

LIFT - OFF!

The Young Professional's Guide to Personal and Professional Success



Actuate Microlearning

India's First Live-Action Video Microlearning

*“The artist is
always beginning.”*

Ezra Pound.



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Introduction / Preface



Life as a young professional can be a strangely mixed experience, both exciting and nerve-racking at the same time.

Peering into the dawn of your professional life, you're probably super excited about the world of opportunities that beckons you - but you're probably also a bit skittish about making new acquaintances, toeing office rules and casting off the comfort of college campus life to explore a whole new world. You probably sense life is probably about to change in amazing - and at times, trying - ways.

You're not wrong!

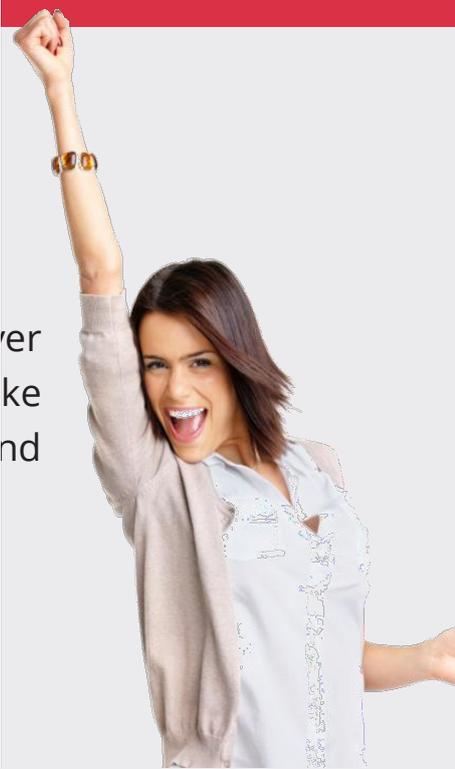
Stepping into the professional world therefore, requires that you:

- 1. Examine and reorient your attitudes,**
- 2. Recalibrate your habits**

Prone to Rookie Mistakes

Because you're prone - now more than you ever will be - to making classic rookie mistakes - like for instance, pretending to understand something

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simply because you're afraid you'll look dumb if you ask a clarifying question, or god forbid, oversharing personal information in an effort to build rapport and be accepted. Mistakes that will probably cost you effort and precious time to undo, if you don't know any better. And chances are you don't know much better – it's why you're here reading this, aren't you.

Finding credible career advice or a mentor this early in your career is not the easiest thing. Don't worry, though! You've got us, and we've got your back.

What's in this eBook for you?

In this eBook, you'll find helpful information and advice you'll need when starting a new job. You really want to avoid those early rookie mistakes, trust us. The content you're about to go through:

- Is a series of excerpts from a larger body of our work,
- Has roots in some of the most incisive psychological and sociological research available today.

So, if you're ready, let's get to launching a prosperous career – yours!

Fire up those thrusters.

It's time for lift-off!



Chapter 1:

**Do the
Smart
Things and
Do Things
Smartly!**



“I used to work extremely hard and didn't really achieve a lot of tangible things. But when I started working extremely smart, the gates of abundant blessings opened up for me.”

— Edmond Mbiaka (Entrepreneur, Author)

Make no mistake, there is no substitute for hard work.

That said, there's really no point grinding away aimlessly. Your career time is finite, if you want to move on to better workscapes as quickly as possible, you need to understand one thing.

The alternative? A significantly shortened, and unfulfilled career span.

Working smart is a skill that can be learnt. First, let's discuss:

Part I: Doing the Smart Things

Here's what doing the smart things involves:

1. Play to your strengths, wherever possible

Figuring out your strengths might take some introspection. The things we like to do are usually the things we're good at – our strengths. Once you identify what you're brilliant at, you're geared to work smart. Here's what you do next...

2. Volunteer or request for high-stakes, high-visibility projects (that utilise your strengths)

Are there projects that your department or team is delivering on where the stakes are high and have the visibility of key stakeholders? Do they play to your key strengths? Embrace these. Volunteer for such projects as they will provide opportunities to learn and prove your mettle to the stakeholders involved – a great way to get noticed.

3. Prioritise learning

You might be called to take on mundane tasks that are not of interest to you. But embrace these. And learn as much as you can. We also suggest you set apart specific hours for learning.

And now, let's discuss...

Part II: Doing things smartly

Here are some suggestions to help you along.

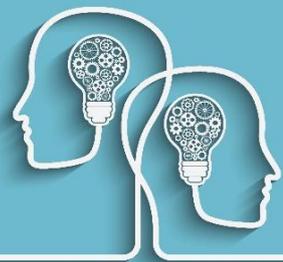
1. Find the best time for certain tasks

Look for times of the day – be it morning or night, when you function at your best. Allot the most important mental tasks for that time of the day, as far as possible. Also, make sure that the time that you have allotted for cognitive tasks can be performed uninterrupted.

2. Find short-cuts and automate tasks

Repetitive tasks should ring alarm bells, especially if they add no value to expertise and knowledge. Speak to your manager about it. Also, collaborate with others to find effective shortcuts and drive automation.

**Do the Smart Things and Do Things
Smartly... You'll Achieve More.**



Chapter 2:

Outwork Others



“If you’re the underdog, your only chance of winning requires expending maximum effort. Outworking is a tall order, it’s not easy to do. That’s why most people will not play that way, because it’s too difficult – that’s the reality of it all”

— Malcolm Gladwell (Author)

Now, give this a little thought!

As a young professional who is in the beginning phase of a professional career, which bracket would you fall in? The underdog or reigning champion? For most humankind, the answer to that question is quite obvious.

So, at the very outset of your career, what might happen if you don’t commit to outwork others?

Nothing terribly bad. But then again, nothing superlatively stellar either.

Eschew outworking others and you'll go through the motions, blend with the mediocre and finally fade away into oblivion.

Not much of an aspiration, is it?

Of course not. You're better than that. Let's move on then.

How to outwork competition – and overcome the odds against you:

1. Don't over rely on your talents:

So, you've got talents. Good! Just remember, hard work beats talent, if talent does not work hard.

2. Eschew shortcuts that prevent you from outworking:

Commit that to memory and recall it often. Don't fall for 'get rich quick' formulae and 'be a billionaire working 4 hours a week' schemes. People who achieved great things in their careers certainly didn't take short cuts to get there.

Promise yourself that no matter what happens, you will not be outworked.

Hard work beats talent
if talent does not work hard.



A word on balance

In the interest of maintaining perspective, there are two things you should never compromise on for the sake of career.

1. Valuable relationships (especially family).
2. Health.

Bottom line: Work hard as you should but play hard as you ought to too.

Chapter 3:

Cultivate Patience



“He that can have patience can have what he will”

– Benjamin Franklin (Founding Father of the United States)

In our hyper-connected world of instant gratification and viral results, our cultural norms encourage us to seek ‘insta-fixes’—whatever it takes to ease our discomfort.

Now!

Waiting for years to achieve personal goals or aspirations sounds just plain absurd.

Reality check – it’s ridiculously rare that you will receive promotions or pay hikes every few months. ‘It takes a lot of hard work and unrelenting patience to succeed’.

You’d do very well to internalize this now – at the start of your career. Remember the lessons on outlearning and outworking others?

Seek excellence and in-depth learning, that requires spending considerable time learning the job, the environment, the products, the competitive landscape, etc. and success will follow.

The alternative is giving in to a job-hopping impulse and setting yourself up for a professional impasse later in life.

Everything you do makes a difference (though you may never see it)

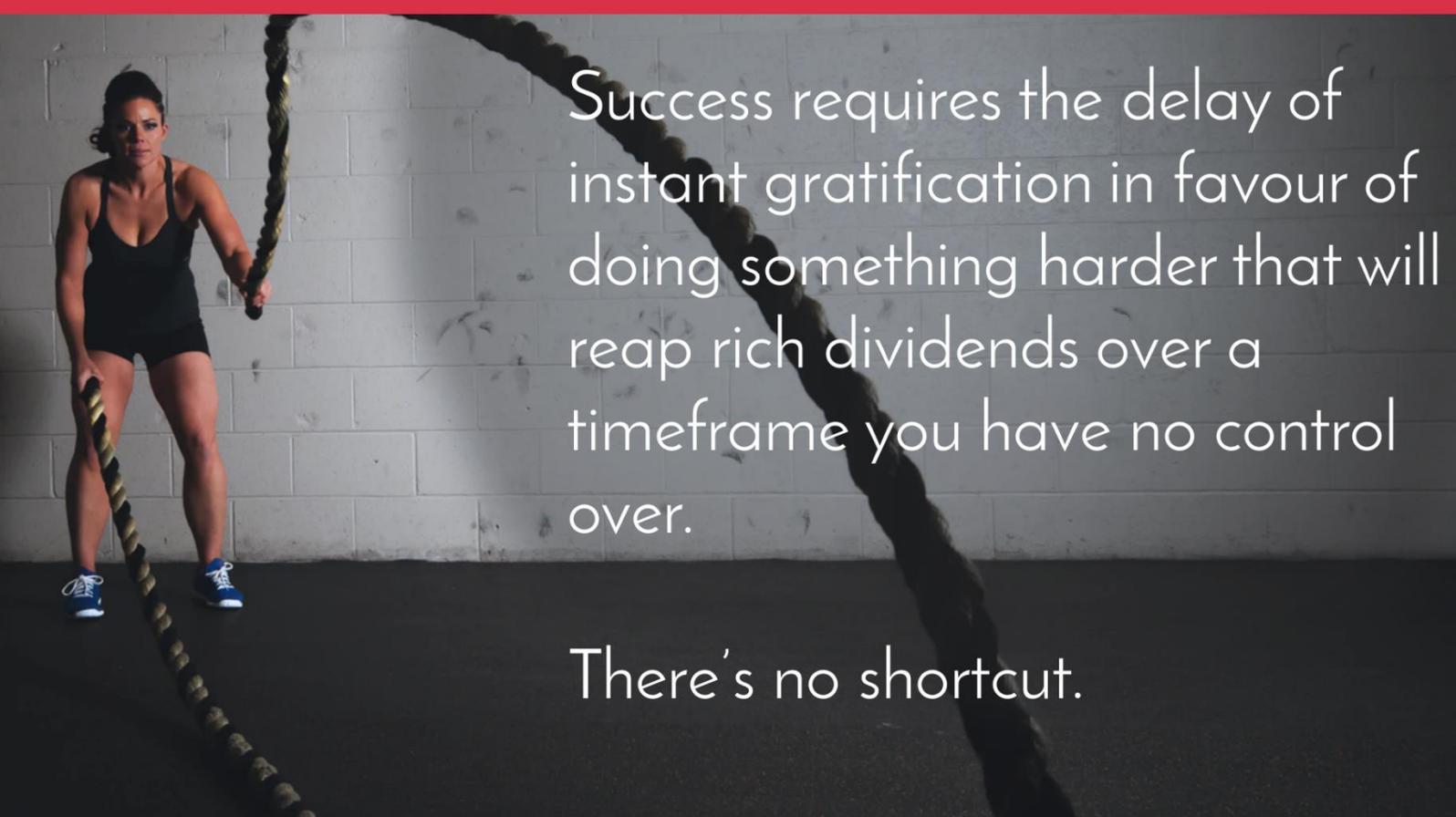
Know this, in the job that you have, you already are making a difference. Sure, it's hard to see that when you're stuck with mundane tasks that every job has - such as filling forms, or entering data into a system, negotiating a deal or dealing with angry customer's day in and out - but a whole lot of people are better off because you are where you are. Without you, a lot of people's need would not have been met.

One day, you will get to a position of responsibility, and you will find crystal-clear perspective on how your work makes a difference.

Until then, be patient!

Don't short-change yourself for 'instafix' job choices. People with winning careers certainly don't.

But how does one cultivate patience?



Success requires the delay of instant gratification in favour of doing something harder that will reap rich dividends over a timeframe you have no control over.

There's no shortcut.

The scientific take on cultivating patience

Work at imagining the consequences of your choices, especially when impulsiveness and temptation come knocking. Just before you're about to make a choice that involves going for something right now instead of waiting for something better – think about what makes that something 'better' and if it's worth letting it go for something lesser now.

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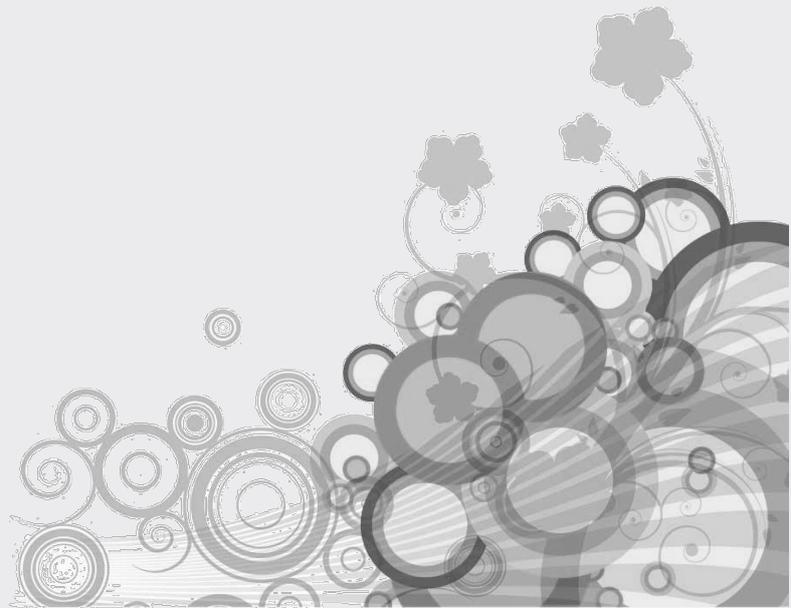
There are stories aplenty of people who were patient and persisted despite the odds, before finally achieving great success. Did you know that Walt Disney was turned down 302 times before he got financing for Disneyland?

As young people in the morning of their professional life, patiently continuing on despite obstacles is pretty much your best shot at making your professional and personal dreams come true.



Chapter 4:

Build Resilience



“The mundane and the sacred are one and the same.”

– Alan Watts (Philosopher)

Every job – irrespective of how much you love it at the start, or how much you want to make a career in that field – will probably start to feel boring at some point, no matter what you do to try to spice things up.

That’s normal. It happens to the best of us.

And oh – it’s actually good for you.

Really!

Mundane tasks have incredible value that can lead to long-term success and payoffs, and they’re generally very essential for proper day-to-day functioning.

And it’s the only true path to mastery of any kind – by the way.

Okay – but how does one remain resilient even as the mundane threatens to overwhelm one’s sanity?

Two pencils, one grey and one brown, are positioned diagonally on a bright yellow background. The grey pencil is in the foreground, and the brown pencil is slightly behind it. The text 'Real life happens in the mundane.' is overlaid in white on the yellow background.

Real life happens in the mundane.

The mundane is not a setback. It is a rite of passage.

Mining the Mundane

Here are some tried and tested ways to engage with mundane activities:

1. Remind yourself that things get tough in every role that we play in life. Work is no exception. Also, remember that the perfect workplace – translating to a mundane-free job - *does not exist*
2. Look for a horizontal – ideally a closely related – movement to another job role. It will teach you loads and come back to your original role with fresh perspectives.

3. Reflect on the impact your role has on people's lives and on the organization. Bring your curiosity into play.
4. Take on risk. Try your hand at some task where the cost of failure can be high. And then give it your 100%. The lessons -even in case of a spectacular failure - will be huge.

Here's something you must never forget: mastery is tempered by the mundane, so escaping the mundane equals forfeiting mastery!

And, so, it stands that the worst thing one could do is try to escape the mundane on an impulse, without doing justice to it. Run away from the mundane often enough and you run the very real risk of being thoroughly mediocre later.



Chapter 5:

**Manage
Work
Relations
with
Prudence**



“When I work, my first relationship with people is professional”

– Bill Murray (Actor, Filmmaker, Writer)

The Fundamentals of Workplace Relationships

According to a survey conducted by the Gallup Organization, people who have a best friend – or even someone they can relate to at work - are seven times more likely to be engaged and satisfied in their jobs.

To add to that,

Employees with high-quality peer relationships are more likely to receive effective mentoring and guidance, are generally better informed in the office space, and have greater access to networks of support in the workplace.

Bottom line:

Great workplace relationships offer a massive advantage all round, no matter where you work. But it's also easy to forfeit this advantage if workplace relationships aren't cultivated appropriately.

Here are some tips that will help you develop great relations at work, and become a 'keeper' in the bargain.

1. Practice common courtesies

- Make polite conversations
- Respect your co-workers' space and belongings
- Practice communication etiquette (volume of voice on a phone call, etc.,)

No matter how benign your intent, everyone has the right to set their own boundaries and have them respected.



2. Don't confuse friendly with friendship

Learn to read the hints and cues that people provide you indicating that they want things to be kept cordial and professional, and nothing more.

3. Exercise caution on social media

If you do connect with co-workers through social media, do not engage in inappropriate relationships and present an unprofessional side of yourself. And do not share confidential information about the company or co-workers on social media, if you know what's good for you.

4. Don't gripe about work at work

No matter how cool it might appear, venting your frustration about work while you're at work is viewed as immaturity. That, and it really annoys people after a short while. Instead, if you feel aggrieved about something, escalate the matter and take control of the situation. How's that for cool?



Chapter 6:

Learn How to Regulate Emotions



“To be aware of your own emotions and to learn how to self-regulate those, is an important part of any kind of management of the intuitive or sensitive nature”

– Heidi Sawyer (Director, Institute of Psychic Development)

No matter how righteous your cause, how flawless your reputation.

Failure to regulate your emotions will cost you, one way or another. You’d do well to remember that. Because there might be no second chances on offer.

Being in the grip of emotions

Emotions dictate our thoughts and actions with seemingly superior authority over our rational minds.

Sometimes though, emotions and feelings can vacillate between dangerous extremes. And when we act on our emotions too quickly, we’re prone to making decisions that we’re bound to regret.

It stands therefore, that negative emotions must be handled with care, especially under the harshest conditions. The question is how.

The Antidote

Although it may sometimes feel like they strike us out of the blue, emotions unfold over time.

Through *emotion regulation* we can interfere with emotional processes at different points during the emotion generation timeline using different strategies.

Researchers have identified a few defining features of emotion regulation. Here they are.

How to regulate emotions

Here are a few techniques you can employ to take control of your emotions and regain rationality in any challenging situation. This is not an exhaustive list.

1. Don't react right away.

Take a breather and respond later instead.

2. Pre-empt being hijacked by negative emotions.

Introspect to figure out what your emotional trigger points are, and mentally rehearse how you'll deal with erring motorists and slow elevators the next time round.

3. Learn to give and receive feedback effectively:

Seek to express your point of view and encourage expression of the other's point of view, in the interest of regulation emotions.

When giving feedback, use 'When I 'statements to create a bridge for the opposite person to understand your emotions. For instance - 'When I don't receive your report on time, it gets me all stressed out'. The focus is in your opinion of the matter, it is seen as non-threatening and inoffensive.

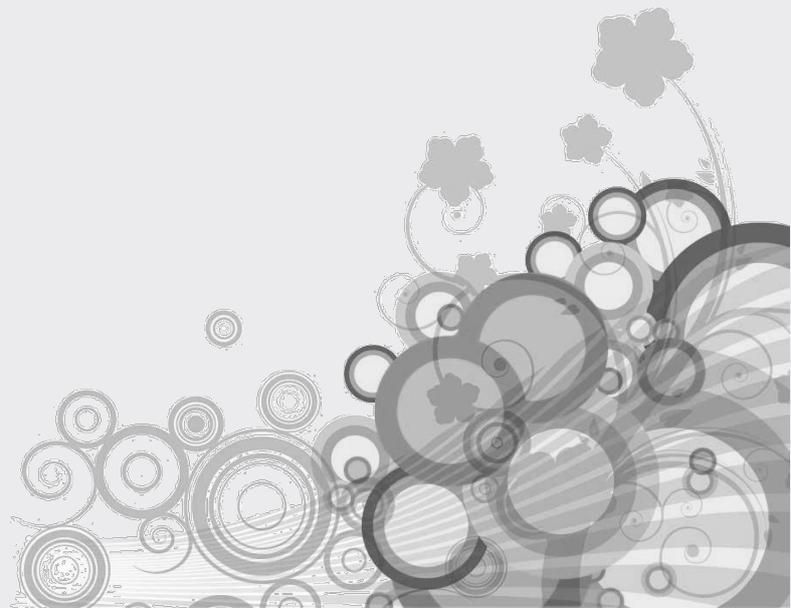
On the flip side, 'You' statements sound accusatory and judgmental and closes down communication lines. For instance, 'You never ever send your reports in on time.'

Following these steps will ensure you handle feedback, especially criticism with tact and grace as opposed to getting defensive and argumentative.



Chapter 7:

Challenge the Status Quo



“Status quo, you know, is latin for ‘the mess we’re in’.

– Ronald Reagan

‘Challenging the Status Quo’ Decoded

To challenge the status quo is to behave or do something in a way contrary to what is generally accepted or expected. It is to test the unproven, dive deep into the unspoken, and challenge the unchallenged.

In fact, as humans, we have an innate desire to achieve something meaningful and significant in our lives. This is a fundamental construct of human nature- we are all born with the ability to do great things and develop into the best versions of ourselves.

But if excellence is one of our primary aims in life why do we find ourselves missing the mark?

Easier said than done

Especially in today’s competitive environment. Many would rather stick with the tried and tested than risk ruffling feathers or changing what has maybe a successful way of doing business.

For the young millennial, to challenge the status quo at work is tantamount with taking the bull by its horns.

In a lot of organizations, superiors tend to view new ideas more as a threat than something that could drive the business forward.

In some places, upper echelons of management believe that organizational breakthroughs can/should only occur at their level.

At this intersection, it becomes really hard for anyone to challenge the status quo. It's undoubtedly hard to challenge the status quo in a hierarchy-driven place.

But irrespective of where you stand in the pecking order, you can challenge, if you do it right. Here's how:

1. Begin by asking 'Why'

Don't just think better... think differently. Asking 'why' repeatedly will lead you to a reason for an action. And preface that with something like 'Just so I can understand this correctly...'. For instance, 'Just so that I understand this correctly, may I ask why this done in this particular way?' Understand the context (the stimulus) that had led to the current system being created.

2. Understand the reason and response as the situation changed

Determine whether the old style still works before you attempt to challenge the status quo.

3. Show 'em the money

Ensure you have a good idea about a new concept and tie it to a revenue stream. Money gains are always a priority. It also helps if you connect with someone who calls the shots or is in the decision-making team.

Want to challenge the status quo?

Link the proposed change to business metrics.



4. Be bold and brave

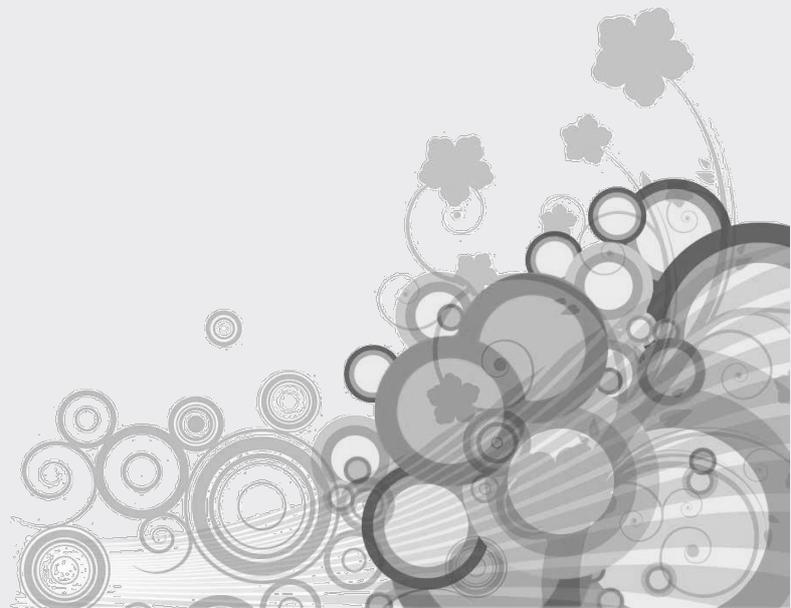
Challenging an industry's most firmly held beliefs does not come without pushback. Your willingness to speak out against outdated rigmaroles immediately sets you apart and provides the opportunity to present other new ideas you are bringing to the field

Just do it for the right reasons - and don't challenge for the sake of it.



Chapter 8:

Get Noticed



“If your presence doesn't make an impact, your absence won't make a difference.”

– Trey Smith (Author – “Crushing Hyper Casual Games”)

Let's say, you need to visit a dentist. You get to a spot where there are two dentist clinics across the road from each other. Let's call them 'Dentist A' and 'Dentist B'. You've heard of 'Dentist A' from a trusted neighbour, who speaks very highly of that dentist. You know virtually nothing of 'Dentist B', although both their signboards show that they are equally qualified. Where would you rather go?

Most people would take their business to 'Dentist A', even if 'Dentist B's signboard boasted higher qualification. Because one doesn't decide their own credibility – others do.

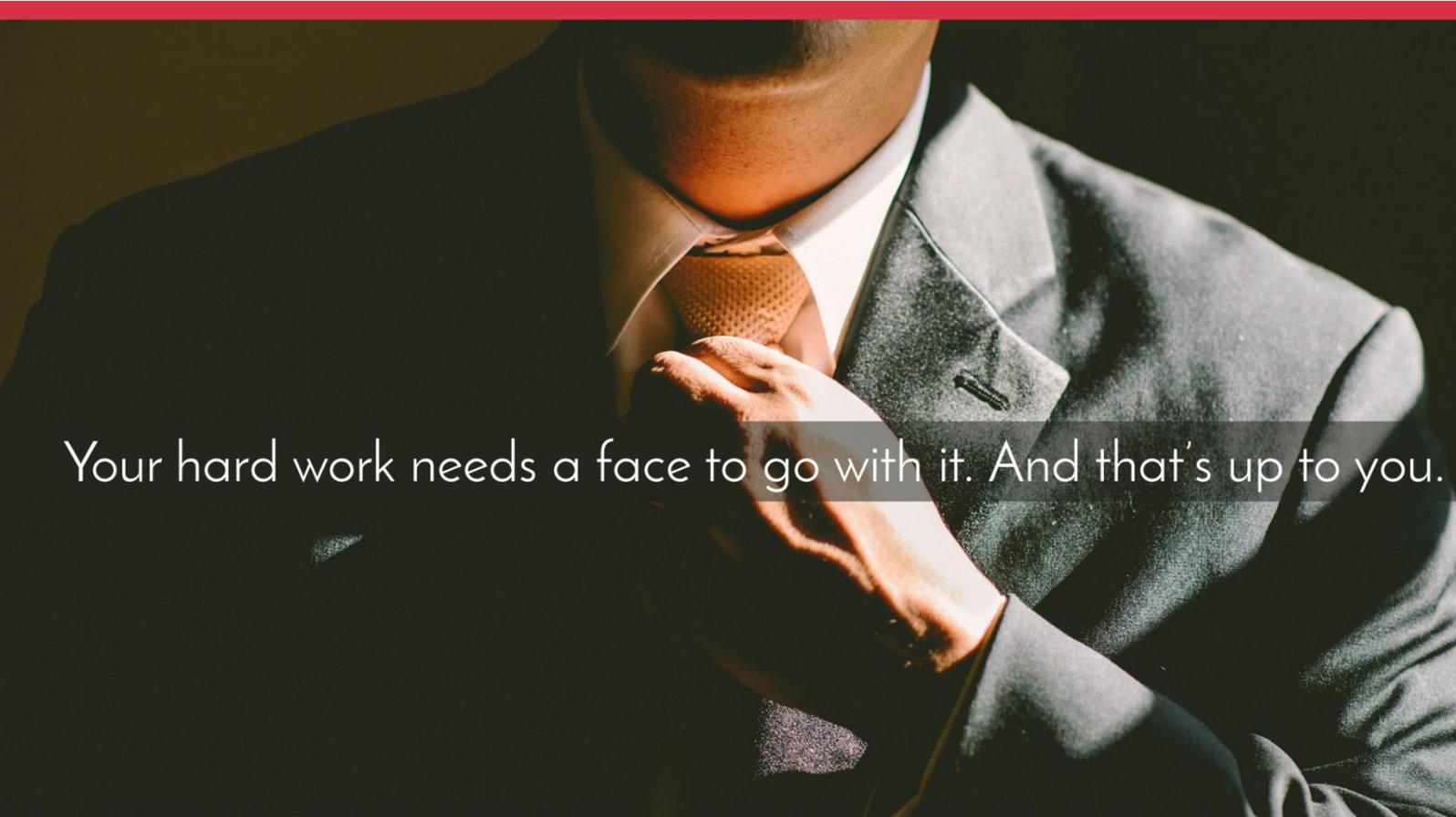
Bottom line: People will always – always, pick the option they recognize over an option they know nothing about.

That stands true for the workplace too. The people who get noticed bag the best assignments, while

those who keep their heads down – hardworking as they might be - miss out. It pays to get noticed (for all the right things, of course.)

You can't always bank upon others, such as your boss, to increase your visibility for you. Instead, you need to assess how to maximize your visibility so that you'll be an automatic choice for opportunities when they arise.

New entrants to the workforce are full of passion and are all for making an impact, but they soon gather that others have low expectations of their abilities. If you are a millennial new hire, your superior probably views you as a rookie who has a lot to learn and prove. You can end up feeling idle when you are rewing to contribute.



Your hard work needs a face to go with it. And that's up to you.

But you know what you're capable of – now it's just a matter of showcasing it right.

Salient Points to Getting Noticed

If key people aren't aware of you, you'll likely miss out on opportunities for promotions and pay hikes, despite your hard work and good performance. It's not only what you know that matters – it's who knows that you know it, too.

Many people feel uncomfortable at the thought of promoting themselves, so they assume a passive role in the workplace, hoping their work will speak for them. The fact is that doesn't always happen....

Here are some strategies to getting noticed and ensuring visibility of your merits and values.

1. Ask for more responsible assignments.

Are there any assignments you could take on that have a big impact on your organization's performance? Don't wait for your manager to assign these projects to you – ask to work on them as soon as you get an inkling about it.

2. Volunteer to represent your department at meetings, on planning committees, and on projects

Working with cross-functional teams gives your talents exposure outside of your own work area. Capitalise on every such opportunity if you can. If you're sceptical about your public speaking skills,

start by giving presentations to colleagues in small team meetings, and transition to bigger events

3. Build your relationship with your superiors

Be in constant touch with your superiors. Give them a heads-up on relevant issues. Share what's on your mind, and make suggestions for improvement.

As you can see there are many simple ways that can help you become more visible, even if you are not naturally outgoing. Get noticed- ensure visibility of your merits and values and you'll shine like the star you were meant to be



Chapter 9:

Serve Your Network



*“The currency of real networking is not greed
but generosity.”*

Keith Ferazzi (Entrepreneur, Author)

A few years ago there was an episode of Ugly Betty (An American comedy series) in which the lead character who, despite her lack of style, lands a job at a prestigious fashion magazine. She is compelled to go out and make connections. She absolutely detests doing it. It feels phony for her to stroll around a bar and have trivial, brief conversations concluding in a quick exchange of business cards.

And truth is, that is phony.

Simply because there was no real connection, no breakthroughs occurred. It just came across as a futile exercise in self-promotion, leaving everyone feeling awkward.

Turns out there are a whole lot of people who feel that way about networking – be it sales professionals, managers or entrepreneurs. They know that they need to reach out, but the way they’ve been taught just feels *wrong*. There are others who belong to the school of thought that you have to be selfish and look

out for yourself in order to network and make the right connections with influential people.

Networking is also often thought of as connecting to people on LinkedIn, collecting business cards at networking events, or following the right people on Twitter. But often that's where the relationship begins and ends in a rush. You might see the person occasionally or message them once in a while on LinkedIn, but that's it.

So what then does Networking entail?

The Essence of Networking

A photograph showing a person's hands interacting with a laptop. One hand is pointing at the screen, while the other is on the trackpad. The person is wearing a black smartwatch and a ring. The background is blurred, suggesting an office or meeting environment.

The essence of networking is serving others.
First you give then you get.

Building a robust professional network is an important part of having a successful career. Being

well-acquainted with key professionals in your industry makes a lot of things easier, from learning new skills to promoting your product or service.

But the fact is any relationship requires effort. Building a strong business network is no different. Networking is about relationship building and not about collecting the maximum number of visiting cards. It is not who you know that matters, it is who knows you that does.

Simply put,

1. Don't brag

Although it's good for your network to know about your professional successes and promotions, you don't want to gain a reputation as a braggart.

2. Regroup from time to time

Every six months or so, it pays to do an "audit" of your professional ties. "You need to look at your list of contacts and ask, is it still accurate? Who should I add? Who is no longer quite as relevant?"

Serve your network selflessly, with integrity and not with an ulterior motive of exploiting it. Do well for goodness sake, not only to expect returns.

Be a giver at work, strive to be generous in sharing your time, energy, knowledge, skills ideas and connections with other people, so that they can benefit from them.

For a rookie who hopes to hit the ground running in a new organization, he/she must first cultivate allies — a network of people who can provide the information, resource, and support needed to succeed.

Remember 'Networking is the number one unwritten rule of success in businesses'.



Chapter 10:

Epilogue



If you've made it this far, congratulations! It appears you're truly passionate about getting off to a flying start with your career. We hope what you've seen on the previous pages helps you kick off your journey to being a thorough professional.

On that note, we mentioned at the start of this eBook that the content we presented has roots in some of the most incisive psychological and sociological research available today. What you'll also be interested to know is that the content and stories contained within also reflects real experiences of clients we work with and our own people at Actuate Microlearning too.

We also mentioned that this content is a series of excerpts from a larger body of our work. For your information, that body of work is a module titled 'Priming for Lift-off'. Here's a link to the module, in case you want to pursue it further.

All this is in the service of saving you time. Precious time better spent taking you further on your career path.

Because the choices you make now will lead to decisions. And career decisions you make now can't be changed later except with years and years of hard work to redo them.

Good luck with everything, friend!

We wish you great success and prosperity in life!

So, here's to good choices and decisions, and here's to you!



Video-Format Microlearning from Actuate Microlearning

As you surely know, video-format microlearning courses are perfect to:

1. Engage the modern-day learner (especially the burgeoning millennial and Gen-Z workforce)
2. Create learning journeys for your learners
3. Ensure better course offtake and completion rates

Twenty-Nine Video-Format Microlearning Courses You Could Use Right Out-Of-The-Box

Considering the advantages that video-format courses offer, we, at Actuate, have created a catalogue of twenty-nine courses - a total of 283 video lessons, 52 hours of learning - on behavioural, leadership, cognitive and technical skills topics.

You could procure these off-the-shelf, get them branded for you and have them deployed pretty much immediately for your learners!

Here're a Few Reasons Our Clients Choose Us:

1 Our courses follow a micro-video format (the format of choice for the modern-day learner)

2 Users love our courses (you should see some of the fabulous feedback we've received!)

3 Users find our courses relatable and relevant

4 Our courses are built for the phone

5 We work closely with you in ensuring people use these courses

Indicative Client List

Over the last nine years of our existence, we've served over seventy organisations across industry verticals. Some of our esteemed clients include Kotak Securities, ICICI Lombard, Zydus Cadila, Edelweiss, Angel Broking, Motilal Oswal, DCB Bank, Lodha, Tata Capital, DESIS, Prudential, to name but a few.

Do Get in Touch!

If you'd be interested in knowing more, please suggest a date and time we could possibly speak/meet. Thirty minutes should suffice for our discussion.

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