

Young professional career accelerator guide

free eBook

Ben Elsinga

**Young Professional
Career Accelerator Guide**

Free eBook

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Content

Mission statement	7
Foreword	8
Acknowledgements	9
Chapter One:	
Introduction	12
Practical information	13
Who should read this book?	14
About me	15
Structure of the free eBook	17
How to read and practice this free eBook	18
Testimonials	18
Chapter Two: You	20
The learning process	22
Being happy	23
Stay true to yourself	24
Be your strength	27
Your components	28
Sincere intentions	30
Norms and values	32
Capacity management	33
Building capacity	35
Maximizing opportunities	37
Smart choices	40
Building self-confidence	43
Outdoing yourself	46

Chapter Three: You and your environment	52
Active behavior	55
Resilience	57
Physical resilience	59
Emotional resilience	60
Mental resilience	62
Giving off energy	65
Your contribution	67
The STAR method	68
Environmental sensitivity	70
A critical view	71
Confrontation	73
Responsible driving	74
Your social environment	75
Listen to your emotions	77
You and your manager	77
Mount Everest	80
Chapters <u>not</u> included in this free eBook	81

Mission statement

By writing this free eBook, I aim to contribute to society, both nationally and internationally, by helping the community of young professionals to make choices that will accelerate their development and help them lead more fulfilling lives through strength, passion, ambition and self-awareness.

Foreword

This is not a textbook full of academic theories – its contents are, and will remain, personal and practical learning experiences. The text in this book will help you to get to know yourself better, and enable you to adapt the given resources to your own circumstances.

By reading this book, you may (or may not) stumble across your own personal life questions. This means that you can use the book not only as a self-help kit, but also as effective preparation for meeting with a professional career coach. The choice is yours: take what you like, and leave what you like.

To all those who have opened this free eBook: I hope that you enjoy reading it, and that it offers you many useful tips for laying a solid foundation for a career which – most importantly – will bring you much pleasure and happiness in your life to come. Our personal and professional lives are connected more closely than you might think, as you will soon discover in this book!

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Your way to success:



Prepare For It



Do A Warming Up



Go For It



Chapter One: **Introduction**

We are living in a time when many of us are under pressure. At the same time we are striving towards a successful career, an active lifestyle and some personal happiness. Our greatest wish is to live according to our passions, and to realize our dreams as quickly as possible. For many of us this proves difficult, because we are being pulled this way and that by all kinds of external influences. Sound familiar?

By setting out my 'internal logic' concretely here in writing, I hope to offer you an inventory of tools that have served to make me happier over the years.

Practical information

You are a young, talented professional and have big plans for your future life and career. However, you may be wrestling with the problem of how to get the most out of your practical experience as fast as possible. You are unsure of which role suits you best – would you like to become a manager at a large, well-known company, or would you rather start your own business? One thing is certain: you are a young dynamo full of drive and ambition.

The question is whether you know yourself well enough to make the proper choices that will suit you best. You are searching for a solid basis that you can combine with self-awareness to help you stand out, as well as the means to embrace your strengths and quickly build on your success without sacrificing your quality of life. If this all seems familiar to you, then this book was written for you.

This book offers a range of resources, perspectives and working methods that you can continue to apply for many years to shape your career, regardless of your profession either now or in the future. These resources are tried-and-tested, as I have been putting them into practice myself for years.

But this does not mean that that everything I write will be effective, or even work, in all situations. It is important for you to continue to relate everything you read to your own circumstances.

All of the strategies described in this book were developed through a process of trial and error, adaptation and perfection. Your case will be no different, but what I do hope is that by reading this book, you can accelerate your learning curve considerably and learn from the mistakes that I have already made. My aim is for you to take ten years to develop an attitude and a set of skills that it took me thirty years to acquire.

The lessons in this book are learned not only through knowledge of my “best practices”, but through concrete experiences (both positive and negative). As soon as you feel confident to undertake more active experimentation, you will gain more experiences (both positive and negative) and start learning faster! From a learning perspective, there simply can be no negative experiences.

This does not mean that you can avoid making mistakes – mistakes are just another way of learning. This book may even help you develop the courage to make more mistakes, with the aim of allowing your talent to reach full maturity. The motto here is:

“Fail fast to learn fast”.

We are living in a time when people must be resilient, and where you must go out in search of the information that is relevant to you, based on the goals that you have set for yourself. In other words: from now on, try to assume responsibility for your own happiness and success. Reading this book and putting what you have learned into practice will allow you to take concrete steps towards this goal.

Who should read this book?

This book was written for school-leavers at the start of their careers, or for those who have already been working for a few years. It is for those who are young (or young at heart, at least) and full of energy and ambitions.

I have limited the scope of this book to young, talented professionals. In my experience it is this group in particular who are at risk of a “burnout”, as they have the tendency to put too much on their plate. If you have trouble saying “no”, you could create serious problems for yourself within a very short time.

About me

I have two children, who both stand up for and take care of themselves. Yes, I am even a grandfather. I am still young at heart, and hope to continue to apply the principles from my own book to my current professional life.



Ben Elsinga: author and publisher of the book series for young and proactive professionals. For more information about my professional life: <http://ypworkbook.com/the-professional-life-of-the-author>

If you are Dutch you can find more information about:

- my professional life: <http://dejongeprofessional.nl/het-professionele-leven-van-de-auteur-de-jonge-professional>
- my blogs: <http://dejongeprofessional.nl/blogs-ben-elsinga>
- my workshops: <http://dejongeprofessional.nl/workshops-ben-elsinga-de-jonge-professional>

I find sharing my experiences with others an energizing experience (hence this book). I enjoy travel, and exercise and play sport every day to keep my body in shape. One of my hobbies is photography, including portraiture, travel and product shooting.

I maintain a somewhat austere outlook as a professional, which I will summarize in a few words and explain in greater detail further on in this book.

Live like a professional athlete, physically and mentally
Be honest, with yourself and those around you
Dare to stand out and be the tall poppy
Live intensely and chase your dreams
Seek out connections with others
Work hard and with purpose
Do not waste energy
Be your strength
Enjoy life

The above is actually the most succinct summary of this book that I can offer.

Structure of the free eBook

Chapters two and three concern matters that are of a fixed nature: yourself, and your environment. You cannot live outside of yourself, and wherever you work you will need to perform in an environment that requires you to adopt a professional and respectful attitude.

Finding a way to manage yourself and effectively learning to interact with your environment will enable you to lay a strong foundation for further professional growth. Priorities and accept yourself, because the one thing you are saddled with for the rest of your life is you. This is an effective prelude to the way in which we construct our personal and professional identities: namely, through the acquisition of autonomy in combination with seeking connections with our environment.

The effects of reading this...



How to read and practice this free eBook

First, read this book once through from cover to cover. Use the book afterwards as a reference, and/or read it again later for a boost of mental energy.

Once you have read the book, and you encounter other young (or experienced) professionals who could use a helping hand, do not hesitate to pass on anything you have learned from it. This way you not only reveal your strengths, enthusiasm and energy to those around you, but you will be investing in your network by showing people that you care about them through your willingness to help.

If you like this free eBook you can accelerate your career even more with the “Young Professional Career Workbook”.

For more information: <http://ypworkbook.com/career-workbook-for-graduates-and-young-professionals>

Testimonials

If you like this free eBook than you can send a testimonial to be shared with other students and young professionals.

The procedure is quite simple:

- 1 Send a linkedin invite to the author Ben Elsinga himself:
<https://nl.linkedin.com/in/ben-elsinga-8694ab4>
- 2 Wait until your linkedin invite is accepted.
- 3 Send your reading experience with your contactdetails in plain text to:
 - a. English: ypworkbook@gmail.com
 - b. Dutch: dejongeprofessional@gmail.com

Current published testimonials for the books series for young professionals can be found via:

- a. English: <http://ypworkbook.com/category/testimonials>
- b. Dutch: <http://dejongeprofessional.nl/category/leesbeleving>

As soon as your testimonial is selected and published by the author you can share your own authentic testimonial via social media.

To make your network aware about this free eBook and what you think of it.

Don't forget to pass it on...

*You have got the shoes,
now the rest.*



Chapter Two: **You**

This chapter is all about you. The reason I want to focus on you is because it is impossible to live outside yourself, and because you (your mind and body) are the motor that you will use to shape your future life and career. So be sure to supply your motor with the right fuel, carry out regular maintenance, make sure it is properly calibrated and ensure effective capacity management – because overloads lead to damage, which would be a great shame. You only have one motor, after all.

The nice thing about your own motor is that it is self-learning, and can increase its own capacity and power throughout its lifespan. The way you run your motor, or your “motor-management style”, can also be improved over time, for example by making smarter choices, seizing opportunities and building confidence, which will ultimately enable you to outdo yourself. Try to remain true to yourself during this process, as only then will you be in command of your full potential and able to excel, while maintaining a balanced life.

Deliberate, active engagement with the concepts and techniques that I describe for you will give you greater control of your life and career.

Life Balance ...

*Hereby I declare this breakfast
open.
What is the action list?*



The learning process

The real learning does not begin until you have finished studying. Most of the skills important to real life are not learned at school, but in a practical setting, even though modern education is becoming more and more competency-based. It is about how you decide to shape yourself in the years to come.

From now on, you will need to make both personal and professional decisions that will greatly influence the course of your life and your level of happiness. So it is important to take your time to consider these decisions, to get feedback on them from people close to you whom you trust, and – perhaps most importantly – to follow your passion and your heart in making them. That means: do not simply follow the money.

You can never fail in making such a choice – you can only learn, just as you can learn from making mistakes. The trick is to avoid the obvious mistakes by being open to learning from other people's experiences.

Only by making your own, fully independent mistakes can you be the architect of your own life, and develop the resilience to be both successful and happy at the same time. So: know what you want, and make choices with your heart and with full conviction. The next chapter offers a more in-depth discussion of “pro-active behavior”. For now it is enough to keep in mind that making your own choices and living by them is an example of pro-active behavior.

Motto:

*“Outside your comfort zone,
that’s where the magic happens”*

In this day and age, it is almost a given that we will be confronted with stressful situations. You don't need to be a scaredy-cat to be afraid of the pressure society puts on us.

My experience has taught me that putting off dealing with these fears is no help at all – this way they only keep coming back, gaining in strength each time. Imagine for a moment that you are afraid of giving presentations in front of groups. The only way to overcome this fear is to start giving presentations in front of groups, and after a few times you will find out that it wasn't that bad after all.

Pressure from society is not the only element at play: the disconnect between who you think you should be and who you really are can also cause a lot of tension. So remain genuine and true to yourself. Do not pretend to be any more or less than you really are.

Accept the experience and development of fears as unavoidable – the important thing is how you deal with them. Facing your fears and enduring them physically is precisely how you can experience the power of this emotion. Only those able to deal with their fears will be capable of reaching the coveted top positions. The most effective way to face your fears is to confront the very thing that you are afraid of!

It may not sound like fun, but it certainly works. Perhaps I have been too brief here in my description of how to deal with fears. I will revisit this topic in the following chapter, and also share some very personal experiences in this respect. I know that by doing so I am exposing my vulnerability. But associating the theory with my own life experience is the only authentic way for me to discuss the matter.

Being happy

So what exactly is the secret to achieving and maintaining professional happiness? Why is it that people who are genuinely happy in their job are also more successful and able to advance more quickly? And – with a bit of luck – achieve a much better income?

The secret lies in the small choices you make every day regarding your personal development and your (envisaged) dream job. So with every decision you make from now on, ask yourself: will this make me happier or not? Will the result of this decision contribute to what I want to achieve in my life? Have I even thought about what makes

me happy and what I want to achieve with my life? Making the right choices requires a thorough knowledge of who you are.

Your first job is already an important decision. Working is about more than just earning money. To a large extent your work also determines your social identity and your options for both personal growth and how to obtain financial security, while at the same time ensuring you have enough money for other personal matters such as family, travel, hobbies, etc.

So maintain a positive outlook on life, and make choices that will enable you to go to work every day with a smile on your face and to “infect” those around you with your energy and enthusiasm. Try it sometime. Deliver a nice, friendly “good morning” at the coffee machine, and you will notice that your colleagues will reflect your positive energy back onto you. They will issue extra-friendly greetings in the corridor for the rest of the day, making cooperation run much more smoothly.

The most effective foundation for further growth is not to let things drive you mad, and to keep yourself upright on your own strength, come what may in your personal or professional life. This requires an independent attitude in a time when things seem only to be getting faster, and the world seems to be getting smaller.

This book offers a number of practical tools, such as ways of increasing your own resilience and of making choices to create the conditions that will enable you to practice your passion with integrity in the long term. I will also give you some tips on how to infuse all of your actions and thoughts with your personal integrity. If you need to do something that disagrees with your heart, don't do it!

Stay true to yourself

The greater your loyalty to yourself, the more you are able to act according to your own strengths and energy. Others will notice if you do – they will see you as genuine, and identify you as full

of ambition, enthusiasm and verve. If you do not follow your passion (i.e. if you *don't* think with your heart), you run the risk of becoming unbalanced and it can take more and more effort to do the things people expect of you. So make sure it doesn't happen to you! Stay genuine, act according to how you feel inside, and – most importantly – do not pretend to be anything other than your true self!

Of course you will need to consider the needs of other people and the organization you work for, however: only by staying focused on your own dreams and passions can you avoid losing yourself, and in so doing, remain an asset to others.

It is possible, all you need is the courage to maintain a consistent belief. And what if your manager expects different things from you, that do not correspond to your dreams and passions? The next chapter deals more closely with techniques that you can use to strengthen your relationship with your manager.

This requires an independent attitude. If you do not have this yet, don't worry – but make sure you start thinking independently as soon as possible, and that you do not make yourself (too) dependent on others. Take responsibility for your own actions! Because only by doing so, even after an unfortunate choice, can you demonstrate your willingness to learn and to build on the trust that others place in you.

A few tips and tricks to try out in practice: do not take on any role or label that you do not feel suits you. For example, do not allow the label of “expert”, “guru” or “leader” to be applied to you if you do not feel at all like an expert, guru or leader. People will often give you an overblown title because they are only too keen to saddle you with responsibility or piles of work.

If a title or label does not suit you, ask the person giving it to you about the implied expectations. And likewise, do not simply dish out titles or labels to others, and make as many professional friends

as you can without letting them treat you like a doormat. The areas where your strengths and passions lie are precisely where you have the most to offer others.

A tip for staying true to yourself is to monitor your own daily physical and emotional state, just as if you were observing someone else. Take a good look at yourself.

If an environment doesn't suit you and you feel uncomfortable as a result, then there is work to be done. Take control. Your feelings are actually kind of higher intelligence that supports you when making and evaluating choices. Whatever you do, do not try to reason away this feeling, but undergo it and discover what your body has to tell you.

If you experience negative or unpleasant feelings, do something about them, because negative emotions elicit negative responses from your environment and serve to block your mental energies. Of course, work is not just about doing whatever you feel like at the time. Work also creates responsibility, and responsibilities are not always equally enjoyable or challenging.

For this reason I cannot provide a standard formula that will allow every young professional on earth to simply do whatever they like, and leave the annoying, mind-numbing aspects aside. What you can do, however, is investigate whether such activities are in line with your position description and the way in which you intend to advance to a new level.

The fact that you are young (or young at heart) does not mean you have to accept everything people dish out. What people do expect from a young professional is that you will put your back into it. If you are being "used" too much for the annoying jobs, think of another way for the work to be distributed more efficiently, and make concrete proposals.

Enter the discussion prepared, and above all, use “I-messages” to communicate how you feel about your workload, the way people deal with you and how you perceive the duties you are assigned. An alternative strategy is to figure out how to make a mind-numbing task extra challenging for yourself, potentially making that aspect of your job much more interesting.

Be your strength

You will have learned to do many of your current tasks during your studies or your upbringing, with the associated positive and negative experiences. Now that you are entering a new stage in life as a young professional, it is a good idea to stop and think about the talents you intend to use in the career that lies before you. When doing so, pay special heed to obstacles and inhibitions that you may have acquired during childhood. Also be sure to remain aware of your own talents!

In the world in which you now live, people act according to strength or power. People who act according to their strengths know where their abilities, capacities, knowledge and skills lie. These are the people who invite others to contribute to a collaborative result without exerting any kind of pressure. Others are invited to participate, but are completely at liberty to decide for themselves whether to do so or not. This helps to increase levels of commitment.

The exertion of power is always either an explicit or implicit form of pressure, forcing the person receiving the request or assignment into a position in which they already feel they cannot say “no”.

Those who assign tasks from a position of power do not know whether the person who receives them (i.e. on whom they are forced) is able to carry them out. This feeling of being pressured into something that you are not at all interested in doing may seem familiar to you.

What about you? Do you prefer to act from a position of strength or power? What is your preference? Try to understand the experiences of your childhood. Acting according to strength is more sustainable

than exerting power. Think about situations in which you felt uncomfortable yourself – it was probably because somebody tried to exert power over you when it was completely unnecessary.

Increase your awareness: continually think about whether you are acting from a position of strength or power. This will make responses from those around you both more predictable and more desirable.

Being a Professional Is A Life Long Challenge ...



Your components

Your body is made up of a number of components, each with its own dynamics and energy. These get in each other's way now and again. The better you learn to read your own "user manual", the easier it will be to have these parts of your body work in concert rather than against each other.

Your body's motor is your physical system, which gives you some genetic abilities, but also imposes a number of limitations. The better you can care for your physical system (e.g. by living a healthy

lifestyle) and managing its strengths, the better your motor will perform, increasing your abilities.

It may sound old-fashioned, but the fitter you are (e.g. by not smoking, by drinking in moderation, exercising daily and eating a healthy diet), the better you will feel both during and after work. Your performance will also improve, increasing your success! I cannot emphasize the importance of healthy living enough, although of course it is up to you to decide how far you wish to take it.

In addition to our “motor”, we also have an emotional system that has evolved within our bodies to give us signals, enabling us to learn faster. An emotion such as fear used to be very important, when we needed to be ready to act if a predator threatened to attack. Emotions such as fear (and by association, stress) at work are no longer that useful, because our lives are no longer threatened by these circumstances. Stress and fear only serve to erode your health in the long term.

In addition to fear, there are five other basic emotions: joy, sadness, anger, surprise and disgust. These have been labeled the basic emotions because they produce the same facial expressions in people all over the world. Learning how to read and identify these emotions in people’s facial expressions will strengthen your connection with whomever you are talking to.

Lastly, you possess a mental system, or rather: the realm of thoughts and reasoning. This system allows you to do some very useful things, as well as work deliberately towards your own happiness and success. The realm of thought is our greatest strength, but can sometimes also be our weakness, if we fail to control it and it overrides the emotional system.

Playing with seemingly negative emotions and allowing non-constructive thoughts to dissipate by choosing not to devote any energy (i.e. attention) to them is a trick that you can use to help you reach the top. These techniques also make life a lot more pleasant.

The message here is quite simple. Take care of your physical motor, so that you have enough capacity to do the work you need to do. Ensure that your emotions do not serve as a kind of brake or airbag, and use positive emotions to give your physical motor a turbo boost. Use your mental system (i.e. your powers of reasoning) to steer and moderate speed. Learn all of this quickly and thoroughly, as an investment in your future.

Know your pitfalls, or make sure you get to know them. Everybody has pitfalls, even the president of the USA! And it does not have to be a problem, provided you can stay a step ahead of yourself and know how to avoid embarrassing situations. Be realistic, and test your ideas against reality before they start leading a life of their own. Right now you are probably asking: and how am I supposed to do that? More concrete techniques are presented throughout the book to help you.

Another tip for more restful working is to switch off your telephone, e-mail, etc. and find a quiet place to sit.

Sincere intentions

Having sincere intentions means working towards a worthy cause from the bottom of your heart. Your intention is the purpose with which you act, and arises from within yourself. By starting off with sincere intentions, you lay the foundations for confidence within yourself and (indirectly) from others towards you. The nice thing about sincere intentions is that you can continue to live with yourself afterwards, regardless of how difficult the challenge was.

Integrity means contributing, participating and empathizing with others, but always from a position of sustainable, mutual independence. By “sustainable”, I refer to building up professional – and possibly even personal – relationships with the people important to you (and your career). This means building on your own self-confidence from the very start, and trying to benefit each other in a constructive manner.

It is a fact that others' trust first needs to be earned. A positive attitude will, in any case, give you the benefit of the doubt, enabling you to get started based on your acquired skills. Also consider the fact that your choice of a life partner is one of the most important you will ever make, especially if either or both of you wish to have children.

Sustainable integrity also means staying true to yourself, and not losing yourself too quickly in someone else. Try to ascertain the other person's intentions. If they are not sincere, try to insure yourself against the consequences of the acquaintance, e.g. by not entering into any commitments that you will regret later.

It is better to bite the bullet now and make a tough decision, rather than regretting it later and wishing things had been different. As a young professional, you may have just met somebody who you want to share your life with, or you may be looking for a suitable partner. In addition to a physical and mental attraction between you, it can be beneficial to ask yourself the following – or, even better, to discuss together whether:

1. you share the same intentions;
2. you have the same ideas regarding partnership/living together/marriage/children;
3. you share the same plans for the future;
4. being together feels safe, secure and comfortable;
5. each of you gives the other enough freedom to do their own thing, such as hobbies, travel, going out with friends; and
6. you share the same norms and values.

Anything goes, as far as I am concerned. But remember: know what you are doing, and make sincere choices. You are entirely responsible for your own decisions.

Stay Close To Yourself



Norms and values

Your values are the things you find most important in life. One example might be your personal view of the boundary between your professional and private life. Do you maintain a clear division and stop working at five in the afternoon, or do you happily work through the weekend on your smartphone and tablet? All individuals make their own choices in this regard (and rightly so), however it is useful to know and respect the wishes of your immediate co-workers in this regard. You must also take your own standpoint, stick to it and communicate it clearly to others.

The same applies to those you work with. Without needing to discuss it, you exchange this information with each other automatically. Knowing where you stand yourself and where your own boundaries lie will help you in getting to know others, who in turn will signal their norms and values to you. Norms and values that coincide, and showing respect for each other's choices, will lay the foundation for collaboration with those in your working environment.

Another tip is to try to figure out where other people's "green buttons" are. By that I mean: what really turns the other person on? What kind of information are they eager to hear? And: where are their "red buttons"? These may relate to triggers for overstepping their boundaries.

Being clear about your own norms and values, and knowing about your own and others' green and red buttons will avoid wasting energy in the form of pent-up emotions and help to create sustainable relationships and friendships. From the perspective of your own resilience, the only other important thing is to continue to monitor your own boundaries and give off signals if other people threaten to overstep them.

When applying for a job, the most important page of your curriculum vitae (CV) is the first page, which contains an introductory text about yourself (roughly half a page, comparable to your Facebook or LinkedIn profile). Did you know that people who evaluate your CV spend no longer than 20 seconds looking at the first page, by which time they have already decided whether to read the rest or not?

My tip is: the better you know yourself, the better and more authentically you can write about yourself. I speak from experience: writing about yourself is the most difficult thing there is. Always ask for somebody else's feedback on how the first page of your CV comes across. The first page really will determine whether you get that nice job or assignment... or not.

Capacity management

Examples of capacity include physical strength, stamina, endurance, being representative, emotional strength, empathy (the ability to relate to others), charisma, emotional resilience, sensitivity, and absolute mental abilities such as creative, combinatorial (the ability to combine various elements to produce benefits) and intellectual ability.

For each of the capacities listed above, you have a genetically predetermined upper and lower limit that you negotiate between throughout the day. The trick is to neither overuse nor underuse each of your capacities. If you are too motivated or put under too much pressure, you run the risk of exceeding the limits of your capacity and becoming “burned out”, resulting in signs of exhaustion and loss of concentration. Not a good idea if you are trying to work on a happy and healthy career!

It is important to know your limits and to find the right level for you to apply your capacities, because that is also where your strengths lie and where you can excel. The key factor is being able to manage a high level of sensitivity. Are you a fairly enthusiastic type, who unfailingly senses the atmosphere in a group and can foresee events much sooner than your co-workers around you?

If you are, then it may be worth your while to read about hyper-sensitivity and learn how to transform your burden into a blessing, e.g. by deliberately restricting yourself to a small number of priorities. Around twenty percent of all people are hyper-sensitive. So if this sounds like you, take active steps to learn more about the subject.

Now that you know where your strengths lie and which of your capacities have a low upper limit (i.e. those that tire you out quickly), you can take action to plan and adjust your work accordingly. Also be sure to ask others about the abilities and qualities they see in you!

One further tip: it can be very useful to work in tandem with somebody whose abilities complement your own – the whole can then be greater than the sum of the parts ($1 + 1 = 3$). Two heads are better than one, and together you will see and hear more than you would on your own. Your “buddy” will also give you the chance to ask for regular feedback.

Building capacity

Your full capacity is the sum total of all your abilities, including the way in which you have trained them and how you combine them in application. You should therefore view being coached and trained by others as a form of professional sport.

Sportspeople can only reach the top if they are fully dedicated and prepared to sacrifice other things. It is primarily up to you how much you wish to sacrifice: there is no good or bad, all that matters is the amount of effort and dedication that suits you best.

Your learning capacity also has an upper and lower limit, which you must learn to negotiate effectively. Personally I believe that people are generally able to achieve anything they like, provided they are prepared to set enough other things aside. Besides your own motivation, capacities and dedication to learning, using the right learning resources can be a smarter and more beneficial way to enhance your abilities.

Intensive, practical mentor coaching and collecting information important to you are two ways of learning efficiently. Knowing which information is helpful can be difficult, however. How can you know what you do not yet know? The answer is quite simple: ask yourself what important information you still need in order to make an important decision. Take a quiet moment and listen to yourself.

Also ask the people around you. Ask advice from others who have had to make a similar decision. Be curious, open a search engine and type in some relevant search terms, read Internet forums and review sites, just like you would if you were to visit a certain castle in a far-off country on holiday. The brochure may promise all kinds of things, but of course you must go in search of more information before you set off. But remember: be wary of the intentions of the person giving you the information. If it is a travel agency, the answer is obvious.

Adopt an active attitude in this regard. Instead of waiting until something crosses your path by accident, actively seek out the help and information that you need to make progress. Ask co-workers, friends and other contacts whom they might know who could help you with your learning needs. Sometimes asking a question on an online forum is all you need to do to get the right help from somebody you don't even know at all. Listening to audio books on the train is also an efficient way to learn.

Even top sportspeople need the right materials to perform well. So only use the hardware and software that are right for you, and which suit the duties you have to perform. You already belong to the generation of smartphones and tablets, so you have experience with effective technology and you can (probably) clearly explain to your boss what you still need in order to increase your performance.

You might also consider something in the realm of collaborative tools (instead of just using e-mail) and facilities support, such as workspaces that are tailored to suit you and your duties. More and more organizations are opening up to the idea of bringing in and using personal devices at work. If you do so, always be sure to comply with the security policy of the organization you work for.

Are You Part Of The Problem Or Part Of The Solution?



Good intentions, sustainable integrity and capacity building will put you well on the way to achieving your desired results, provided that you go about it the right way – and by that, I mean that you have asked other people precisely what they expect from you in your position. Intentions, integrity, capacity and results are the four cornerstones not only for learning to trust yourself, but also for building up other people’s trust in you. Consciously managing these four elements and listing them in your CV will enable you to continuously work on your career without doing any harm to yourself or others.

Maximizing opportunities

Imagine that you and some others wish to collaborate to reach a certain goal. First of all, in a group, you should think as creatively as possible about which routes and methods could be used to achieve your goal. For example: the owner of a crèche wants to double the number of parents who leave their children there within the year. During this initial phase, you all think together about ways to achieve this goal – do not yet think about why certain alternatives are already doomed to fail.

This is what I call “thinking in possibilities”. The advantage of this method is that, either alone or in a group, one idea can be used to create a much better and more effective idea. For example: organizing open evenings with satisfied parents advertising the crèche themselves by telling enthusiastic stories on social media, instead of the tedious task of delivering brochures to everybody in the neighborhood.

Another way to maximize opportunities is to change your habits, by being more flexible with those around you or enhancing your skills. There are many roads that lead to Rome, and your own behavior is no exception. So dare to experiment – you are capable of more than you think, and you should keep trying until you have discovered what does work. Cultivate the mentality of a go-getter, clamp down and never give up, especially if you can clearly envisage your goal.

Thinking in possibilities will stimulate your own creativity, and enable you to pleasantly surprise others at times when they think they have run out of options. However, monitor the commitments you make, and weigh them up against your own current goals and commitments. You can only keep commitments – including those you make to yourself – by maintaining strict discipline. Do not focus your decision-making exclusively on plan A, but broaden it to include plans B and C. That way, if circumstances suddenly change or if new relevant information comes to light, you have other options available.

The first step towards maximizing opportunities is to identify them, and to create the necessary conditions for you – either alone or in a group – to follow the route you have plotted out.

Take some time in advance to think about the things that can go either right or wrong, this will help you to make decisions faster and limit any potential damage. When making choices, incorporate advice from a variety of experts in combination with the expertise from people at the “coal face”. Accept insecurity as a given: it is more important to know how to deal with insecurity than to avoid it.

For this reason, have a good think about how you can respond effectively to setbacks. The more prepared you are for situations that can go wrong, the faster you can recover and get the wind back into your sails. Even if you lose your job, life goes on. Some people say that being fired was the best thing that ever happened to them. The way you deal with setbacks determines who you are, to a large extent.

Having to overcome difficulties often sends people’s professional lives in a completely new direction. After all, isn’t job security *already* a thing of the past? So be ready for change, ready to take advantage of your professional opportunities, and – most of all – to ensure personal growth that will continue until far beyond your retirement.

Pretend that you are going on a summer holiday in the north, where the weather is always unpredictable. You must make sure you take both rain boots and sandals with you – or in other words, you plan for both good and bad weather. The business world is no different. A new marketing campaign, for example, can be successful... or fail completely.

Of course, you have already thought of what you will do in both instances: if the campaign is successful, you march happily into your manager's office. If not, you dust off plan B (and you will have learned how not to run a campaign). Plan B may take a variety of forms, e.g. an additional needs assessment among potential customers.

Do not be discouraged by whatever objections may come your way, such as “we’ve done this so many times, it just doesn’t work”. The trick is to constantly come up with creative ways to circumvent the difficulty. This, too, requires thinking in possibilities.

Especially if you are a young professional, experienced professionals may not take your opinion seriously very often. But do not forget, your strength lies in your fresh perspective. The most effective professionals are the ones that put young professionals’ fresh perspective to good use.

Setbacks are a part of life. It is important that you recognize, acknowledge, accept and internalize such situations, so that you can continue looking towards the future. Try to process any sadness and frustration you have experienced. Although bottling up your griefs and emotions may seem to be the path of least resistance, they will continue to dog you if you are unaware of them or deliberately ignore them.

In summary: always be focused on how you CAN achieve your goals, either alone or with others, instead of being defeatist and coming up with reasons why something CAN'T be done. You are here on earth to pursue your own dreams and successes, to enjoy life and to learn about the path that will lead you there. Find a “buddy” at work with

whom you can share your joys and sorrows, with whom you have a good personal connection and who can help you to enhance your capacities and skills.

The more experienced you become, the more you will notice the benefits of forming several such duos, e.g. a few with other young professionals, and one with somebody more experienced. The best experienced professionals are those who recognize your potential, and who are motivated to help you reach the next level.

Update your “plate” based on the new possibilities that you now see, and remove activities that now seem to have less potential or have taken on a lower priority. You now know which of your strengths you can exploit. Now try to outdo yourself, and consciously view your body’s motor as a kind of “barometer”.

Have fun discovering your potential! View the text above as a personal experiment in relation to your environment (i.e. a playground). It is impossible to fail, the only thing you can do is learn! This mindset will accompany you for the rest of your life. Embrace it, and see yourself shine.

Smart choices

Future success in your career will depend on making smart choices. Be aware of the fact that not all of your choices are as deliberate as you think. Your sub-conscious is very sensitive to the opinions of so-called “experts” (e.g. financial intermediaries who may not be as impartial as they claim), linguistic formulations, the use of color, statistics, and so on.

Our sub-conscious has often already made a decision before we have had the time to consider it ourselves and carefully weigh up the pros and cons beforehand. So take the time to think about the key decisions that will affect the success of your career and, by extension, your life.

For example: consider carefully whether you should take that assignment abroad, or start a course of study offered to you at a discounted rate or because one of your co-workers had to pull out. Even the way you think about things – positively or negatively – will have a major effect on your future decisions, which is why positive thoughts are so important for launching you into a positive spiral of thoughts and actions.

For every important decision in your life, first think long and hard about whether it will genuinely make you a better and happier person. So what do you want? Above all: stay true to yourself, because it is ultimately all about your future. Think extra carefully about decisions that give you that “strange” feeling in the pit of your stomach. At the same time, you will also need to learn to serve others. The more effectively you can combine being of service with activities that energize you, the better off you will be.

If something does not feel right, there is usually something wrong with whatever is on offer, and there is a snake in the grass somewhere. Be especially on guard whenever people start explaining in an exaggerated tone why you really should be doing a particular thing. Continue to weigh up the pros and cons objectively, and garner feedback from your buddies, tandem partners or others you trust.

Ask yourself whom you can trust when making important decisions, and why. Be on the lookout for deceptive details – not everything can be expressed in figures, and figures cannot always be compared to each other. Our world is too complex for that. Make your decisions as late as possible in the day, or take a night to sleep on it. Put all e-mails that first require some consideration into a to-do folder, or put a to-do label on them. Do not make these decisions until you are certain that your choice is a sensible one for both you and those you care about.

Ensure that you are rested and have eaten enough whenever you need to make important decisions, take enough time and get enough feedback from the people around you. Your personal and private lives

are interconnected: some choices can affect your work-life balance more than others.

Other people's expectations will affect you in both your personal life and the professional arena. An expectation is not tantamount to an imposed choice – you can always explain why you are unable to fulfil certain expectations, which will provide clarity beforehand, instead of disappointments and stress afterwards. Also try to be consistent in your own choices, that way you will create a more reliable reputation for yourself and those around you.

Smart decisions simply take time, especially if you wish to gather enough critical feedback first. Realize that you make thousands of decisions every day, ranging from the trivial to matters of life and death.

All of these tips will increase your chances of success, and build on your own credibility and reliability. After all, people who respectfully say “no” are extra reliable whenever they do say “yes”.

Try to create a win-win situation in the choices you make, and by that I mean: make a choice that is good for both you and other people. This way everybody wins, and it has proven to be the best guarantee for ensuring that commitments are kept. The funny thing is that, whenever somebody expects something of you, you do not have a “problem” but a negotiating position. Life is made up of give and take. The more adept you become at negotiating from a win-win perspective, the further you will go in life.

Even the choice of a life partner is one big process of negotiation. The earlier you start negotiating together from a principled, win-win mindset to quickly determine what you can expect from one another, the less suffering and frustration you can expect later on in your relationship. Principled negotiation begins with a phase of telling each other what you find important and why. After that, try to create a win-win situation together.

In this regard, all of the tips I give you for your professional life are equally useful for your private life. Your professional and private lives are more interconnected than you think. You will therefore need to continuously weigh up professional and private objectives against one another, as you are the navigator of your own happiness in life, and your time each day can only be spent once!

One quick tip: as a young professional, never say YES or NO to a proposal or request straight away. Wait at least one day to decide. If your feelings and your reasoning contradict each other, wait at least a week before accepting or declining, and involve enough people you know in the decision too.

The more experience you gain, the faster your decisions will become. Ultimately you will learn to make decisions completely intuitively, and you can also implement the decision straight away. The tip above to “think things over” is intended to protect you against excessive enthusiasm, which can cause you to bite off more than you can chew and lose sight of the bigger picture.

Building self-confidence

As your self-confidence increases you will become more daring. You will also exude more confidence without realizing it.

Self-confidence also helps you to feel more “comfortable in your own skin”, and ensures that you enjoy whatever you do and that you smile more at work. The feeling is contagious! Your co-workers and business partners will enjoy working with you more, precisely because things run so smoothly.

Walking through the corridor with a smile on your face says that you are a master of your trade and of the work you do. This behavior even adds to your charisma, and people tend to obediently follow those with charisma. World history has provided enough evidence of that. Truth be told, you could say that it is simply enough to believe in your own success.

As soon as you do that, you have already achieved life's greatest success. Communicating this feeling of success to others is easier than taking the first step, which is to believe in yourself. Your emotions are a form of "higher intelligence". People sense instinctively whether they are dealing with someone who believes in themselves.

Self-confidence is built up through acknowledgement and concrete achievements, a large part of which comes from your childhood. Think back to your own upbringing. In the past, did your parents take a negative view of your abilities and actions? Many parents are always busy, busy, busy, and do not spend enough time with their children.

This means that they often respond negatively when their children demand attention, which is a less-than-constructive approach. The children then feel rejected, and cultivate this response as a kind of defense mechanism against all kinds of perceived intrusions. If this happened to you during your upbringing, try to work through it, process your regrets and realize that you are a unique person on this earth, and the result of millions of years of evolution.

The first step to believing in yourself is letting go of inhibiting fears and illusions. Experiencing fears at certain times is fine, and serves to heighten your senses in the moment. You create hormones that ensure you remain alert, e.g. during a presentation before a large audience. If you experience fears at less exciting times, it is a sign that you need to get moving.

In order to build self-confidence, you first need to overcome your fears. A nice technique for doing so is to think about the facts. When you are feeling anxious, first try to get your breathing under control by slowly inhaling and exhaling.

Imagine for a moment that the organization you work for has announced a restructuring plan. Unavoidable dismissals are on the cards, and all of your co-workers seem to be afraid for their jobs.

What do you do? First of all you are a young professional in the prime of your life, and your current employer will probably want to keep you as an investment in the organization's future. On the other hand, there is sometimes no way to avoid the official rules governing mass dismissals. What are your current opportunities like elsewhere? Is your CV fully up-to-date?

Whom do you have in your network who you could ask about another job if you turn out to draw the short straw? How long are you entitled to welfare benefits? What are your savings like, and what is your cost of living? Is it possible for you to reduce your expenses temporarily so that you have more time to look for another job? This is what I mean by "looking at the facts" and finding answers to whichever questions are relevant at the time, i.e. being pro-active instead of cowering in a corner and waiting for something to happen.

Once you have conquered your fears, the real work can begin. Build your self-confidence gradually by setting concrete, realistic goals for yourself and attaining them by working towards them in a very disciplined manner. Start with small, simple goals, and every time you reach one, your self-confidence will increase. Gradually make your goals more and more challenging. As your achievements start to appeal to more and more people, you will earn praise from those around you, further boosting your self-confidence.

The process is actually the opposite of a downward spiral: just as people are able to think themselves into the ground, so too can they launch themselves up into a spiral of positivity.

Believe it or not, being successful and exuding self-confidence is an entirely mental process. It is all in your head, and you already have the required grey matter. All you need to do is put it to work in the right way. We are built to improve and continually develop ourselves.

You may already be in a negative spiral while reading this book. That sucks. However, there is a way out: the first step is to acknowledge that right now you feel much worse than you did, say,

a week ago. So you are clearly already aware that you are on the way down. What happened to switch you from the “positive” to the “negative” setting? Try to find where to identify the cause.

You want this plan to succeed, so you have two options: you will either succeed alone, or you will not. For example, imagine that the cause of your problem is that your workload is twice what it should be. Ask yourself whether you can solve the problem on your own, using your plan, within two weeks.

Next, discuss your problems and your improvement plan with somebody you trust, and decide together whether you will solve things on your own, or with help from others. Also agree to meet every two weeks to keep a finger on the pulse. Get started using the tips above, and do not wait too long. The sooner you take action, the sooner you will be back on dry ground.

The longer and more intensively you continue to develop throughout your life, the later you will suffer from signs of ageing. Especially if you are successful in business, you will want to enjoy your success as long as possible, travel the world and remain in good health. So if you are a smoker or drinker, seriously consider quitting soon! This is an initial concrete goal that will contribute to your self-confidence, your health and to increasing your chances of success in life.

To summarize: think big, but plot out concrete, attainable steps for yourself. Take heart from all that you have already achieved in your life, and think about which skills you applied in the past to achieve your prior successes. Try experimenting with variations on these skills. Life is one big experiment; the sooner you start seeing life as a game of chance, the more you will put things into perspective and learn to “detach” yourself from the worries of daily life.

Outdoing yourself

Thus far your upbringing, education and work experience have brought you to a certain level of knowledge, with associated attitudes, behaviors, and a level of self-awareness. However, if you

wish to realize your dreams and have a successful career, you will need to know, do, and be capable of things that you currently cannot.

This is what I mean by “outdoing yourself”. You must find your own way to make sure that each week, your knowledge and skills exceed those of the previous week. As human beings, we are one of the few mammals on earth that are built to train and develop ourselves to reach new heights. So you actually already have everything you need in order to outdo yourself week after week for many years to come, provided you consciously and deliberately direct your energies accordingly.

A good way to do this is to become competent in two or more areas. After all, you can’t stand on one leg for very long. Integrating your knowledge from various disciplines is even better, and will make you truly unique. Above all, concentrate on your strengths and do not focus entirely on improving your weaknesses – otherwise you will fade into the background, just like so many others. If your fields of expertise are extensions of one another, your skills and competencies will be amplified, increasing your appeal to employers and/or customers.

You should view developing the skills in this book like learning to drive a car. Only once you are an experienced driver will you be safe on the road and able to enjoy the trip. By “enjoying the trip”, I mean knowing what you want and taking pleasure in each step that takes you closer to your dreams and aspirations.

Enjoying the trip also means having sufficient control of your body (physically, emotionally and mentally) to enable you to perceive without prejudice, including the signals you receive from your own body. This will allow you to relate to others and approach them with calm and attention, making you intelligent not only in a rational sense, but emotionally as well. After all, you can only mean something to someone else once you understand what their needs are. Only then can you bring “added value” to others, and will they be willing to return the favor later on.

So outdoing yourself actually means arriving at a level of internal self-discipline, allowing you to be there for others instead of merely struggling with yourself.

Once you have reached this level of internal discipline, you will also be better able to deal with any confusion or mental anguish because you will have a better understanding of how it arose in the first place. This topic will become a recurring theme in this book. Before you can load up your “plate” with new things, you must clear it off first – literally and figuratively.

First of all, try to gain a clear idea of how others see you. To do so, seek out people you know whom you get along with and who have already attained a level of internal discipline, so that they can open themselves up to you and help you to reach new heights. A good mentor/coach is someone who can communicate with you at the right level. They will be genuinely interested in you, both as a person and a young professional.

Another indicator of a good mentor or coach is when somebody is prepared to make time for you and listen to you at short notice, and, of course, if you have the feeling that they understand you. If things don’t “gel” between you and your mentor/coach, feel free to find an alternative and give your old mentor some respectful feedback, because mentors can also learn from you too. Contact between people is always based on two-way communication.

A mentor may be a personal acquaintance, or a very experienced professional: somebody who sees it as a challenge to help you realize things you do not yet know, and who will guide you in acquiring this knowledge and skills. It may sound crazy, but despite the modern age, the Internet, gadgets, etc. the old method from the middle ages still proves to be the best: the apprentice who learns a craft from a master, on the shop floor.

So do not try to fill the gaps in your knowledge yourself, but ask concrete questions to someone who knows the answers. The times when you ask for feedback are actually the key moments of insight, especially if you have been working with the same person for a longer period. For example, the conversations I have had with experienced professionals led me to the idea of writing a book about the experiences, insights, knowledge and skills I myself have acquired, for the purpose of offering them to you as a helpful toolkit.

I can imagine that by now, you are now dying to find out how to really outdo yourself. There are many ways to do so, and the trick is to apply all of these techniques in combination and to discover how each of them can help you to extend your limits. So find the right teachers/counsellors, dare to experiment and get out of your comfort zone, e.g. by thinking of a situation (possibly with your mentor) that you have very little experience with. Dare to doubt, as it will keep you alert and aware.

The situation could be taking a sales meeting, or giving a presentation to a large group of people. Write down what you wish to learn, and make preparations together with your mentor or a good colleague. Step up to the plate, go ahead and hold that sales meeting or presentation, and evaluate the learning experience. Several things will happen.

You will have some experience that you did not have before. You will notice that it was not as hard as you thought. Ask somebody (who knows you well) to attend the event: this will give you some good advice for how to outdo yourself, as you will receive objective feedback.

But be sure to set up your safety nets and airbags, e.g. by holding regular meetings with your mentor/coach. Step outside your comfort zone for a short time to get to know yourself better, and to find out that most of our limitations are actually either self-imposed or have been ingrained by others. Curiosity and an eagerness to discover new things is a habit that you must hold on to for as long as possible.

Believe and trust in your ultimate success. Life is much more enjoyable and intense if you can work toward your success in a systematic and disciplined manner. Setbacks are excellent character-building events, and can help you prove your worth in difficult circumstances. Fight your way out! Imagine that you are capable of more, and that you are worth it.

Chapter Three:

You and your environment

Just as you are saddled with yourself for the rest of your life, there is no way to avoid the environment in which you live. You are always living in “an environment”, be it a personal or business one. Your success is therefore determined to a large extent by how you interact with your environment. It is not your environment that determines your fate: you write your own destiny through mature interaction with your surroundings, and by seeking out environments in which you can thrive.

And so I would like to start this chapter by arguing for (pro-)active behavior, because only this way can you push your life and career in the direction that you yourself want to go in. Waiting on the sidelines is not an option if you wish to reap success and happiness in life!

Your environment will not always be as ideal or accommodating as you would like. One thing I will say: although my life has never been boring, it has taught me resilience. And it is my sincere wish to pass on these lessons in resilience to you, because the more resilient you are, the better you are able to withstand hard times.

Once you start demonstrating active behavior and increasing your resilience, you will get a better grip on how to achieve your goals, and the easier it will be to get the results you want. This has an energizing effect, and the nice thing about being energized is that you start to radiate it almost automatically. This will increase your appeal to your environment, and put you in a position to take the next steps to success. Your self-confidence will grow, which in itself is a solid foundation for even more active behavior.

This may involve groups of people who are important to you, environmental sensitivity, a critical perspective and daring to enter into confrontations – not to cause trouble, but in order to generate clarity and create the conditions for you to perform at your best.

I believe this also means a safe and clean workplace, so that you can make optimal use of the time available and limit long trips to a minimum – unless you enjoy travel, of course. In addition to your

physical environment, you also have a social environment in which you must try to remain in control of the changes. The age of job security is over, and – as crazy as it sounds – accepting this fact will make you more resilient and more comfortable with uncertainty.

If you work in a corporate environment, you will usually have a manager who directs and assesses you regularly (unless you are self-employed or an executive). Until you become an executive, it is sensible to train yourself in dealing effectively with your manager. Your manager can make or break your career (at least in the short term), so the best thing to do is to invest in a good relationship with your manager, based on active behavior.

Young, talented professionals can never learn enough, and your environment is precisely what will offer you many opportunities for development. One technique is to view your environment as a kind of “observation lab”. Critically observe the environment in which you work, try to understand what is happening around you and investigate why things happen the way they do.

Find people (your teachers/mentors) that you feel you can learn from. Just like learning to deal with your manager, you can also develop faster by learning to communicate effectively with your teacher or counsellor. This person may be a formal mentor or career coach affiliated with the organization in which you work, or it could simply be someone who enjoys teaching you new skills.

You Are Okay



Active behavior

Before explaining what I mean by active behavior and how it can help, first I would like to talk about passive behavior. People who exhibit passive behavior do the following: they wait and see, want to be asked first, put things off, imagine all kinds of difficulties, think in terms of bottlenecks and problems, like to blame other people, are mistrustful, make no decisions, hope and wait for things to blow over, keep dreaming, complain, have a negative attitude, make themselves dependent on others, cover themselves, worry and brood, are reserved, see few possibilities, defend their position, do not share their knowledge, stick doggedly to their job description, and criticize and complicate things. They do not get the most out of life. Truth be told, they live as thoughtless zombies devoid of will, and allow life to wash over them. Or worse: they have their lives lived for them, and drown in the daily grind.

The opposite to passive behavior is (pro-)active behavior. An active attitude is a natural consequence of active behavior. In order to start displaying active behavior, you first need to become aware of what active behavior is, and ask yourself how far along you already are in displaying it.

People who exhibit active behavior: offer help, dare to expose their vulnerability, ask for help if convenient, do what is necessary, think in terms of opportunities, act with self-awareness, take responsibility, trust others, are creative and enterprising, have imagination, involve others, ask for feedback on their ideas, share their knowledge, take others in tow, say what they do, do what they say, are completely transparent and reliable, create security and establish connections, set the pace, organize and structure, seek out challenges, communicate their intentions clearly, get results, enjoy their work and get the most out of life.

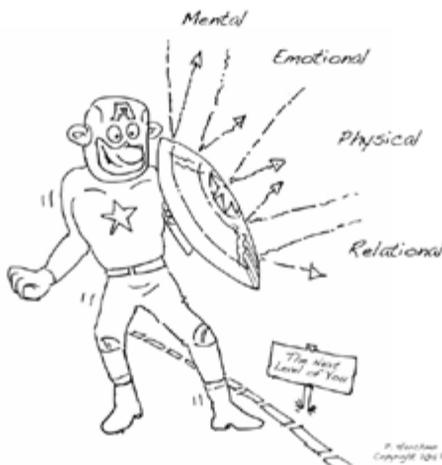
Active people only expend their energy on circumstances that they can genuinely influence. The advantage of this approach is that it has a self-perpetuating effect: the more active your attitude and behavior, the larger your circle of influence becomes.

Do not infer from the above that active behavior is always preferable to passive behavior – sometimes it is better to stand back and see how things develop, and to actively choose a passive stance.

Go online and Google “choosing a puppy from a litter”. People with experience advise against choosing the one that bounds up to you straight away... The pup that first waits, and then approaches (i.e. somewhere between active and passive behavior) will have authority and grow to be well-adjusted. Sometimes an active approach is best, sometimes a passive one, the most important thing is to make a conscious decision.

Furthermore, the choice between active and passive behavior does not have to be either/or – in some cases you can choose to combine these behaviors. You may actively decide to take the initiative to write a blog on a topic that you are passionate and know a lot about. Afterwards you can choose to be more dependent on your co-workers and fellow professionals, who can help you to improve the articles you write.

Work on Your Defense Model



Resilience

The more experienced (and potentially older) professionals in your circle will still remember a time when there was no Internet or social media: you had one job to do that was thought up and assigned to you by your manager.

Being resilient will enable you to deal with anything crossing your path that detracts from your goals or the focus you need to attain them. It will allow you to respectfully say “no” to others, ideally in a way that shows you are also acting in their interests. It ensures that you maintain control of what ends up on your “plate”.

This in turn will give you the mental freedom to continue to improve as a professional, while still remaining open to people in your environment who deserve your attention. Being resilient is therefore an absolute must in order to survive without burning out, which will be inevitable if you are not resilient. The pace of the modern age means we are always constantly being bombarded with information and tasks that others think we should be aware of, and that we should perform without a clear mandate.

Resilience helps to maintain an overview of your duties and promises, and allows you to keep all the commitments that you have made to others. You will build on others’ trust in you by fulfilling the commitments that you do make. Being resilient ensures that you enter into the essential discussions and negotiations before even making commitments of any kind. Resilient people are treated differently than non-resilient people, and you retain control of both your own schedule and the mental freedom you need for continued development.

Resilience can be compared to the human body’s immune system. If you do not develop and maintain it at an early stage, in the long run you will suffer from work-related conditions such as RSI, occupational depression (burnout), etc. Being out of action or working at less than full capacity is inconvenient not only for you but for your environment as well, meaning that those around you

also have an interest in your resilience. It will also help you to keep enough time free for your personal life, such as dedicating time to your partner and raising your (current or future) children.

Devoting time and attention to your children is the best investment you can make in your young life. The more time and attention you give your children now, the easier it will be once you have become an experienced professional yourself. This will allow you to concentrate your energies on enjoying life, mastering all that you do, and taking the mental freedom to coach other professionals in their own development.

Avoid situations in which you are forced to think in certain “camps”. Whenever anybody wants you to join their camp, they are actually exerting power over you from the outset. Choose your own side, and do not allow yourself to be pigeon-holed: you are neither above nor below anybody else. You are a professional, assessing each situation according to its individual merits.

Be sure not to get caught up in a web of claims imposed on you by others. For example: imagine that somebody approaches you about a problem they have with a co-worker. If you choose one person’s side, before you know it you will become embroiled in a conflict that you would rather have nothing to do with. For this reason, caution is advisable in potential conflict situations at work.

Ensure that you always have enough room in your schedule for thinking about the near future, anticipating and responding to circumstances, as well as preparation and influencing others.

Employees who are only ever dashing from one meeting to another are not effective. One way to avoid this is to set aside one morning or afternoon per week to get things sorted out, and to prepare for the following week. An even better idea is to incorporate this into your daily routine. Be sure to maintain a reserve of energy – only this way can you be sure you have not exceeded the limits of your capacity.

So how can you increase your resilience? The solution is to be resilient at three levels simultaneously: physically, emotionally and mentally. Methods for achieving this are described in more detail below. There is actually also a fourth, spiritual level. To avoid coming across as too airy-fairy or “new age”, the spiritual concepts have been incorporated into the text without naming them explicitly. These include promoting unprejudiced perception by getting to know yourself better, passing on wisdom, and directing your energies through focus and attention.

Physical resilience

You can increase your **physical resilience** by getting into better physical shape, and cultivating a higher physical endurance threshold. The more firmly you can **literally** stand, the firmer the foundations for your resilience will be.

The principles for physical resilience in the workplace, based on experiences from the Japanese arts of self-defense (e.g. judo and karate) include the following:

1. Cultivating internal self-control;
2. Manipulating the other person’s energy without expending much of your own;
3. Taking advantage of the other person’s actions and reactions;
4. Anticipating and evaluating the other person’s responses to your actions;
5. Learning and practicing a repertoire of action/reaction patterns;
6. Training your physical and mental resilience; and
7. Learning to take a blow, and get back up again.

If you have not reached this point yet, get to work! Because you do not want to simply resign to others determining your future. Challenge yourself to push your physical boundaries, and get moving – literally!

Emotional resilience

The **emotional aspect** of resilience is many people's Achilles heel. It is no coincidence that charitable organizations use harrowing images in their fund-raising campaigns (but for very noble causes, let there be no misunderstanding about that).

A well-known technique used by rulers and salespeople is that of "fear, uncertainty and doubt", abbreviated to FUD. Making us anxious and insecure means that we are more inclined to cling to the "life buoy" that the leader or salesperson just "happens" to throw out to us.

In other words, the less daring and more fearful you are, the greater your chances of "falling" for the pressure exerted by others, and bearing the negative consequences as a result. I am not saying this is a good thing, but: given the fast pace of modern society, everybody is just trying to survive in their own way. And for many, offence is the best defense. After some gentle probing, a keen attacker will target your weakest point.

The disadvantage of lacking emotional resilience is that it directly blocks the flow of energy to your mental capacities, putting you at your opponent's mercy. One example is the large numbers of employees who allow their energy to be drained by all the "office politics" that go on before, during and after a reorganization.

So what can you do to increase your emotional resilience? This is a difficult question to answer, as emotions also play a very useful part in our day-to-day lives. The solution is not to go through life completely without emotion. Consider, for example, a narcissistic manager who puts thousands of employees on the street without a second thought, earning himself a pretty penny.

So try to stay in control of your emotions under normal circumstances, while also being aware of their pitfalls and their power. By "controlling your emotions", I mean: postponing emotional experiences while you are in a public space, but experiencing them fully at a later time.

Your emotions are precisely where you will notice a large degree of overlap between your professional and private life. If you've had a terrible day at work, you will probably take it home with you and the effects will be noticeable at the dinner table and later that evening. And if you have ever made an "unfortunate" partner choice in the past and you do not suit each other (any longer), you will not turn up at work fully rested.

However, if you have created a peaceful oasis for yourself at home, and if you have lived through all of life's emotional difficulties and emerged comfortably on the other side through a process of acceptance and internalization, controlling your techniques of emotional attack at work will be easier. But rather than training you to be a more adept attacker, the goal of this book is to increase your defenses so that you can funnel your energy towards your mental capacities.

If you sense that you are being attacked and emotionally manipulated (i.e. the attack "hits the mark"), you really need to know how to parry the attack in advance. You will no longer be thinking clearly, because the attack has blocked the flow of energy to your mental system at the emotional level.

Being sure of yourself, self-confidence, knowing yourself and being aware of what is happening in your body are therefore important prerequisites for bolstering your emotional defenses.

Compared with the world of the more experienced professionals, your world – today's world – is much more competitive. You are living in a time when job security is a thing of the past, and you can only "survive" by standing out in the crowd in a positive way. If you are in control of your body both physically and emotionally, you are at a point where you can also use your emotions as a positive means of attack. People feel attracted to people who exude positive energy.

One word for this is charisma. Being able to communicate your positive emotional energy (and youthful enthusiasm) to other professionals in your environment – within socially acceptable limits – will make you less vulnerable, especially if you are armed internally with sincere intentions and integrity. Humor, for example, is a wonderfully effective way to positively charge the people in your environment, again within socially acceptable bounds. This will result in a more pleasant atmosphere, more positive (or other) energy, people will be more creative, and those same people will ask you back again for another assignment or recommend you to others because working with you is so pleasant and effective.

Look at yourself regularly in the mirror. Really look at yourself, and try to describe what you see. Do you see a “sourpuss” looking back at you, a tense person with a red tinge to their face, or someone who radiates happiness and joy? Whoever you see looking back at you, give yourself a smile and you’ll be alright for another hour.

If, after that, you still have a dry mouth, a hot feeling, tingling skin, raised heart rate, sweaty armpits or superficial, “shallow” breathing that feels like you are not getting enough oxygen, then you should be aware that you still have work to do when it comes to emotional resilience. Talk to your mentor/coach to get started, or get in touch with a counsellor.

Mental resilience

In addition to enhancing your physical and emotional resilience, it is also beneficial to work on your mental resilience. Your mental resilience resides at the level of “knowledge” and “thought”. Just as you can train your body physically through sport, you can also train your mental system by continuing to learn and remaining curious. However, you must avoid overload due to having too much on your mind, as well as deadlocking your mental system through “infobesity” (addiction to information, and feeling anxious about missing out).

So prevent data congestion before it clogs up your central processing unit, or your mental system. Mental resilience is essential in order to communicate mentally (i.e. at a professional level) with other people and to collaborate on new, innovative solutions.

Our environment is now becoming the problem. There is simply too much to know, and we are overwhelmed daily with copious messages and too much information. To avoid a mental overload or deadlock, you must strengthen your mental lines of defense in addition to your emotional ones.

Start by building your assertiveness: do not simply accept tasks without a second thought, optimize what is on your “plate” and make sure that it only contains things that contribute to your goals. This is why it is so important to set goals for yourself. If you do not, you will be like a feather being tossed around by every slight breeze that blows through.

Use spam filters and algorithms in your e-mail software to filter out pointless messages and ensure that they do not take up your attention. They are a waste of both your mental energy and your time. There is probably something you can do to limit the number of open channels: limit how many e-mail accounts you have, and restrict opportunities for others to send you messages that could distract you from what you are doing at any given time. Exercise caution when giving out your e-mail address – one good tip is to create a separate e-mail address for advertising and spam purposes.

Turn off your voicemail, and record a message telling people that you can only be reached via WhatsApp or text message. Voicemail is a classic case of a tool from the past that serves to erode your mental resilience. Because there is somebody who wants something from you, you are required to go through two, three or more steps just to find out what it is. So turn off your voicemail, and channel/filter all communication in your direction.

You will then have plenty of time and attention to deal effectively with the messages that still reach you. Get used to an “empty-inbox” mentality. Every day, consciously take a maximum of five minutes per hour to empty your inbox, and in between, devote your concentration to the tasks that you had scheduled for that day.

Try to optimize your method for dealing with messages as much as you can, to keep the required time and energy to a minimum. For example, you could organize how you store your messages (if you even store your messages) according to their priority in terms of your goals. Put messages that you cannot process immediately in a to-do folder (i.e. remove them from your inbox), or put a special to-do label on them.

Work through these messages once a day. If you can never seem to empty your to-do folder, then you need to re-evaluate your goals and more actively monitor what ends up on your “plate”. If you cannot empty your inbox within five minutes, then you need to apply stricter filters, or talk to people about their e-mail behavior. If this requires too much energy, go for stricter filters. Boosting your mental resilience will simultaneously clear your head and give you more time every day to work on realizing your dreams and goals.

It will also give you more time to think ahead, enabling you not only to enhance your focus, but also to systematically plan within your focus areas and ultimately spend most of your day calmly working on things that are important to you (such as realizing your passions). The more effectively you can think ahead, the simpler it will be for you to achieve your goals with a minimum of energy wasted. This will increase not only your efficiency, but also your effectiveness.

So shut yourself off from advertising, website pop-ups, spam and whatever else is eating up your time and distracting you from things that do deserve your energy and attention. Ask a co-worker to come back for that chat in fifteen minutes, if you still need time to finish something off.

Scheduling your social time deliberately will ensure that others are not disturbed, and that you can devote your full attention to social interaction whenever it does happen. Planning these times will allow you to make genuine connections with others. Listening actively, remembering what others do and showing sincere interest will also help to strengthen your relationships.

One final way to improve your mental resilience is to prepare thoroughly for meetings and complete tasks on time. During a meeting, is better to announce that you have completed your task rather than waste energy coming up with excuses as to why you once again failed to do what you promised. Also be sure to arrive at meetings in good time, allowing time for friendly chats and to properly welcome the participants.

Giving off energy

Communication is a two-way street. The positive energy you exude will come back to you, provided the other person is open to receiving the positive signals you send out. This will help you to bring out the best in others. Positive energy is directed outwards, but while negative energy is directed inwards, it can still “go viral”. What you are actually doing is giving the other person a gift.

You have taken the first step. When two people communicate, an action by one person elicits a reaction from the other. The purpose should always be to raise confidence in a positive outcome to the conversation, and to create a positive atmosphere. To do so you must exude warmth and compassion, however it must be genuine and come from you.

If you find you are unable to exude positive energy, it is a sign that you still have a blockage somewhere that needs to be dealt with. The energy you give off is mostly emotional and mental in nature. By “broadcasting” at these levels, you give others the signal to open themselves up also. Often somebody needs to take the first step. If you are the one to take the initiative, personal contact will develop more quickly.

Only once any emotional barricades have been removed is there any point in getting down to business. This will make it easier for both of you to focus your attention (i.e. your energy) on the topic at hand.

During a more in-depth conversation, the other person will respond even more positively if their expectations of the conversation are met. It is possible to inform the other person of your expectations in advance, i.e. negotiating before the conversation even takes place.

Even the way in which the conversation takes place or the circumstances leading up to it can create a positive or negative “vibe” in advance. If you sense some negativity beforehand, try to neutralize it by listening to why the other person is not feeling content.

If this point arrives in the middle of a conversation or a meeting, you can stress your positive intentions and express your hope of arriving at an amicable solution together. Always take emotions seriously, and never trivialize those of others (or your own). Emotions can actually never be trivialized, as they are either there or not. Give the other person the opportunity to express their emotions. Only if they feel you understand them will they be receptive to your positive attitude during a conversation.

If drinks have been organized at the end of the day or after a meeting, be sure to go and get to know everybody there. This is often when the fun stories are told and when you can find out where other people’s “green buttons” are, i.e. the topics and standpoints that that they are very enthusiastic about. These might include their small children, a hobby they invest lots of time and money in, or a passionate view on a particular issue, such as data privacy or international human rights. Pets can also be a rewarding subject.

Whatever you do, be sure send out positive energy to your environment. However, this energy must be relevant to the situation at hand – don’t start telling a lively story about your last summer holiday at a funeral. In order to exude energy, you first need to create it for yourself: the “exuding” part is communicating it to

others. Sincere intentions and integrity serve as your internal source of positive energy, which you give out first in the hope of receiving something back from others. One tip I can give you is to communicate your intentions unambiguously to the outside world. If you do not feel secure in openly declaring your intentions, this may be a sign that you have not (yet) reached a state of internal balance.

Your contribution

It is wise to regularly ask yourself what your contribution is (or could be) to your environment. In other words: what is your added value? Imagine that you have been designated to assist a project manager during a large, important job. Sit down with this person, and ask them exactly what it is they expect from you. Have them explain what they mean, and what they feel is most important.

If this does not happen automatically, you can ask what things will make him/her believe that you have done a good job, what the most important aspects are and why they are so important. Try to arrive at a top three, and have the other person describe as accurately as possible exactly when their expectations will have (or have not) been fulfilled.

Knowing what is expected of you will help you to get started in a targeted way. As soon as you have a clear idea of what people expect, you can start thinking of the methods and resources you need to achieve the result.

If your project manager expects you to store all of the project documentation in a central administration system, for example, then you will probably require some training in the use of the relevant system. Or perhaps some clear agreements first need to be made with the project participants regarding the submission of documentation, so that you are able to do your job properly. There is certainly no harm in making your processes transparent to your employer or customer, as you then provide the opportunity for refinement or to receive assistance with your working method, e.g. by being put in touch with the right people.

The STAR method

Whatever work you do, you are simultaneously also building on your CV (a brief summary of your work experience). Make your CV more attractive by using the STAR method. The Situation is the actual environment in which you work – by describing it as concretely as possible, you force yourself to understand your surroundings.

Your Tasks and Activities are the result of your personal working plan that you have drawn up in consultation with your manager or employer/customer. The Results you obtain must be fully in line with the expectations clarified beforehand. This method helps you both to broaden your perspective, as well as put into words exactly how you contribute to the whole.

The chessboards

Often multiple groups will be involved in the work that you do. These may be working parties who implement the project, or other groups who evaluate the project both from a managerial and administrative standpoint.

For example: a proposal to renovate a playground in the middle of a residential area can involve up to ten different consultative bodies, especially if you also wish to involve the local residents. Or imagine that you are engaged in a major project with a customer: you will need to deal with suppliers, your customer's customers, the users or employees for whom you are implementing the project, not to mention the management who will ultimately decide on the direction taken. These are all different consultative bodies that need to be considered.

For convenience I refer to all of these groups as the “chessboards”, for the simple reason that a different game is being played on each board, each with its own set of pieces, and in many cases with very different rules. To ensure success, all of the dominant chess pieces must be acting in concert with each other.

In light of the above, try to establish which chessboards are the most important, and which pieces (i.e. people) you need to know well in order to have an initiative accepted within the various groups. It is often not feasible to know everyone personally as a young professional, but you can aim to get to know people with influence over the more dominant pieces, often simply through informal chats and paying attention to what they themselves find important.

If you have an extended network and have built up plenty of goodwill among those closest to you, you will have access to lots of information. But be aware of the context (i.e. chessboard) that people are acting in, and of what their intentions are. Try to place the information that you receive within the context that it came from. This way, chessboards can be viewed in terms of time, space, context, processes and participants. On a chessboard, or information hub, the participants (i.e. the pieces) represent a combination of conscious and sub-conscious knowledge, from both the past and present.

The most powerful chessboards are those that you cannot even see: they may not be included on any organizational chart, but they are there nonetheless. They are the informal networks populated by the rulers and the rats, the foxes and the followers. The ruler is the one at the top of the food chain, and is motivated by self-interest, high bonuses and expansion of their empire.



Environmental sensitivity

Knowing about which power plays are being fought is very useful, and it can be especially worthwhile discovering who the foxes and rats are within an organization – particularly if you as a young professional want your idea to take root there. This means that you need to be able to sense what is important, and be flexible in order to deal with changing circumstances. So make sure that you monitor both the big picture and the political landscape, and adjust your plans and behavior accordingly.

You will need to learn to use your own objective observations and information from the people in your network to interpret signals within the right context (or chessboard). This skill cannot be learned from one day to the next: it takes years to develop, which is why working with an experienced co-worker is important so that he or she can teach you how to improve your environmental sensitivity in the workplace itself.

Be open to receiving the right signals – rationalization is not perception – and continually monitor your environment. Be aware of how those around you respond to what you say and do. Try to imagine even the most improbable situations, often your emotions are the most effective warning against imminent danger. It takes time to develop this sensitivity, and to interpret signals correctly. If the atmosphere feels strange or out of the ordinary, make a few hypotheses and test them out to see whether you are picking up the signals correctly. Do not do this alone, but together with people you can trust.

Based on your sincere intentions and integrity, use the people in your network as antennae or sensors to reach your goal as a young professional: the acceptance and implementation of your idea for making the world a better place.

Only with focus and attention on your goals can you receive these signals and assess their merit. Increase your attention and powers of perception by not (or no longer) focusing on matters that are not

really relevant. Try to evaluate the level of professionalism of your fellow workers, and adjust your own accordingly.

Keep your eyes and ears wide open, and your mind alert. You will probably not master all of the above straight away, especially if you are a young professional, but it is worthwhile learning this skill quickly. People only develop a form of environmental sensitivity through trial and error, and by realizing that it determines success to a large extent.

If you are not terribly sensitive to your own environment, ensure that your immediate network contains enough people who are, and catch up over coffee or tea with them often. Or – even healthier – take a more intensive walk at lunchtime. Create an open, collegial atmosphere. Exercise gets your blood flowing, allowing the brain to function better. A nice breeze is also refreshing, enabling you to take a step back from the daily grind and see things in a new light.

A critical view

No environment or organization is perfect: all forms of organization have their pros and cons. Even the hierarchical structure of organizations is reinvented with alarming regularity. For this reason, you must never trust your fate to the structure of a particular organization at any given time.

Such structures, however, are telling about the way the management has divided up its tasks and responsibilities, and about how the associated reporting procedures are defined. Although these are aspects that you do need to deal with, it is nothing to get extremely worked up about as a young professional. This is important to realize, in order to avoid frustration and wasted energy!

As a young professional, there are really only two things that count. First of all you need to do the work that suits you, that energizes you, and where you can demonstrate your added value. Secondly you must maintain a good relationship with your immediate superior, and this person must be able to evaluate and guide you in your development.

Sensible young professionals will scout their working environment for a suitable mentor, so that they only need to follow the advice of this mentor and their manager. Of course you must also look out for restructuring dangers and political power struggles, but do not allow them to sap your energy. Deflect any attacks on your energy by being resilient.

Resilience enables you to keep growing your value to your customers and to avoid becoming emotionally shaken, freeing up your mental capacities for the reason you are here on earth: namely, to give what you can, and to learn and apply what you have learned.

For this reason, be disciplined and maintain a constructive but critical view of your own environment. Say what you think. Be clear about your own expectations, express them consciously and deliberately. Express yourself in the privacy of a personal conversation. Do not bottle things up, they will only come back to haunt you later.

Many management paradigms are relics from the industrial age. Dare to question bureaucratic rigidity, as well as black-and-white, bottom-line cultures. Many aspects that are often essential still defy measurement, particularly when it comes to interpersonal, social processes. Just think back to the importance of informal organizations as a “lubricant” for the formal processes.

Old certainties are now under pressure or are proving to be completely outdated, such as the real estate bubble, the financial bubble, and so on. The world’s best economists failed to predict the financial crisis. Be wary of organizations that ask you to enter all kinds of personal information without telling you why the information is being collected.

When faced with rapid growth, continue to ask yourself what this growth is based on. Gradually, more and more people are realizing that growth is no salvation in itself, but that the world as a whole can

only survive if we learn to live together sustainably and with sincere intentions and integrity.

In your case, this means you need to be critical of all signals and claims that come your way. In this context, taking a critical view means trying to relate signals and claims as objectively as possible to your own frame of reference.

Confrontation

Be aware that everybody has their own way of viewing an organization. For example, burned-out and frustrated employees may see their own organization as an enormous black cloud, while ambitious young employees may see it as the undiscovered country, full of new possibilities and learning opportunities.

Maintain a critical view of your environment, and above all, of yourself. Ensure that you are at least doubly critical of yourself than of your environment – setting your own bar higher will allow you to stand out from the crowd. Blowing your own trumpet a little is okay, provided it has a purpose and you do not take it too far. Do it with deliberation and moderation, and use other people's feedback to correct yourself.

Dare to say what you think, dare to enter into confrontation and see what it does to you and to others in your environment. The worst that can happen is that you will learn a lot about the people you deal with. Seek out the passion in yourself and others, show people what you're made of, dare to question old (or other) certainties that are taken for granted – there is no shortage of collective blind-spots! Your added value as a young professional is your fresh new perspective on the organization.

Accept that our environments are chaotic by definition; they have developed organically, and were not designed with an ideal situation in mind. Many working environments are the result of the typical meeting culture and the tendency to seek endless compromise, and after one year are already completely defunct. Question so-

called “self-service” concepts which – to increase efficiency for organizations – often pass on the necessary administration to you as a customer or employee. Open up the effectiveness of bureaucratic culture for discussion.

Responsible driving

Modern (e.g. flex) working practices mean that more and more people are travelling between various locations throughout the working day. From an efficiency and environmental standpoint, it is important to take a responsible approach to this kind of travel. Keep your travelling to a minimum through effective planning, or by using modern means of communication so that you do not need to travel at all.

Raise the issue with the people you meet with, and decide together on the ideal way for all of you to work. Combining methods is also an option, e.g. alternating physical meetings with telephone contact using a conferencing service. The most important thing is to be creative, and continually try out new methods of cooperation.

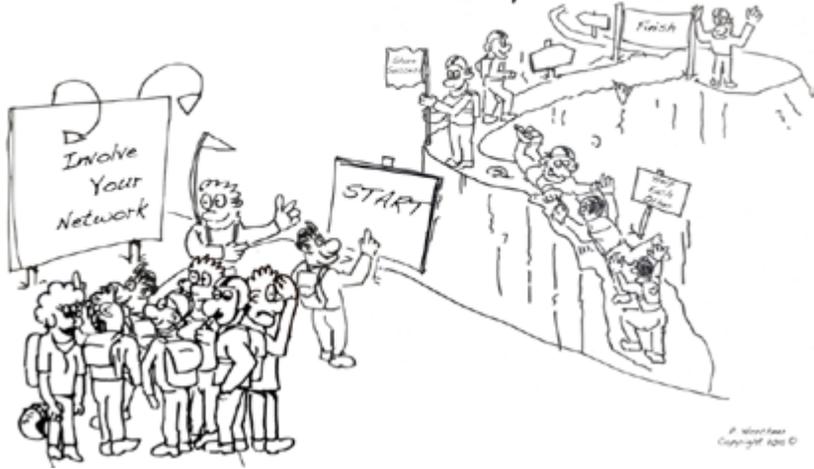
Establish your own clear guidelines for how you intend to combine travel with the use of your mobile phone, and always keep traffic safety in mind, however you travel (train, car, bicycle, etc.).

It is better to make a conscious decision to turn off your mobile phone while you travel, than for both you and your bike to end up underneath a truck.

At each of your work locations, try to create an ambience that suits the nature of the task at hand. A collegial, trusting atmosphere will produce better results than one of suspicion and hostility. A calming environment is one where there are few people.

Try heading out into nature if you need to think things over, or put on some headphones with some good music to withdraw from the hectic workplace for a while.

Use Your Network To Make The Journey



Your social environment

In addition to physical and organizational environmental factors, as a young professional you will of course be in touch daily with social networks of people across the globe, both professional and personal.

These networks include immediate co-workers, fellow professionals working and studying at other organizations, and members of associations and communities that you also belong to – and of course friends, acquaintances and family. On the one hand these environments represent an environmental factor that you must learn to manage, but on the other they are the most important tool you can use to shape your future once you have read and applied this book.

For this reason you must work tirelessly to build trusting relationships, show substance and extend warm compassion to your fellows. Avoid “energy drainers”, and by that I mean: all people and daily interruptions by those who want something from you, but who offer no added value to you whatsoever.

Giving energy drainers short shrift will give you more time to spend on activities that do energize you, and that have a worthwhile place in your private life and professional career. Feel free to “cherry pick” in terms of the people and the themes in your life, and find a partner who will support you through thick and thin in your future ambitions.

See, recognize and acknowledge the value of others. Take special note of the titles people have invented for themselves on websites such as LinkedIn. Also dare to explore new territory when making new contacts, and ensure sufficient diversity in your networks.

One very practical tip is to add business contacts on LinkedIn, and limit your personal and interest-based contacts to Facebook. When making new contacts, be sure to listen to your feelings. Your emotions are a form of “higher intelligence”: all you need to do is learn to listen to them.

The simplest way to grow your professional network is to take the initiative regarding the topics that energize you. When doing so, make practical use of communities and competency teams. Joining them is one way; starting one yourself is even better. Ensure that all members of the community see their membership as a source of added value. Real professionals simply get “fired up” when presented with sincere acknowledgement, and the opportunity to explore their passion for their subject.

Listen to your emotions

Our emotions are always one step ahead of our thoughts – nature has made us that way, and there is no way around it. What you can do, however, is to use restful moments to take stock of what you are feeling.

Emotions often relate to things that you feel someone has done to you, things that have happened to you, or even recent shortcomings in your own behavior. If you are feeling emotional, it is a good idea to withdraw for a while, ask yourself what emotion you are feeling and what the cause could be.

Only by being aware of your emotions and their possible causes will you be on the right track to appreciating your feelings for what they are.

I do not propose going through life without emotions; this is equally ineffective as a long-term strategy. My message is that you should learn to listen to your own body both physically and emotionally, and learn to respond promptly to the signals your body gives you.

This may all sound very simplistic, but people who experience a burnout are the ones who have gone on too long without listening to what their body was trying to tell them, or ignoring the signals altogether. Make sure that this does not happen to you, either now or in the future!

You and your manager

Provided that you are neither unemployed nor self-employed, your manager (in addition to your loved ones) will also be an important person with whom to maintain a good relationship. Note: by this I do NOT mean sucking up to anyone, or licking people's boots. Google "manage your boss" sometime, and a whole new world will open up to you.

The most important thing is that your relationship with your manager be based on mutual respect. Put yourself in his or her shoes, and try to ascertain what it is that drives your manager. In your communication, try to make everything you do relate to your own manager's objectives and those of the organization that you both work for.

If you already know that you cannot deliver on a request from your manager, saying "no" does not make you unreliable – provided that you can substantiate your reasons for not saying yes. You should also provide honest and open feedback concerning the requests that you do find energizing, and those you do not. Even your manager is entitled to feedback, should he or she be unable to interpret your body language.

Manage your environment ...



Observe and analyze your manager's management style. Is it directive? Coaching? Are they a control freak, or do they give you plenty of leeway and trust? How does your manager perceive his/her own job?

Are you there for your manager, or does your manager see themselves as someone who is happy to support you in your personal development? The answers to all these questions will determine the way your manager wishes to deal with you. You can gain an advantage by adapting your behavior according to how your manager expects his/her subordinates to act.

Failing to do this effectively will generate friction, which is a waste of energy for both you and your manager. Managers are people too (!), and it is a simple fact that people are susceptible to all manner of influences. My personal belief is that suitable methods of influence are acceptable, provided that their purpose is to give you support and freedom to act in order to speed up your development as a professional. This results in a win-win situation, after all, so you should feel free to help your manager to make the right choices.

A good relationship with your manager is based on a personal connection while also maintaining a respectful professional distance. Any optimum relationship with your manager will be based on open forms of communication. In order to perform properly, your manager must maintain an appropriate distance from you, to enable him/her to evaluate you objectively along with the other employees. I have built up many relationships with managers during my career, and often these relationships became more intense the moment my manager was replaced by someone else – probably because the distance required between manager and employee was no longer necessary, allowing the relationship to evolve to a more personal level.

There are many types of managers: sales managers, accounting managers, delivery, customer care, security, compliance, product and service managers, you name it. Find out about where these managers' interests lie, then try to place all future remarks, questions and/or requests within the context of these interests and you will begin to understand why every manager has a different set of expectations and priorities.

Mount Everest

The highlight of my trip through Nepal and Tibet in 2010 was a visit to base camp at Mount Everest, where I stood at the foot of the world's tallest mountain. I had just spent the night in a Tibetan tent, kept warm by old Tibetan woman using dried yak dung.

This mountain can serve as a symbol for the growth that you are about to embark on. Which summit are you aiming for in your career? There are many possible options, and you will undoubtedly encounter many falling boulders and avalanches along the way.

The trick is to make the “climb” with as much preparation – and as little baggage – as possible. My aim with this book has been to help you prepare for your climb, and to help you lighten the load.

The better prepared you are and the lighter your baggage, the more you will enjoy the journey and the further you will go. Provided you enjoy the climb and go to work every day with a smile on your face, then it really doesn't matter which summit you decide to aim for.

If the above is true, your only possible destinations will be the places that give you the most positive energy. I wish you much strength and happiness on this wonderful journey. I myself am just over half way up the mountain – perhaps we will see each other sometime, and we can exchange a smile or two.

Deal?

Chapters not included in this free eBook

In the “Young Professional Career Workbook” you will find the following additional Chapters and exercises.

Having laid the foundations in the previous Chapters of this free eBook, in Chapter four I describe my ten (personal) success factors that have aided me greatly over the last thirty years to achieve success in both my professional and personal life. Of course they will not all apply to you, but by presenting mine I hope to give you a helping hand in creating your own.

Chapter four also describes how to identify the application of these success factors in your own life, allowing you to measure yourself against my own “benchmarks”, as it were, without needing to become a carbon copy of me. They are only resources to help you get to know yourself better.

Getting to know and understanding yourself is the core theme of Chapter five, which contains many exercises that focus on increasing your knowledge and understanding of who you are. Self-awareness is a great gift, and I hope that its improvement will be a major recurring theme in the rest of your life. In Greek antiquity, those with the greatest self-awareness were considered the most qualified as community leaders.

The workbook also contains 60 exercises (without cartoons) to accelerate your personal growth. To order the workbook search for the keywords “Ben Elsinga” and “Amazon” on the Internet.

An alternative to find the “Young Professional Career Workbook” is to look at the community site for Young Professionals world-wide: <http://ypworkbook.com/career-workbook-for-graduates-and-young-professionals>