client will commit time to the agreed-upon assignments and action items so the desired results will be achieved. Involve the boss or key stakeholders when appropriate and keep them informed of your progress.

Step 9 – – PROGRESS REVIEW AND FEEDBACK.

During the halfway point of the coaching partnership, an informal review of the coaching process is conducted. Feedback is collected by having follow-up conversations with the key stakeholders or boss to see what changes have taken place and what still needs improvement.

Step 10 – – END COACHING ENGAGEMENT.

At the end of the coaching engagement, a review of the coaching process takes place. Feedback is collected on what has worked well, the progress made and areas still needing improvement. This gathering of information can occur from discussions with the stakeholders, supervisors, direct reports, boss, Human Resource Department or peers. These final results will be compared to the initial goals and objectives.

HARVESTING SUPPORTERS

Step 11 – – POST COACHING FOLLOW-UP.

After the formal coaching sessions have ended, continued and less frequent check-in coaching sessions are scheduled. This helps follow-up on the success that has been created and sustain the behavior change for the long haul.

How Executive Coaching Works

The coaching process includes one-on-one work with the executive: scheduled telephone or in-person sessions (ranging from a half-hour to two hours in length, depending on the client's needs and schedule) are supplemented by email support between weekly coaching sessions to help the client receive ongoing feedback, support, advice, direction, resources and perspective.

To make long-term, positive changes in behavior, the person being coached must make a serious investment and commitment to his or her professional development. This commitment typically entails completing action items and to-do lists on a weekly basis, based on what is learned and discussed during each coaching session. Creating realistic, workable and successful action plans is critical to the coaching relationship. These relationships often continue for six to twelve months and have been known to go as long as three to five years, depending on the needs of the client.

An employee can personally pay for the cost of the coaching or be sponsored by his employer. Costs depend on the situation and the type of coaching involved, but most coaches charge a monthly fee ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars for three to four sessions each month.

You can also ask successful colleagues for coaching recommendations. A relationship with an executive coach is like any other relationship with a professional, from doctor to fitness trainer to nutritionist to golf instructor: chemistry and communication style is important. An initial consultation will help determine if the client and coach are a good fit.

Not surprisingly, the corporate world has also come to recognize that executive coaching can be valuable to business people. According to the professional journal *Consulting to Management*, "The leaders of organizations such as Alcoa, American Red Cross, AT&T, Ford, Northwestern Mutual Life, 3M, UPS, American Standard, the federal governments of the United States and Canada are convinced that coaching works to develop people and increase productivity."

Just as sports coaches help Olympians win medals or high school students perform well enough to get college scholarships, executive coaches help clients reach their career pinnacles and earn the equivalent of medals – in the form of promotions, increased contributions to their companies, better strategies for networking and stellar executive presence. As Bob Nardelli, former CEO of Home Depot said in *Fortune* magazine, June, 2002, "I absolutely believe that people, unless coached, never reach their maximum capabilities."

The coaching partnership accelerates the client's performance and success. The value and bottom line impact can be clearly seen in an extremely quick time frame.

CONCLUSION

If you ask senior managers to describe the reasons for their success, most will say they got where they are through the influence, mentorship and coaching provided by other leaders throughout their career. The fact they needed help to climb the career ladder should encourage you to seek help, too.

The obvious goal in seeking supporters, mentors, and advocates is to secure help with professional development and future promotions. But the underlying objective is to form alliances with those peers and superiors who want the best for you. In the process, they will encourage your growth and challenge you to reach higher levels within the company.

If you work at W. L. Gore, the makers of Gore-Tex, you can't advance unless you develop alliances with your peers. According to CNNMoney.com, "Except for a handful of top executives, all 6,800 employees have the same title: associate. From there, upward mobility follows an unusual path. Some associates act as 'sponsors' to help pair colleagues' interests to particular projects. If you want to become a 'team leader,' you don't lobby the higher-ups for a promotion; you form an alliance of people willing to commit to a specific goal, whether it's pitching a product or a new health plan." (Paul Kaihla, "Best-Kept Secrets of the World's Best Companies," CNNMoney.com, March 16, 2006)

When taking on larger roles and increased exposure, you might feel anxious or overwhelmed because this aggressive approach is new to you. By gaining the advice, resources, support and advocacy you need from others, you can increase your chance of success.

Be prepared for some of your supporters, mentors and advocates to leave the company as their own careers move forward. Since losing their influence can impact your promotion strategy, spread your network so wide that the affects of having one or two individuals leave won't affect your ability to advance your career.

You can also buffer the loss of supporters by cultivating role models who represent the type of person you want to become. Inside role models can be current or past employees. Outside role models can be living or not. What is most important is you learn from their success. Become curious about them. What made them rise to the top when so many remain stuck in mediocre careers? As you begin to understand what made your role models successful, you will be able to incorporate their behaviors into your own work life, emulate their accomplishments and achieve the same success.

Finally, consider establishing a relationship with an executive coach. Not only will you demonstrate to others (your superiors and other influential people) your commitment to your career, you will acknowledge that your work-life is something that requires – and benefits from – the devotion of attention and effort. An executive coach will serve as a mentor, teacher, ally and supporter and will leverage your unique talents and attributes to their best effect as you develop a plan and an increased sense of purpose for your career.

In Chapter 10, we'll turn the focus from support to creating and implementing your career development plan.

CHAPTER 10.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Manage your future or somebody else will.

~ PETER DRUCKER ~

Leaders with executive presence know where they're going. That's why a career development plan is so important. This plan helps you move from point A (where you are today) to point B (where you most want to be). Your plan directly affects your professional growth because it requires you to assess your potential and position yourself to excel in your areas of strength. It also enables you to develop your skills so you can avoid unnecessary challenges and setbacks.

A career plan helps you take a long, thoughtful view of your working life. You'll be able to look at things in terms of what's best vs. what's speediest, what's meaningful vs. what's easy. As Ann Moore, chairman and CEO of Time, Inc., said, "Faster, harder and more does not bring peace and fulfillment. Where you are headed is more important than how fast you are going. Always plan for the long-term strategy because, trust me, 25 years fly by in the blink of an eye." (*Knowledge@Wharton* November, 2005)

An explicit and systematic career development plan demonstrates your dedication and commitment to yourself and your company. It also creates opportunities to work more closely with top executives and increases the likelihood of positive performance evaluations and promotions.

Because most organizations focus on the immediate success of the company, most employees don't realize the importance or need to set aside the time to chart an individual career plan. The day-to-day responsibilities of the job drive the bottom-line results. Your immediate boss and most of the influential people at work model a "what-have-you-done-for-me-lately" attitude. They will not encourage you to devote the necessary time and effort it takes to create a career development plan.

That's unfortunate because having a plan is vital to long-term success and fulfillment. Statistics show organizations that encourage individuals to create career development plans have a more satisfied workforce and less employee turnover. Most job seekers prefer to join an organization that encourages and supports career development for all employees.

Career development and planning is typically a function of the Human Resources department. A discussion of career development might be included in an annual performance review -- but often, this topic doesn't get much attention (sometimes, career development is completely overlooked).

Many employees operate as if their supervisors, managers and the Human Resources department are solely responsible for their career plans. You'll never reach your goals -- or your full potential -- with this attitude. Be proactive. Don't wait for your annual review to think about your short and long-term aspirations. Seek guidance and support from management, Human Resources, and your immediate boss and make them aware of your goals, especially when your plans change. But don't rely on them to start or sustain your career plan -- it's solely your responsibility.

CREATE YOUR CAREER PLAN

It's choice, not chance, that determines your destiny.

~ JEAN NIDETCH ~

Since you're not likely to get a lot of encouragement from your company in this area, it's up to you to properly prepare a plan of action for your own future career. The time to begin is now. To create a successful career development plan, you must:

1. Review your past
2. Assess what you have learned
3. Create career development goals
4. Put together a plan of action

Step 1: Review Your Past

First, thoroughly review everything you have accomplished in your career. Focus on the experiences that have taught you important lessons and helped you learn new skills. Look at your resume (including those from the past, if you have them) and peruse any performance reviews and other feedback you have on hand.

Devote plenty of time to thinking about and documenting the following components of your career progression:

- Accomplishments (including promotions, awards, new skills attained, etc.).
- Career-related strengths and key abilities.
- Areas of development and growth.
- Weaknesses and areas that need improvement.
- Talents and unique gifts.
- Activities or projects you enjoyed most and the reasons you enjoyed them.
- Experiences and activities that generated the greatest passion.
- How successful or unsuccessful you were in living a balanced life.
- Changes you would like to make based on past experiences.

Review Your Past	Assess what you have learned and document below.
Your career accomplishments	

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Review Your Past	Assess what you have learned and document below.
Career-related strengths & key abilities	
Areas of development & growth	
Weaknesses & areas of improvement	
Talents & unique gifts.	

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Review Your Past	Assess what you have learned and document below.
Activities or projects that you most enjoyed & the reasons you enjoyed them.	
Experiences & activities that generated the greatest sense of passion.	
How successful or unsuccessful you were in living a balanced life.	
The changes you would like to make based on past experiences.	

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Step 2: Assess All You Have Learned

Next, assess all you have learned from your review of your career. Take note of any parallels and key information that stands out – for example, look at the talents and gifts you listed. Were these attributes essential to the activities you enjoyed most? Are the changes you’d like to make skewed toward one particular area (such as communication, technical skills or prioritization) or are they evenly distributed?

Focus on common patterns, interests, abilities, likes and dislikes. As you analyze your past, define and characterize the current state of your career, your “Point A.”

CURRENT STATE OF YOUR CAREER	
Parallels & key info	
Common patterns	
Interests	
Abilities	
Likes	
Dislikes	

Step 3: Create Career Development Goals

A career development plan is a map that guides you toward your professional goals. Those goals describe your destination, your “Point B.” If your goals are unclear, your career progression will be unfocused and haphazard. Or, as a wise person once observed, “if you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there.”

Think about your current career, your “Point A” and the conclusions you reached with the help of the chart in Step 2. What do these conclusions tell you about what you want from your career and where you want it to go in the future?

It may help to identify professionals within your company you admire who currently hold positions you aspire to fill. Use the strengths and skills of those individuals as your guide. In what areas can they serve

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as role models? What skills do they have you respect? Which skills do you not admire? Use the answers to these questions as a launching point to identify your developmental goals.

PROFESSIONALS YOU ADMIRE SERVING POSITIONS YOU ASPIRE TO FILL	
<u>Admired Person #1</u>	
Strengths	
Where they could serve as your role model	
The skills that you respect	
The skills you <u>don't</u> respect	
Other info	
Other info	

PROFESSIONALS YOU ADMIRE SERVING POSITIONS YOU ASPIRE TO FILL	
<u>Admired Person #2</u>	
Strengths	
The skills that you respect	
The skills you <u>don't</u> respect	

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Where they could serve as your role model	
Other info	
Other info	

For example, if you aspire to become the director of department X, and the current director is a skilled problem-solver with a talent for bringing people together in a common cause, your goals might include:

- Develop solid problem-solving skills.
- Learn reliable negotiating techniques.
- Become the director of department X.

If you can't think of anyone you admire enough to be a role model, use the following list of questions as a starting point to clarify your goals. Pick and choose from the list and feel free to add your own questions. Write out your answers in detail.

What are some of your professional career dreams?

What level of responsibility do you want to have?

What projects would you like to head?

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What results do you want to achieve in your department or organization?

What type of company do you want to work for (culture, size, integrity, reputation, etc.)?

Does becoming an entrepreneur appeal to you -- why or why not?

What geographical location do you prefer (including local, national or international)?

What problems or concerns do you care enough about to focus your entire career on solving? _____

How many people do you want working for you?

What type of skills will you be leveraging?

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What type of environment do you want to work in?

What type of people do you like to work with?

Who are the clients you want to work with?

What activities do you find most fulfilling?

Who do you want to report to?

What compensation (salary, benefits) do you desire?

What type of work/life balance is best for you?

What level of support and mentoring is best for you?

Describe your ideal organization?

It's a good idea to create two types of career goals: (1) Current focus: one-three years and (2) Future focused: five-ten years. Project yourself both one-three years and five-ten years into the future when you answer each of the above questions. If you are feeling ambitious, project 20 years out or with retirement in mind.

Focus on the skills, strengths and experiences you need to develop to reach each goal. Disregard your tendency toward self-limitation: don't lose the fantasy ideal of what you most want for your career. Instead, apply these two requirements when creating your mid-term and long-term goals:

1. Develop a fantasy ideal without limitations.
2. Have confidence that you will achieve your ideal career goals and they will become a reality.

Step 4: Put Together a Plan of Action

An action plan is an outline of the actions necessary to achieve your goals. Once you have identified these tasks, you'll be ready to create a chart that will serve as a blueprint for future success.

Identify the following key areas for each of your projected time periods: (1) Current focus: one-three years and, (2) Future focused: five-ten years.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| • Goals | • Resources needed |
| • Specific tasks or action steps | • Obstacles |
| • Person(s) to report to | • Update Progress |
| • Target date | |

Identify the most effective route toward accomplishing each goal. Sometimes, the best route will be a lateral move or even a step backward. At other times, you'll need to boldly step forward. Notice whether your goals, desires and interests are aligned with where your company is heading. If not, what actions can you take to make sure your goals move forward consistent with those of the company? If your goals are incompatible with those of your current employer, your action plan might include switching to another organization.

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Choose your actions wisely and be aware of the risks involved. Your action plan will not only be instrumental in realizing your goals, but will enable you to notice unexpected opportunities to leap forward more quickly than planned.

Devote at least three to four hours to the following exercise. Considering you're laying the foundation for success over the next ten years, it's well worth your time. Go through it once quickly with pencil. Then put it aside for a day or two to think about your strengths, hopes and aspirations. You'll come back to it with renewed enthusiasm and the conviction to "make it happen."

CURRENT FOCUS: <u>ONE-THREE</u> YEAR PROJECTION				
Goals #1	List of specific tasks or action steps			
Person(s) to report to	Target Date	Resources needed	Obstacles	Update Progress

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CURRENT FOCUS: ONE-THREE YEAR PROJECTION

Goals #2	List of specific tasks or action steps			
Person(s) to report to	Target Date	Resources needed	Obstacles	Update Progress

FUTURE FOCUS: FIVE-TEN YEAR PROJECTION

Goals #1	List of specific tasks or action steps			
Person(s) to report to	Target Date	Resources needed	Obstacles	Update Progress

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FUTURE FOCUS: FIVE-TEN YEAR PROJECTION

Goals #2	List of specific tasks or action steps			
Person(s) to report to	Target Date	Resources needed	Obstacles	Update Progress

PARTNER WITH MANAGEMENT

If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

~ ISAAC NEWTON ~

Once you have produced your initial career development plan, ask to meet with your manager to discuss your goals and aspirations. Present a draft of your career plan and ask for his or her feedback and assistance.

Managers need to be more than passive participants in the career development plans of their staff. Career plans should be part of every manager's responsibilities and tied to performance evaluations, bonuses and pay increases. When this happens, career plans are elevated to a high level of importance.

One of my clients, an employee at Cisco Systems -- the worldwide leader in networking for the Internet with 34,000 employees -- says his company recommends the following for getting managers involved in career planning:

“It's best when employees work with their managers to identify development goals that support an employee's career interests and are directly aligned with the company's business needs and mission. Every employee will benefit from creating a development plan that is focused on learning priorities and career aspirations. Ideally, employees work together with their managers to identify and assess their strengths and identify areas of development. Managers provide coaching and necessary company resources to help align the needs of both employee and company.”

Even if career planning is not a top priority in your company, your manager can provide guidance, support and resources for you. So ask him or her to partner with you to make your plan a reality. His or her experience may provide the expertise and insight you need to focus on the right activities and ensure company buy-in along the way.

Meet with Management Once a Quarter

It is important to receive clear and consistent feedback that provides you with the direction you need for advancement. Ask your manager (and other supervisors) for continuous feedback and coaching to improve your current performance and enhance your future development. And when you get feedback, listen carefully and change your behavior when necessary. Supervisors will be more inclined to provide feedback if they feel it's paying off.

Ideally, meet with your manager or boss quarterly with the specific agenda of reviewing your plan, including top priorities and key goals. These meetings open channels of communication, highlight your accomplishments and invite management to have a vested interest in your career (i.e. become advocates).

When you regularly meet with your manager, you'll be able to modify your plan and make adjustments as needed. With the workplace changing so rapidly, it's important you keep pace: stay informed about changes in your industry, your company and the corporate environment. Consider the implications of global and national changes, as well. The quarterly review allows you to catch up with the evolving corporate environment in a way that positively impacts your career.

According to WSJ.com, Steve Bennett, the CEO of Intuit, the maker of Quicken and Turbo Tax software, tells his managers to create a “psychological contract” with every employee detailing what is expected, how well they are performing and what they must do in advance. (Nov. 14, 2006)

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When you receive honest, ongoing communication about your performance, you will know what you must do to get promoted. Your manager can help you in the 11 ways listed below. Keep this list in mind when you meet with your manager – if he or she asks, “How can I help you?” you’ll be ready with numerous excellent answers!

11 Ways Your Manager Can Help Your Career

1. Share the company’s practices, priorities and plans for the future so you can ensure your skills and goals are aligned.
2. Communicate any major changes or restructuring so your career plan can be adjusted accordingly.
3. Make sure you are considered for new assignments that are consistent with your career plan.
4. Review your current role and add responsibilities or experiences relevant to your career goals.
5. Monitor your progress and make sure you have realistic expectations about achieving your future career plan.
6. Offer the needed support to compensate for any underdeveloped areas that might undermine your ability to accomplish your goals.
7. Provide the necessary resources for development in areas directly related to your aspirations.
8. Find tasks and projects that will help you develop needed skills to enhance your prospects for advancement.
9. Identify part-time assignments and small-scale projects with other teams to help you be more proactive (and visible) in completing your action steps.
10. Share your career plan with other managers in your division or in other areas of the company. This can give you specific feedback, resources and ideas to best accomplish your ultimate career goals.
11. Make you aware of openings within his or her areas and in other departments that can fulfill your career plan.

Make sure you schedule the next quarter’s meeting at the conclusion of each meeting.

Additional Partners

In addition to receiving feedback and direction from your supervisor – as well as the advocates and mentors you have cultivated – it may be beneficial to meet with Human Resources and your division director (your boss’ boss). This way, executives who do not work with you on a day-to-day basis will know who you are and what you have accomplished. They may keep you in mind for future opportunities and promotions, especially as you develop your skills.

Many companies operate on a performance and merit system that is administered by the Human Resources department. HR personnel use this system to determine grade or level increases. If your company has adopted a similar approach, it can be helpful to meet with Human Resources to make sure your career development plan is consistent with their performance and merit system. The company can then officially document your progress, ensuring your development, achievements and readiness for advancement are not overlooked.

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Meet with your boss' boss to review your career plan and obtain buy-in from him or her so you will be a known commodity as changes occur within the department. Your increased visibility will help you land promotions in the company at higher and higher levels. During these meeting(s), use the same template for discussion you created for quarterly reviews with your direct manager (see above). Additionally, think about how the division director might become your advocate.

■ SECURE THE RESOURCES YOU NEED

*Many of us spend our lives searching for success
when it is usually so close that we can reach out and touch it.*
~ RUSSEL H. CONWELL ~

Motivation, perseverance and follow-through are important components of your career development plan. To be successful, you must also gain access to the necessary resources through company management and/or an executive coach.

Company Management

When your company helps you initiate and implement a career development plan, you know that your professional growth is a priority for management. They may provide all the resources you need without being asked.

If those resources are not automatically provided, you must request them. When you meet with your manager to share your vision, ask for whatever resources you need to implement your goals. This might include training and development, educational opportunities, credential programs, qualification training and testing, workshops, conferences and an executive coach.

Other resources management might provide include:

- networking with co-workers and other professionals inside your organization
- mentors who provide guidance and overall direction for achieving your goals
- communication with clients and vendors who are knowledgeable in your career areas
- assistance in developing job-related skills and abilities

Executive Coaches

To round out the internal support you receive – or to provide external support if you receive none from your supervisor – consider hiring an executive coach. You may meet frequently with this advisor in the beginning to create your career development plan. As you implement and monitor your progress, you'll meet less often, but continuing the coaching relationship will help ensure your success.

Let management know you have hired an executive coach. This shows you are determined do the best job possible and are taking your professional goals seriously.

An executive coach will help you thoroughly assess your career and produce the appropriate goals and plan of action. You will discuss some of the challenges, setbacks and self-imposed limitations that might affect your success. As you take action, your coach can guide you in evaluating risks, weighing alternatives and making the best choices.

Joel's Coaching Clients

Terry establishes a framework for his future

Terry Glossen was an executive at Procter & Gamble. He needed help in creating a plan for his future. Even though he was successful at his job and received lots of recognition, he was unclear as to where his career should be heading. He hadn't devoted the necessary time to planning and none of his managers encouraged or supported the career planning process.

Terry wanted a plan that would invigorate his career, guide his overall professional direction and be supported by influential people. He didn't want to simply go wherever the company decided to send him. He wanted his career to be based on his talents, passions and needs.

Together, we worked on his career strategy and created two-, five- and ten-year plans. We devoted two months to creating the plan and three months implementing it. Over the next two years we tweaked the plan, obtained management support and make the right career decisions based on his Terry's overall plan.

Terry's decision to invest time and energy in a career plan paid off: within three years he achieved his five-year goals and Terry realized he would be able to achieve his long-term goals in half the expected time. His worth to his employer and his job security continued to increase due to this proactive approach. He was given more responsibility and greater leadership on some of the most important projects within the firm. Terry also doubled his salary in four years and rose to the next level of senior management.

Terry's success was far greater than he had previously thought possible – establishing a framework for his future made all the difference!

CONSIDER OTHER OPTIONS BESIDES A PROMOTION

There are two primary choices in life; to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them.

~ DENIS WAITLEY ~

Nurturing your career and advancing up an organization can take many different forms and along the way you will have to make numerous choices. Executives need to have more options than just trying to get promoted. Gaining a traditional promotion is becoming difficult as organizations become flatter. At many large companies, as many as 100 to 150 people report to one manager – there are fewer management positions available and little opportunity for advancement. Thus, knowing your options and learning about opportunities beyond promotions will give you the freedom to make the best career-path choice.

1. Stay in place

You stay in the same role and position in your company, but create new opportunities to expand your responsibility, knowledge and competence. You reconsider your overall medium- and long-term career objectives and understand what you need to gain in your current job to reach these goals. Your day-to-day work shifts so you are expanding your skills and gaining the expertise needed for your overall career plan. You take on projects, assignments and roles within your division that expand your influence.

2. Lateral move

You move to an equivalent position within your company, perhaps in a new department with a new manager. Most organizations prefer to hire someone internally, so you have an advantage when you move laterally within your company. When you make a lateral move, you gain more knowledge, increase your network, gather more advocates, increase your skills and discover new opportunities to prove yourself.

Myrtle S. Potter, who runs sales, marketing, development and managed care for Genetech Inc., the \$3.3 billion biotech company, says, “Don’t minimize the importance of lateral moves and broad development. I did a number of lateral moves in my career, and not only did it not hurt me, it actually helped tremendously.” (*Fast Company*, December 2004)

3. Downward move

Move down to move up? Yes, in some cases, this may be the best way to achieve your long-term career goals. For example, your company is eliminating your division. There is another group within the organization that needs your skills, but you’ll have to move down in position to start with this new group. Or the organization could have other companies or divisions that are having more sustained growth than your group. You will move to the other company and accept a position at a lower level. The change will feel like a downward move in the short-term, but could greatly benefit your long term prospects. Skills development is another endeavor that may require a move to a lower-level position.

4. Moving to a new location

If you are willing to move to another location to pursue a career specialty, work for another division of your company or for another company that’s a leader in your field, you may open up more career options. Cost of living is another consideration: lower expenses can free you from worrying about making ends meet and give you more time and energy to focus on developing your career.

Moving to an area that’s considered “hot” or “up-and-coming” may provide a nice boost to your career. Large, well-known companies (typically technology and pharmaceutical companies) often build major offices in areas that have a low cost of doing business combined with incentives provided by the state.

Consider moving to such an area – even though it may not be a so-called major city at the moment. It could be soon and you’d have gotten in on the ground floor! Moving to formerly lesser-known cities that are now thriving and home to numerous successful companies can be a great career move.

5. Join a new company

You can take your expertise and leverage it for new opportunities in the same industry, doing similar work. Companies pay a premium for executives who already possess certain types of expertise or have worked for a well-known company. You can move to another firm and increase your salary and responsibilities – and move two to four levels higher, too. When your current organization is stagnant, joining a new company may be the right solution. In fact, according to a 2006/2007 Strategic Rewards survey, promotion opportunities is one of the top three reasons employees leave their companies, slightly ahead of “career development.”

In addition, it is not uncommon for an employee to leave a company for a higher position at another company...and then return to the original company at an even higher level.

CONCLUSION

Creating a career development plan based on a carefully crafted series of action steps is crucial to achieving your professional goals. Crafting and implementing your plan falls squarely on your shoulders. It may be possible to find people who will support you in this process, but in the end, it's up to you.

Having read this chapter (and worked on the exercises), you now know how to create a career development plan. You have reviewed your career and collected valuable data. You have assessed the data to find parallels and identify key information. You have produced a set of one-, three-, five- and ten-year goals by asking yourself probing questions. And you have put together a plan of action by identifying the most effective route toward accomplishing each goal.

You have learned to partner with management. You have reviewed your career plan with your supervisor and set up quarterly meetings to review your progress and gain support for your goals. In addition, you have begun to increase your visibility by meeting with your Human Resources department and/or your boss' boss to make them aware of your career plan and enlist their help.

You know how to secure the resources necessary for achieving your career plan, including training and other company-supported educational opportunities. You also have asked your boss for his or her opinion and are seeking mentors.

If your company and/or manager are not willing or able to provide the support and resources you need, you are aware of the benefits of hiring an executive coach. You know that a coach can help you create a solid career plan and accelerate the attainment of your goals. Finally, you are aware of the various career options open to you, inside and outside of your company.

CHAPTER 10 – REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

- ☐ Review the material in this chapter. Focus on your answers.
- ☐ Create a career development plan by first reviewing your past.
- ☐ Complete the second step in a career plan by assessing all you have learned.
- ☐ Implement the third step of your plan by creating career goals.
- ☐ Finalize your plan by putting together a plan of action.
- ☐ Schedule time to meet with your manager to discuss your plan and ask for his/her feedback and assistance.
- ☐ Schedule time in your calendar to meet with your manager or boss quarterly.
- ☐ Review your list of eleven ways your manager can help your career before you meet to discuss your plan.
- ☐ Schedule time with Human Resources and your boss's boss to share your career plan so they know your goals and where you want to focus.
- ☐ Secure the necessary resources management will provide so you succeed in implementing your career development plan.
- ☐ Considering hiring an executive coach so you have the necessary support needed to create your plan and implement it successfully.
- ☐ Review the list of career options and choose one (aside from a promotion) that best suits your career direction.

SUMMARIZE KEY POINTS

Summarize the key points you learned in this chapter and jot them down below.

Throughout the centuries there were men who took first steps down new roads
armed with nothing but their own vision.
~ AYN RAND ~

Well done! You have put a great deal of time, thought and effort into recognizing and analyzing your achievements and attributes. The result is a career plan that's right for you. You are well along the road to creating a more powerful executive presence.

You have taken your knowledge of the 16 executive traits discussed in Chapters 1 through 5 and have developed a stronger sense of yourself. You are now better able to express your accomplishments in financial terms. You better appreciate your worth – and can communicate that worth to people of influence. In addition, you have created a few Success Statements and an exciting roadmap to achieve your career aspirations.

By now, you have assessed whether you have an aversion to self-promotion. If you do, you now have the tools to overcome your resistance and focus on the value of ensuring your colleagues and superiors are fully aware of your contributions and ideas. If you are comfortable with self-promotion, you have further developed your strategy and approach to get the maximum results from your efforts.

Finally, you are now adept at identifying and securing supporters and advocates – clients, colleagues, mentors and executive coaches - who will help you reach your full potential.

CONCLUSION

We must look for ways to be an active force in our own lives. We must take charge of our own destinies, design a life of substance and truly begin to live our dreams.

~ LES BROWN ~

Leaders with executive presence are inspiring because they are confident and have conviction. By reading this book, completing the exercises, taking action and engaging in the sort of self-reflection that can be difficult you have built for yourself a foundation of strong executive presence.

You've redefined your relationship to work by finding new energy and excitement in your current job. You've considered ways to advance in your career. And you've sharpened your ability to identify and engage colleagues and superiors who are willing to help you as you pursue your career goals.

You've branded yourself to influence the perceptions others have of you. You will have traded doubt and uncertainty for confidence and purpose. You now possess the 16 powerful traits in the major areas of business intelligence, risk-taking, interpersonal relationships, performance improvement and executive self-development. You've mapped out a career development plan to serve as your roadmap for the months and years to come. You know how to express your accomplishments in financial terms – and with whom you need to share this information.

From the administrative assistant to the CEO, you can effectively communicate with your colleagues and superiors. You have a support network of colleagues, clients, upper management, friends and perhaps an executive coach...all of whom are interested and invested in your success.

That's an impressive list of accomplishments. Your Success Statements, career development plan and support network are tools you can rely on whenever you need information and inspiration.

Whatever your goals, you have built an important framework for your future career. If you wish to strengthen your contribution to your company and gain a promotion or new position, your executive presence will provide the confidence and substance you need.

The **"Take Action Now!"** mindset will serve you well as you embark on this next stage of your career. You are becoming a stronger executive, an executive with presence who will realize your professional, personal and financial goals.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

~ MARGARET MEAD ~

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RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE BEST: Acknowledged as one of the top 50 executive coaches in U.S. Global Gurus named Joel #14 on its list of top 30 global coaching experts.

MASTER CERTIFIED COACH: Only 2% of the 30,000 coaches worldwide achieve this distinction – the highest accreditation in the profession of coaching from the International Coach Federation.

CLIENT LIST: Google, Amazon, Starbucks, Procter & Gamble, Bank of America, Microsoft, Oracle, Deloitte, The Ritz-Carlton & many more.

AUTHOR: Written 7 books and over 300+ articles on leadership.

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE: 20 years of executive coaching and speaking experience.

PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER

Joel is a sought-after keynote speaker and corporate trainer who is regularly called upon to address conferences across the country and around the world. He has delivered more than 1000 workshops, speeches and keynote addresses to groups such as the Commonwealth Club of California, the Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce, the Kentucky Society of Human Resource Management, Wells Fargo Bank, Haas School of Business, Financial Women's Association, the University of California Berkeley, Marriott Hotels, Gap Inc., Cisco Systems, Eli Lilly, Autodesk, Charles Schwab, Bank of America, Accenture, Sapient Corporation, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Kohl's and The Ritz-Carlton Hotels.

AUTHOR

Joel has written seven books that are read in 25 countries. He also has contributed to the book *The Art and Practice of Leadership Coaching* (John Wiley and Sons), *Leader to Leader* – the award-winning quarterly journal launched by the Peter F. Drucker Foundation and *PHR/SPHR Professional in Human Resources Certification Exam Guide*. His seven books are:

- **Executive Presence:** 4 Ways to Convey Confidence and Command Respect as a Leader.
- **How to be a Great Boss:** *Learn the 7 Traits of Great Bosses*
- **Difficult Conversations:** *Practical Tactics for Crucial Communication*
- **Getting Ahead:** *3 Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*
- **Time Management Mastery:** *Stress-Free Productivity in the 7 Key Areas of Life*
- **Love Your Work:** *Make the Job You Have the One You've Always Wanted*
- **Get Paid What You're Worth:** *How to Negotiate a Raise or Higher Starting Salary*

EXECUTIVE COACH

Joel Garfinkle serves companies throughout the United States and in countries around the world. Here is a partial list of clients who have benefited from his coaching knowledge:

- | | | |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| • Google | • Oracle | • Wells Fargo Bank |
| • Starbucks | • NBC Universal | • Genentech |
| • Deloitte | • Procter & Gamble | • Levi Strauss & Company |
| • Amazon | • Charles Schwab | • PricewaterhouseCoopers |
| • IBM | • Cisco Systems | |
| • Microsoft | • Visa International | |

SPEAKING TESTIMONIALS

"Thanks again for the outstanding training. Your insight and expertise regarding the leadership values of perception and influence is outstanding. We received a great deal of positive feedback."

ORACLE – Chris Grim, Group Vice-President – Enterprise Performance Management

"You stole the show! Registrants told us that they thoroughly enjoyed the program. In fact, one woman said, 'I learned more in the 1st 15 min of Joel's presentation than I do at many conferences.'"

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMBER OF BUSINESS & INDUSTRY – Susan Smith, Dir. of Customer Learning

"Your enthusiasm, style and heart enabled the team to open up and really listen to the message. We hope to be able to bring you back every year to help us keep on track."

CISCO SYSTEMS, INC. – Kathy Weiner, Enterprise Marketing, Sr. Manager Strategic Alliances

"Over 96% of my employees said they would enjoy hearing him speak again!"

GENSLER – Karen Habegger, Human Resources Manager

"I thought your 'Unlock Gifts at Work' presentation was right on target for what we needed. I recommend that any organization needing to get the most out of its people use Joel Garfinkle."

WELLS FARGO BANK – Jim Keene, Regional Manager

"Joel is a phenomenal speaker and instructor who's able to capture the audience's attention while engaging each person on an individual basis. I highly recommend him as an instructor."

UCLA EXTENSION – Jeanna Trammell, Technical Management Program Manager

EXECUTIVE COACHING TESTIMONIALS

"His feedback and encouragement were instrumental in my quest to find the better leader in me. Joel should be a member of every executive's personal board of advisors!"

BROTHER INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION – Henry J. Sacco, Jr., VP and Chief Legal Officer

"As CEO of a media holding company that manages assets of US\$34 billion, Joel's executive coaching had a significant impact on developing the strategic capabilities of my 12 direct reports. They improved both their direction setting and their execution."

IPG MEDIABRANDS BENELUX – Diederik Breijer, Chief Executive Officer

"Joel Garfinkle is one of the most effective and innovative executive coaches I've worked with. Thanks to his guidance, I was able to push my limits and discover my true potential as a senior leader."

ORACLE – Amalia Sterescu – VP Oracle Customer Services

"What makes Joel an outstanding coach is his ability to get you to really think about your goals, identify what you need to change and help you execute on the changes."

NBC UNIVERSAL – Priya Swamy, Vice-President

"Joel's coaching delivered immediate results that impacted my company's bottom line. I increased my ability to direct and lead people which has amplified my influence."

CISCO SYSTEMS – Andrew Peters, Manager, Enterprise Marketing

"Because of Joel's coaching, my team has learned to have more respect for me as a leader."

ELI LILLY AND COMPANY – Eric A. Eilers, Director of Regional Managed Markets

FREE RESOURCES FOR YOU

Joel's Library of 2-Minute Videos

Joel provides 2-minute video clips that show him in action as a motivational speaker, providing valuable workplace insights to his audience.

➔ **Subscribe to Joel's YouTube channel:**

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FREE Articles

Free articles that provide practical, "how-to" information and insights to help you become an effective leader and boost your career success. These articles cover a variety of topics, including executive leadership, workplace issues and career advancement.

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Career Advancement Blog

Joel's bi-monthly blog provides articles with action steps on common workplace issues.

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EXECUTIVE COACHING AND SPEAKING SERVICES

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Joel has 20 years of first-hand experience working with thousands of executives, senior managers, directors and employees at the world's leading companies.

- Executive presence coaching: Learn how to convey confidence as a business leader, be respected as an authority, and have a professional magnetism that influences others.
- Career advancement coaching: Learn how to take your career to the next level based on his book *Getting Ahead*.
- Lead through influence: Learn how to become an influential leader by adopting the five key traits all influential people have: (1) Solid reputation, (2) Enhanced skill-set, (3) Executive presence, (4) Superior likeability and (5) Power to persuade.

Speaking Services <https://joelinspirationalspeaker.com/>

Joel Garfinkle is sought-after keynote speaker, corporate trainer and online webinar facilitator. Book Joel to energize and educate your keynotes, meetings, conventions, and seminars with his compelling and inspirational speaking style.

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