

# Principles

"Guiding Principles for Professional Success"



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# Introduction

Every business, like every family, has its own values and culture. And, as an individual, you have yours.

Africa and South Africa have a great number of cultures and languages. Individual people or groups within those cultures have different values.

When we refer to your values or the values of a company or organization we are talking about the beliefs of a person or social group about which they have a strong feeling or view.

One group of people may believe strongly that abortion is never to be carried out no matter what the circumstances are. Another group of people may believe that this is a question for the individual persons involved to decide, and that this is their personal choice. We are not saying anything here about whether this is right or wrong. We are saying that these two groups have different values about the question of abortion.

People may have different values on many different subjects.

When you are working in a company or an organization you will find that they have values that they tend to stick to or promote. Most organizations will have values that are general enough to allow different cultures to work in the same organization.

We have focused on a few values that we believe you can follow and by doing so you will be more successful longer-term. This set of Principles has been studied by thousands of learners and we have used their feedback to refine and customize the Principles to make them even more valuable to you.

Each value in the chapters that follow will be referred to as a **principle**. A principle could be said to be a single value.

Without being untrue to yourself, your success in your profession will depend a great deal on your ability to 'fit in', to integrate your own values with the rules, policy and customs of the team to which you belong.

This course introduces you to the most important general **guiding principles** which would be appropriate to follow, no matter what organization you belong to, and will lead you to success in these organizations and, indeed, in all areas of your life.

Good luck!



# Chapter 1

**Know, understand and subscribe to the purposes, values and policies of your team**







The guiding principles we will go through with you in this course are **personal** guiding principles you can use.

Before we get to these principles, it is also true that there are many other things you need to learn about your company or employer that are not covered in this particular course.

When you join an organization you need to get to know and understand all the various aspects of its rules, policy, goals and purposes so that you can become a valuable and trusted member of your team as soon as possible. Rules or policy may include starting times, dress-code, email usage and so on.

If you are doing this course as part of an overall work-readiness or skills development program, you will find more detailed information about these various elements in the modules of these programs, but it is up to you seek out, understand and familiarize yourself with those particular elements which make up the code of conduct of your new team.

If you are not on a work-readiness or skills development program, and if this information is not provided for you by your company in an induction course or policy manual, then you will need to approach your seniors and your peers and your human resources department to obtain the necessary information. You cannot function successfully without it.



## Chapter 2

Be a good example to others





Albert Einstein said, "Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others, it is the only means." Besides Einstein, this idea is promoted by all great religions, philosophers and various social and educational or skills organizations and employers.

Young people growing up in a tough crime area, can be influenced by 'successful' gangsters, with smart cars and fancy clothes. This is the example they set for the children in their areas.

Another person, from the same area, manages to get to a university, graduates with a qualification, finds sustainable employment and helps the community do better. This is the example *they* set for the people in the area.

Your impact on others can be positive or negative. Thankfully, most people desire to have a positive impact.

As you enter the workplace or progress in your career, your impact on others can be quite significant.

There are many ways you can set a good example both at work and socially.

You could draw up a list of things that you think will help others by your setting a good example. A very short list may include:

- Arriving on time, always
- Being polite and helpful to others
- Keeping to the dress code
- Always being respectful of others
- Setting a good social media example
- Being a dedicated employee who delivers valuable results
- Delivering to others a bit more than they expect of you

This is a quick and summarized list, but you may have many more items you would like to include. For example, they may include: helping an older woman with her parcel, allowing a senior gentleman to go ahead of you in a queue, holding a lift door open for other people and being environmentally conscious and responsible. These all set a good example.

All the principles in this book give you the framework for setting a good example for those around you. The more you do this, the more we all gain.

People like to be associated with someone who sets a good example. Doing this, gains respect.



## Chapter 3

Delivering more than what was expected







Most people are satisfied in life to give and receive what is sometimes known as 'fair value' in their dealings with others. For instance, with your employer, you will feel satisfied to receive 'fair value' in terms of your salary package, and your employer will be happy to receive 'fair value' from you in terms of the quality and quantity of the work you produce.

Fair value would be one-for-one, same value for same value. The person receives what was expected. According to Businessdictionary.com, fair value is: a price paid by a buyer who knows the value of what he or she is buying, to a seller who also knows the value of what is being sold. In other words, neither is cheating the other.

You enjoy a meal at a restaurant and you pay R 50.00. The restaurant gives you a meal and it has the service and value of about R 50.00. This is considered fair.

There is, however, another type of interaction, which could be 'delivering more than what was expected' where you would try to give *more* value than what you receive in any transaction, in terms of extra service, extra care and extra effort.

In the restaurant the service was so good you were surprised and the food tasted like R 75.00 in value. You leave the restaurant with the feeling that they delivered to you more than what you paid for and more than what you expected. This creates word-of-mouth advertising for that business, because they deliver more than what is expected. They keep their service *interesting*. Some studies show that this is what causes word-of-mouth advertising. Webster's dictionary defines interesting things as those that arouse interest or hold attention, and products can be interesting because they are novel, exciting, or *violate expectations* in some way.

This principle applies to you personally, as a professional. If you arrive at work always on time but also sometimes arrive early and leave a bit later, because of something your senior wanted you to finish, this is noticed, this gives more than what is expected, this creates value for your employer and, over time, this will definitely create value for you.

If you approach life from this point of view it can be gratifying to yourself emotionally and also it will tend to create for you a more successful future, because other people definitely do notice when someone has this attitude.

'Going the extra mile' has become an English idiom. It comes from way back. One example is possibly from the gospel of Matthew, "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain (old English for 'two')."

Try to become known as a person who always seems to give that little bit extra value, who always goes 'that extra mile' in your dealings with those around you.



## Chapter 4

When you give your word, keep it



To give your word, is to promise something, to make a promise, to commit to something. This is an English idiom. Another way to say this, is when you give your word, keep your word.

Once you have given your word, people expect you to keep it. If you do keep your word, people respect you for it. People then trust your word. This trust is professional gold. It is of great value to you and your future activities. If you don't keep your word, this becomes known, by your colleagues, family, social contacts and in the workplace.

The Holy Bible has a reference in James; "Let your 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no". This is a simple statement that says a lot. In the Holy Qur'an, the 21st Greater Sin is "Breaking of a promise".

Using an accounting or financial analogy, giving your word is like a debt. You owe what you promised. Once you honour your word, the debt is paid.

It is interesting that this simple idiom, giving your word, is linked to your honour, integrity, your reputation and your trustworthiness.

Another word that is linked to this principle is obligations. An obligation is an action you feel bound to do because of your own agreement, because of your society, your conscience (inner moral sense) or because it's the law. An obligation is a commitment. Keeping your commitments is keeping your word. You will have future financial obligations, for example. You will have obligations toward your family, friends and professionally.

Keeping your word can apply to small things and big things. Agreeing to arrive at a certain time, or agreeing to hand-in your business report on a certain date. The size of the promise is not important. Keeping your promise is important.

You will have experienced this yourself if anyone has ever given you their word about something and then has broken their promise. If a friend promised to keep a secret and then told someone else, they have broken your trust and you will think twice about trusting them ever again.

Keeping your word, therefore develops trust. The respect others have for you increases. This way you have a more successful or secure future.

## Chapter 5

Hold yourself to professional standards







**W**hat does it mean to be professional? Many authors have said many things about this subject. What we can say is that it goes further than good manners and a professional code of conduct.

ACCA, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants proposed a description of professionalism, and so did the organization Mind Tools, a management and leadership online training organization. Combined they cover:

## Competency

Professionals are known for their specialised knowledge and skills backed up by their relevant qualification, whilst keeping their knowledge current. Professionals get the job done. In other words, they are competent. They're reliable, and they keep their promises. If circumstances arise that prevent them from delivering on their promises, they manage expectations up front, and they do their best to make the situation right.

Part of being competent is being productive. Get things done. Don't procrastinate. Finish things. Being productive means being efficient with your time. This means getting more done in less time, without dropping quality or your final results.

## Reliability and Accountability

True professionals plan in advance and never turn up to client meetings unprepared. They honour their commitments and can be relied upon to always get the job done. They deliver what they said they would deliver, and on time. But if things are not going exactly to plan, they do not look for excuses but do their best to put tasks and projects back on track. If mistakes are made, they accept responsibility for the part they played.

## Honesty and Integrity

Personal accountability is closely linked to honesty and integrity, another two tenets of professionalism. Professionals always tell the truth and never compromise their values. They will do the right thing at all times and in all circumstances, even if it means others will disagree or disapprove.

More than this, true professionals are humble. If a project or job falls outside their scope of expertise, they're not afraid to admit this. They immediately ask for help when they need it, and they're willing to learn from others.

## Self-control

Imagine being faced with an irate client or supplier. Instead of getting angry in return, you will act like a professional if you stay calm and business-like, and if you do everything you can to understand and help resolve the issue. Professionals can do this because they have a good degree of emotional intelligence, which means they consider the emotions and needs of others.

At work, professionals keep calm under pressure no matter what, even though they might act differently if faced with a similar situation in their personal lives.

## Flexibility

Your contract of employment may state that your workday ends at 5 pm, but some days you may have to stay later to get a task or project finished on time. This does not mean you should ignore important commitments in your personal life, but you do not want to be seen leaving important work not done just because you want to go to the gym or some other purely personal activity.

## Respect for others

Treating all people with respect and kindness is part and parcel of being professional. This includes people junior to you and those in support roles, as well as people you dislike. Sometimes you will have to work with colleagues you just do not get on with or who are not very nice. Remain professional by always being polite to everyone you come into contact with, no matter what their role is and no matter what you think of them.

## Professional Image

Professionals look the part. They don't show up to work sloppily dressed, with unkempt hair. They're polished, and they dress appropriately for the situation. Because of this, they exude an air of confidence, and they gain respect for this.

Appearance also extends to external emails and written documents you present to clients, suppliers and other parties. Untidy reports with poor grammar will imply you are careless or disorganised and will therefore call into question the quality of the content. They will also call into question your professionalism.

In conclusion, demand professional standards, of yourself and of others.

If you are studying further to improve yourself, either through a college, university or in work-readiness or skills development programs, you will learn many other principles relating directly to those studies.

Knowing and being able to use the principles you learn in your various studies will contribute even more to your overall competence and professionalism.

People need and want competent professionals on their teams.

## Chapter 6

Decide for yourself; let others decide for themselves





Many of the Principles in this book are related. One adds to another. In life, you may have experienced people trying to enforce their decisions or beliefs or opinions onto you.

Maybe they want you to be like them, to think like them, to feel like them, to believe what they believe. This can be very confusing, especially when deep-down inside you might have other feelings, other beliefs. How can you know what is right and what is wrong?

Your right to decide for your self is protected by our constitution and by international agreements. Section 15 of our constitution, states "Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion."

In the end, the test of any fact, principle, policy, rule, standard, belief, or 'truth' is whether you agree with it or not. Your parents or professor or boss may state something, as fact, that does not quite seem right *to you*. That is okay. You do not *have to* agree.

If you agree, for the sake of it, or agree to keep the peace, while inside you actually do not agree, this will compromise your personal integrity. This is being dishonest with yourself. Holding true to your opinion or belief can be tough to do in an environment that is very strict or even a bit abusive. Being courageous enough to hold your own view, is a great quality to have and to develop. We are not referring to you having opinions that never change. We are referring to opinions you have come to hold through your own experience or observations.

Decide for yourself. But, you need to let others decide for themselves too. In this set of principles, later under "Practice cultural tolerance," we will go into this a bit more. Tolerate the ideas, opinions and cultures of others. Allow them to have their own opinions and to decide for themselves.

## Right and wrong decisions

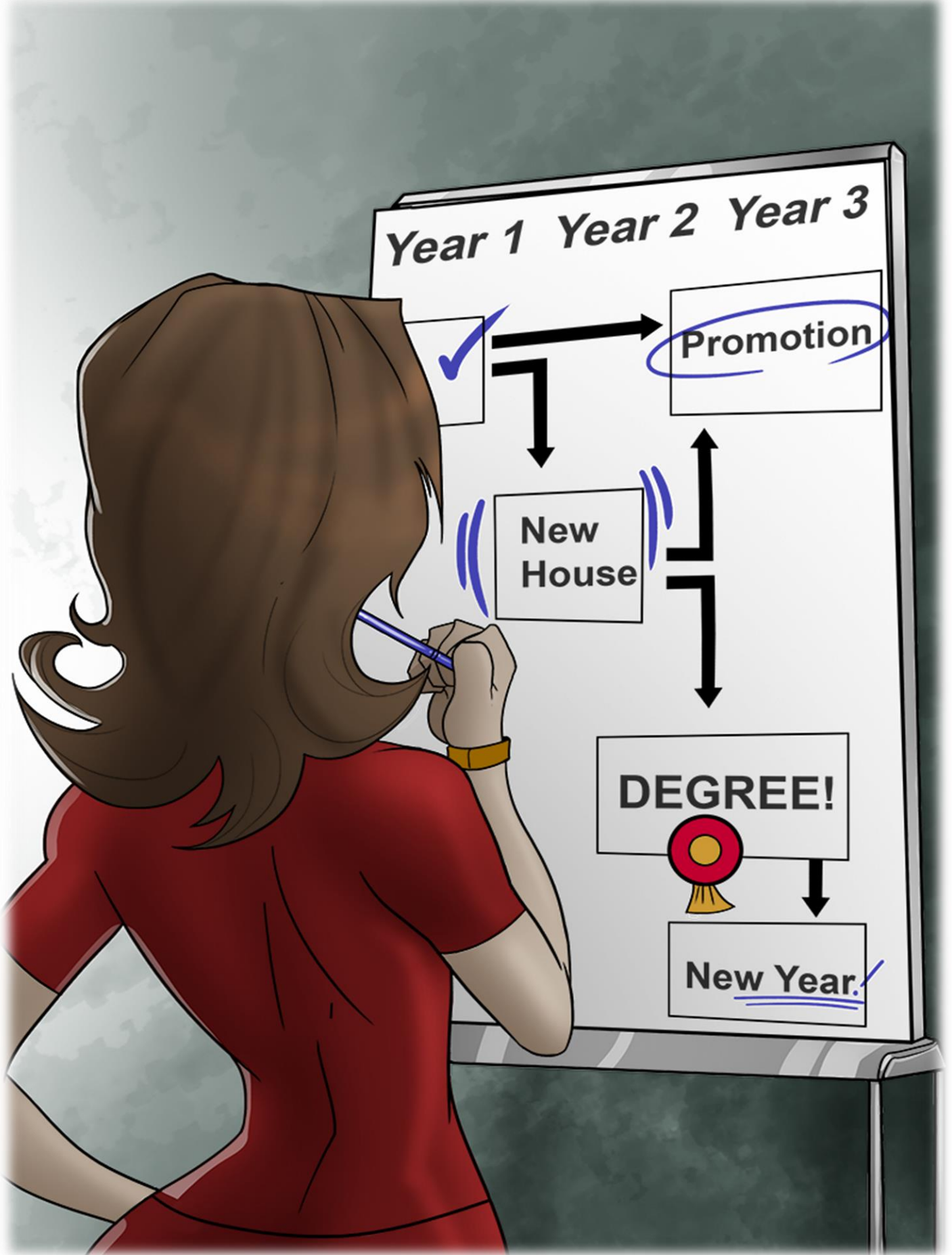
In 1781 one of the founders of Utilitarianism set up a principle for deciding whether to judge something right or wrong. "To determine whether an action is moral you merely have to calculate the good and bad consequences that will result from a particular action. If the good outweighs the bad, then the action is moral". Having some way to judge right or wrong, helps you to decide for yourself. The above principle may not be the only way, but it is a useful one.

For instance, there may be two groups of friends you need to decide between. The one group is very flashy and exciting, but they tend to drink too much and sometimes indulge in drugs. The other group is not quite so exciting but they help coaching the sports teams at your local school and quite a few of them are studying in their spare time. Which group should you join? This is easily decided using the above simple principle.



## Chapter 7

### Create Goals and Plans







The first chapter in this set of principles advised you to get to know the values, goals and purposes of the group you are joining, your employer. Now, in this chapter, we are speaking about your *personal* goals and objectives.

Lawrence Peter Berra, known as "Yogi" Berra was an American professional baseball catcher, manager, and coach who played 19 seasons in Major League Baseball. He is also well known for interesting quotes that have a unique style. An example would be "When you come to a fork in the road, take it".

This is what he said about having goals "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else."

This is funny but true. Having and pursuing goals is essential to life and your success. There are hundreds of books, movies, articles about goals. A goal is something you imagine, as an objective, and push and strive towards it. If it's clear, all the better.

### What is a goal?

A goal is something you want to achieve, whether it is to pass this course, or persuade a particular guy or girl to marry you, or be able to buy a new computer, or get a driving licence. A goal is a very specific thing you want to achieve, and without goals there is no direction in life. The website 'Code of Living' says goals are the oxygen of our dreams, the first steps of every journey and goals take us forward in life.

A goal which is too easy is not challenging, is not interesting, and so will not be motivating. On the other hand, a goal which is too difficult is not achievable, so it will discourage you, de-motivate you and you will lose interest. Try it out for yourself. Set a short-term goal and achieve it. Practice a bit. Then set some medium-term goals for yourself. Remember, once you have set a goal, you can set another. You can change them too if you want to.

But, as a famous Frenchman Antoine de Saint Exupery once said, "A goal without a plan is just a wish".

### A Plan

In order to turn your goal from a wish into a reality you need to break it down into a step-by-step plan, complete with targets and dates. Otherwise it may seem too big, too difficult, too complicated and impossible to achieve. Step-by-step will get you there. Stephen Covey said "Begin with the end in mind". In setting goals (and in working on one specific task) you are imagining the outcome of your work; you are visualizing how something will work out and creating a future for yourself. Whilst working 'now', some attention is on the outcome, the objective, in the very near future or further into the future. These two activities go together (Work now and imagine then).

There is a great deal to know about setting goals and drawing up workable plans and programs. There are software solutions and guides as well as apps for your electronic devices. There are thousands of books and solutions offering advice in this area. The modules available on various skills development programs, or in your own specific studies, will assist you in setting worthwhile goals and planning and organizing your work and your life. Get advice from experienced people to select an app or book to use to assist goal-making or tracking your progress.

Setting a goal could also be quite quick and simple. According to CBN website (edited), one night in 1990 when Jim Carrey was a struggling young comic trying to make his way in Los Angeles, he drove his old beat-up Toyota to the top of a hill. While sitting there, broke, looking down over the city, and dreaming of his future, he wrote himself a check (cheque) for \$10 million, put in the description 'for acting services rendered,' and dated it for late 1995. He stuck that check in his wallet - and the rest, as they say, is history.

## Determination

Remember also that 'Rome was not built in a day', and there is no such thing as 'overnight success'. Once you have a goal and a plan, you need to stick to it and stick it out. This is called determination.

Google the top qualities of successful entrepreneurs and the word determination comes up (or words similar). According to Shopify (edited) "A successful entrepreneur, or an employee, understands the importance of perseverance despite failures and roadblocks. They know that failures and rejections are not signs for stopping but instead are signs to keep pushing forward and persevering.

"Begin looking at failures and roadblocks as learning experiences and stepping stones. Remember that if it were easy, everyone would do it. You *will* encounter failures, setbacks and other obstacles. But that's okay. Persevering despite the struggle is one of the most rewarding experiences for anyone".

Little by little you will achieve your goals if you are determined, if you persevere, approach them gradually, step by step, not too fast, not too slow, until you get there and succeed.

## Chapter 8

Continually develop your professional skills



As you might have seen in our earlier courses, one of the Principles of Learning is firstly knowing that there is something to learn, or that you do not 'know it all already.'

## Keep learning

From this simple principle comes the follow-on, that we should never stop learning. This is the age of information and technology. Vodacom has approximately 60 million customers and over 7400 employees. The launch and sales of mobile phones in South Africa started in 1994 when MTN and Vodacom launched their cell phone services. This became the foundation of the voice and data services we have today.

The important observation is that *before 1994 not one cell company job existed*. Vodacom's 7400 plus jobs did not exist.

20 years from now, many new jobs will exist that do not exist today. In the book *Future Industries* by Alec Ross, he predicts that every person entering Grade 1 at school today, when they graduate Grade 12 and enter university, 65% of the jobs they will be applying for, do not exist today. This is amazing information. Not to mention Apple. They employ 66,000 in the USA, over 627,000 internationally to support their operating system and over 33,000 in their stores. These jobs did not exist before the mass production of cell phones and tablets.

This tells us that we have to continually learn new things. We have to develop our professional knowledge and skills, all the time. Many professions have systems of CPD, Continuous Professional Development, where your professional status is linked to staying current and informed.

## Apply what you learn

Learn to apply your knowledge. Always. Practice and application is vital.

Any activity or skill, no matter how well studied, no matter how well known in theory, comes up at last against the acid test: can you actually *do* it? And doing requires practice. In fact, much of what passes for 'talent' is really just practice. Canadian author, Malcolm Gladwell, wrote a book about how it takes at least 10,000 hours of practice to become a top expert in something. 5 hours practice per day, 7 days a week is 35 hours a week or 1820 hours a year.....interesting. This may be true for many activities. It simply points out what it takes to be *very* good at something special.

Preparing a set of financial records, done with skill and practice, means completing the job rapidly and accurately. Often in the professions, time is money. Speed increases with your certainty, which comes from practised skill.

[As an example, a professional charges their client R 3,000 for a consulting service, such as a business plan, a financial report or something similar. One professional completes one service for one client in 4 hours. The company earns R 3,000.

Another professional, in the same firm, providing the same service completes two services for two clients in 4 hours. The company earns R 6000.]

There comes a time with practice when you no longer have to 'think' to send an email, complete a task or a report or even to park the car: you just do it. Highly skilful people seem to make what they do look easy. Practice is what is behind this. Lots of it!

Skills development involves learning the theory of something then practising what you have learned. The more practice, the better you will be with that skill. If knowledge is power, then being able to *use* that knowledge skilfully, must *really* be power.

So be patient with yourself; practise, and then some more, and soon you will be an expert!





## Chapter 9

### Practice cultural tolerance





**W**e need to cherish and protect our cultural diversity. We have so many different cultures in our country. This requires tolerance.

TheFreeDictionary says to tolerate is to recognize and respect the rights, beliefs, customs, opinions or practices of others. This means *allowing* others to have their own beliefs and opinions and customs.

Tolerance works both ways. Expect tolerance from others. You may express your opinions and beliefs, but tolerance suggests that you allow others to have theirs, without being judgmental and without criticism.

### Being tolerant means not being judgmental

According to Vocabulary.com, people with good judgment are not usually considered judgmental. *Judgmental* is a negative word to describe someone who often rushes to judgment without reason. Judgmental describes someone who forms lots of opinions — usually harsh or critical ones — about lots of people. On the other hand, *having good judgment* is a sane and valuable quality.

Let people live according to their own customs and beliefs. Live your life by your customs and beliefs. Hold your own opinions. Tolerance is saying, 'live and let live' or allowing others to be who they choose to be.

### Do we always tolerate?

According to Wikiversity, some behaviour is so wrong it cannot be tolerated. The universal principles not to kill, steal, or maliciously deceive others are examples of behaviour that is outside the bounds of tolerance. A tolerant person is *intolerant* of such reprehensible behaviour. As an example, the United States Air force Academy honour code states: "We will not lie, steal or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does".

"Tolerance is the virtue that makes peace possible".

In our country where we have so many different languages and communities and religious beliefs, tolerance is an especially important principle. Here, more than anywhere, we need to cherish and protect our cultural diversity.

Cherish means to hold dear. We do not want our many different cultures to be lost, we want to protect them and we want to cherish and value their differences and allow everyone to live according to their beliefs, without interference or oppression.



## Chapter 10

Look for the good in the action of others





We have delivered our courses and skills programs to thousands of learners, and one point that learners appreciate is the advice to be tolerant and to look for the good in the actions of others. These two principles are related.

It is very easy to see what is wrong, and to point it out. Sometimes this works well, and other times it causes an upset.

## Objects and people

When dealing with things, objects, technical problems, it is essential to know when something is wrong and to point it out. If a building engineer sees a wall that is crooked, not well-built, he had better notice it quickly and get it repaired. Technical people look for things that are wrong, as a habit or as a way of operating. This is correct for their fields or professions.

When it comes to dealing with people, this system does not work as well. When dealing with people, you have to do the *opposite* of what the technical professional does. You have to *look for what is right*, that the other person is doing. This is interesting.

This does not mean that you do not notice what is being done wrong. No at all. You must notice what is not correct or right. But, it is the way you deal with this, that is important. Technical professionals need both skills. Dealing with people and dealing with the problem itself.

## Look for the good or what's right

Many parents, colleagues and managers have the unfortunate habit of always telling you what you are doing wrong, rather than what you are doing right.

If someone does something that you feel is wrong or incorrect, the way to go about dealing with this is to look for what they are doing well. Mention that. Compliment them, then ease over to a suggested correction that improves their competence even more.

Good sports coaches reinforce their team's strengths; you can do the same. A bad soccer coach says, "Your passing of the ball is terrible!" A good soccer coach says, "You control the ball beautifully and you mark your opponent well! Now let's get your passing as good as your ball control. Would you like that?" Of course.

It is the same with good managers and bad managers; a bad manager will say, "Your emails are full of spelling mistakes; what's wrong with you!?" a good manager will say, "Your emails are always well thought-out and you express yourself clearly in them; now let's focus on improving your spelling. I think that will help?" The employee would agree.

Some of us are a bit like perfectionists. We see how it *should be*. Clean kitchen. We see *how it is*. Messy kitchen. So, we point out to the person, look, messy kitchen, sort it out!

Using the method above, you would acknowledge some other thing that they are doing well, and bridge over to the messy kitchen in a non-judgmental style and thereby gain their cooperation. To dive straight in, with a criticism, will get them resisting and argumentative. Try it (the nice way).

It is a good idea to make a practice of noticing what the people around you are doing well and complimenting them on it. You will find that this makes a big difference not only to the way in which they behave but also in how they react to you. And it develops their strengths at the same time.

If you develop this good habit you will also find, funnily enough, that it becomes much easier to correct people when they could be doing things better. They will not be so defensive or resentful when you point out ways in which they can improve when they already know you as someone who always notices and reinforces what they do well.

To start with criticism, tends to create disagreement.

To start with what is right, tends to create agreement.

This is a powerful principle and will have lasting effects on how you succeed in the world. To criticize or to find fault is easy. Look for what you can agree with, look for what someone is doing well, look for the positive and work with people from that starting point.



## Chapter 11

When you are not sure, ask





One thing we have learned when assisting learners to start successful careers, is when they start at work, ask, if you are not sure.

Often a new employee is not sure about something, and thinks they may be thought less of, if they ask. "I am a graduate, maybe they will think I am poorly trained? Maybe they will think I should know this? Maybe, maybe."

Well, the only thing to do is ask. Even if you feel it goes against your instinct, at first, ask. We have checked and surveyed and researched this point. Employers want you to ask. Take this advice and your career will go further quicker.

In life, sometimes we are taught that we should be quiet. "Elders are present, keep your opinion to yourself. Children should be seen and not heard (This has even become an English idiom)". Girls especially should be quiet, according to some authors from back in 1450. This is old advice. The modern world requires more communication, not less.

In some UK research, in decades past, children were seen and not heard while parents made decisions based on what suited them, without consulting them. Nine out of 10 parents now say they routinely involve their children in family decision making no matter what age they are.

Those born a generation ago admit they were neither offered nor took any role in making family decisions when they were young

Children are far smarter now; they know exactly what they want from an early age and are encouraged to ask for it. They're involved in some of the major purchasing decisions where they mightn't have been before.

This modern way is true for employees as well. Speak up. Ask. Communicate. Doing this removes uncertainty, allows you to do a better job, quicker and more accurately.

We are faced with 1000's of new variables each month in our lives. No new employee is expected to know everything. None. To deal with this, you must communicate. Always.

However much it hurts, however difficult it seems to communicate when you are not sure what the result will be, if ever you find yourself asking, should I say it or should I not, then say it. In the long run it will always be the right decision.

Want an example? A good friend of yours has fallen into the habit of gambling away most of his salary on card games on the internet. You notice this. Should you speak to him about it or not? When you are not sure, speak up. You speak to him. He is furious and loses his temper with you and denies everything. He doesn't stop. You tell him that you are going to tell his wife. He shouts and screams at you and says

he will never talk to you again if you do. You tell his wife. More shouting and screaming. She says she will leave him if he doesn't stop. She says she will tell his boss. This finally gets through to him and he stops. Three months later he comes and thanks you for saving his job and his marriage. If you had just kept quiet he might be on the streets now, down and out, without family, money, job or friends.

This applies in very simple situations like having questions at work. Should you ask? What if my boss thinks I'm stupid if I ask? Doesn't the boss think I should already know how to do this? As we said earlier, bosses prefer you to ask or to communicate or to speak up. We even have signs in our academies saying "Ask, Ask, Ask!"

## Chapter 12

### Have Good Manners, Etiquette, Grooming & Personal Habits





Clarence Thomas said "Good manners will open doors that the best education cannot."

Paying attention to manners, etiquette and grooming is very much part of a successful life, in fact much more so than people realize. You could argue that a good education is more important than manners, and you would be right, but the fact remains that if you are lacking in manners you might not be given the opportunity to put your education to good use.

## Manners and Etiquette

What do we mean by manners? A good dictionary says, "Polite ways of behaving". And etiquette? "The customary rules for conduct or behaviour, including in a profession." What about grooming? "The things that people do to keep themselves clean and make themselves look nice".

So we can see that these three words all relate to what we do to fit in with the customs and expectations of the group or society to which we belong from a behaviour point of view.

Following these three basic ideas helps build agreement between you and your group. The opposite is also true. Having bad manners, poor etiquette and poor grooming creates disagreements (upsets) between you and your group.

Every organization, like every family, has its own rules of etiquette and manners and there are rules for each profession. These are set out in a book called "Etiquette for Success". This book, researched and created in South Africa, goes into great detail and covers every area of your professional and private life. It will make a great difference to your success. If you do not have access to this book you could ask your facilitator, look this up on the Internet on their website, or try a similar book in your local bookstore.

## Grooming and hygiene

Grooming is also important. Sometimes people do not realize that they are judged on the basis of their appearance. And the way you dress is often part of the culture of your group or team. In the paragraphs below, we will include personal habits.

Keep your personal hygiene to a high standard, including cleanliness, dental hygiene and hair. Be moderate (avoiding excess) when eating and drinking. Take care of your health. Rest properly. Dress in agreement with your workplace. Expensive is not what is required. Just thoughtfulness and careful budgeting.

Making sure your personal hygiene is always a priority is important to professional success. Keeping your body looking and smelling clean is important for your personal health but it also has a lot to do with how people react to you, in your private as well as in your professional life.

## Personal Habits

Proper rest is not always well understood. Here are some thoughts from WebMD; good rest or sleep gives you:

- Better memory
- Stronger immune system
- Lower risk of injury
- Better mood
- Better weight control
- Clearer thinking
- Better health
- Less pain
- Better sex life

These sound like very good reasons to take this advice.

Some drugs are good for you, as in specific medicines, but others are harmful. Thousands of young South Africans suffer from the bad effects of drug use. You will probably know about some cases personally.

People who take harmful drugs do not see the world clearly. They believe they 'feel better' or 'perform better' when they take drugs, but this is not true. It is a delusion. Sooner or later they will become addicted and the drugs will destroy them physically. Addicts steal and lie or do anything to get the next dose of drugs. They are unreliable and dangerous. Discourage people from taking harmful drugs.

Alcohol abuse is probably the single greatest reason why careers and relationships fail. Part of the trouble is that alcohol is socially acceptable in many cultures and is also not harmful when taken in moderation, and so addiction can creep up on you without you being aware of it. Be alert to the consequences of drinking alcohol. Have your own very firm policy on how you treat this subject.

Become an ambassador of a moderate (not excessive) life, including being faithful and truthful in your relationships.
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Unfaithfulness on the part of a sexual partner can have very heavy consequences. The newspapers are full of the violence caused by unfaithfulness. And there is also the question of health; if you do not insist upon faithfulness from a sexual partner, you lay yourself open to disease.

Maintain a healthy diet. This simply means eating well and in moderation. Balance your intake of food to include the nutrients needed by your body to stay healthy. We are not recommending any particular diet, but rather advising moderation and some attention to this subject. This advice is true for exercise as well.



The vast majority of successful professionals take care of their rest, eating habits and exercise. You can research this yourself if you need more information.

Taking care of yourself, professionally, includes acting upon each and every one of the principles mentioned in this chapter.

Wherever you are in terms of trying to apply these principles, the best way to improve things, is to do so one by one. Start somewhere, and work up from there.



## Chapter 13

Care for your personal space and the environment





Caring for and looking after your own spaces is a habit you can develop and, if you follow this principle, it has a positive effect on your performance and your interaction with others.

By spaces we mean your personal belongings and space at home as well as your work space and facilities. Being organized and caring for these important aspects of your life helps your general sense of order and progress.

Many organizations place a lot of importance on this quality in their staff or potential employees. Looking at someone's personal space, the state of their possessions, their car, their workplace space, will tell you a lot about how they operate. Sharp and alert memory seems to be better with those who display tidy habits and a good sense of order. Knowing this, you can then work on this quality and improve it.

If your space is neat and clean, both at home and at work, and if your things are well looked after, you will find this will have a positive effect on your productivity and your self-esteem. And people around you will notice and approve.

Caring for your personal space and possessions extends to caring for those around you. This includes taking care of family, of being a support and positive influence on children and of course caring for and respecting your parents and extended family. How much you can help is often modified to some extent by your ability and capacity.

Some of us are asked for a lot, when it comes to family and even extended family. We operate within cultural norms and these norms often dictate to us, what is expected of us.

It is difficult to give advice in this area, but, what we have experienced with hundreds of learners on our programs, and in business, is that when your own survival is hindered or harmed, these norms need to be modified. Paying the majority of your income to others, and suffering personally, stops your own progress and ability to succeed. A young entrepreneur started a spinach-growing mini-farm using tunnel protected farming methods. She did well. The business grew. She started making money. Her extended family made more and more demands on her to pay for various expenses. She found it hard to say 'no'. She started cutting her business expenses to pay for family-related matters. The business suffered. She eventually gave up the business and left the area to find a 'normal' job in a company.

Looking at the above example, caring for family and friends, is a cultural norm, but when it is destructive, it needs to be managed.

## Environment

This principle of caring can be expanded to include your *whole* environment.

This starts very simply with your immediate environment. If you throw an empty plastic bottle or packet out of a vehicle, for example, that is not taking care of the things around you. This is also not setting a good example. This idea can be further expanded into every part of your community and professional life.

Just as one example, let us consider plastic. If we throw away a plastic bottle or a shopping bag, what happens to it? In a village in Switzerland, Davos, many high-powered meetings and conferences are held each year to look at the top issues in the world. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation report from Davos 2016 said:

"Decades of plastic production have already caused environmental problems. The report says that every year "at least 8 million tonnes of plastics leak into the ocean. This is equivalent to dumping the contents of one garbage truck into the ocean every minute. If no action is taken, this is expected to increase to two per minute by 2030 and four per minute by 2050

"In a business-as-usual scenario, the ocean is expected to contain one tonne of plastic for every three tonnes of fish by 2025, and by 2050, more plastics than fish".

The plastic bottle or packet thrown out of the window can still be around many years later. Something is biodegradable or not. According to the World Nuclear Association, nuclear waste from nuclear power stations takes 1,000 to 10,000 years to degrade to its original level when mined. Its hazard depends on how concentrated it is.

**How fast do things biodegrade?** Here is a list from Science Learn website showing how long it takes various items to degrade and become recycled into nature, naturally:

Vegetables	5 days –1 month
Paper	2–5 months
Cotton T-shirt	6 months
Orange peels	6 months
Plastic-coated paper milk cartons	5 years
Leather shoes	25–40 years
Nylon fabric	30–40 years
Tin cans	50–100 years
Aluminium cans	80–100 years
Some glass bottles	1 million years
Styrofoam cup	500 years to forever
Some plastic bags	500 years to forever

We notice litter in our communities or junk thrown out of vehicles or dropped while waiting for transport. The Principle is to take care of our environment. There are hundreds of groups around the world trying to do this and to support this effort. In the years to come, it will become more and more important.

Recycle plastics; take care of our environment, for the sake of our children and their children.

We can start small and grow our influence from there. Start by taking care of your own purchases and litter. If you can, extend this to influencing others.

Organize a community clean-up day. Give talks at schools. Anything will help if we are aware of how a clean environment can help us live better lives, now, and in the future.

The world needs help from all of us if we are going to have a healthy, sustainable and pleasant place in which to live.





## Chapter 14

### Use the Golden Rule





## Treating others

**D**o not harm others. Treat them the way you would like to be treated. This is known as the Golden Rule.

If you google "The Golden Rule" you will find that many great thinkers have written about this, from the Ancient Greeks, Old Testament, the Jewish Talmud, the Christian Bible, the Qur'an and in other great writings. (Wikipedia)

500 years before Christ, in Europe, Laozi said "Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss." In China, around the same time, Confucius said "Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself." The Hindu religion says, "Do not do to another what you would not yourself experience". In Native American Spirituality we get "All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves".

In other words, before acting, ask yourself this simple question; "Would I like someone else to do this to me?"

It is still very good advice.

If you feel they somehow deserve some tough treatment, then before acting, ask yourself another question; "Is this really going to help the situation?"

## Living cleverly

It is tough to live life without harming anything. That is not possible. We sit down and enjoy a nice juicy chicken burger, for example. The chicken died to offer us our meal. The wheat plants in the burger roll were cut down and processed to make your burger. Some harm must happen for life to be lived.

When living life, try and do as little harm as possible to plants, animals and your environment. Take from these what you need and be considerate of the things you do not need.

When it comes to people, the trick is to harm as little as possible. This is where the Golden Rule applies.

Possible examples of how you could harm others:

- Stealing?
- Telling lies?
- Acting in a deceitful manner?
- Verbal or physical abuse?
- Not keeping your word?

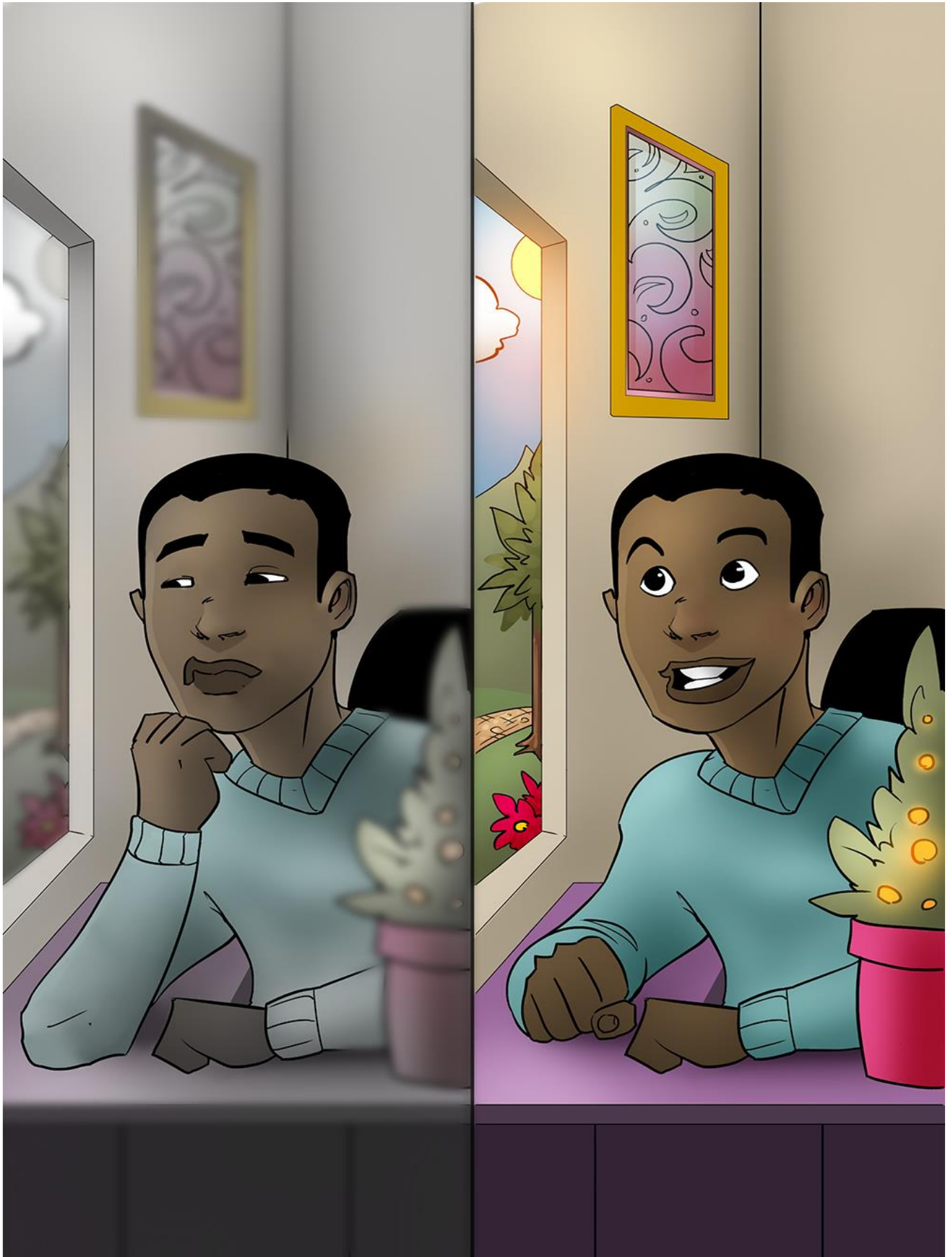
Limit the harm you might do and maximize the good.

Staying honest in your interactions with others will give you the best long-term chance at being successful at home, socially and professionally.

In the workplace, this is how it works. Dishonesty ends your career. There are many examples of this in the articles and books on the subject.

## Chapter 15

Be observant; be curious



To observe is to look. It is one of your most powerful tools in life. If you observe, you see what *you* see. If someone tells you, people from Nigeria cannot be trusted. That is something they observed or did not observe. They may have been told this by someone else, or read someone's opinion. Either way, it is not something *you* observed.

Whether you are rich or poor or somewhere in between, one thing you have, which is just yours and no one else's, is your ability to observe. Your ability to look.

If you go to Nigeria, speak to and meet people, go to schools, universities and malls and communities, and you come back, after you have looked and observed for yourself, you may have a view that most Nigerians can be trusted and some cannot. Just like where we live.

If you take on someone else's observation as your own, so that their opinion is now your opinion, this is fine, as long as *you know* that this is what you are doing. Best practice, where possible, is to observe for yourself.

In today's hectic world, in a serious information age, we do not have the time and resources to observe everything ourselves. For example, what is it like on Mars? We can look at trusted videos and articles and images and get an idea that we can rely on. So we rely on others' observations many times. In fact, to live life, we have to do this to make any progress. This is why one of the Principles of Learning, described in our Study Course, is to evaluate what you learn.

We are suggesting, in all critical decisions, observe for yourself as much as possible. Personal relationships, career, colleague and employee decisions. You can extend this to financial decisions and other personal matters. Decisions with longer-term consequences for you, is a good place to start with direct observation. Other observations are indirect, in other words.

Watching the movie, *The Big Short*, or reading the book, tells you a lot about this subject, without saying so explicitly.

### Observation in business (From a publication called *MBA Official*)

The most common method used for getting information about the various things around us, is to observe those things and also the various processes related to those things. It can therefore be said that observation acts as a fundamental and the basic method of getting information about anything.

But it must be kept in mind that observation is not just seeing things but it is carefully watching the things and trying to understand them in depth, in order to get some information about them.

Observations sometimes act scientifically, when used by the researchers in various research works but it should be noted that all observations are not scientific in nature.

According to TheFreeDictionary, "observe is to be or become aware of, especially through careful and directed attention; notice; to watch attentively; to make a systematic or scientific observation of something".

Management author Jamie Flinchbaugh, adds that direct observation is going to the direct source, with as little filter as possible, and *no assumptions* at all. This is how you understand how things are really working. We don't care how things are supposed to work; we only care how they actually work.

## Gemba

Gemba (The 'G' pronounced like Gold) is a Japanese term meaning "the real place." Japanese detectives call the crime scene gemba, and Japanese TV reporters may refer to themselves as reporting from gemba. In business, gemba refers to the place where things are done; in manufacturing the gemba is the factory floor. It can be any "site" such as a construction site, sales floor or where the service provider interacts directly with the customer. It is where the staff are processing accounting records and financial statements.

Danielle McGuinness says traditional managers often get stuck in all-day meetings without knowing the real work to be done. One of the most powerful principles of lean thinking is the "going to see." This means visiting the gemba, the place where the real value-creating work gets done in your organization. How often are we really there to support the work of staff, minimizing their burden? Instead, we habitually rely on data to help guide us.

Data is not enough. Data is great for trending and thinking long-term, but being on the floor and seeing operations is where you can really begin to problem solve. Moreover, being on the floor with your team sends a symbolic message that you are there to support them.

## Our own advice

Our own advice to our managers includes:

- Observe what is there and do not overlay optimism or hope (or pessimism) where none exists. If it is brilliant, that is what you see. If it is less than that, this is what you see
- See what you see
- Practice MBWA, managing by walking about. Don't become desk-bound. Get out and observe. Hit the road. Talk to clients. Talk to staff and not only managers. Talk to students current and past. Talk to the professions and employers. Observation as a skill and a management function is way-underrated in the business world in general. Observation precedes planning, it informs future direction, it gives you data to act upon, it enlightens, it avoids hearsay, it is a high-IQ function.



## Be Curious

Curiosity killed the cat. This is an English idiom. It is something that you say in order to warn someone not to ask too many questions about something. Don't be too inquisitive, is what it is saying.

*We are saying, be curious.*

Find out why or how. Look and ask. This is related to the ability to observe.

### Curious: 'Experience Life' website article (adapted)

One of the most reliable and overlooked keys to happiness is cultivating and exercising our innate sense of curiosity. That's because curiosity — a state of active interest or genuinely wanting to know more about something — creates an openness to unfamiliar experiences, laying the groundwork for greater opportunities to experience work or life in general.

Curiosity is something that can be nurtured and developed. With practice, we can harness the power of curiosity to transform everyday tasks into interesting and enjoyable experiences. We can also use curiosity to intentionally create wonder, intrigue and play out of almost any situation or interaction we encounter.

Curiosity, at its core, is all about noticing and being drawn to things we find interesting. It's about recognizing and seizing the pleasures that novel experiences offer us, and finding novelty and meaning even in experiences that are familiar.

When we are curious, we see things differently; we use our powers of observation more fully. We sense what is happening in the present moment, taking note of what is, regardless of what it looked like before or what we might have expected it to be.

It all starts with wanting to know more.

If we are going to find a meaningful purpose or calling in life, chances are good we will find it in something that unleashes our natural curiosity and fascination. Indeed, curiosity is the entry point to many of life's greatest sources of meaning and satisfaction: our interests, hobbies and passions.

We need to develop our "curiosity muscle" through more regular and intense use. Here are some easy ways to begin expanding your own curiosity capacity:

- When working: Look with "fresh eyes." Choose to see some things you may have overlooked before. Find out more about an area of the company you did not know before. Find out a new fact about your current job.
- When reading: What is happening in the world today? Find out some new perspective in something of interest to you. Not just social subjects or the latest gossip. This area of 'curiosity' can be very extensive. A specific share price, how our exports are doing, how many unemployed in your city, what industries are expanding. There is a never-ending list of subjects to be more curious about.



- When driving or traveling or walking: Instead of zoning out on a daily commute, make a point of actively anticipating what the people around you are likely to do next. Stay aware of what's ahead and on the horizon, look for buildings or businesses that you don't know enough about, or don't understand. Notice something you have not noticed before.

Our innate curiosity can easily become dulled by the tedium of some monotonous or boring daily routine. Reawakening it starts with shifting how we pay attention — even in situations we've experienced a thousand times before.

[This article was adapted from *Curious? Discover the Missing Ingredient to a Fulfilling Life* by Todd Kashdan, PhD (HarperCollins, 2009). Kashdan is a clinical associate psychologist and professor of psychology at George Mason University].

## Conclusion

- Be observant.
- Be curious.
- Keep learning.

The modern world demands this of us.

## Chapter 16

Choose your friends and associates well



## Types of people

The majority of people we interact with are people of goodwill and who are interested in helping others. Everything that works in our society, works because these people of good intent do their jobs as employers, employees or just because they want to, and keep things going well.

A smaller percentage act in harmful ways, by instinct. Modern literature refers to these types of people as sociopaths. Sociopathic Style website lists over 70 books on this subject. What we have presented here is a synthesis of this material.

Most people in the world are social people who get along with their lives and try to do the right thing. There have been many studies to find out how many people are social people and how many are not.

### 90/10

Estimates differ, but a safe estimate is that 90% of people are social and tend to help others as their basic impulse, rather than harm others.

This means approximately 10% are not social people. (Some estimates start from 4%).

This 10% has been referred to as anti-social personalities, sociopaths, psychopaths, psychotic, 'criminal' or in some cases, evil. For the purposes of this write-up, we will simply refer to these people as sociopaths. We know there are some definite differences between these types, but that goes beyond the purpose of this article.

We can see that a broad ratio is 90% social and 10% sociopath.

Reading through this material will show that the estimates of how many people are good and well-motivated, and how many are sociopaths vary. A rule of thumb for our purposes, based upon these books is 90/10, social people to sociopaths.

The basic difference therefore between a sociopath and a social person is the question of conscience.

Healthy Place website says (summarized): "At their essence, sociopaths are social predators. Common traits of sociopaths are a lack of empathy and a disregard for the norms of society, the rules both written and unwritten that help keep the world safe and fair for all. The sociopath can be defined as someone who cares only for himself and lacks the ability to treat other people as human beings.

"What is a sociopath? A definition of sociopath is someone who, because he is antisocial with *no conscience*, ignores reality to make his own uncaring and selfish life".

They are not openly recognizable. They could be in a large company, or a small one, or could be a municipal worker, or teacher, a psychologist or a lawyer, a government official or policeman, someone in charge of a community organization, a political party official or a construction supervisor.

Some characteristics of sociopaths are:

- No conscience
- No normal moral compass
- Lack of empathy. Learns to pretend empathy. Learns how to be 'compassionate'(says what society expects them to say) but it is false and learned rather than genuine
- Narcissistic
- Very poor relationships
- Likes flattery or praise. Often antagonistic to those that oppose the narcissist
- Thinks they are right always or mostly
- Pretends to be friendly or empathetic or supportive
- Self-interested completely
- Does not respond to normal attempts to improve themselves or to therapy, such as counselling
- Hides their intentions
- Lies cleverly and hides the truth
- Plays one person off against another
- The results or products of their efforts are destructive in some way
- Stating reality as opposed to exchanging realities ("It is like this". No discussion required)
- Can switch from being 'best friends' to distant and cool and even completely unfriendly, as it suits them
- Friendships, relationship and associations are made to suit the person not for any true sense of contribution to a cause or common purpose
- In positions of authority, they will get rid of powerful people, insightful people and really good performers, as well as good staff members
- They 'blame others' and are often not spotted as the cause of upsets in an organization
- They can be openly sociopathic or covertly so. Hitler was an open sociopath, Osama Bin Laden was covert.

## Work situations

We find anti-socials and sociopaths at work as well as in life generally. Due to their nature, they can even rise up and become senior managers or executives in organizations. The book 'Snakes in Suits' by Robert D. Hare is an interesting read, and describes various real-life examples of sociopaths in action, in organizations. This information's based upon actual case-studies of sociopaths in the workplace.

The sociopath is able to look for and find the most important things to focus on and to raise and discuss in an interview. They are masters at being a mirror of everything you want to see and hear. Their intentions are not good and they destroy relationships and your organization.

They do all of this with a smile and a pleasant outward appearance. They are in fact, as the book title says, 'Snakes in Suits'.

## Observe; Choose social people as friends and colleagues

Livehappylife.com says: "If you allow people to make more withdrawals than deposits in your life, you'll be out of balance and in the negative. Know when to close the account".

If you simply looked carefully, observed thoroughly, and do not listen to the hype and the 'PR' and look for results and outcomes, you would see that the final results of sociopaths is harmful in some way.

## How to deal with a sociopath

If you google this heading, WikiHow gives some tips. Best is to read up on what to do before launching into your solution to dealing with them.

Here are some tips from this article:

- Learn about sociopaths and what drives them
- Don't believe what they tell you. Be sceptical
- Only hold *neutral* conversations with them
- Never share personal information with them (family, friends, business, finances, dreams, goals, and so on. Sociopaths want to use you, your loved ones, your resources and your connections)
- Keep your cards close to your chest
- Don't talk about what makes you happy or upset
- Don't become indebted to them
- Document any harassment
- Get professional help

## Chapter 17

### Beware of peer pressure



**W**hat is a peer? A peer is a person who is a member of the same group as yourself. Your peers at school were those people in the same class as you and who spent time together. Your peers at work are those people at your level who you like and interact with. Your peers are the group of people that you feel a part of. They are your friends. This is known as your peer group.

What do we mean by peer pressure? It means that you do something because your peers are doing it, not because you *want* to do it.

To give an example, let us say that at work your peers are downloading stuff from the internet even though it is against company policy. You know it is not allowed and you don't really want to do it, but all your friends are doing it and you believe they will think you are a 'sissy' if you don't, so you also download stuff.

What has happened here? Instead of being true to your own beliefs you have done something you actually disapprove of because you don't want your peers to think less of you.

This is one of the most dangerous things in life, and one of the easiest traps to fall into. We all want to be thought well of by our friends, we don't want to lose their friendship.

Unfortunately this is how so many people start using drugs; their friends are doing it and they are scared they will lose their friends if they don't also do it. So they try it too.

There was a student on a skills program who was not doing well at an accounting firm. When the situation was investigated, it was discovered he had left the firm where he had secured a job, because all his 'friends' were in a crime gang, and had been putting 'pressure' on him for months to leave his job and join them. He joined them and became a very unhappy person.

Another student had a similar situation whilst still on a program and, after some consultation with the supervisors, decided that his 'friends' were not really his friends (gang members). He did not allow the peer pressure to take away his future, and created a new life for himself. He is now a professional accountant.

Another student walked past his unemployed friends on the way to the station every day and was hassled and teased by them about going to a skills program. They tried to put pressure on him to 'be like them'. He held his ground, graduated from the program and is now a consultant in a bank and going places.

What can you do about peer pressure? In the case of downloading stuff from the internet at work, for instance, you have a few choices:

- You can go ahead and download stuff too, even though you don't really want to; this is called giving in to peer pressure.
- You can play it cool and just laugh when they pressure you
- You can frown at what they are doing and let them see it
- You can tell them it is not allowed and so you are not going to do it
- You can tell them that they should not do it
- You can tell them that you are going to have to report them if they continue
- You can tell them you are going to report them, and then report them



This is a *sequence* of steps you could take and it is for you to decide which step is the best one to begin with, in order to get the best result.

The best result of course is to persuade your friends to do the correct thing. Giving them some *direct* indication that you disapprove is probably the best initial way to deal with it. This takes a bit of courage too. It may not be an easy thing to deal with.

Doing nothing is not an option, if you plan to be a successful person.

Each situation has its own set of circumstances. Do what you feel you can do. Take the correct path but believe in and trust yourself.

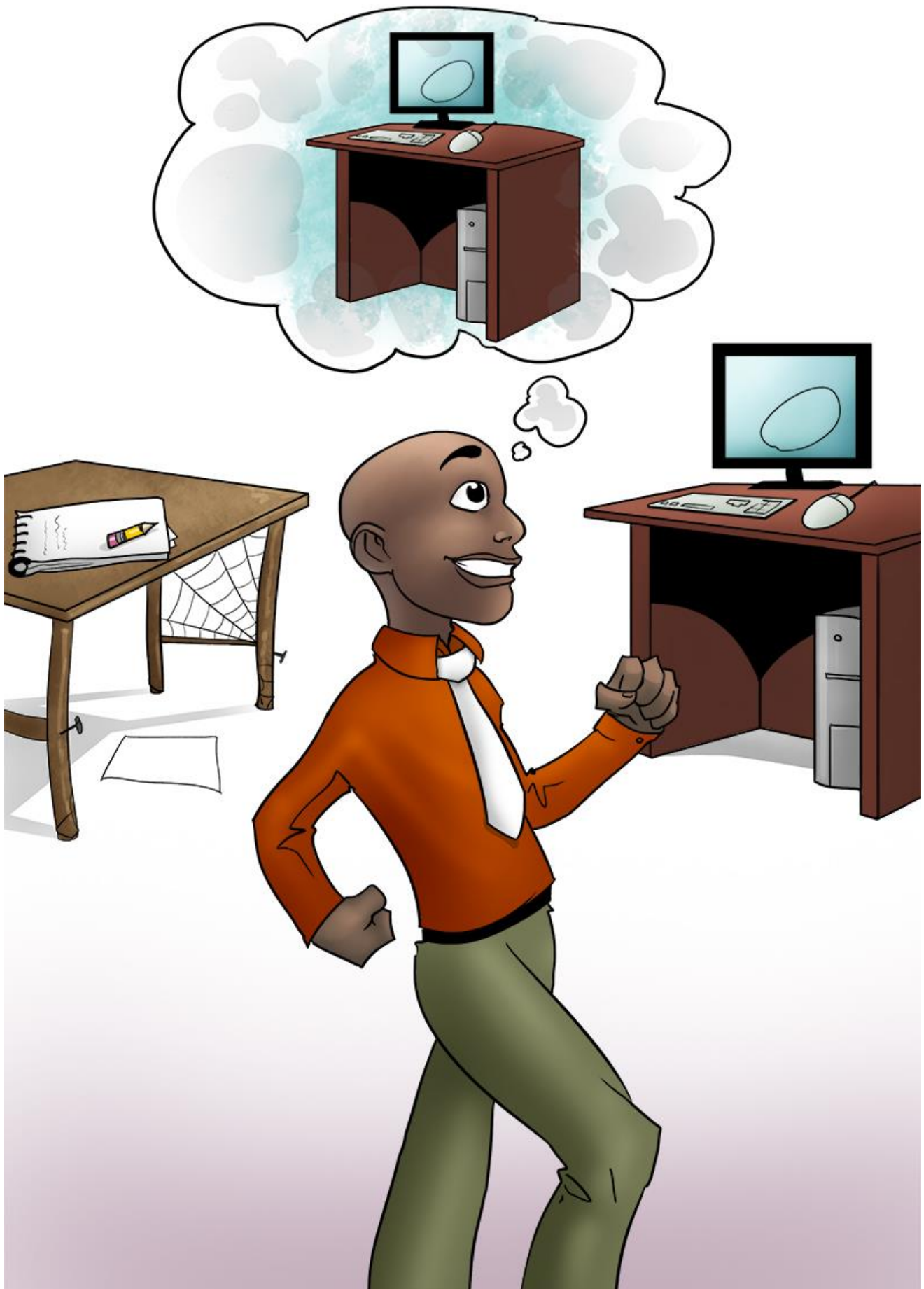
If you are successfully following all the principles in this course, then you will be someone who your friends will respect. Others will also like to be friends with you.

In this way you will have set a good example.



## Chapter 18

You make the difference





When something happens to you that is not that pleasant or easy to experience, many of us may look for a reason as to why this happened.

"I lost my job. I didn't get the job. I lost money by lending it to a friend. My relationship did not work out. I only achieved 50% in my exams".

It may help us feel better, in some way, by having reasons for these things happening, that do not involve us personally.

"It was bad luck. It was the weather. It was fate. It was that stupid so-called friend of mine. It was his fault".

A healthy way to look at things is to find out what you could do better next time.

### We create our own thoughts

We create our own thoughts. We create our own plans. We choose the path we follow. We decide things every day.

If we believe we can cause something ourselves, it assigns more responsibility to us. It asks us to step up. To be accountable.

Of course, there can be things that just happen. If there is an earthquake and you are right there, and are injured, it does just happen, at times.

We are referring here to everyday things that you could possibly take responsibility for.

To blame everything around you, for everything that you experience, would be unhealthy or at least incorrect.

The more power you gain through true knowledge and the more competence you gain through application of that knowledge, the more you can look to yourself to create things around you.

If you think positively every day about what you want to achieve, it influences the decisions you make. It influences those around you. It puts you in a better position to win and achieve and succeed.

Being positive affects your health, your decisions, your achievements and your life.

There are many authors who have written many wise words about this subject. Read some of them. [We have listed some of these wise people at the end of this article].

All these great people agree on the basic idea that:

If you think you can't then you can't.  
If you imagine success, you have a chance of achieving it.

## Outcomes are mostly determined by us

What you cause in your life, determines the outcome of your life.

This can be quite a tough statement to accept.

“What you cause in your life, determines the outcome of your life”.

We all find ourselves born into different circumstances. Living in a poor home, with parents struggling to survive, or with only a single parent, or no parent, can be tough barriers to overcome. These barriers may make you believe that your life may not turn out the way you dream.

To now say that “you cause the outcomes of your life”, is a bit tough to accept, but what we are referring to, is to take whatever you have and to work with that, and to gradually improve your situation and to succeed from that point.

We say this outside of your religious beliefs. Your relationship with higher powers is a separate thing. We are referring to the many ways you can make a difference, by thinking and acting positively, with your own God-given intelligence and ability.

We could modify the statement above, to make it a bit more acceptable:

“Wherever you are starting from, no matter your circumstances, starting with a positive frame of mind and a determined approach to life, you will be able to gradually cause more and more positive things in your life that determine the outcomes of your life.”

A change in how we view things, especially those things that are within our control, changes their outcome.

Many people can have similar backgrounds that are tough, with many barriers, and some will not succeed, while others go on to securing good jobs and supporting not only themselves, but their families as well.

This goes to show that our circumstances don't necessarily define our success. Our viewpoint and determination to overcome these circumstances, while focusing on the vision, can make all the difference in changing the outcome of our lives.

## A vision

A vision can be called a future outcome that has not yet been realized.

To realize it, you must keep it alive as a vision, whilst working hard and cleverly, and being determined to make it happen.

Some people take a walk in the rain, whilst other people just get wet.

For someone to start off in rural Zululand, and to attend the local university with parents who are not well-off, manage to get a job in finance and to only then find out the degree is not accredited by the professional body. To then begin a part-time study program to upgrade the degree, to pass this upgrade and then continue to obtain an honours degree, required by the professional body. All the time living and surviving. After obtaining the honours degree, to continue on and complete 3 years

articles, or Learnership, then to write a board exam and not pass, rewrite and then pass, and then to find that there is a board exam number 2 still to write. To write this exam and not pass. To rewrite this same exam once again, later, and to finally pass. To find there is still, a specialist course to study and pass, on this tough journey.

To finally get through all these barriers. With an impossible financial struggle. To finally be awarded the Professional Designation of Chartered Accountant.

This is amazing. And this is a true story.

This person had a vision in mind, an objective, a target, a dream if you like. He pursued this dream by staying very positive throughout. Working hard is not even a good description of what he had to do.

He was, at that time, a young Black man, in a very white profession.

He succeeded. He survived, sometimes he did not know whether to spend his small amount of cash on a new jacket or shoes, or to use it for a few better meals that week. It was tough, it was not easy. Sometimes he felt his purpose weakening, but still he continued.

He could never achieve this by being negative. True?

We said earlier, "A vision can be called a future outcome that has not yet been realized.

"To realize it, you must keep it alive as a vision, whilst working hard and cleverly, and being determined to make it happen."

This person did this, clearly.

## Look for positives

When you find you are noticing too many negative things around you, look around you for things you like, or can agree with. Out of the hundreds of things happening around us, there will always be something we like or something we can agree with.

"That bird over there. It looks healthy and pretty and active?"

"The sun is shining. That's good for all of life. It's raining, great, the land is being nourished".

"I passed four subjects, even though I did not pass one of them".

"The baby is alive and well-fed, even though it has very poor parents".

"I sat in the taxi this morning and saw many people going to work. They have jobs. They are contributing to the economy. They are making the country work. This is good".

If you really do this, take the time to do so, you will see more and more of what is good.

The more you look, the more you will see. Try it.

This process helps you focus on being positive. It allows you to practice a positive view.

This influences your vision in a positive way. It makes it easier to make progress, and it makes it more possible for you to achieve those dreams.

## Conclusion: Wise words

A study was documented in research by Barbara Fredrickson, who is a positive psychology researcher at the University of North Carolina:

"When you are experiencing positive emotions like joy, contentment, and love, you will see more possibilities in your life.

"Researchers have often noticed an "upward spiral" that occurs with happy people. They are happy, so they develop new skills, those skills lead to new success, which results in more happiness, and the process repeats itself".

**Buddha:** We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make our world; the mind is everything. What you think you become.

**Abraham Lincoln:** Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.

**Earl Nightingale:** We become what we think about.

**Dalai Lama:** In order to carry a positive action we must develop here a positive vision.

**Henry Ford:** If you say you can or you can't you are right either way.

**H.M. Tomlinson:** The world is what we think it is. If we can change our thoughts, we can change the world.

"With positive thinking, it is easier to gain success, inner peace, improved relationships, better health, happiness and satisfaction.

"People around you pick your mental moods and are affected accordingly. Think about happiness, good health and success, and you will cause people to like you and desire to help you". **Remez Sasson**

## Chapter 19

**Believe in and trust yourself**







After having prepared yourself for life by learning, practicing and following these principles and rules, then you can *know* that you are skilled, that you are *competent*, that you are *worthy of trust* and that any person or team in the world can consider themselves lucky to have you on their side!

“Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.” **Thomas Jefferson**

Good luck!

# Chapter 20 IFAC Code of Conduct Overview

(Full code can be seen on IFAC website. IFAC is International Federation of Accountants)

## The Fundamental Principles: General

There are five fundamental principles of ethics for professional accountants:

- (a) Integrity – to be straightforward and honest in all professional and business relationships.
- (b) Objectivity – not to compromise professional or business judgments because of bias, conflict of interest or undue influence of others.
- (c) Professional Competence and Due Care – to:
  - i. Attain and maintain professional knowledge and skill at the level required to ensure that a client or employing organization receives competent professional service, based on current technical and professional standards and relevant legislation; and
  - ii. Act diligently and in accordance with applicable technical and professional standards.
- (d) Confidentiality – to respect the confidentiality of information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships.
- (e) Professional Behaviour – to comply with relevant laws and regulations and avoid any conduct that the professional accountant knows or should know might discredit the profession.

A professional accountant shall comply with each of the fundamental principles.

## Integrity

A professional accountant shall comply with the principle of integrity, which requires an accountant to be straightforward and honest in all professional and business relationships.

Integrity implies fair dealing and truthfulness.

A professional accountant shall not knowingly be associated with reports, returns, communications or other information where the accountant believes that the information:

- (a) Contains a materially false or misleading statement;
- (b) Contains statements or information provided recklessly; or
- (c) Omits or obscures required information where such omission or obscurity would be misleading.

If a professional accountant provides a modified report in respect of such a report, return, communication or other information, the accountant is not in breach of the relevant paragraphs.

When a professional accountant becomes aware of having been associated with information described earlier, the accountant shall take steps to be disassociated from that information.

## Objectivity

A professional accountant shall comply with the principle of objectivity, which requires an accountant not to compromise professional or business judgment because of bias, conflict of interest or undue influence of others.

A professional accountant shall not undertake a professional activity if a circumstance or relationship unduly influences the accountant's professional judgment regarding that activity.

## **Professional Competence and Due Care**

A professional accountant shall comply with the principle of professional competence and due care, which requires an accountant to:

(a) Attain and maintain professional knowledge and skill at the level required to ensure that a client or employing organization receives competent professional service, based on current technical and professional standards and relevant legislation; and

(b) Act diligently and in accordance with applicable technical and professional standards.

Serving clients and employing organizations with professional competence requires the exercise of sound judgment in applying professional knowledge and skill when undertaking professional activities.

Maintaining professional competence requires a continuing awareness and an understanding of relevant technical, professional and business developments. Continuing professional development enables a professional accountant to develop and maintain the capabilities to perform competently within the professional environment.

Diligence encompasses the responsibility to act in accordance with the requirements of an assignment, carefully, thoroughly and on a timely basis.

In complying with the principle of professional competence and due care, a professional accountant shall take reasonable steps to ensure that those working in a professional capacity under the accountant's authority have appropriate training and supervision.

Where appropriate, a professional accountant shall make clients, the employing organization, or other users of the accountant's professional services or activities, aware of the limitations inherent in the services or activities.

## **Confidentiality**

A professional accountant shall comply with the principle of confidentiality, which requires an accountant to respect the confidentiality of information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships. An accountant shall:

(a) Be alert to the possibility of inadvertent disclosure, including in a social environment, and particularly to a close business associate or an immediate or a close family member;

(b) Maintain confidentiality of information within the firm or employing organization;

(c) Maintain confidentiality of information disclosed by a prospective client or employing organization;

(d) Not disclose confidential information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships outside the firm or employing organization without proper and specific authority, unless there is a legal or professional duty or right to disclose;

(e) Not use confidential information acquired as a result of professional and business relationships for the personal advantage of the accountant or for the advantage of a third party;

(f) Not use or disclose any confidential information, either acquired or received as a result of a professional or business relationship, after that relationship has ended; and

(g) Take reasonable steps to ensure that personnel under the accountant's control, and individuals from whom advice and assistance are obtained, respect the accountant's duty of confidentiality.

Confidentiality serves the public interest because it facilitates the free flow of information from the professional accountant's client or employing organization to the accountant in the

knowledge that the information will not be disclosed to a third party. Nevertheless, the following are circumstances where professional accountants are or might be required to disclose confidential information or when such disclosure might be appropriate:

(a) Disclosure is required by law, for example:

- i. Production of documents or other provision of evidence in the course of legal proceedings; or
- ii. Disclosure to the appropriate public authorities of infringements of the law that come to light;

(b) Disclosure is permitted by law and is authorized by the client or the employing organization; and

(c) There is a professional duty or right to disclose, when not prohibited by law:

- (i) To comply with the quality review of a professional body;
  - (ii) To respond to an inquiry or investigation by a professional or regulatory body;
  - (iii) To protect the professional interests of a professional accountant in legal proceedings; or
  - (iv) To comply with technical and professional standards, including ethics requirements.
- In deciding whether to disclose confidential information, factors to consider, depending on the circumstances, include:

- Whether the interests of any parties, including third parties whose interests might be affected, could be harmed if the client or employing organization consents to the disclosure of information by the professional accountant.
- Whether all the relevant information is known and substantiated, to the extent practicable. Factors affecting the decision to disclose include:
  - Unsubstantiated facts.
  - Incomplete information.
  - Unsubstantiated conclusions.
- The proposed type of communication, and to whom it is addressed.
- Whether the parties to whom the communication is addressed are appropriate recipients.

A professional accountant shall continue to comply with the principle of confidentiality even after the end of the relationship between the accountant and a client or employing organization. When changing employment or acquiring a new client, the accountant is entitled to use prior experience but shall not use or disclose any confidential information acquired or received as a result of a professional or business relationship.

## **Professional Behaviour**

A professional accountant shall comply with the principle of professional behaviour, which requires an accountant to comply with relevant laws and regulations and avoid any conduct that the accountant knows or should know might discredit the profession. A professional accountant shall not knowingly engage in any business, occupation or activity that impairs or might impair the integrity, objectivity or good reputation of the profession, and as a result would be incompatible with the fundamental principles.

Conduct that might discredit the profession includes conduct that a reasonable and informed third party would be likely to conclude adversely affects the good reputation of the profession.

When undertaking marketing or promotional activities, a professional accountant shall not bring the profession into disrepute. A professional accountant shall be honest and truthful and shall not make:

(a) Exaggerated claims for the services offered by, or the qualifications or experience of, the accountant; or

(b) Disparaging references or unsubstantiated comparisons to the work of others.

If a professional accountant is in doubt about whether a form of advertising or marketing is appropriate, the accountant is encouraged to consult with the relevant professional body.

## **Glossary**

See separate Soft Skills Glossary that covers all Soft Skills courses.