



Creating Possibilities



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How to
Realize Your
Personal Power
to Succeed and
Empower Yourself
and Your Career

Creating Possibilities: How to Realize Your Personal Power to Succeed and Empower Yourself and Your Career

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Introduction

Welcome to “Creating Possibilities: How to Realize Your Personal Power to Succeed and Empower Yourself and Your Career.”

This ebook springs from my deep personal belief that we all have untapped power inside ourselves, power to change our lives and our world. In my career as a Success Coach, it has been my privilege to work with hundreds of clients to help them unlock their potential and tap into the enormous opportunities that await them.

On each page, you'll find a short, motivating message intended to get your thoughts percolating. With that message will be a quote that distills the thought into just a few words. You might want to write the quote on a card so you can pull it out and look at it throughout your day, or pin it to your bulletin board to remind you of what you read. I've also included an action idea designed to help you take the first step toward making the ideas a reality.

Through the pages of this book, come journey with me as we explore the hidden talents and boundless energy that lies inside you, waiting to be awakened. I want to help you create possibilities and successes to realize your full potential and untapped power. Yes, you can!

Getting Started: Oh Yes, You Can!

“Can” is a little word, but a powerful belief. People who believe they can do something are unstoppable. Those who believe they can’t are unstartable. Which are you?

In this section, I want to shake up your status quo, nudge you toward your heart's desire, and rock your boat a little to get you thinking and moving.

Throughout my life and career, I have drawn wisdom, encouragement and energy from quotations and photos. They motivate me, give me strength and lift me up after a bad day. I'll share my tips for using those strategies to give yourself an energy boost, and hopefully, get you thinking about where you want to go from here.

Come along with me! There's a whole world waiting for you!

There's an App for You!

A popular commercial for smart phones manages to answer every question a potential customer has about the phone's ability to do a huge number of things with the answer; "There's an app for that."

Of course, they're talking about mobile apps (applications), the kinds of mini-programs that run useful programs or fun games on your phone or tablet computer. But I want to introduce you to my personal meaning: "There's an appropriate quote for that."

I'm a quote-aholic. I've collected hundreds of quotations from all kinds of sources and put them in books, slid them under the glass on my office desk, tucked them into the frames of pictures on the walls, and carried them in my wallet. Quotes are like a cup of espresso, a scoop of ice cream and a good night's sleep on vacation, all rolled in to one. Best of all, they're totally portable, so they can go with me wherever I roam.

That's a good thing, because in my prior career in sales, I roamed a lot. And, unlike the Travelocity gnome, I often roamed alone. Depending on the time zone, time of day, signal strength and the conflicting schedules of the people in my life, I couldn't always reach someone to talk with, vent to or offer me advice when I really needed it. But my quotations were always with me, a constant, supportive presence.

Quotation:

"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty." Winston Churchill

Action Idea:

What quotations give you motivation, energy or a good laugh? Start your own collection today by writing your favorite quotes on index cards, Post-it notes, even on your mirror—places you will see them and remember them.

Words can Work Wonders

My collection of quotes and photos lift me up when I'm feeling discouraged, give me the courage to carry on when I'm having a bad day, and cheer me up when I'm on my own. I've collected quotes and photos in journals that fit in my luggage, but you can also do the same thing with a Word file or PDF that you keep on your smart phone, tablet PC or laptop and have with you wherever you go.

Although the quotes I've collected span centuries and the photos are a mix of famous artwork, nature scenes, postcards, and magazine clippings, the themes are consistent. Here are some of the mantras that show up over and over in the quotations that resonate with me.

- Always take the high road
- Stay positive
- I can do it!
- I'm not the only one who has gone through this, others have gone before me, and have found a way.
- There is always hope.
- Never, ever, give up.
- I am never alone.
- I am a part of a larger universe; it's not all about me.
- Look at the big picture
- Get outside the box
- Have courage!
- Pick yourself up, brush yourself off, start over.
- Forgive.
- Strive to live up to the ideals that matter.

What resonates with you? If you're feeling discourage, overwhelmed or challenged, why not create your own quotation book? I'll warn you; it's addictive! Start your own quotation book today, and you might be amazed where the journey takes you!

Quotation:

"What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?" Robert Schuller

Action Idea:

Create an easy motivation booklet you can carry in your purse or briefcase, or keep in your desk drawer. Find 10 quotations that lift you up, and 10 photos that give you peace. Compile them in a Word document, paste them into a notebook or make a collage and keep it where you can see it to help you stay motivated!

Road Warrior Rescue Plan: Create “Travel Book” And Keep Your Spirits High

In a “past life”, I traveled for business—a lot. I was in sales; do I need to say more? I was one of those exhausted people you pass in the airport security line, shifting from foot to foot in high heels that stopped being comfortable hours ago, wishing I were wearing jeans and a comfortable shirt instead of a business suit.

I had always made sure that I carried a book; actually, enough books to last in case my plane was delayed. I loved mysteries or espionage stories that took me to a completely different world. Magazines were good, too—fun, informative and visually delicious. I tried walking, window-shopping and listening to music. It all helped take my mind off the worst parts of travel, but something was missing.

I realized that as much fun as the books and magazines were, they didn't quite hit the spot because they didn't speak to me in a way that nourished my soul. So I got a blank journal and grabbed some scissors, glue and other supplies and started to fiddle around with an idea that was just taking shape in my mind. What I came up with was so powerful; I have to share it with you, because it changed my whole mindset when it came to business travel.

Quotation:

“Wherever you go, go with all your heart.” Confucius

Action Idea:

Try your hand at creating a “sanity-saver” journal with motivational quotes, photos of favorite places or uplifting art and keep it handy so that you can add to it and enjoy it whenever you need a boost!

One for the Road

People who don't travel for business often think business travel must be exciting. You've probably heard comments to that effect from your co-workers, non-traveling teammates, friends and maybe even your spouse.

If you are the road warrior, you know that reality is a little less exciting. For most frequent business travelers, even the fanciest hotel rooms begin to look alike, and your own bed at home looms large in your fantasies. Restaurant meals also tend toward same-ness, making a home-cooked dinner seem delicious. Airports become crowded mazes and flight schedules are often little more than wishful thinking. When you're on the road a lot, what you really want are your own space: your own family, your own bathrobe, your own comfortable chair, your own people, pets and stuff.

Yet for many people, business travel is a non-negotiable part of life. So how do you keep your chin up and your thinking positive?

Before I became a success coach, I spent many years in corporate sales, and I was one of those weary road warriors. I struggled with the blur of cities and airports and the inevitable toll that being on the road and away from home took on my mood. I was determined to find a way to make the best of my business travel, so that, if it didn't quite live up to the glowing fantasies of my non-traveling friends, it didn't leave me wrung out and glum.

The tricks and strategies I created for myself helped me escape the frequent flyer funk. So if you've got a busy travel schedule coming up, here are some ideas to help you enjoy the journey and not just the destination.

#1 Take action to keep your mood positive. Staying afloat mentally doesn't happen by accident. Be proactive and give yourself small treats to look forward to that you can enjoy on the journey. Some people save books or magazines that they're looking forward to reading for their time in the airport, on the plane or in the hotel. Or, download some new upbeat or relaxing music to your MP3 player to enjoy on the road. You might even want to download an inspirational guided meditation to enjoy at the end of the day or while you're on the plane to focus your thoughts on positive intentions.

#2 Make some "me" time every day. It's easy to get swept into morning-until-night activity on the road, but that will leave you wrung out and depleted. Instead, carve out at least 30 minutes of time for yourself (and I don't mean reviewing emails). Take a walk around the block where your hotel is located. Sink into a comfortable chair and read or listen to music. Meditate. Do a light workout or run through some Yoga moves in your room to loosen stiff muscles and get rid of jitters. Carry some herbal tea with you and treat yourself to a hot, fragrant cup.

#3 Don't fill every moment with work. It can be tempting to try to be "productive" every waking moment when you're on the road, but resist the temptation. That road leads to burnout. You don't have to read a business book on the plane or spend the entire time you're in the airport answering emails. Odds are, you're already working a longer-than-usual day with meetings and transportation hassles, so allow yourself some breathing space during the in-between times.

#4 Try to do at least one thing that takes in some "local color." Yes, you can eat in the same chain restaurants anywhere in the world and get coffee at Starbucks from Boise to Beijing. But if you default to what's familiar, business travel takes on a mind-numbing sameness. Instead, try to do at least one "local" thing each day. Opt for the local coffee house over the national chain. Ask the hotel staff for a good local restaurant that's not a franchise. Pop into a one-of-a-kind gift shop, independent bookstore or a retailer you don't have back home. Look for a restaurant, bar or coffeehouse with live music and enjoy the vibe.

#5 Create your own "travel book" to keep your spirits high. I'm a visual person, and I found that when I put together my own journal of magazine photos, snapshots and inspirational quotes and carried it with me, my travels became more pleasant and less stressful. Best of all, your travel book won't weigh down your luggage. Select a slim, blank journal and keep it handy, along with a nice pen and a glue stick. When you find a magazine image that lifts your spirits or read a quote that soothes your soul, add it to your journal. Then leave yourself a few quiet minutes before you go to bed to page through your journal, and let it wash away the day's stress. (If you're the digital type, you can create your own scrapbook in PowerPoint or Word.)

You'll be amazed how much better you'll feel about your time on the road when you set your own inner agenda. Set an intention to reframe your travel time to make it refreshing, renewing and enjoyable, and you might be surprised at the results!

Quotation:

"Dwell in possibility." Emily Dickinson

Action Idea:

Before your next business trip, check out AAA or TripAdvisor.com (or similar sites) for ideas of what to do in the destination city, and pick one "local color" adventure to make your journey memorable!

Take the View With You

A colleague of mine used to bring a museum post card of a famous painting with her to business meetings. After seeing her do this on more than one occasion, I finally asked her why. She told me that looking at that card of a favorite piece of art kept her happy and entertained even when she was bored to tears in endless meetings. Ever since then, I've carried my own personal traveling art collection with me, and I add to it every chance I get.

Museum gift shops are a perfect place to find inspiring, pocket-sized art in the shape of greeting cards or miniature prints, and this can be an easy and affordable way to collect the paintings, photography and sculpture that speaks to you. But almost every airport or gift shop postcard rack offers cards with beautiful sunsets, scenic views, ocean expanses, soaring mountains, or pristine beaches. These can be inspiring in their own right, and can make an even bigger emotional impact when they remind you of a place you love.

Don't stop there. Magazines and the Internet give you a limitless source of art for every mood and situation. Clip and print fearlessly, and save your treasures in small, portable mini photo albums so they're easy to tuck in your purse or suitcase. That way, you can retreat into them as your own personal sanctuary, either one at a time, or paging through the group.

Photos and artwork inspire, motivate and comfort me, and they refresh and recharge my mind. I've used my traveling collection to liven up drab, boring every-city-is-the-same hotel rooms, take my mind off dull meetings, and keep me entertained during flights when there was nothing to see out the window.

What "view" changes your mood? Keep an eye out for photos that help you manage your frame of mind and take them with you wherever you go!

Quotation:

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered you will never grow."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Action Idea:

Create an easy-to-pack group of favorite personal, motivational or just beautiful photos in a small album or on your phone so that you have it ready for your next trip.

Moving Forward: How to Realize Your Personal Power

In my experience as a coach, I find that most people completely underestimate the importance of what they know and the impact of what they have to offer the world.

You do not have to be the “best” at what you do, the “only” one with a certain talent or the “first” of your kind to make a difference. There is no truly new idea under the sun, so it’s likely others have gone before you and others may be on the path with you now, just as others will come after you.

But no one will offer the knowledge that you have in the same way that you will, because no one else has walked your journey. The gift you have to offer the world is a combination of what you know, who you are and where you have been and that makes it completely unique.

Not only that, but if you allow yourself to be unique (and stop trying to copy others), you will attract the clients who are perfect for you because your message will resonate with them in a way no one else’s does.

Begin today to step into your personal power and relax into the gift you have to offer to the universe.

Are you Ready to Open the Door to Your Dreams?

Dreaming is wonderful, but to make dreams into reality requires work and a willingness to step outside your comfort zone. If you are ready for change, ask yourself: what do I want, and how much do I want it?

Am I willing to really test myself and feel uncertain as I work toward achieving my goals? Can I step away from the security of what is certain in order to claim the rewards of what is now still just a dream? Am I ready to stretch, learn new skills, and grow as a person to make my dreams come true?

Change is magical, but it doesn't happen by magic. Hard work, preparation, uncertainty and a willingness to risk all play a part in making dreams come true. If you're ready to explore your possibilities and live up to your personal full potential, realize that the road to success will require commitment, perseverance and confidence-- even when progress seems elusive. Once you accept and embrace change as a necessary part of making your dreams a reality, you have taken the first step toward success.

Many people like to think about making their dreams come true, but shy away from making the changes necessary for success. Maybe they prefer what is safe and "known" to the uncertainty of taking a risk. Perhaps they still hear negative voices from their childhood that were critical or toxic, voices that made them feel like they don't deserve success. Or maybe they don't see a way to achieve their dreams and still meet all their other obligations. Realize that the people who have succeeded in achieving their dreams found ways to overcome all of these obstacles--and you can overcome your closed doors too.

Change-seekers and dreamers often fall into three broad categories: Rockets, Hidden Gems and Dark Horses.

"Rockets" are motivated and energetic, with a strong internal compulsion driving them toward change and a clear idea of where they want their dreams to take them. They're open to input, and willing to seek guidance and to learn new skills, creating a team of helpers to make their dream a reality. Most "Rockets" have already worked through old hurts and negative mental images to gain self confidence and a strong sense of identity. They embrace change and love to stretch beyond what's comfortable, enjoying challenges and taking uncertainty in stride.

"Hidden Gems" have determination but are a little less sure of themselves than Rockets. Perhaps they haven't been thinking about how to achieve their dreams for quite as long, or maybe they haven't quite finished working through old negative thoughts that are holding them back.

Sometimes, the "Hidden Gems" still need to get clarity on the goals needed to achieve their dreams. Often, "Hidden Gems" haven't yet learned to trust their instincts. They're not quite as ready to tackle dream-building as the Rockets, but once they get their homework done, watch out! These quiet "Hidden Gems" have the determination to do what it takes.

"Dark Horses" have the ability to come from behind and cross the finish line. "Dark Horses" are hard workers and big dreamers, but they have more internal and external obstacles to overcome than the Rockets and Hidden Gems. They may have challenging life situations that create difficult obstacles to success. Issues from the past may keep getting in the way until the Dark Horse gets the help needed to lay those negative influences to rest. While the Dark Horses may have a harder road to travel, they are absolutely able to make their dreams come true, just like the Hidden Gems and the Rockets.

Do you recognize yourself in any of these descriptions? If so, perhaps you've gained an insight into what it will take for you to open the door for your personal and professional success. No matter which description fits you, remember that those who make their dreams come true have the courage to believe in themselves no matter what.

Take the first step today to open the door to make your dreams a reality!

Quotation:

"Progress always involves risk: you can't steal second base and keep your foot on first." F.W. Dupee

Action Idea:

Decide whether you're a "Rocket," "Dark Horse" or "Hidden Gem" and then think about how your style of dealing with change is both a strength and an area for opportunity.

Pushed or Pulled?

Change is never easy. As human beings, we tend to resist upsetting the apple cart, even when the apples are rotten (or when we didn't like apples to begin with). Yet change is not only a part of life, the act of changing is part of the definition of what it means to be alive.

With change that we perceive to be risky, frightening or negative, we often avoid, deny, delay or refuse to accept the changes. Other personal changes we embrace with deep enthusiasm. What makes the difference is how we view change, and how our approach to change affects the outcome.

It's human nature to resist anything we feel pushed into. So if you're feeling like a job or relationship change is being forced on you, fighting the shift is part of the natural self-preservation instinct. Yet many times, the changes we initially fight turn out to be open doors to new possibilities. How often have you heard about someone who was laid off from a job only to embark on a rewarding new career? Or about people who mourned the loss of a less-than-ideal relationship until being single enabled them to meet the perfect partner?

As painful as "push" changes feel at the time, it's important to reframe the situation into as many positives as you can imagine. Moving from one city may mean leaving old friends behind, but it creates possibilities for job advancement, new friendships, travel adventures, and personal growth. Leaving a job in a merger or layoff may mean uncertainty or temporary belt-tightening, but it may open up opportunities for a whole new career, additional education, and greater personal satisfaction.

What about the "pull" changes, the changes you can't wait to initiate? Often, the risk and uncertainty is just as great (or greater) with pull changes as with push changes, but because we are excited about the pull change, we zoom right by the risk with our eyes on the reward. On one hand, that excitement can mean energy and enthusiasm to make the change happen. On the other hand, too much starry-eyed excitement can blind you to real risks or challenges that need to be considered and addressed.

Maybe you can't wait to start your new business. That enthusiasm will be an asset for getting you through long hours, but make sure you slow down long enough to get good legal advice, fill out the necessary paperwork, and get your basic business systems set up. Leaving a stifling relationship can be a very positive step toward personal growth, but without doing the homework to figure out why you were attracted to the bad relationship in the first place, you might get fooled again.

How can you reduce the stress change causes while remaining open to the best change has to offer? Here are a few suggestions.

When change is on the horizon, make a quick assessment as to whether it's a 'push' (externally-caused) or 'pull' (internally-caused) change. Recognizing the source of change can help you avoid missing the benefits of a push change or overlooking the risks of a pull change.

Whether the change is pull or push, give yourself time to acknowledge and feel the loss, knowing that even when things turn out for the best, it's difficult to say good-bye to what's been familiar.

Consciously reframe change to look for benefits as opposed to dwelling on fear, risk and loss.

If you're not sure what the benefits might be, get help from a coach, trusted friend, or professional counselor to assist you identify opportunity and avert risk.

Spend time thinking about who you want to be in this new, changed world. Do you need to let go of some old habits, mental attitudes, or outdated image? How can you adapt to make the change as positive as possible?

Relax and enjoy the ride. Even when a change is one you have desired and worked hard to achieve, there will be bumps and surprises. Trust in your ability to handle what comes your way and relax.

While change can be stressful, it can also be exciting, energizing, and growth producing. When the winds of change blow, embrace them and let them help you soar!

Quotation:

"If you don't risk anything, you risk even more." Erica Jong

Action Idea:

Find a chance to put just one of the ideas for coping with change into action. Then sit back and see how it makes you feel and what it helps you do.

Confessions of a Success Sherpa

Sherpas are the guides who help mountain climbers safely reach the crest of Mount Everest, the tallest mountain in the world. I don't climb mountains, but some days, it feels like it. Instead, I help my clients reach their personal peak—in business and in life.

Sometimes, it feels as if we're climbing up hill, carrying heavy baggage, breathing thin air. When that happens, it's my job to know the safe trails, recognize the skills and limitations of my client, and be a ceaseless source of encouragement. It's a combination of recognizing real-life pitfalls, knowing the path, and believing that my client can do what he or she has set out to do. It's hard, but it's worth it for the view from the peak.

Every good guide has his or her own tools for tackling the trail. Here are few of my favorites:

A 360 evaluation. Since people are usually blind to their own true strengths and areas for improvement, I take a look at what others have written, such as testimonials or interviews. It's amazing what will surface when we step back and see what other people value about my client that he or she didn't even think was important.

Competitor research. I look at my clients' competitors until I find something new and different or better and excellent or something that gives me a new perspective on my client's approach. I want to see the variety of ways the best people in their industry are presenting themselves and their services. Once we have a fresh look at the competition, we can best decide how to differentiate, where we can adapt something they're doing, or where the market sees a gap we can fill.

There's a reason people hire Sherpas to climb Mt. Everest –it's because they couldn't get to the top without help.

Quotation:

"Clear your mind of can't." Samuel Johnson

Action Idea:

Give the 360 Feedback or Competitor Research a try and see if it changes your perspective.

Are you a Positive or Negative Thinker?

Do your friends and family call you a pessimist, when you swear you're just being "realistic"? Are you known for your sunny outlook and the conviction that, like Annie, the "sun will come up tomorrow"?

Sometimes it's difficult to tell whether you're a positive or negative thinker because it's hard to know, "compared to what?" Here's a quiz to help you know whether you tend to see the bright side or focus overly on the things that could go wrong. Each question requires a yes/no answer.

1. Are people drawn to you because of your upbeat energy?
2. Do you feel anxious, as if you're always waiting for the "other shoe" to drop?
3. Can you see an opportunity in nearly every situation?
4. Do you have a long memory for your mistakes, but barely remember your wins?
5. Do setbacks fuel your creativity?
6. Is it difficult for you to regroup and move forward when there is change involved?
7. Do you get energized by reviewing your most recent successes?
8. When things change, do you see new looming disasters rather than new possibilities?
9. Do you really believe that "the sky's the limit"?
10. Do you spend more of your time thinking about obstacles than outcomes?
11. Are you naturally good at getting people excited about your ideas?
12. When things go wrong, do you look for someone to save you?
13. Do people want to work with you because of your confidence and natural energy?
14. Are you often overwhelmed with feelings of helplessness?
15. When you face an obstacle, are you confident that you can find a way around it?
16. Do you regard optimistic people as simple-minded or naïve?
17. Do you take charge of setbacks by looking for allies and new information?
18. Do the things you fear loom so large that it's difficult to do anything?
19. Are you constantly building on your past successes?
20. Do you feel afraid much of the time?
21. Can you look at a problem or a situation from different perspectives, even put yourself in the shoes of another person to see things with an open mind?
22. Do you consider asking for help a sign of weakness?

Count up your answers. If you answered "yes" to the odd-numbered questions most of the time, you tend toward an optimistic outlook. If the even-numbered questions got most of your "yes" answers, you're likely to be stuck in negative thinking.

Here's a challenge—if you scored high for pessimistic thinking, make an effort each day for one week to reframe just one negative thought into a helpful, more positive idea. Gradually increase your quota day by day, and as you practice, reframing negatives will get easier and you'll love the way positive thinking feels!

Quotation:

"Attitude is everything." Charles Stanley

Action Idea:

Take the challenge to reframe one negative thought each day into a positive perspective. Try it for one week and see what a difference it makes!

Do You Have A Positive Inner Coach?

We live in a culture that offers a “coach” for everything. We have life coaches, business mentors, personal trainers, financial advisors, nutritional counselors, spiritual gurus ... experts of every flavor to help navigate through any life situation.

If you've ever worked with a coach, you know that one size does not fit all. Some coaches take a drill sergeant approach, believing that they can shout and badger you into improved performance. At the other end of the spectrum we find coaches who emphasize the positive and encourage their clients to reach their goals with a can-do attitude. Naturally, there are coaches who land between these two extremes, combining both a push from behind with a pull toward the goal.

But what happens if you are faced with a big decision and have no coach to call on for advice or encouragement? While hiring a coach is a smart decision, ultimately it's the coach inside you that matters the most. As entrepreneurs and solopreneurs, we spend considerable time alone and must routinely make decisions and take action without consulting anyone. We need to be able to rely on our inner coach for support.

Whether you realize it or not, you are continually coaching yourself. The little voice in your head might be helping you achieve success, increasing your energy and improving your attitude, or it may be holding you back from fulfilling your goals. Those thoughts, whether good or bad, will direct the course of your decision making, your business, and ultimately your life. Here's a reality check: Do you often speak to yourself in a critical way? If so, you have a toxic work environment between your ears! The good news is that you can fire that negative inner critic and replace it with a supportive, wise and fair inner coach.

So how do you become your own best coach?

1. Don't be too hard on yourself. Set the bar high, but cut yourself some slack if you don't quite make it. Tomorrow is another day.
2. Make the decision to believe in yourself.
3. Focus on your strengths and don't dwell on the rest.
4. Face your problems head-on. Obstacles require solutions not self-recrimination.
5. Give yourself a pep talk. You can do this - yes, you can!
6. Review and learn from your mistakes, then laugh and move on.
7. Ask for help when you need it.
8. Challenge yourself by creating new goals.
9. Break big goals into smaller goals and smaller goals into baby steps.
10. Give yourself a hand or a pat on the back when you reach your goals.

Don't underestimate the power of your inner coach. Learn to become your own mentor, cheerleader and advocate, and give yourself permission to feel strong, confident and empowered. People will notice the difference, and your positive energy will attract them to you. When you feel strong and confident about yourself your clients will feel the same. Give yourself a round of applause... you deserve it!

Quotation:

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.” – Marianne Williamson

Action Idea:

Pay attention to how you are “coaching” yourself. If you wouldn't pay for someone else to treat you like that, change your t

Don't be afraid to ASK!

I am amazed how many people don't think to ask for the info they need, how many others are afraid to ask, and how many more don't know who to ask or how to ask for what they want.

It takes confidence to ask questions. Our world tells us we are supposed to be able to find the answers for ourselves and not bother people, especially busy people like our bosses. It's easy to get the impression that real experts don't even have to get full information from clients, that they will somehow just "know" what to do. But there will always be times when it will still be necessary to ask someone a question.

Most people are anxious in new situations and want to make a great impression. This is especially true when you're in a new job, offering a new service or in a company that is rapidly changing directions. You may think you should be able to figure everything out on your own and feel uncomfortable asking for input.

While it's important to be able to function with independence, no one is a mind-reader. I've seen people spend days and even months worrying about something, yet if they asked the appropriate person for the needed information the obstacle would be removed and it would become easy to move forward.

Does this sound familiar? If you're one of these "ask phobic" people, don't despair. You can become more productive and less stressed by learning the fine (and easy) art of asking for what you need.

Start by asking yourself why you are afraid to ask for information. Does the person you want to ask make you uncomfortable? Are you afraid someone will laugh at you for not knowing the answer or get mad at you for bothering them? Do you think it reflects badly on you that you need to ask someone for information? Are you afraid the information that you will get will be something you don't want to hear? Your answer will help clarify what is causing your anxiety and that knowledge will help you to better prepare for asking your question.

Once you've discovered why asking is difficult for you, you've taken the first step toward getting rid of your "ask phobia." It's not that hard to begin to get what you want. All you have to do is ask!

Quotation:

"Don't be afraid to fail. Be afraid not to try." Unknown

Action Idea:

Start by choosing a "safe" person (like a restaurant server or retail clerk) and ask a simple question. Repeat the ask and answer process until your comfort level increases!

How to be Direct Without Being Confrontational.

Are you afraid of confrontation? Being direct and engaging with someone does not mean you are initiating a confrontation or being confrontational. Yet people often worry that if they are straightforward they will be seen as launching a full-scale confrontation.

Being direct means handling a situation, managing with authority, and dealing with others in an open and straightforward manner. That's very different from a confrontational approach, which involves facing off with someone, fighting, or heatedly disagreeing.

Unfortunately, some people who take a confrontational approach excuse or minimize their hostility by terming their behavior "direct." If you have ever been subjected to someone's tantrums and heard them gloss over or justify their abusive behavior as being "direct," it is understandable that you might shy away from being "direct" yourself. That is why it is so important to realize the vast difference between truly being direct and being confrontational.

Being confrontational escalates problems and can lead to abusive behavior. Being direct minimizes problems by fostering productive dialog and seeking resolution.

For many people who worry whether or not to be direct, the real choice is between taking action and not taking action. Usually, this dilemma arises when a problem occurs. The person facing the dilemma is anxious over the problem, but fearful that saying something might be seen as confrontational and thereby escalate the problem or make others view him/her negatively.

Make the choice to be direct, and the course of action becomes clearer. Now that you've ruled out confrontational behavior, your only choice is whether to take direct action or do nothing.

Taking direct action may not get you the desired result, but you will at least know that you did all you could to solve the problem. Others are likely to see you as a leader because you acted in a direct, solution-oriented manner, regardless of whether or not you got the result you wanted.

Quotation:

"The best way out is always through." Robert Frost

Action Idea:

Choose a small thing with low risk like an inattentive waiter or salesperson and take direct action to get what you want. Afterward, ask yourself, "How did that go?"

Use Your Positive Power! Share your positive thoughts with people around you.

We all know how important it is and how good it feels to be validated by other people for what we do. We also know we have the capacity and ability to validate and encourage others to believe in themselves and to keep pursuing their dreams and goals.

If you think something positive, do you say it out loud? Suppose you are bowled over by someone's creativity, or can't believe what an incredible idea someone has come up with. Do you share your appreciation? If not, why not? Are you uncomfortable telling people how you feel? If so, discover the power of compliments.

Don't assume people already know what they do is good or praiseworthy. That's true even if the other person is a famous artist, creative entrepreneur, or renowned designer. You may tell yourself that they have heard it a hundred times, or are going to think you are presumptuous to give your opinion, but the truth is, compliments never go out of style.

Even very successful people crave validation, and while you may focus on all their honors and accolades, they feel the sting of every public barb and criticism. Even if you compliment someone who is uncomfortable receiving praise and he or she brushes off the praise, the important thing is that you were open and honest. Most people will be encouraged, smile and feel happy.

In my experience, a large number of creative doers, talented artists and entrepreneurs don't know how good they are. Although these people are amazingly accomplished, surprisingly enough, they don't have a high opinion of their work and say they don't get much feedback.

What amazes me is how grateful these talented people are when you compliment their work and how much they appreciate your positive feedback. Some seem surprised by the interest and compliments; others say the words give them encouragement to continue to pursue their work.

When you validate someone with a compliment, you are recognizing and affirming them. Your words can be the difference that keeps a person from giving up what they are doing or moving forward. Some people may refuse to accept your positive words because praise makes them feel uncomfortable, or because they have never learned to accept compliments, but they may still appreciate your words deep inside.

Try it and see what happens!

Quotation:

"If you do it, you can. If you don't, you can't." Unknown

Action Idea:

Find one person and give a heartfelt compliment today!

3 Easy Ways to Become an Elite Mental Athlete

We all know people in the workplace and in life who seem to keep moving forward, upward, and onward, always making real progress toward a new goal, a better job, the next life transition, or even their personal/professional reinvention in a new direction. Like Olympic star athletes, these people create challenging goals for themselves and often achieve success because they are mentally, as well as physically, attacking their goals with disciplined commitment. They are Elite Mental Athletes.

What sets an Elite Mental Athlete apart? These are people who continue to reach their goals because they know how to use their minds as their secret weapon. Sports psychologist Chris Carr, in his article "How to think like a Winner", says that winning a gold medal begins in the athlete's head. He's worked with many Olympians, so he should know. I was struck by the similarities in the mental attitudes of elite athletes and what I like to call Elite Mental Athletes, the superstar performers whom I have known in the workplace.

Three of Carr's points that really stood out for me included: 1) "Set goals wisely"; 2) "Talk to yourself"; and 3) "Visualize your performance." When setting goals, Carr suggests that you "choose a reachable goal, and then plan out what has to happen every day to achieve it. That last part, "following a plan" is critical for success. Without a plan, you don't have a goal, you have a daydream. Plans make goals real.

When Carr talks about "talking to yourself" he means finding a mantra that you can say to yourself that, "cuts through distractions and focuses your mind." Remember how Mohammed Ali used to say "I'm the greatest?" That was part of how he psyched himself up to perform. Try something like, "I'm really good at this," "I build rapport easily," or "I can do this!" You don't have to say your mantra out loud, but you should repeat it frequently to yourself.

Everyone talks about the importance of visualizing your performance and Carr suggests, "watching a mini movie of your success" day after day. You'll hear pro athletes like Tiger Woods and Mia Hamm talk about how they would see themselves making a difficult shot in their minds, all the way from when they stepped up to the tee or the shot on goal to the motion of every part of their body when they took the shot, to seeing the ball sail through the air toward its destination.

When you compare articles and books that talk about the winning attitude of elite athletes it's almost identical to the mind of a seriously committed motivated person, people you will find in all occupations. Exceptional goals are evidence of strong motivation and desire to achieve, and require exceptional efforts to reach the goals.

If you think about it, these three points are the opposite of what we often do. It's all too often that people wish instead of plan, talk themselves down in their minds instead of repeating encouragement, and visualize failure instead of success. The secret is to turn those behaviors upside down and do what the gold medal athletes do. Then you will also be an Elite Mental Athlete and reap the benefits!

Quotation:

"To be a winner, all you need to give is all you have." Unknown

Action Idea:

Set a small goal today, repeat that goal to yourself, and visualize yourself achieving the goal. Celebrate your success!

Speak Softly and Carry a Big Wand

Magic wands should be standard issue.

As a child I imagined waving my wand for a magic carpet to fly around the world on, picking up friends, giving a lift to interesting animals and munching on lavish, delicious deserts as we flew. (This may be where I developed my love of room service.)

I liked the idea of righting wrongs and making the world a better place, like a benevolent dictator. When I grew up and entered the working world, I knew immediately that a magic wand should be standard issue like a computer --- along with an unending supply of gold stars.

Why? Because many things in the corporate world beat people down, but very few things lift them up. That's the power of a "magic" wand.

People make mistakes and stew over their errors instead of moving ahead with the next act. Nice people sometimes finish last, despite their hard work. The workplace is full of worried and angry people, people who lack confidence, and difficult clients. All of these people need a lift.

Sometimes things go wrong. A long-awaited product is damaged, a favorite item is discontinued, or a deadline is missed through no fault of your own. It's difficult to wipe away the memory of failure and get back on your feet.

Yes, I know that no one can wave a stick and make everyone happy and fix every problem. That's not the kind of "magic" I'm talking about, although it would be nice! But there's another type of very real "magic" that lies in being affirmed by another person and in simple rituals that allow us to leave our failure, disappointment and frustration behind us and start over.

That's where my "magic" wands came in. In my corporate days, I collected suitable wand-like items that would fit the bill. I still have my favorite two wands. Some of my wands were pink and glittery, while others were more dignified and reserved. I could always slip them into a desk drawer to avoid long explanations to visitors to my office. (Even though creative people sometimes get a little more leeway for eccentricities.)

Did I really think that a bolt of Harry Potter-esque lightning would flare from my wand? No. Instead, my wands did something more powerful. They helped people refocus, rethink, and reinvent.

The next time you're stuck, give it a try. You can use a ruler, a pencil, even your hand. You can wave your "wand" over yourself in a mirror, or over a friend in need of encouragement. You might be surprised at the "magic" you find!

Quotation:

"Most things are difficult before they are easy." Unknown

Action Idea:

Create a "magic" ritual to perk yourself up when you need a boost. It could be repeating a positive phrase that makes you smile, doing some deep breathing, lighting a candle or anything that helps you regroup.

Introverts Rock!

Many of my clients identify themselves as introverts. They don't seek the spotlight, and prefer to listen before they speak. Trumpeting their strong points makes them feel like used car salesmen. And in today's larger-than-life and louder-than-thou culture, my introverted clients wonder if they're in danger of being overlooked.

Actually, I believe introverts bring some significant assets to the table that extraverts lack. For example, introverts are more likely to prepare more for a meeting or presentation because speaking to a group is outside their comfort zone. Many extroverts "just wing it" and often, make a less-than-stellar presentation because of their lack of preparation.

Because introverts prepare more, they often are more knowledgeable about the topic at hand, but while introverts speak less often, when they do pipe up, their input is more informed, and more likely to be fact instead of opinion. Introverts think before they speak, and speak only when they have something of value to add. This is a welcome trait since most people seem to be competing for maximum time at the microphone.

Introverts are more likely to actually listen to what others are saying, instead of being so focused on their own next words that they tune out everyone around them. Because they have listened carefully, they're also likely to be able to speak intelligently to the pros and cons of what has just been said and to ask good questions, staying on topic.

Don't sell yourself short because you're an introvert! Instead, put your listening and analysis skills to good use, to add valuable input to meetings and conversations, and watch your star rise!

Quotation:

"If you are going to doubt something, doubt your limits." Don Ward

Action Idea:

Think of a time when your "Introvert Super Power" actually helped you seal a deal or achieve a goal.

Gold Stars and Applause: The Motivational Fuel of Champions

When I got a gold star as a kid, I felt happy and proud. Getting that gold star meant that my work was recognized. Gold stars were special, acknowledging exceptional work, and not everyone got one. That made them precious. It meant a lot to me as a child to know that I had done something my teacher thought was outstanding.

Not only was a gold star a reward for good work; it was also a big motivational boost. Once I got one gold star, I wanted more. And when I found out that some teachers would give TWO gold stars for truly amazing work, I ratcheted my goals even higher to meet that criteria.

Fast forward a few decades, and I find that gold stars and applause are two of my favorite coaching tools. Most people have warm memories around earning a gold star from a favorite teacher, and even the shyest person appreciates well-earned applause. But once we're out of school, gold stars and applause are harder to find. In the "real world", too many bosses, team leaders and other authority figures put more emphasis on pointing out shortcomings than on celebrating a job well done. We get hungry for someone to acknowledge when we've done our best work.

Verbal praise is very important when a coaching client achieves a goal, but I've found that many adults automatically deflect praise. As we get older, it seems we are often more attuned to the negatives than to the positives, and we often hear—and recall—negative comments much more clearly than we allow ourselves to absorb positive words.

That's why I love gold stars and applause. People may ignore or choose not to accept your words of praise, but when you add a verbal "gold star" and applause, it's much easier for positive comments to make it past their defenses and really create an impression. People of every age deserve and need validation and acknowledgement for their hard work and great ideas. This is especially true when the road to achieving a dream is long and fraught with setbacks. Praise and recognition can make the difference between someone going on or giving up. It's powerful stuff.

Quotation:

"You always miss 100% of the shots you don't take." Wayne Gretzky

Action Idea:

Buy some gold stars and find one thing each day that you've done that deserves a gold star. Then branch out, and make it a point to give one gold star every day to someone else!

Staying the Course: How to Succeed in Uncertain Times

Today's up and down economy is a far cry from the stable years most Baby Boomers remember from their childhood. Just keeping up with ever-changing technology poses a challenge. Many workers of every stripe invest years of education, training and experience only to find it difficult to stay abreast in the "New Economy."

While you can't control mergers and global trends, you can control your attitude and the choices you make in response to change.

Take charge of your future by discovering the secrets behind surviving—and thriving—in uncertain times.

What's your Secret Ingredient?

No one in this world is exactly like you. No one has traveled the same road, taken the same life journey. You are unique from your siblings, your other family members, and from everyone else on this planet—even if they share the same name as yours.

Did you ever realize that you are also unique when it comes to your business? That one-of-a-kind life road that you've traveled means that although there may be thousands of people in the same business, none of them is exactly like you.

In business, differentiation is the heart of branding. When individuals and companies create a brand, they are defining what makes them unique, creating something that makes them different. Usually, the difference is there from the beginning; a clever marketer just helps the company or individual see what's been in front of them all the time and recognize its value. It's like figuring out the "secret ingredient" to take a so-so meal and make it fantastic.

How does your personal story make you different from everyone else in your industry? How can you find your "secret ingredient"? Here are some ideas:

#1 Because you've had the problem, you empathize with the pain. Have you ever heard a company owner talk about how a bad experience they had created their life mission? Many people in the health and wellness industries chose their vocation or profession because they or a loved one struggled with a disease. How has your life journey created empathy or an ability to connect with customers that makes you unique?

#2 Because you came out of a situation, you know what it takes to overcome. If you've struggled with a problem, and beat it, you're uniquely qualified to help others find their way to freedom. So if you dug yourself out of credit card debt and learned how to become financially independent, you've got credibility because you've been there and you beat it. The same is true for people who emerge from addictions to become counselors, who overcome relationship problems to help others do the same, or who rose from poverty to wealth and commit to lifting others.

#3 Because of your special gifts, you are uniquely qualified. For example I know a chiropractor who used to be a professional dancer, and found her way into her new profession because of the unique insights into movement and injury that her gifts as a dancer gave her.

#4 Because of your personal heritage, you have a perspective unlike anyone else. Did you grow up as the child of a foreign ambassador or in a military family? Those are just a few examples of relatively uncommon personal heritages that would provide unique perspective. An ambassador's child might be uniquely suited to international business which requires both an understanding of other cultures and a knack for diplomacy. A military "brat" might have the perfect background to help corporate employees deal with overseas transfers or re-acclimate once they return home.

#5 Because of your personal journey, you look at things differently. A friend of mine knew a college professor who had once been a senior staff person for NATO. His journey from a military career into academia gave him a completely different perspective from colleagues who came from a corporate or academic background. Perhaps you have changed industries, learned things the hard way, or even just applied something you practiced as a hobby. No one else has taken your journey, so the perspectives it yields are yours alone.

Too many times, people are so anxious to fit in that they ignore or minimize the very things that make them unique. Yet it is those unique traits that are priceless when it comes to standing apart from your competition. Don't be afraid to claim your "secret ingredients" to create your future.

Quotation:

"Leap and the net will appear." John Burroughs

Action Idea:

Make a list of all the things that make you unique. Can you find your "secret ingredient"?

Step Aside and See Your Real Self

In my experience as a coach, most people don't fully realize what they're already doing right. Clients focus on what they are doing wrong (in their opinion), where they lack something, what they don't know.

I find that these well-meaning people often completely undervalue and overlook the tremendous skills, knowledge and gifts they already bring to the party. Sure, there's always something more to learn, new skills to acquire, and ways to improve your game, but don't let a quest for perfection blind you to the wealth of value you already provide.

I love to role play with clients. Role playing enables a client to step out of him/herself and play a part, decreasing self-consciousness and reducing the interference of the filters we all place on ourselves. When the client is playing a role, truths emerge that the client otherwise is too inhibited to reveal. This is especially true when it comes to recognizing their own true worth.

Imagine that you aren't "you" right now—you are a publicist talking about "you." Since it's a publicist's job to promote, there's no need to worry about bragging or "blowing your own horn." That's what publicists are paid to do, and in this scenario, you are a very good publicist.

Now imagine a reporter asks publicist-you about client-you's qualifications. Give an answer that is honest, but mentioning everything noteworthy and with the best foot forward. Now imagine a question about client-you's professional accomplishments. Make the answer factual but feel free to put some shine on it by making sure every recognition, promotion, award, major contract, noteworthy client, community leadership role, etc. gets mentioned.

Next, imagine a question by the phantom reporter about client-you's skills and talents. No reason to be shy, because it's publicist-you answering! In your publicist role, you'll want to make the client (you) as attractive as possible to the reporter, so overlook nothing! Even if the skills/talent isn't job related, such as singing, painting, or mastering Yoga, include it anyhow. Everything goes!

Take off your publicist hat and look at the list. Pretty impressive, huh? I constantly find that my clients overlook what they do well and focus only on what (in their opinion) needs improvement.

When clients are able to take a more objective look at their accomplishments, skills, talents and qualifications, and slow down enough to really let the benefit of their own hard work sink in, they see themselves in a new and more confident light.

I enjoy being the catalyst, spark and spur to help my clients gain positive energy and step out with greater confidence and a much-deserved appreciation of their own skills and talents. Put some role playing to work in your own life, and see your real self emerge!

Quotation:

"Act as if it were impossible to fail." Dorothea Brande

Action Idea:

Role play the "publicist" game and sing the praises of "client-you." Make sure to take notes!

Five Steps Toward Realizing Your Full Potential

The word “potential” intrigues me because it contains several meanings. “Potent” means “powerful” as in your personal power. “Potential” also suggests something possible that hasn’t happened yet, and therefore could be anything. Wow. Now think about the word “potential” applied to yourself.

Do you grasp your full personal power and have you created your possibilities?

The good news is that it’s never too late to discover your full potential. And because “possibilities” are limitless, you have never truly exhausted all that is possible for you to do or to become, even if the path you’re currently taking seems to have hit a brick wall.

Many of my coaching clients come to me looking for ways to get “unstuck.” They feel stuck in jobs or relationships or even inside their own skin. They want to stop being limited, to discover new possibilities. In short, they want to find their personal power and create possibilities, to reach their full potential.

If you’re longing for a change that makes it possible for you to show the world—and yourself—what you’re really made of, here are five steps to take toward realizing your full potential.

Step 1: Write down everything you’re good at, and everything you’re passionate about. No one is going to see this list except you (and possibly your coach), so don’t hold anything back. Include job skills, interpersonal skills, hobbies and things that might not seem to matter (like being great at soccer or playing Sudoku). As you write down each item, take a few seconds to “feel” the passion for that activity. If you are good at something but hate doing it, make a note of that. If you love to do something but fear that it isn’t “grown up” or “doesn’t make money” or is “silly” don’t let your inner critic keep you from adding it to the list. Listing things you love and taking a moment to feel your passion, enthusiasm and excitement about each item should leave you invigorated.

Step 2: Write down everything that is making you feel burned out or that has made your current job or role lose its original shine. Which elements of your current situation make you feel bad about yourself? Are there certain aspects that make you feel like someone (or something) has dimmed your light, extinguished your creativity, or stolen your soul?

Step 3: Make a list of your achievements, awards and accomplishments. Don’t worry about bragging. Get it all down on paper. Include things like volunteer service, workplace committees, certificates of achievement, leadership roles, events you’ve hosted, big sales/new clients you’ve landed. Add promotions, awards, articles or other publications, speaking presentations, classes you’ve taken and taught, books you’ve written, and praise given to you by colleagues, clients, and supervisors. Create a list of “testimonials” from the thank-you emails people have sent you. Keep the testimonials and your list of achievements handy and read it over whenever you need a lift.

Step 4: Validate yourself with more testimonials. Ask a few close friends, trusted colleagues and even supportive family members to write down and send you a few sentences about what they believe to be your biggest accomplishments or brightest skills/talents. If you’ve worked with outside groups on events, speaking engagements or presentations, don’t be shy about emailing a request for a short testimonial. Now look at the lists you’ve put together. Where does something you love to do match up with something others think you do exceptionally well? Those are the “bright spots” to focus on as you create your new possibilities. You want more bright spots and less of the things that dim your light.

Step 5: Dream, brainstorm, explore and reinvent. Now that you’ve rediscovered, reclaimed and been reintroduced to your passions and talents, you’re ready to brainstorm. Don’t put any limits on yourself, and don’t worry about what’s “practical.” Brainstorming is about possibilities. We’ll worry about logistics on another day. Right now, the sky’s the limit. What would you like to do if money were no object? What activities are you so passionate about that you lose all track of time when you’re doing them? What would you keep doing even if no one paid you to do it? What makes you feel alive? Open all the doors and “try on” every possibility in your mind. Pretend you’re an actor trying out for many different roles. Make a note of the ideas that get you excited and make you light up.

I'm always amazed how many people take their talent for granted or forget to mention their passions because they don't think it's unique, valuable or important. If you're good at something and do it effortlessly, it's easy to dismiss it as unimportant, but it's probably one of your greatest strengths. (Remember, just because it's easy for you doesn't mean it's easy for other people.)

We often are told by well-meaning people (like our parents) that being "practical" means working for money even if you hate what you're doing. By mid-life, people who have squelched their passion for the sake of being "practical" are often the ones who struggle with migraine headaches, ulcers, depression, and a host of other physical and emotional issues because they have cut themselves off from who they truly are.

Making money at something you enjoy and that makes you feel alive isn't just for a lucky few. You can find or create your dream job—but first, you have to be honest with yourself about what you really love.

Quotations:

"Don't let anyone tell you what you can or can't do." Unknown

Action Ideas:

Sit quietly for a little time each day and ask yourself, "What do I love to do?"

Reinvent Yourself After Job Loss: Ten Tips so You Don't Skip A Beat!

Today's economy is creating uncertainty—and opportunity—for a record number of American professionals. As companies downsize, millions of people are planning Act II of their lives. If you're one of them, you know what it feels like to be outside of your comfort zone. Resist the temptation to sink into despair.

This “slow period” can be an opportunity to rethink your long-term goals, readjust your priorities, reassess what's needed to accomplish your vision and reframe your skills to attract a new employer. You can use this transition to emerge stronger than ever—if you use your energy to create a game plan to reach your goals.

Here's your survival kit to help you make the most of your new possibilities without skipping a beat.

Create an “I Believe In Me—and So Do Others” bulletin board. This is a combination of a vision board (where you post pictures of your goals and dreams) and a collection of the inspirational quotes, congratulatory emails, thank you notes and testimonials others send praising your best qualities. Make sure you put this bulletin board where you'll see it frequently from your workspace to keep your spirits high.

Make a “greatest achievements” folder. List your awards and promotions and quantify your successes. Don't worry whether they're big or small, personal or professional. Include things like volunteer service and workplace committees, leadership roles, events you've hosted, big sales and new clients that you've landed. Keep this close at hand so you can refocus on your successes the next time you're feeling down.

Do a “skills inventory” and ask your friends to help. Make a list of all the skills, traits and talents you think are valuable at work and in leadership roles. Now ask a few close friends, trusted colleagues and even supportive family members to do the same. This informal “360 review” is likely to turn up strong points from others that you discount in yourself. Keep these skills and talents in mind as you prepare to find a new role, and continue to ask your group of supporters for feedback throughout the process, and use them to help you role play for practice before important interviews and presentations.

Stay in the business habit. Dress the part when you go out for lunches or coffee with friends and colleagues. If funds permit, buy a new suit (or at least a fresh tie or scarf) or invest in a new briefcase, folio or purse. You'll feel fresh and confident. Make sure your shoes are shined, your clothes are pressed and that you have the best haircut you can afford. Limit the people to whom you confide your fears, personal issues and uncertainties to a trusted few who can be counted on to respect your confidences.

Realize that you are your own product. Get personal business cards made so you have a professional calling card. Try to avoid self-printed perforated cards and take advantages of the many online specials for a quality product at a great price. Buy a domain name that's as close to your name as possible and get a professional email address that isn't AOL, Hotmail, Gmail or one of the other free services. Remember, you're building a brand—YOU!

Surround yourself with positives. Read proactive, affirming business books. Hang out with positive people. Look for mentors who can help you make new connections or develop new skills. Thank people for their help, and look for ways that you can help others by making connections or sharing your expertise. Don't dwell on your fears. Reframe negative, fearful thoughts as challenges and opportunities. Even better, set goals for yourself and reward every achievement.

Continue to grow. Find a mentor. If your finances won't permit you to hire a mentor, see if you can barter services or take advantage of some of the free business resources from the Small Business Authority, Chamber of Commerce and local universities and community colleges. Read books that help you broaden your business perspective. Take courses, sign up for workshops and attend lectures. Go to trade shows, networking opportunities and business receptions where you can meet new people. Use the Internet for competitive research. Make the most of your flexible schedule to stay current and connected.

Take time for yourself. This transition is a unique opportunity. Take some “mental health breaks” and schedule in time for workouts, lunches with encouraging friends or family, even trips to the park. You'll be back at work soon enough and back

on the career treadmill. Plan a half day every week to do something relaxing like enjoy a walk, read at the library, go to a free afternoon at the museum or have a picnic. You'll be amazed at how refreshed you'll feel without spending a dime.

Congratulate yourself for the wins, both big and small. Don't wait until you find a job to celebrate. Reward yourself when you make ten phone calls or send ten emails. Praise yourself for the effort when you schedule appointments or research a potential employer. Make a do-able daily to-do list and celebrate reaching the end of every day's list. Celebrate your win when you create your web site, refresh your resume or polish your cover letter. Make sure to share your successes with supportive friends.

Make your success visible—and visual. Professionals in the creative industries know how important a portfolio is to showcase their best work for a prospective client. Why not borrow the idea even if you're not in a "creative" profession? Create an online multimedia portfolio with photos or graphics to represent key milestones or accomplishments in your resume. Ask for audio or emailed endorsements from former bosses and colleagues, even people who have seen your volunteer contributions.

Upload photos of your involvement in community projects such as Habitat for Humanity. (Hint: Your LinkedIn page could be a great place for this!) Or, create an off-line "portfolio" of your work contrasting "before" and "after" examples of your work in text descriptions or photos (if appropriate). Use a three-ring binder so you can add or change content to suit the interview. Be sure to include your resume and reference letters.

Many successful people look back on times when they were "displaced" and realize in hindsight that those transitions were amazing growth opportunities. While change is never easy, your attitude, persistence and actions can enable you to realize your dreams. So don't let a career change slow you down. It just might be the opportunity you've been searching for!

Quotation:

"Our attitude is the most important aspect of our ability to succeed." Unknown

Action Ideas:

Whether you've lost a job or are in some other kind of transition, see which of the Survival Kit steps you are already doing, and which you can add to your routine

Tip Sheet - Success During Uncertain Times

Most of us try our best to reduce stress. There's nothing wrong with that—except for the fact that the universe seems to be able to dish out a fresh batch of stress every time we clear our plates.

Uncertainty creates stress. When we feel uncertain, we don't know which way to go. We're caught between two perceived negatives with no clear positive. We doubt our own ability.

Uncertainty can turn a neutral situation into a stress-provoking nightmare. The uncertainty may be due to the economy, a personal situation that is unfolding, the weather or the business cycle. Uncertainty makes us fearful and often paralyzes us.

But the truth is, stress is part of living. How we view stressful situations has as much to do with the negative feelings we experience as the situation itself. Have you ever noticed how some people seem to thrive during stressful situations? In my experience, the ability to feel energized instead of paralyzed in a stressful situation is due to three attitudes: empowerment, creativity, and a commitment to action.

Here are my ten tips for success under stressful and uncertain situations.

1. Create your team. No one succeeds alone. Take a look at top athletes—they're surrounded by coaches, trainers and other experts who help them maximize their game. Maybe you can't pay for a team just yet. That's OK—create a team from three or four colleagues, friends, family members or like-minded professionals and promise to support each other with encouragement and ideas.
2. Reduce uncertainty through preparation. The more information you have, the more empowered you feel. When you understand what you're up against, you can make better choices and realize better outcomes.
3. Practice. Whether you practice your presentation alone or role play with a friend or coach, practicing boosts confidence and helps you anticipate tough questions so that you can answer them well.
4. Think of creative ways to deflect negative responses. Stress often comes in the form of negative comments from other people. Learn to reduce your stress by anticipating their negativity and finding a way to reframe their comment toward a positive outcome.
5. Determine your desired outcome in advance. You reduce uncertainty when you know what you want. Go into a stressful situation with a clear mental picture of how you want it to turn out. Even if you have to make adjustments, you'll have a yardstick to measure what you're offered against a clear idea of what you wanted.
6. Create a BATNA (Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement) Negotiators know that they don't always get their first choice. Skilled negotiators go into a negotiation with a very clear picture of their desired outcome—and an equally clear idea of what the minimum is that they'll settle for. Make up your mind in advance what elements are must-haves and what are nice-to-haves and know at what point you're willing to walk away.
7. Go in with a commitment to move forward. We feel the most stress right before we make an important decision. After we've made the decision, we feel a sense of relief. Go into a stressful situation committed to find some way to continue moving forward. Just making that commitment will help to decrease your stress.
8. Cultivate a positive outlook. We often lose the battle in our mind before we ever lose it in real life. Catch yourself whenever you begin to imagine failure. "They won't buy. They can't afford it. My company isn't as big as the competition." If you've already decided the project will fail, no one will argue with you. Think positively!
9. Refuse to take "no" for an answer. According to Robert Allen and Mark Victor Hansen in their book, "The One Minute Millionaire," the difference between success and failure is getting past the third "no." When you refuse to let "no" stop you, you gain the power of determination.
10. Realize that small failures often come before large successes. Every successful person failed somewhere along the way. The secret to success is trying again, and again, and again. Stressful situations become less stressful when you realize that failures and disappointments are just speed bumps on the way to success.

Put these tips to work for you and watch your stress decrease, even during uncertain times. Once you cultivate empowerment, creativity and commitment to action, stressful situations will lose their power to derail you, and you'll be on your way to success.

Quotation:

"When you have exhausted all possibilities, remember this: You haven't." Thomas Edison

Action Ideas:

How can you put the 10 tips to work right away to reduce your stress?

Changing Course: Finding a New Job When the World is Changing

Long-gone are the days when people counted on any job—or career—to last from graduation to retirement. Instead of bemoaning the change, how about looking for the positives: the excitement of reinvention, the opportunities to explore new roles and companies, and the thrill of constantly learning new things?

Adaptability is the key to success in today's ever-changing workplace. Enthusiastic adaptability and a willingness to see reinvention as both an opportunity and an adventure will assure that you can always find your way. But adaptability is a skill, and it can be learned. Not only that, but by practicing adaptability, you can also decrease your fear of change, which I believe is the Number One thing that holds most people back from being their personal best.

In this next section, you'll find tips, tricks and techniques to help you prepare to ace your next interview. I've shared some in-depth, step-by-step guides so you can help yourself make the best first impression and refresh your personal branding. And if you've never tried role-playing to refine your interviewing skills and boost your confidence, now is a good time to give it a shot with these can't-fail tips!

Set an intention to find something new and skill-related that you can learn that excites you. Take a class, volunteer, tinker on your own. You may find that you create a new career path for yourself—or even a whole new career!

Play the Role to Get the Part

In this series' first article, I explained how going on a job interview is a lot like auditioning for a play or movie. Now that you know how important it is for you to learn your "role" see where your role fits into the overall plot, make the most of your role, learn your lines and accept direction, it's time to focus on what Hollywood calls the "back-story."

Do you know your own "back-story" when it comes to your job-hunting "role"? Surprisingly, many people don't. I've worked with hundreds of clients, and I've found that every one of them benefits by doing some extra "study" on their own personal back-story.

How can this be? Although you might think that you can automatically rattle off your own employment highlights perfectly, most people find that in the nervous atmosphere of an interview, without preparation and rehearsal, their minds go blank.

They forget important accomplishments, fumble on dates or details, accidentally misrepresent something, or blurt out something better left unsaid. Any one of those mistakes could cost you the interview. That's why it pays to get your own back-story straight before you face an interviewer.

Here are three steps to take to get your back-story into shape:

1. **Make sure your resume and online presence is up-to-date** so that it represents you as well as possible. Go look at the resumes and LinkedIn profiles of colleagues you respect and see what tips you can pick up to make yourself look your very best.
2. **Use Google to help you research the company** you're interviewing with. Read their web site, see what financial analysts, the media and customers are saying about them, and check out news releases about major recent events involving the company. If you know the name of your interviewer, look at that person's LinkedIn profile—you may find a conversation-starter in common ground like a shared alma mater or other similarity.
3. **Get a sense for the company's position** among its competitors and of its industry. Again, Google is your friend. Find out what the opportunities and pressures are on the industry, and see which competitors present the biggest threat. Get your back story straight, and see the difference it makes in your interview confidence!

Quotation:

"You have so much more power than you think you do." Unknown

Action Idea:

Role-play new skills you want to develop, in both your personal and professional life to reach your goals and improve your chances for success.

Practice Makes For the Perfect Job/Client Interview

When you role play with your coach, you can have as many do-overs as you need (something you don't get in real life). Flub a line, forget a detail, or say something wordy or awkward, and you can start over or collaborate on how to do it better.

Your coach is also essential by acting as a mirror. If you're projecting low energy or being overly modest, your coach can let you know through facial expressions or body language that you're losing the interviewer's attention.

After each role play, your coach can give you feedback on what to keep doing and where you can make changes. Not only that, your coach can help you prepare for a variety of scenarios so that you feel confident no matter what comes your way.

Here are more ways to use your role playing time to perfect your presentation style.

- **Get over embarrassment.** If you're self-conscious about emphasizing your strengths, take it past the limits with your coach by going to extremes and brag, brag, brag! Stay factual, but really play it big. Once you've gone sky high, it won't feel so daunting to share the more toned-down version.
- **Dress the part.** Know the company culture. Find out whether the company dress code is suit and tie or jeans and t-shirt. No matter what it is, play your role as interviewee right by dressing professionally. If the company is informal, pick a suit that has a less traditional cut or is in a brighter color. If the company is formal, it's time for your black or navy suit. Dress for the job you want, not the one you have.
- **Keep it up.** Practice for every interview. Don't assume that just because you've role-played once you're done. Every interview is different. Avoid getting complacent, and make sure you stay on your game.
- **Use the props.** When you role play, bring the purse, briefcase or other items you expect to take to the interview. Set up the chairs so that you're across the desk from your coach, or seated facing each other in chairs. Change the setting and see how that impacts your energy.
- **Be excited.** Put the same energy and enthusiasm into your dress rehearsal that you expect to use in your real interview.
- **Get a "screen test."** Actors try out for the part while being filmed, so that the director can assess how they look on camera. Ask your coach to tape your role playing sessions, either with audio or video, so you can see and hear yourself.
- **Knock 'em dead!** Take your new skills and your confidence into your next interview and get ready to make a big impression.

Practice pays off with confidence and a more polished presentation. Do your homework, role play with a coach, and expect that success will happen for you.

Quotation:

"You are not alone everyone faces fear, anxiety and failure, face down, stand up to your fears, anxiety and recognize that you are not a failure and that failing at something is part of life and everyone does it." Unknown

Action Idea:

Whether it's an interview, a presentation or some other kind of conversation that gives you the willies, find a supportive friend or coach to role-play your way through it and see what a difference it makes!

Don't be Shy About Letting the World Know What You Can Do!

Many accomplished professionals become like shy children when it comes time to sell their qualifications to a prospective client or an interviewer. This is the point where I find role-playing makes a huge difference. When I role-play with a client, I pretend to be the prospect or interviewer, and the clients get to relax and be themselves. We explore different questions and scenarios, looking for ways to help the client present herself/himself in the best possible light.

Here are some tips to help you get ready for your role-playing debut with your coach or trusted friend and ultimately your next prospect!

- **Don't be Shy About Letting the World Know What You Can Do! Know the benefits and value you bring to the job, and how you would help improve the life of the client or the business of the company that hires you.**
- **Focus on what you love.** When you focus on what you love to do and feel you do best, you'll radiate enthusiasm and your examples/stories will have more impact.
- **Find your sweet spot.** Identify opportunities where you can make a positive difference and be ready to point them out and support your position.
- **Have more examples than you're likely to need.** Brainstorm a dozen or so examples that show a variety of ways you made a difference.
- **Emphasize your unique qualities,** so that it's clear how your skills and perspective relate to the job description.
- **Get comfortable talking about yourself.**
- **Don't try to memorize your answers.** Instead, focus on remembering your list of examples and the top one or two things you emphasize for each example.
- **Face your fears.** Come up with a list of the questions you are most afraid to answer, and then figure out how you'll deal with them.
- **Have several questions to ask the client or interviewer** that show you've done your homework.

Show genuine interest and take the initiative to interview the interviewer!

Quotation:

"Discover your passion, uncover your strengths, and discover your personal power." Unknown

Action Idea:

Challenge yourself to grow. Get help when you need it, and understand that we all need help, support, motivation, and inspiration.

Manage your Star Image

Every celebrity understands that fame means living in a fishbowl. When you're a famous actor, the world follows your every move and dissects each word you say.

Lucky for you, you can take some simple steps to make sure the story the Internet tells about you puts you in the best possible light. Here are some easy ways to make sure your online story is a success.

- **Google yourself.** The quickest way to see if you've got damage control to do is to type your own name into Google and see what comes up. Is the information accurate? Has the Internet confused you with someone else who has the same name? Interviewers routinely Google applicants, so if the search results serve up potential problems, it's best to know in advance so you can plan how to respond
- **Are you easy to find online and is it clear what you do?** If the search results have found the correct "you", is the data accurate and does it make it easy to understand your expertise? If you don't show up at all, that's a problem of another kind. Interviewers expect people today to have a digital footprint of sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, web sites and other online spaces. Being completely absent may signal that you're a technophobe—not good in today's computerized business world.
- **Are you easy to contact?** Your online resume should have both an email address and a phone number where you can easily be reached. If you're on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, make sure you watch for comments and direct messages that require an immediate reply. You don't want to miss out on your starring role because no one could find you!
- **Is your bio/resume/website current** and does it include your professional headshot? Whether it's your resume on Monster or your profile on LinkedIn, your career history needs to be clear, complete and up-to-date. Make sure you have a current professional headshot associated with all your online sites.

In today's job market, when you play the role of a job seeker, you've got a lot in common with A-list actors who can't outrun the cameras of the press. In today's social media saturated world, every move you make is under scrutiny, especially when you're competing for a job. Take the initiative to manage your image, and leave your competition in the dust!

Quotation:

"Take control of what you can in your life." Unknown

Action Idea:

Create a personal plan and follow it by taking one step each day toward your goals

Lights, Camera, Action!

Preparing for an interview is a lot like getting ready to be in a play. You're the star, and your interviewer is the audience. Your "standing ovation" means that you get the job.

If you've never thought of a job interview as being like a play, you might be missing out on some great ways to prepare for the role of a lifetime.

Read the script: Actors decide whether or not to audition based on whether the script suits them. For you, the "script" is the job description posted online or in the newspaper. While being in a period of career transition can be scary, avoid the temptation to apply for anything and everything. You'll be happiest in the long run (and so will your future employer) if you only apply to the positions that are the best fit for your interests, background and talents. So "read the script" and decide whether this particular job opening is a potential "starring role" for you.

Find your place in the plot: Once you've determined that the role (job description) is a good fit, it's time to figure out where your character (job) fits into the overall plot (company). Most plays require an ensemble cast to do justice to the script, and in a company, your role will require interaction with people above, below and beside you to accomplish the goal. Make sure you understand where you fit in the big picture.

Make the most of your role: It's often said that "there are no small parts, only small actors." The meaning is that when an actor is offered a minor role, a truly gifted thespian can still turn in an award-worthy performance and perhaps get noticed for future, larger parts. If the job you're applying for isn't your dream job, see how you can either grow your role into the part you want, or use this job as a stepping-stone to move up to the job you desire.

Prepare for your interview as you would for a starring role on Broadway, and you'll be hearing "Bravo! Bravo!" from your new employer!

Quotation:

"Take your goals/future/life in your hands and move forward." Unknown

Action Idea:

Challenge yourself to "increase your territory" enlarge your scope, expand your world, improve your job, build your abilities, enhance your possibilities. It all begins with a single step forward!

Embracing Success-- Empowering Yourself and Your Career

When we feel a lack of power, it's usually because we have given our power to someone else. We are waiting for a boss to appreciate us and create a new opportunity at work for us to step into.

Waiting robs you of your power. What steps can you take yourself toward what you want to have happen? Can you volunteer for a visible project at work to help you build your network?

Fighting for what you deserve doesn't require aggression. It's really an issue of going after what you want and believing in yourself, then staying the course. Being empowered doesn't require negativity or rudeness. In fact, you're much more likely to get what you want by being direct, being polite and being persistent.

Instead of waiting for your ship to come in, start building a rowboat. Stop waiting for a hero and become your own champion. Don't look for others to validate you; instead, learn to give yourself the gift of positive self-talk and learn to acknowledge and validate yourself. You'll be amazed at how far a feeling of empowerment can take you, and how good it feels to be captain of your destiny. Go for it!

Be Your Own Best Boss!

Any time you change jobs (or your job changes around you), stress follows. Usually during the transition, there's a period of chaos, and it can be daunting to feel like you're at the top of your game.

Whether you've started a new job, transferred to another department inside the same company or gotten a new boss, here are some tips to put you in the winner's circle.

#1 Create a positive atmosphere inside your skull. You'll weather the uncertainty better if you have a clear image in your mind of yourself as the competent, experienced professional you have shown yourself to be. Keep a list of your accomplishments in your briefcase and take it out to remind yourself what you're capable of doing. Know the value you bring to the organization. Reminding yourself of past successes can help you stay afloat and keep your spirits high.

#2 Start tracking all your new successes and accomplishments. Start a list and add to it every time something goes right. This is not only important for keeping your own spirits high; it will also be essential when you're preparing for your performance review. Don't trust your memory—make a list!

Take charge of managing your own work, and you may not even mind that your boss is “missing in action.”

Quotation:

“Never, never, never give up.” Winston Churchill

Action Idea:

Start your “success list” today by writing down five things that went right today. (If you're struggling, even not burning your toast counts!) Resolve to write down your successes for a week and see how good it feels!

Champion Yourself to Success

In my experience, both as a success coach and as a sales professional in Corporate America, too many people sit back and wait for someone else to be their champion, missing important opportunities.

You can learn to be your own best advocate, and in the process, learn to create your own luck by following these four steps.

Step #1: Know your own worth. Give yourself regular pep talks reminding yourself of major accomplishments, positive outcomes and clever ways you've handled dicey situations. Internalizing a realistic and positive sense of self-worth will strengthen your feelings of personal power and enable you to stand up for yourself when necessary and use that power when the situation calls for it.

Step #2: Avoid emotional responses to workplace drama. Sooner or later, you will be questioned, disparaged or misunderstood. The person who seems to be working against you may be truly nasty, or might just be clueless. Observe, listen and collect information until you have a clear idea of the situation and your options. Review your findings and ideas with your coach or a trusted friend (outside the organization). Create a plan of action and work your plan, but steer clear of angry rants or sarcastic remarks.

Give these a try, and see what a difference it makes!

Quotation:

"True success happens when you encourage and support yourself and others." Unknown

Action Idea:

Give yourself a two-minute pep talk out loud. You'll be amazed at the difference it makes in your outlook!

Tips to Handle a Client That has Gone AWOL

Have you ever landed a client who initiates a project and then goes missing? Phone calls and emails go unanswered along with vital questions, and meanwhile, deadlines loom. The fate of the project—and your reputation—hang in the balance.

Hang in there. There's a better way. Here are four suggestions for keeping a disappearing client from derailing the project.

#1—Make sure you are paid in advance. Nothing motivates like money already spent to keep a client's attention on the next steps. If you can't arrange to be paid in full, create a document up front detailing project milestones and payments due, and make sure to include specifics on exactly what is due and from whom for each milestone.

#2—Take the initiative. Set up the phone calls, generate the questions, and remind the client that you're unable to move forward without their essential input. If email doesn't seem to work, arrange a phone call and interview the client to get what you need. Leave voice mail, and enlist the aid of the secretary or receptionist in hunting down the errant client. Gather as much information up-front as possible.

#3—Play to their needs. Your client wants the project completed by a certain date, so emphasize how getting back to you quickly will enable you to create the most complete product with time for them to review before the deadline.

#4—Know your client. If you've worked with this person before and time-management was an issue, make sure you specify the impact of rush charges so he or she has a bottom-line reason to keep you on schedule.

Most clients mean to stay on schedule, but conflicting obligations pull them off track. Do your best to proactively manage the situation and win their gratitude and repeat business by keeping the project humming along!

Quotation:

"Take care of the minutes, and the hours will take care of themselves." Lord Chesterfield

Action Idea:

"In the middle of difficulties lie opportunities." Albert Einstein

10 Things You MUST Do to Keep Your Job After a Bad Review

Everyone's had one—the review that didn't go well. Maybe you overcharged a client, missed a deadline or bungled a project. Or perhaps you didn't hit it off with a new account, failed to make your goals, or didn't quite carry your weight on the last team.

When bad news is inevitable, it may still be possible to turn the situation around—if you keep a clear head and know what to do.

If your boss calls you in to warn you about a mistake you made, be respectful and be alert. Warnings and negative attention from your boss need to be taken seriously. You are fortunate to get a second chance. You are unlikely to get a third.

Here's what to focus on when the situation hits the fan:

1. Get clarity. It's critical to understand what your boss wants you to correct. Don't assume, interrupt, or confess. Ask for details, and keep asking until you know exactly what it was that went wrong. Make sure that you are on the same page with your boss by repeating what was said. It won't help if you fix things that aren't broken and overlook the things that need attention.
2. Apologize for the problems you have caused your boss. It's very likely that your supervisor or manager has been embarrassed by your mistake. He or she may have been called on the carpet by the big boss, especially if your mistake cost the company money or caused a problem with a client relationship. Your boss is human, and he or she doesn't enjoy getting in trouble any more than you do. Getting in trouble for the actions of someone else is even more upsetting. Own up to the fact that you've caused a problem, and apologize.
3. Take responsibility for the problem and for correcting the problem. Now is not the time to be defensive or blame others. You'll be more likely to earn a second chance if you own the problem (even if it wasn't entirely your fault) and have a plan to set things right. Look at it this way: if you own the problem, you control the solution.
4. Immediately create a plan and put it in place so the problem won't happen again. Provide a copy either verbally or in writing (depending on what your boss wants) and outline how any future or potential problems will be avoided.
5. Get agreement from your boss on how and when you can give and receive communication updates and get feedback on your status as you try to get back on track. In these check-in sessions you should strive to make sure that you are on track from your boss's perspective, and to get wind of any issues before they become real problems. Don't assume that everything is going fine, and don't wait for your boss to give you an update. Schedule regular communication with your boss. Regular communication leaves fewer chances for misunderstandings, and helps you avoid being unpleasantly surprised.
6. Do a self-evaluation in private, and be brutally honest. Don't whine, make excuses or justify what happened. Ask yourself, why did the mistake happen? What was the chain of events that led up to the problem? In hindsight, can you see where things began to go wrong? Where might you have gotten back on track? Was there a point of no return, and if so, what kept you from realizing how serious things were? Be honest with yourself, and ask yourself how the situation could have been avoided, how you might fix it now, and what you can do to avoid a similar problem in the future.
7. Be particularly sensitive to your boss. I know, that is difficult when you've been called on the carpet, but remember, your boss has probably already been reprimanded by his/her boss because of your mistake. Your boss will likely

be angry and will be disappointed in you. Use all your people skills to be attuned to how often your boss wants you to communicate and make sure you do as directed.

8. Take ownership of the situation that now exists with your boss and between you and the company. Stay focused on the problem your boss has outlined as an area for improvement, and demonstrate your commitment by improving immediately and consistently.
9. Look for ways that you can bring value to your boss. Make sure you understand your boss's priorities and make them your own. Your goal is to change your boss's perception of you so that he/she sees you as a valuable employee.
10. Look for some ways you can score some wins by doing the very best you can at every task. Look for opportunities to make you and your boss look good, and be sure to give your boss credit for everything that goes right. Go above and beyond what you're asked to do, and without being obnoxious, make sure you get noticed for good work. People tend to remember recent information more than what happened in the past, so if you turn over a new leaf and become the best employee ever, that impression will overshadow past mistakes. Strengthen your reputation with successes.

No one enjoys negative feedback, but when you realize you've been given the gift of a second chance, you can make the most of a bad situation. Resolve to make a wakeup call into a success story!

Quotation:

"The biggest mistake that you can make is to believe that you are working for somebody else. Job security is gone. The driving force of a career must come from the individual. Remember: Jobs are owned by the company, you own your career!" Earl Nightingale

Action Idea:

Even if you like the job you have, spend time each week thinking about the next job that you want. What steps can you take today to prepare yourself to be the best candidate for that next job tomorrow?

Tips for Dealing with an Absentee Boss

Have you ever wanted to put out a “missing persons” alert for your boss? Does he or she sometimes feel like a figment of your imagination?

You know the type—never in the office, never at his/her desk, never answers the phone, never replies to email. Yet somehow, the missing-in-action boss always expects you to provide brilliant results. Sometimes it's the boss you inherit, and other times it's a new boss who never quite fills the void. (Hint: Even if your boss isn't “absentee” these are great ways to position yourself for success.)

Tip #1—Stay positive. Imagine that you're locked in a chess game or some other type of strategy contest. Try to imagine your opponent's next move (or lack thereof). Assume inaction, and strategize around the obstacle.

Here are some “chess moves” to get action out of the absentee boss:

- Send an email, and follow it up with a concise voice mail summary of the email.
- In the email and voice mail, don't ask for advice; rather, suggest a course of action so all the boss has to do is give a simple yes/no.
- Let the boss know that “given the urgency of the situation” you'll be taking that course of action unless you hear back before the meeting/appointment/deadline.
- Have a “plan b” in your pocket for the absentee control freak who is likely to say “no” just for the feeling of control. If he or she has a favorite response, assume they'll follow pattern and have it ready.

You could get mad—but all that will do is damage your own career. You could sink into apathy, but again, you'll pay the price, not your boss. Or you could give yourself a promotion —and begin to manage yourself.

Quotation:

“If you want to make good use of your time, you've got to know what's most important and then give it all you've got.”
Lee Iacocca

Action Idea:

Try one of the “chess moves” above and see if it gets your project unstuck!

4 Ways to Be Your Own Best Advocate

In the workplace, it's not uncommon to find yourself without a mentor or champion. In those sink-or-swim times, knowing how to be your own best advocate can be the difference between success and failure.

Being your advocate doesn't mean you brag about your accomplishments or force yourself on other people. Rather, it means you have a realistically positive sense of your own worth to the organization and the value you bring to the game. Based on that competency and contribution, you have an innate sense of self-worth that makes you willing to speak up on your own behalf and take action to help yourself out of a tough situation.

People who sit back hoping to be saved when they're in a jam are often disappointed. Here are four tips on how to be your own best advocate:

#1: Do your homework **BEFORE** you communicate with your boss via email, phone or in person so you know as much (or preferably more) about the situation than your boss does. This will make you confident, and show your boss that you are serious about results.

#2: Identify what you want to find out/get settled from your interaction with your boss. If you need help being concise, bounce your ideas off a coach or trusted friend so you can ask for exactly what you need.

#3: Make an appointment to meet in-person with your boss, and have a specific agenda so you are both clear on what you want to discuss and what take-aways you need to leave with. Role-play the meeting with a coach or trusted friend so you aren't nervous.

#4: If your boss says getting resolution will take time, find out more about the process and set a time for an update or completion date. You'll feel empowered if things aren't left open-ended, and it gives you a time-frame to follow-up.

Sometimes ineffective bosses mean well but have difficulty creating the structure necessary to succeed. By learning how to be your own best advocate, you can guide your boss through the required steps to create the outcome you need!

Quotation:

"Ordinary people think of spending time; great people think of using it." Anonymous

Action Idea:

Always have a career-enhancing pet project you can work on when you get stalled waiting for input from others. Not only does it keep you productively busy in a way that will pay future dividends, it also keeps you visible.

Go out and create your possibilities.....

I hope that you've gotten some words of encouragement, good ideas, and uplifting suggestions from the articles, quotes and action suggestions in this book.

Now it's up to you.

Armed with the tools you've gained and the approaches you've learned, it's time to look at the things that challenge you with a new perspective.

You have the power to change your life. You already possess important abilities, and you can gain any new skills you need.

Make up your mind to create the job, life and future that you desire. I believe in you. You can do it!



Creating Possibilities
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