THE TAO OF EMPLOYABILITY

Ram Raghvan

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Boost your effectiveness to get what you want by
understanding, developing and realising your potential

Ram Raghvan

To

Professor John Murphy and Professor Paul Sparrow who have always been a source of inspiration and have been the beacon of clarity

We hope you enjoy your copy of the attached book. The contents of this book is primarily used in our corporate training and talent management programs- particularly in the area of behaviour, skill, competence and leadership enhancement

These books are intended to be used as a straightforward guide to help individuals to understand their own strengths and potential areas for improvement by gaining insights into not only what they think of themselves , but also understanding how others are likely to interpret their behaviours.

The book can be used as the fundamental building block to help you realise your potential. It warrants sincere application and desire to convert dreams to realities. All the very best.

Best Regards,

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Contents

THE TAO OF EMPLOYABILITY

- Employability is not only about what you know but about letting others know what you see
- You need to have a strategy to get what you want
- Your behaviours control you from getting what you want
- Understand your source of competitive advantage

Before you start reading this book I want to make one thing clear. This book is not targeting the academic market. If you were searching for educational references or quotes then I would politely suggest you to stop reading. This book on employability helps you to define and embark on the road you need to take to get that dream job or get closer to your dreams. It is targeted at individuals who are at cross roads of their career[1] and who want to take a different direction or who want an alternate perspective to validate their decisions. It addresses the key issues and concerns of job hunters from fledgling's to seasoned professional. This book introduces the concept of employability and provides some unique insights and tools to help you get more employable.

The book is similar to a Do It Yourself (DIY) book and the onus of deriving maximum value rests on the individuals. Before I start talking about how to get employable it is my duty to talk about employability and what it means in the current context. If you do not want some history and some insight about the concept please feel free to flip to the first chapter.

This book does have a pattern and the chapters are set out in that order. However, as in any realistic scenario, you could browse through the contents whatever way you feel comfortable.

I have enclosed a worksheet in the appendix. Please use the worksheet as you see fit. The objective of this book is not to lecture you about employability but to provide some clarity on what you could do to become more employable.

I have included the worksheet for a specific purpose which I shall discuss later. If you agree with what is said its all well and good. If you disagree please send me an email as to why you think it does not work.

I am keen to learn more from wiser minds such as yours. If after reading the book you walk away with a new perspective about yourself that you were not aware of earlier or achieve a reconfirmation then the purpose of writing this book has been achieved.

We turn to the concept of employability from a familiarisation perspective. Employability is the combination of two words Employable and Ability. It is the process through which individuals can cope with the changing needs at work and succeed.

It is the ability of individuals to distinguish from what they perceive about themselves and more importantly learn how others are likely to perceive them. The key to success lies in that understanding.

Employability refers to a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work.[2] Employability is influenced by the ability to think on your feet, ability to understand and apply learning to communicate effectively.

More comprehensively, employability is the ability to develop self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment. For individuals, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers, and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market[2] conditions) within which they seek work.

Like any business problem one needs to have a strategy to solve the employability problem. To conceptualise a strategy it is necessary to understand strength and weakness at an individual level.

Armed with that knowledge it would then be possible to formulate action plans to help individuals get closer to their dreams. Once an action plan is drawn it has to be implemented and sustained. This is where most people fail.

This warrants a fundamental change in behaviour and that imply understanding behaviour from a deeper perspective. People set goals and milestones to monitor progress. However, some set their goals too high and use misleading measures to track progress. As a result they end up measuring the wrong things and loose motivation and momentum as a result.

You need to understand why you are different from the hundreds or even thousands with similar skill sets. You need to know whether that is a source of sustainable competitive advantage or if it can be copied. What is the strategy you are pursuing to get closer to your dreams? Are you competing in the competitive red ocean space or creating something new a blue oceans

In the current economic climate reservoir of talent outstrips demand. Organisations therefore have the luxury of cherry picking the best talent at a fraction of the cost.

The responsibility for mustering the required talent lies on individuals. To present themselves as "the" candidate, individuals have to understand the limitations of their skill and competence. They then have to start working on them to be better equipped.

Any competence or skill is mainly influenced by individual behaviour. Behaviour is a product of biology as it is largely determined by the patterns learnt and stored in the brain. Unfortunately, most of the self awareness tests available today do not provide the insight about the behavioural dimension that manifests as mindset, attitude and personality[3].

Without understanding the impact of an individual's behaviours from their own and perceived perspective (how others understand their behaviour) it would be virtually impossible for the candidate to know what behavioural changes need to be made to improve their employability. To become employable one needs to understand what employability means and where one stands in the bigger scheme of things.

This book is not aimed to help you get through your interviews. It is not about giving the correct answers that would get you the job. It is not about saying the right things to impress people. This book is about giving you the tools to help you understand the basic tenets of your behaviour and then use that understanding to build strategies to get you closer to what you desire, deserve and dream which incidentally can also help you get the job you want, shine in interviews.

Neural plasticity

Many managers who were interviewed for this book felt that it is crucial to recruit the individual with the right attitude over the one who possessed the appropriate skill sets but lacked the attitude. However, attitude is only one component of individual behaviour. An individual's personality and an established mindset motivates or prevents them from doing some specific task.

Rather than monitoring attitude organisations have to monitor behaviour. If the individual demonstrates behaviour patterns that are not congruent with the role they are expected to perform they would not be accountable for the final delivery. Any training given to these individuals attend would not add any value as they would never apply what they have learnt. It is vital to identify the fit at the values level. How on earth does that impact employability?

If an individual experiences value incongruence between their values and the values of the organisation they would never be engaged to the role. When people are not engaged they never give their best. Those satisfied with a result considered "good enough" never stand out. They would

continue doing the same thing again and again. It is necessary to understand that what got you here will not get you there. If you always do what you have always done then you will always get what you have always got.[3] If you want to move forward you need to break the shackles that hold you back.

You need to unlearn what you have learnt so far to learn new things to get you closer to your dreams. The pain of unlearning is no doubt challenging and difficult but without that change nothing can be achieved. The LIFE formula and the ROAD formula discussed in the next chapter can help you achieve that.

Although one would think that it is difficult to change behaviours it is possible to do that provided one applies all the principles rigidly and rigorously. This is possible because of the concept of neural plasticity. Let me explain. If understanding how the concept of neural plasticity works is not your cup of tea then jump to the next chapter.

The human brain learns through patternation and by speaking to itself. The brain screens, evaluates, and compares information at an amazing speed. It compares the

information patterns against the existing patterns. The data is evaluated and then imbibed or discarded rapidly. We have all acquired our knowledge when multiple patterns are built over and across these patterns.

Whenever we encounter some new information, our brain tries to compare it with our existing body of knowledge and appends bits of information that is relatively new. However if the new piece of information contradicts our existing knowledge base the easiest reaction of the brain would be to reject it.

If we are presented with compelling evidence then the brain invests time in understanding the new body of knowledge whilst replacing the old body of knowledge. The brain always comes up with an argument against the new knowledge because of the laborious process of reconfiguring the neural networks.

The fundamental cells that carry the signal to the brain are called neurons and synapse is the connection that occurs between neurons. When individuals think about something or when they acquire a skill their neurons get attached to

each other to form a neural network. Neurons that fire together wire together.

Neuro-plasticity refers to changes that occur in the organization of the brain as[5] a result of experience. Studies have shown that brain develops new connections when subjected to new experiences and environments altering behaviour and cognition.

I shall use a classic example to explain how the behaviour can be altered. We will look at the behaviour of a person addicted to alcohol. Their urge to consume alcohol stems from their desire to drink.

This neural activity will get a cluster of neurons fired. Let us call them "urge clusters" for the sake of simplicity. However, when the individual resists the temptation to consume alcohol it fires another set of clusters. Let us call these as "resisting clusters".

 The resisting clusters could get the individual to think about liver failure caused by drinking or loss of life and the impact their absence would cause in their families. These responses in turn fire some other clusters.
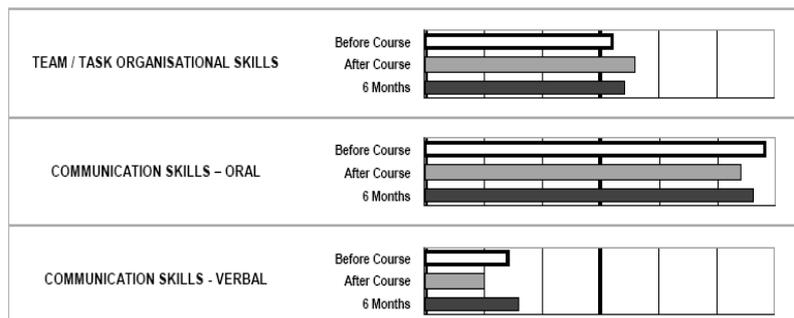
When the urge to drink exists it fires a set of clusters and when the individuals constantly think about alcohol it fires more neurons and creates a flurry of activity in the brain. Although the resisting clusters attempt to calm this activity the urge to consume alcohol is greater and the urge clusters fire on all cylinders.

This causes the brain to inject some chemicals activating some motor neurons which then gets the individual to go out and consume alcohol. When the resisting clusters fire more the brain injects another chemical causing the urging clusters to calm down and their urge to consume alcohol is mellowed. This example presents the potential conflict that occurs constantly in our brain. We could replace alcohol with chocolates, new shoes, books, dresses and so on.

In order to change behaviour long term it is not enough to calm down the urging clusters, they have to be rewired. A key property of synapses is that they are plastic: various activities and biochemical events can alter their strength. Individuals who desire to alter their behaviour have to weaken the urging clusters altogether.

According to Darwin's theory of evolution anything that is not used will automatically get eliminated. Clusters that have not been fired would over a period of time loose their strength and the synapses would rewire the neural networks to eliminate the urge clusters fully. Studies have shown that it takes 13 weeks to alter behaviour patterns and build new ones. The figure below demonstrates a real life example of how competencies get reinforced and the time it takes to imbibe the skill. This discussion clearly demonstrates that altering behaviour is a slow process and can only be successful if the individual is desirous of changing their behaviour takes seriously the responsibility of change. The silver lining is that if you want to change your behaviour you can alter it and it can be done in a finite time.

Competency Tracker

	Before Course / After Course / 6 Months
TEAM / TASK ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS	
COMMUNICATION SKILLS – ORAL	
COMMUNICATION SKILLS - VERBAL	

GETTING STARTED

- Know thyself

- What are your values?

- The LIFE formula to formulate goals and action at the non conscious level

- The ROAD formula to ensure that you stay on the path of success and happiness

The ability to understand ones own abilities, behaviours and competencies are critical to lay the foundation to enhance employability. People not organizations hire people. When they are scouting for talent they not only look at the skills required to perform the role but also look at behaviours, values and fit with the organization. It is not surprising to note that some people do not get their dream job despite having the right skills.

Any exercise to strengthen employability starts with true knowledge of self and making efforts to modify behaviour and enhance competencies all of which must finally become[6] second nature. Dialogue, inter and intra personal forms the basis of solutions to help individuals manage themselves to become more employable.

We evaluate our ability towards a task or team based on our intentions but judge others based on their behaviours and hard deliverable. It has become second nature that we rarely note that we are using different lenses to assess people.

If you think that you are different, I am sorry to burst your bubble… You are not... Let me prove it to you...Let us start with the assumption that you are in the final round of interviews and the interviewer says this, " Write down four words that come to your mind when you hear the word "party". Go on record it on a piece of paper now…

Ok now look at what you have written, you might have just assumed that party is about partying and you could have written drinks, friends, music and entertainment. I am not saying that you would have written these exact words but you would have written something on those lines.

Now, if you have put your thinking cap on you might have written political party, birthday party, wedding party and graduation party. Some of you might have assumed that it is about politics and written the names of four political parties that you are familiar. Some might have struggled with three.

If for example if I say that I meant party from the partying sense then people who thought about political parties would get eliminated. If you were not sure and identified four different types of parties you would also be eliminated. So the person who has written those four words pertaining to the partying wins right?

No... If the interviewer hates partying then the four words that come to their head would be violence, noise, drugs and nuisance. That means that people who thought partying from the fun perspective also get eliminated.

The human brain has an astounding ability to combine different words with different events, perceptions, cause and effects and it continues to build on this knowledge base over and over again. The knowledge we acquire is constantly shaped by our own value systems and the community we interact.

The point I am trying to make here is straightforward. If a simple word like party can create so many different perceptions, imagine the difficulty that you would have to go through to remove your intentions from your actions. We are a result of social and cultural conditioning and that influences

how we behave. Our identity is so intertwined with our behaviour that we seldom we see the difference between it.

However, when our performance is evaluated it is not what we know but how we apply what we know to deliver the results others require that matters. In other words getting what others want is end goal and can be equated to an individual's image.

Identity is who you are whereas image is how you are viewed by others. Many outstanding candidates fail to reveal who they are during the evaluation process be it an interview scenario or during a performance appraisal. In order to succeed individuals not only have to understand their inner strengths, skills but also present them in way others find it valuable. To enhance employability one needs to understand how they are perceived or likely to be perceived at any given point in time. An elaborate 360 degree assessment could help them gain an understanding of what and how they are actually perceived.

Traditional psychometric measures cannot help in providing complete understanding as the frameworks that are used are

two dimensional. When I say two dimensional it has an x and y axis and has two times two which is equals four options.

We as human beings do not think and act in two dimensions but operate in three dimensions. When we use a three dimensional structure then the number of options is two times two times two which provides eight options at least. 360 degree appraisals provide the full picture as they tend to use the three dimensional approach but that process is time consuming and not an effective business proposition. Neurological profiling helps us to understand how a person behaves and how behaviour is triggered in the brain[7]. Behaviour profiling as opposed to competence or skill profiling provides a holistic interpretation of individual behaviour. By understanding the basic tenets of behaviour individuals can then work on altering or tweaking their behaviour to help them get closer to their objectives.

Behaviour profiling as opposed to other psychometric tools is based on how an individual behaves and how that is triggered in the brain. Talengene Parallax has developed a behaviour profiling method based on that knowledge. Want to understand your behaviour? Get in touch with us.

LIFE AND ROAD

Understanding self is the first step to getting started. However, that alone is not enough to get you closer to your dreams. You need to have an strategy to advance and that can be explained by two little formulas : The LIFE formula and the ROAD formula.

The LIFE formula stands for

- Liberation
- Ideation
- Formulation
- Execution

Liberation occurs when one is aware of personal values and uses that information to transform self interest to synergy. Understanding the core values that govern them as a person helps individuals set goals and aspirations that they want to achieve. At this point, I would like to explain the difference between values and beliefs.

Belief operates at the rational level and feelings act at the emotional level. Beliefs are based on knowledge and are alterable when the underpinning knowledge is proved to be faulty. It is not an absolute; meaning there are shades of

grey. People believed that the earth was flat until it was proven otherwise. Values on the contrary are not alterable it is absolute and there are no shades of grey. People believe in honesty or do not believe in it.

People who are competitive and who want to win had the value dominance and or competitiveness ingrained in them. Take that away and these people will not be the same again. In order to be liberated, you need to understand your core values. If you do a lot of introspection, this should be an easy task. If, however, you have not done any contemplation so far you need to start doing so. I have provided a simple work sheet that will get you started, but you need to develop further to identify your core values. Values govern our behaviour because:

• Values govern our emotional responses

• Values can govern our rational responses although, for most individuals, their BELIEFS (not their values) direct the actual behaviour.

• VALUES ALWAYS govern our volitional decisions that, in turn, generate our "most" desired outcome at any specific moment (& desired OUTCOMES trigger our motivation).

It is essential to distinguish between beliefs and values and you need to understand the core values that help you describe what you are. This knowledge will then help you determine your aspirations and goals. Different trainers, coaches & mentors, promote different ideas about BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE. Most (the vast majority) will advise you to change:

• your PHYSIOLOGY

• your INTERNAL STATE

• your MINDSET / (frame of reference)

• your ATTITUDE / (motivation)

• your limiting BELIEFS for empowering BELIEFS

BUT the fact (i.e. experience, fact & reality) reveals that all 5 changes listed above do NOT produce LASTING BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE. To achieve LASTING (i.e. sustainable) Behavioural Change, you must change at least 2 of the 4

components that govern the assembly and / or application processes. There are 4 things that you can change that will cause LASTING BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE. Two of them operate at the conscious level and two functions at the non conscious level.

At the conscious level, you need to **"Develop your Skills and competencies"** and then **"Set and achieve outcome oriented Goals".** At the non conscious level, you need to "**Cultivate and improve your Language patterns"** and **"Establish a formal set of values"**. Knowledge of skills required, skills already present and competencies that need to be acquired help individuals hone their performance.

Setting goals to accomplish what needs to be achieved provides the sense of purpose. These help individuals change at the surface level. However, for the change to be permanent or long lasting there are two changes that need to be made.

The first one is about understanding language pattern. Remember the word party? It is essential to understand how language shapes our thinking patterns, influences our mental patterns which then manifest as behavioural patterns. The

second change is about understanding the values that govern the patternation process. However, any change has to start from within.

For you to become more employable, you need to start working with your deeper self and use that knowledge to set goals. Doing so instils a sense of responsibility that helps you sustain and secure what you want. Remember the persistence you displayed when you were a child or even as an adult when you wanted to get something. If you had believed that it was worthy you would have worked hard to get it and then lost interest in it once you got it.

Many a times we work towards a goal and when we realize it we rarely enjoy the fruits of the labor. We immediately set out a loftier dream and start working towards realizing that goal as we do not see the value of accomplishment or gratification on achieving the primary goal.

The core of the problem does not exist in the goal setting process or the skill enhancement process. It is a problem that needs to be tackled at the volitional level. The goal setting was based on a ideology than values. If we set our goals based on values than beliefs, then we will not be in a

constant state of flux nor will follow the next best thing that we believe help us feel contented.

Goals set with a volitional perspective liberate individuals from the shackles of mechanical rat race. Ideation is about having a vision and being clear about it. Unless and until you are clear where you want to go, you would not be able to get what you want in life.

You need to have a clear cut strategy as to how you want to achieve your vision. Strategy is nothing but a road map and formulating an action plan to achieve that strategy helps you surge forward. Unless you are focused on the tasks and deliverable and the results that need to be achieved, all of the activities above add no value.

Sustenance helps to get closer to your goals but, sustenance can only be achieved only if you know what you have set out to achieve and how you want to achieve it which is influenced by the goals that you value. ROAD

Whilst the LIFE formula works at the non conscious level the ROAD formula warrants conscious effort. ROAD is the summation of the four components of lasting success:

- **R** - RESPONSIBILITY

- **O-** OUTCOMES

- **A** - ACTION

- **D** – DISCIPLINE

R.O.A.D. provides the INSIGHTS about lasting success. Having set goals and identified what needs to be changed, individuals then have to hit the ROAD to make that lasting change.

By staying on the ROAD, an individual can achieve their goals and be happy as a result of the outcomes that occur with that achievement. We all yearn to change something or seek out to accomplish something but give up mid term and blame it on events beyond our control.

To learn something new we need to change something old or even alter our paradigms. Failure to do that will become the biggest stumbling block that prevents us from changing and unlearning old habit or patterns. Many people experience life as a series of destinations (events). They do not plan anything or plan something but give up midway.

As a result, something happens in their lives and then another thing happens and then something else happens and so on and so on endlessly. The sequence of random events controls their lives. This constant state of flux teaches them to react and adapt to these events and end up living event driven lives.

In practice, they are NEITHER living on - nor travelling on the R.O.A.D. to …. Success & Happiness. They want to have the best but cannot understand why they are not getting it despite giving it their best. As a result, they are not happy nor appreciate their accomplishments. The few people who experience sustainable success & happiness live their lives not as a series of events but, as a predetermined linear process.

These people rarely talk about destinations (events) and often refer to their experiences as a journey. They set outcome oriented goals and take specific action to achieve their goals. As a consequence of this frame of reference, they are on the ROAD to success and happiness.

Whilst LIFE formula helps individuals to formulate value governed goals and strategies ROAD formula will help you to

sustain in the way you set out to achieve. As a result, ROAD provides you the foundation to sustain what you are doing and get what you want.

To be successful, you need to take full control of your life and behaviour. Once you assume full control it then becomes easier to decide what you want and when you want it. You will also know how to determine the success of the outcome to help you confirm that you have achieved what you set out to achieve. You need to act to achieve the desired outcome. You, therefore, have to develop an action plan to achieve what you want, and you want to specify the required steps/tasks to execute the plan.

Last but not least, you want to be disciplined, and you need to have mechanisms in place to ensure that you keep your commitment to the plan. The INSIGHTS of lasting success:

• to think of life as an ongoing JOURNEY

• on which we shall encounter joys & adversities

• joys encourage us and increase our motivation

• adversities teach us to change our behaviour

- When we LOVE what we do and DO what we love

That is when we have discovered the secret of HAPPINESS

CASE STUDY

Simon is a Korean student who wanted to become an engineer whilst his parents wanted him to major in finance and accounting. He was at the cross roads when his parents approached us for help. We had a lengthy discussion with Simon and his parents to understand why they wanted to pursue a specific field. Simon completed an online questionnaire. His parents were asked to complete the questionnaire based on how they saw Simon behave. We then compared the reports. The reports revealed that Simon was extremely analytical and logical. It also demonstrated that Simon would work well in a creative environment than a rigid environment. The report clearly identified his key strengths and as a result the areas he would excel which was engineering. When we discussed the findings with them the parents were happy to let Simon pursue the Engineering path

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TOXIC BEHAVIOURS

Toxic behaviour causes stress

- Bullying and manipulation are two forms of toxic behaviours

- In total there 8 forms of toxic behaviours

- Every individual has a toxic, pseudo toxic, nourishing and Pseudo nourishing behaviour

- You need to understand the consequence of your behaviour as toxicity can get you off the ROAD

- Are you a victim of toxic behaviour?

In 2008, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) reported that in 2007, the number of workers who sought medical advice for work related stress increased by over 110,000. Work related stress, anxiety and depression, caused the loss of 14 million working days, costing the economy of £3.5 Billion8.

The same report estimates that 1 in 6 workers suffer from work related stress and warned that the figures for 2008 will show a further increase. HSE guidelines have placed responsibility for dealing with work-related stress on employers who must now take "appropriate measures" to manage the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities. Very little research has been conducted on the impact of behaviours that cause stress. This chapter focuses

on the behaviour perspective and how it manifests its toxic influence in organisations.

What is Toxic behaviour?
It is defined as "any behaviour that causes harm, damages relationships or generates endless, adverse feelings in other people9". Toxic behaviour often results from a lack of "Emotional Intelligence". Toxic Leadership in the workplace is regarded as either bullying or manipulation. Toxic Leadership in politics and banking has resulted in a worldwide depression.

Leverage, from an anatomical understanding causes stress, pain, and the current financial pain is also the result of leverage. The current financial turmoil has and will cause resentment amongst people. If jobs are lost by the dozen, then people would resort to unhealthy and unethical practices. They would resort to anything to undermine advantage held by others to improve their job security. It could manifest as bullying and intimidating behaviour towards timid colleagues.

Pain is part of organisational life. Pain by itself is not toxic. The way pain is handled (harmful Vs healing process) over a

period of time results in emotional toxicity. Toxicity in the workplace appears through leadership, culture or managers. Toxicity is the pain that strips people of their self esteem and that disconnects them from their work11 (Stark, 2003), in the workplace. In business speak lack of value alignment between individuals and organisation causes pain, which if left unattended manifests as toxic behaviours at work.10

Types of TOXIC behaviours
There are eight types of toxic behaviours four are classified under the bullying category and the other four are classified under the manipulation category. Bullying gets noticed immediately in organisations and organisations have established policies in place to manage bullying.

- Intimidation is the primary form of bullying. This technique is usually followed by a dictator, autocrat, oppressor and brow beater. They establish a threatening/hectoring behaviour pattern to intimidate the others. In some cases, they use intellectual power or authority to influence the person. Our studies have revealed that not all autocrats are dictators but, all dictators use intimidation to bully people. They have a pursuant

attitude and eager to take risks and are strongly beliefs driven. They are success driven and would do anything to succeed.

- Aggression is the second form of bullying. These kind of people demonstrate a hostile, antagonistic and belligerent behaviour style. This style of bullying is usually practised by a fierce competitor, who wants to win. However, for them success is more gratifying at the emotional level. They typically use verbal abuse to assail other people. They are feelings driven and can even become violent or resort to violence to get what they want and are extremely aggressive. Not all competitors are aggressive but, a large proportion of them use aggressive behaviour to bully people.

- Control freakery is the third type of bullying. This form of bullying is demonstrated by someone who is an authoritarian and stickler. They adopt a military, prescriptive, authoritative demanding behaviour style. These are people who use their position to exploit and exercise unwarranted authority over other people. They insist and enforce absolute

adherence to standards and rules and use micro management technique to supervise, stifle and control people. They generally demonstrate an inability to take risks which they conceal by becoming prescriptive and enforcing. They are rationally driven people who rely on logic than relationships to get things done. Not all sticklers are control freaks but many use position power to bully people.

- Perfectionism is the fourth form of bullying where the individual resorts to perfectionism, fault finding and nitpicking. These are individuals who resort to critical, unrealistic, carping and captious behaviour to bully people. These are people who argue over trivial details and demand perfectionism. As a result, they hinder progress but mask it by wearing the perfection mask and would ,therefore, appear as logical people. As a result, they set extraordinarily high standards and would not settle for anything less. These are people who look for and finds fault out of spite, pettiness or envy. They are feelings driven, emotional and view any activity as a risk.

Manipulation is the second type of bullying which usually gets missed out. Many organisations and individuals do not realise this subtle form of bullying.[11] Victims of this form of bullying generally do not realise the spite immediately but on reflection suffer the same consequences of outward bullying.

- Equivocation is the firm form of manipulation which employees have to watch out. These people adopt a bewitching, seductive, duplicitous, misleading and enchanting behaviour style. On the surface, these are people who use humour, charm and eloquence to stimulate other people, whereas, beneath the surface, these are people who use flagrant cunning and guile to mislead other people. These are people who appear to be relationship oriented but, they rationally use their charm to get what they want with people. They love to be the centre of attention and try to charm their opposition and followers alike. However, not all dazzlers are beguilers but, all beguilers use equivocation to manipulate people.

- Flippancy is the second form of manipulation. These are people who constantly take risks and are very people friendly. However, their caustic tongue or

intent is cleverly masked by their humour. They adopt a pejorative, insensitive, ill-mannered, glib, impudent pejorative behaviour style. On the surface, they make spontaneous quips who make people laugh.Whereas beneath the surface, they use a form of impudent levity to belittle other people. These people appear friendly, humorous but can get highly emotional when they do not get what they want, and that is where they tend to get caustic and manipulative.

- Dissimulation is the third form of manipulation where the individual resorts to a masquerading, evasive, avoiding, hypocritical, pertinacious reality avoiding behaviour style. They appear to be welfare patrons and insist on getting things done democratically. They mask their inability to decide or take risks by appearing to be democratic. On the surface, they appear as a sincere individual who advocates consensus and need to compromise. However beneath the surface they are hypocrites who advocate rules for others but use loopholes themselves. On the surface, these are wordsmith

who advocate human rights, social justice and utopian ideals. Beneath the surface, they are politicians who manoeuvre and manipulate people to sidestep a process under the guise of democracy. They sap individual and or organisation energy. However, not all democrats are dissimulators but, all dissimulators are reality avoiding manipulators. Whilst honest democrats give straight answers dissimulators always avoid giving straight answers.

- Toadyism is the fourth form of manipulation. These people appear people friendly, intensely emotional and caring but always look for support emotionally. They are fearful and avoid doing things by scoring brownie points by playing their " oh poor me" card. They adopt a servile, sycophantic, bootlicking, flattering, obsequious behaviour style. These people use flattery to get what they want or not do what they do not want to. They use flattery and false praise to placate and flatter an opponent. Beneath the surface, they seek to ingratiate themselves with persons of superior status. They sap energy of individuals and organisations alike and can be an

immense drain on organisation resources. While not all faint hearts are toadies all toadies use flattery to cajole and manipulate people.

In addition to the toxic behaviours, there are pseudo toxic behaviours that can have a detrimental effect on the organisation. However, there is a balancing positive nourishing behaviour for toxic behaviour. In most cases, individuals could be perceived as toxic whereas in reality, they are not. In most cases these individuals are not even aware of the consequences of their actions or inactions. Human brain has a remarkable ability to understand and connect different levels of abstract information to reach a logical conclusion. However, this innate ability also becomes the Achilles heel when it comes to understanding people. An individual who is exceedingly delivery focussed, extremely detail oriented in executing a plan and highly pursuant in pushing a team to deliver can be wrongly categorised as an intimidator or an aggressive person. If, the individual gets an opportunity to understand or visualise how his/her actions can be perceived it would help them to alter their behaviour or in extreme cases communicate with the parties involved

explaining why their behaviours could be perceived as toxic whilst in reality they are not toxic.

Signs of TOXIC Leadership

In business, declining performance, high staff turnover, absenteeism, sickness, increases in stress, grievances, disciplinary actions, early retirement and burnout. In individuals, feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, anxiety, anger, frustration, guilt, fear and hopelessness, all of which tend to cause ongoing health problems. Toxic communication can be terribly difficult to detect. Poor communication skills aggravate toxic situations. It is only when the behaviours of individuals are extremely polarised they tend to become more toxic. Any extreme form of behaviour can become toxic.

Impact of TOXIC behaviour

The impact of toxic behaviour is enormous as it can disrupt the effectiveness and efficiency of the individual. If employees are bullied constantly at work, their survival instinct kicks in which could be disastrous for the individual as well the organisation. The increased stress levels can result in erratic behaviour involving wrong decisions, costing a fortune to the organisation and eventually resulting in

reduction in head count. Power play, on the other hand, has similar effects but on a grander scale. Toxic behaviour of two power players can lead to loss of talent which could have been retained otherwise.

There is a legal standpoint that organisations need to consider when they choose to ignore toxic behaviour. In a recent judgement, Abbey had to award close to £2 Million to an investment banker as he was bullied at work in the UK. When there are emotional scars that run deep it stunts their confidence and paralyses the individual's ability to perform better. In addition to a huge payout, the organisation deters talented people because of the negative publicity that is associated with it. Ignorance of the law is not sufficient and cases brought by employees can have detrimental consequences: financial loss, loss of reputation and termination of trading licenses. Even criminal charges can be initiated.
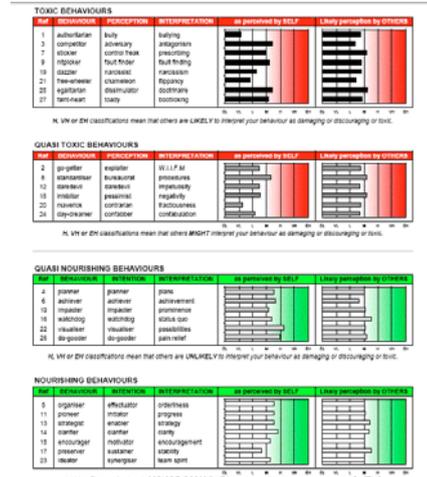
•Once weeds take root, gardeners often find it difficult to remove them.

•Once stress takes root, many employers can expect a double whammy.

•Costs rise and productivity falls - impacting the viability of the business.

Deducting and reducing TOXIC behaviour
Toxic behaviour causes stress and when left unresolved can damage the business. Most of the time people who cause stress amongst others do not even recognize the stress they induce by their actions or inactions. Understanding toxic behaviour at the individual level is key to becoming more employable. By understanding how their actions are likely to be perceived individuals can conduct themselves in a cordial manner.   To avoid business problems resulting from Toxic behaviour individuals have to undertake regular toxic health checks. People have annual health checks. They have their cars serviced annually. Businesses have equipment serviced annually. In a society that believes in prevention than cure, early detection over surgery, individuals should proceed through a routine toxic behaviour analysis. It can easily be

detected using the appropriate diagnostic tools by performing a TOXIC health check. If left unchecked toxic behaviours can get individuals off the ROAD to success and happiness. Do you exhibit toxic behaviours or are you a victim of toxic behaviour? Get in touch with us to know more

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CASE STUDY

A major real estate firm conducted an annual toxic health check. All the employees were asked to complete an online questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire produced a stress management report for every employee. Being in the real estate sector, employees had immense pressure to deliver. Problems in the real estate sector exacerbated their problems and they were not able to hit their numbers. However one particular team experienced high levels of stress and the stress was caused by the director. The stress report of the director clearly demonstrated that the director was highly stressed and was in behaving toxically with his subordinates. The findings were discussed with the CEO and the HR director. A feedback session with director confirmed the findings and he was advised to see a specialist stress management consultant. Since then his stress levels have come under control and his toxic behaviour has vanished. The teams stress levels have dropped dramatically and their performance has soared.

Goal setting

"You must not let anyone define your limits because of where you come from. Your only limit is your soul[12]."

Strange but true, this quote from a children's movie applies to every one of us. Our potential is the possibilities we can become and very few of us focus our energy enough to discover the outer edge of our capabilities. We are much more than we think we are. It is, therefore, vital that individuals take time to assess what they have achieved and where they want to go from here.

One would expect that the goals are set in line with the LIFE and ROAD system. There is no point in setting goals that are based on your beliefs. The goal setting exercise would not only help individuals to set clear goals but also give them an opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt from their personal journey so far.

Some view work as a means to an end whilst others consider work as a hobby. In the case, of the former people tend to emphasize distinct goals for career and personal life and in the case of latter the balance between work and personal life

blurs and, as a result, they devise goals that have a bit of both.

There is no point in being judgmental and saying one is better than the other. It ultimately boils down to the individual values and how their goals embody those values. In order to stay on the road to success and happiness individuals have to identify their work, family and financial goals.

They should use the insights they have obtained by means of feedback, their experience, introspection and the various tests that they completed to understand various aspects of their behaviour. For example, understanding the levels of engagement and the forms of engagement are a key ingredient in plotting the possible career options.

Individuals have different forms of engagement which gets them to spend their time and effort to advance their careers. Fundamentally there are three forms of engagement. They are: Intellectual, Emotional and Volitional. Intellectually engaged employees like the challenge their roles have got to offer.

Emotionally engaged employees are at peace with the surroundings and share an emotional bond with the brand and their colleagues at work. Volitionally engaged employees are comfortable when they realise the value they add through their role. Volitionally engaged employees have bought in to the values of the organisation and, as a result, are happy to play their role. Of course, financial security or perks of the job are the hygiene factors and are taken as given.

Every individual has a combination of all these three forms of engagement and the proportion of these forms of engagement varies according to the individuals. Understanding where you stand in the engagement matrix helps you determine the amount of energy that you are ready to invest in your role.

The work life balance desired also has a bearing on the goals set. Factoring all these aspects the individuals set short and long term goals with specific milestones. Every goal has to go through the LIFE and ROAD approach to make it realistic and volitional.

If this exercise is executed properly, it would provide a clear road map of where they want to go at the macro level. If individuals set their goals using the LIFE and ROAD formula arriving at the destination, would not be the only driving force. The goals would essentially be value governed and, as a result, they would be able to relate to the goals and own them ,as a result, they would ensure that they invest all their efforts to achieve what they set out to achieve in the first instance.

Understanding where one wants to go is the first step. To achieve that objective, individuals need to discover where they are at the current point in time. There is no point in setting ultimate goals without understanding the possible routes that need to be taken and the strategy that needs to be followed to travel along the route want to go.

We would presume that the destinations set by individuals are influenced by their values. Building on these assumption individuals has to work the various options that are there for them to move closer to their goals. The problem with goal setting is that it can be loosely or tightly defined. Achieving the balance is the key to goal setting.

If, for example, an individual sets their career goal to become the Head of Marketing it is achievable. However, they could end up heading the marketing function for a small organisation or go nowhere are their goal lacks specifics. Now if, we believe that they set their goal as to become the global / national president of marketing for a fortune 500 they are getting somewhere.

Although this goal appears to be tight in fact it is not. There has to be a time frame that they need to set out to achieve this goal and they just cant say they want to achieve it in 5 years when they are in the junior management cadre. Clarity on what they want is critical but, clarity on the possible routes they need to consider is paramount.

They need to understand the different roles they have to perform before landing in that prime position. If the person is working for that organisation, they could clearly define the organisational ladder and use that information to chart their career moves. If, on the other hand, they are not working for the organisation they need to obtain detailed insights and the possible routes to take to land in the role they ultimately want.

Goal setting is similar to defining the landscape. If individuals do not define or understand the terrain they will never be able to win the war. Understanding the workings of the organisations they want to eventually work with is important. Obtaining information about companies is not difficult any more. Internet is an information repository which can be tapped to acquire knowledge about the organisations they want to work for.

Professional networking sites like Linked in offer a platform to help individuals connect and network with people who work for their target organisations. Many people are willing to provide information and share insights of the organisations they work for. The pearls of wisdom these individuals provide are much more valuable than the corporate brochures and publications available in the public domain. This insight helps individuals map the different routes that are available to them with each organisation. They should also define a specific time lines to know the time that they would have to work to realise their goals.

Clarity of thought helps individuals develop a veritable road map. If they know that it is going to take for example, ten

years to get what they want, they need to make a long-term commitment to it. This is where the application of ROAD formula helps. This information could also set them thinking in a different direction. They could explore ways to shorten this time frame and could identify some qualifications or some key experiences that need to be acquired to do that. They could then channel their efforts to complete these courses and or work experiences.

The goal setting exercise has to follow this path to help individuals set realistic goals. This backward integration of the goal exercise reveals the gaps that need to be filled from an experience, capability, skill and behaviour perspective. The individuals could then invest their time to bridge those gaps. This removes any inconsistency between intentions and actions. Intentions provide the trigger whilst actions produce results.

Individuals can then work out the inventory of the skill sets that are required to move to the next role(s) and evaluate it against their existing skill set(s). They could acquire these skills through their current roles, request for secondment or even do some voluntary work in the community if required.

Individuals then need to assess their progress using some behaviour profiling tools to ensure that they are on the right track.

When individuals set their goals they need to ensure, their personal goals matches with the work life balance they desire. Whenever there is a contradiction and or extra commitment, they need to make a note of it to ensure that no goal, role conflict occurs.

Goals on their own could be divided into career goals, financial goals, investment goals, family goals etc. The same structure has to be followed to set goals for every category. In order to maximise the value of the goal setting exercise, individuals need to use the services of specialist or specialist firms. It is better to invest some time, money and effort early on in the process than undertake something only to discover that the route plan needs to be charted again.

Any goal setting exercise has the component of behaviour, skill and competence. It is crucial to understand where an individual is and understand where they want to go from the behaviour perspective. There is a handful of organisations across the world that provide behaviour modelling for

individuals and groups alike. One such solution offered by Talengene allows individuals to self rank 81 attributes on a Likert scale of 0 to 100 in increments of 10. This ranking provides a self perception inventory i.e. it helps us to understand how a person thinks they behave. They are then asked to make a forced choice between two bi-polar attributes in the second part of the exercise. This forced choice gets them to take a position which is simply a reflection of their behaviour. This will demonstrate how they would behave in the real world and how they are perceived by others.

Based on these inputs individuals are mapped on to the brain from an aerial, side and rear view. The summary of this analysis provides insights into behaviours and competencies that individuals perceive to be proficient at or are perceived to be good at by others. They could also complete a behaviour profile for the future role they want to get to and use that as a template to understand the gaps in their behaviour.

The behavioural system has been developed and constructed on well established theories proposed by Nobel laureates in

the field of neurology, relevant theories and findings from several streams of management and organizational behaviour literature.

Different professions require different behaviours. For example, an investment banker has to be rational, analytical, be extremely careful, delivery focussed, results driven and should be able to take difficult decisions at the cost of a relationship. When these traits trigger behaviour patterns that work in tandem with the behaviour required in the role then they help the individual succeed. Talengene has created a map indicating the differing behaviour patterns required by different professions. They have then been mapped on to their framework. This mapping is based on extensive data that have been collected and analysed.

As a result, it becomes easier to compare individual neural maps with the collective maps of people who are already working in that role or area of responsibility. Using the same example given above if individuals favour relationships over results, is disorganised, is not analytical but extremely creative it becomes clear that this individual has to invest more time to get closer to the role they want. This insight

helps to understand what the individual should learn, unlearn to enhance their skill set to grab the role. However, such an insight also helps them to understand what compromises they have to make to get closer to their goals and reveals the value conflict that can occur. Individuals then work at the non conscious level to bring about the change desired to achieve their goals.

CASE STUDY

Microsoft in India wanted to identify and develop leaders of tomorrow. The duration of the program is for a year. Individuals with potential (who demonstrated the leadership skills set out by Microsoft) were identified. They were then screened by our profiling system and definite goals for monitoring progress were then set. These individuals undergo periodic evaluation to monitor their progress.

The key element that dominated this intervention is clarity. Clarity on what they want and the gaps that exist has helped them develop and define specific interventions to improve the leadership skills of the candidates. Insights about their own behaviours and their own inhibitions that prevent them from getting what they want has helped the candidates overcome inhibitions and enhance their skill sets.

Measuring performance

""Anything that cannot be measured cannot be managed" continues to be the mantra to determine an organisation's success. Of late, many corporations are focussing on reviewing and revising the traditional measurement systems that are in place. Traditional measures have always focussed on value addition from a share/stakeholder perspective. The measures have and still continue to focus on what is achieved and how it is achieved. Ideally the "how" of the equation is supposed to have created check points on "what" was being achieved.

 In reality, that has not happened. The roots of the current crisis stem from greed and a significant shift from ethical governance practices. Ironically many companies that have failed have always brought out an annual corporate social responsibility report. There then is a glaring difference between what they do and how they do it. There has to be more to it than the "what" and the "how". Measures, on their own, do not have a role in an organisation.

For a measure to be effective, the organisation has to understand the value of the information that these measures can churn out. If an organisation is a collection of individuals then, how individuals behave would affect the organisations behaviour or culture. Individual behaviour can have a

profound impact on organisation behaviour when the individuals are in leadership positions.

Individuals, therefore, have a greater role to play in developing and incorporating measures to assess their tangible and intangible achievements. They need to articulate why something needs to be measured and how it could be measured in the context of the role. In other words, they need to understand the importance of what why and how they are measuring success.

In other words, measures have to be more value governed than belief driven. I looked at the performance measures organisations currently in use by various organisations. There was not one measurement system that had the volitional component included in it. Measures like 360 are inadequate straightaway if the organisation is belief driven. Measures like balanced score card focus more on the "what" and in some cases "how" but that also stems from a belief system which is proven to be faulty. If that is the case is there a way to measure performance and how can individuals use it to improve their performance. Defining the purpose and linking it back to individual values is the first step.

Purpose helps people identify the core reasons why they have to change and what they aspire to be. Purpose acts like the beacon and personal values act like the moral compass.

Purpose provides clarity on what needs to be done, and values guide how it needs to be done. When we scrutinize our actions to the microscopic level the purpose that drives us to do something, is primarily influenced by the desire to **help,** to **innovate**, to become **effective** or **excellent.**

All our actions are fundamentally influenced by these four strands. We want to help something, be innovative or achieve the best by being excellent and effective. When individuals set a goal and establish milestones to achieve it, conventional wisdom leads us to believe that if we achieve the milestones we can obtain the goal.

That means a quasi-moral milestone can be justified by amoral goals rather than the other way around. This can result in a lot of mistrust and plans to achieve milestones start sounding cynical. Purpose is not meant to establish financial gains, personal gains etc and is pursued for its own sake without further justification.

Moreover, it is easier to measure some skills and competencies from a job perspective ,however, that just would not give an indication if the individual has truly progressed. We have looked at the various job advertisements across sectors across levels of seniority across professions and have realised that there are six key areas that any role warrants. They are:

1. Motivation and Drive

2. Relationship capital

3. Service orientation

4. Strategic Leadership

5. Result orientation

6. Share stake holder ethics and governance

If individuals become proficient in all these areas, they will be able to get what they want. The benchmark for improvement can be set by assessing the individuals current level of performance. From our research, we have identified excellent behaviours for each of these areas.

Motivation and drive
• Infectious enthusiasm – influences ability to motivate and drive
• Encourages innovation and efficiency
• Self aware: Someone who can see what his/her limitations are and use others to help or overcome that limitation • Looks for ways to make things better and encourages colleagues to think innovatively
• Passion: refers to the spirit individuals show in doing their job

- Self motivated: refers to individual initiative and someone who is a self starter

Relationship capital
- People orientation: An individual who achieves results through people and is not necessarily focussed on task alone. • Supportive: Someone who supports his fellow employees and helps them solve problems
- Influences: refers to individuals ability to influence others to get things done
- Shows respect: refers to individuals ability to respect the other team members and get things done
- Individual challenges: Refers to individuals ability to inspire others to improve performance

Service orientation
- Active listener: Someone who actively listens to customer /employee suggestions and implements it
- Reliable: individuals who can be relied upon to take decisions, implement them and deliver results.
- Works with customers changing needs in mind
- Empathy: Refers to individual traits needed to treat their employees/customers fairly
- Simplifies: ability to clarify and communicate complex tasks and get it done

Strategic leadership

- Coaching: refers to individuals ability to coach and help people achieve results
- Implement: Refers to someone who has the ability to implement a plan or strategy
- Decision making: refers to someone who can independently take decisions and take it through
- Judgment: refers to individual ability to assess a situation without any discrimination and take decisions
- Development orientation: refers to the individual ability to identify areas of strength and weakness in employees and help them to develop
- Big picture: Refers to individuals ability to look at the big picture
- Ability to handle complex situations
- Positive demanding: refers to some one who demands results but does it in a positive way

Result orientation

- Interpersonal skills: refer to the measure of a person's ability to operate within business organisations through social communication and interactions.
- Problem solving: individual problem solving skills using conventional and unconventional approaches
- Manage and coordinate resources: refers the individual ability to manage and coordinate resources

- Analytical: refers individuals ability to analyse things critically
- Flexible/ Willingness to adapt: refers individual ability to be flexible and willingness to adapt to new situations

Stake holder ethics and governance
- Quality of work: refers to individual ability to deliver better outputs with similar resources possibly in lesser or the same time compared to others for a specific job
- High levels of integrity
- Regulatory compliance: refers to individual ability to complete a task in accordance with the guidelines set
- Risk management: ability to calculate risks from a big-picture perspective. It is the ability to understand the impact such risks are likely to have on individual, unit level or organisation level performance.
- Equality: refers unique ability to maintain equality and not be biased to individual employees, customers or shareholders

We do help individuals develop metrics based on these behaviours but, it is beyond the scope of this book. However, one could populate these six areas by looking at the roles that they want to progress. The goal setting exercise would have revealed the key roles that individuals have to move into to move up the corporate ladder. There are different routes (working in different departments in different sectors in

different roles) to reach the final objective. The goal setting exercise would have helped individuals identify the skill sets and competencies expected for each role and each path. They could then determine the list of general skills and competencies that exist across routes and focus on them in the first instance.

CASE STUDY

The training department of a major aluminium company had identified twelve competencies to increase their employee competence. The major challenge they faced was ensuring individuals who were trained, to sustain high levels of competence without further training. We demonstrated that they could overcome the paradox by identifying how certain behavioural styles naturally reinforce the development of some competencies and, at the same time, the same styles naturally hinder the development and /or application of other competencies. We dissected their competencies, identified specific skill sets. We then identified the mindset, attitude, personality required to acquire those skill sets and then mapped it on our three dimensional model. This provided an understanding of the competencies from a behavioural perspective. We then demonstrated that it would be impossible to get them to reinforce every competence at the same instant. We used our behavioural profiling to identify the competency Potential and the reinforcing capability of individuals prior to training. They realised that such an information helps the trainer and trainee to focus on improving self-reinforcing competencies, resulting in fewer reinforcement initiatives after the training. They have since been using our profiling solution prior to training to identify reinforcing behaviours and competencies and use those insights to train people so that they started applying what they learn.

PAID framework

Our approach to getting you employable is based on the PAID framework. This framework neatly encapsulates all that you need to be doing to enhance your employability. Individuals who work meticulously on these four dimensions will undoubtedly see their employability quotient rise above others. This framework helps you to enhance your skill sets, behaviours and competence. The framework would guide you to complete an overhaul of your profile. The four dimensions are

• Presentation

• Assets

• Insights

• Deployment

This framework not only helps individuals to determine what they need to do but how to refine it and present it in a manner that would help them become more employable. In order to become employable individuals should have a clear idea on what they want. Having developed a plan and identified possible routes they should identify and develop the list of behaviours, competencies and skills that would help them excel. Despite all of this if the individuals do not have clarity on how to target the job market and or network they would go nowhere. Even if they manage to do that and if they obtain an interview if they cannot reveal all these

skills to the prospective employee then the efforts invested would produce no fruits. The PAID framework is like a dashboard that helps individual monitor various aspects of employability.

P-Presentation

It is not what you know but what others think you know that matters when it comes to an interview situation. Presentation aspect focuses on the individual's ability to demonstrate 'employability' assets and present them to the market in an accessible way. This includes

- CV presentation

At the end of the day it is this two-page document that helps you get past the initial screening process. The information you present should be relevant to the role. I know you know that, and, you also know that every CV has to be customised for the role. The question is do you do that? It is advisable to seek the help of a professional resume writer who would spend some time with you, interview you and then write the CV based on your experience. If you have not used the services of a professional CV writer you should seriously consider using one. Agreed that it is a sunk cost, but if it opens the doors for you is not that worth it?

- Qualification/ Competence presentation

When it comes to presenting qualifications or competence we all believe that we were good at everything the role expects from the candidate. However, some tend to over

value and or glorify their resumes with experience which they didn't really acquire. They hear about some project or intervention and conveniently present it as part of their experience. In some other cases individuals who play a minor role in a major project tend to say that they were managing that project or played a major role. This is a dangerous route to take as lying is not the path you want to tread upon. I am not being the moral police here, but lets say if someone gets off with a lie and gets the job and if they are expected to bring that skill to work they would have to lie more and more, until they are exposed. Do not doctor or polish your competence. Believe me it will come back to bite you when you least expect it to. On the other hand there are people who have done amazing things but don't present it to the organisations. They are modest about their achievements but come on if you don't tell what you have done how will the interviewer know about it?

• References and testimonies

These days professional firms call up people who provide references and validate the candidates experience. So do not inflate your skill set or ask your referees to do so. Although references are confidential some times you get to see the references yourself. Please ensure that it is a true representation of yourself and doesn't overvalue or undermine your potential candidacy. If you believe someone might not give you a decent reference do not approach them. One of my clients who was made redundant got a lot of interview calls despite the tougher economic climate.

Despite performing well in the interviews he was not getting the job and he was wondering why. As luck would have it one of the potential employers told him that one of his referees had undermined his candidacy by providing a weak reference. The candidate did not approach this individual for a reference for the next interview and voila he got the job. I also came across another client who got the following reference from her employer: "Her attitude towards her clients is of concern". He luckily shared that reference with her and when she asked him why he had provided a reference like this, he said that he wanted to say that " She was actually concerned about her clients"…

• Interview techniques

It is not what we know but what others believe we know that will get us the role. This topic alone is worth discussing for pages. Yes, you can find loads of self help techniques, books and tips on the internet. I have presented some in the next chapter. However, that is what every one says and does or advices. So why is it that people are still committing the same mistakes? Why is it that some people always get the job they apply for and many do not. Preparation is the key. Yes you have to understand what the organisation does and what your role is. Agreed that is the first step but the devil lies in the details. Successful job hunters normally formulate questions that the interviewer is likely to ask and prepare for it. They look at the key aspects of the role and link it with an example from their past experience and present it during the

interview process. They empathise with the interviewer and present truthful answers which the interviewer is looking for.

You need to ask for the role and I am surprised to see that a vast majority of us don't do that. Successful people finally summarise why they believe they deserve the role by summarising their key skills. They think about the problems or challenges the role has or could potentially have and ask questions about that to the interviewer. In some rare cases they even come up with a plan as to how they would perform and the problems they would address immediately and how they would do it to the interviewer.

You need to understand that the organisation is trying to look for a solution provider and honestly evaluate yourself and position yourself as the solution provider. We have organised mock interviews for some of my senior clients with a professional talent partner who grills them thoroughly. People who go through such intense sessions find the actual interview process very calming and relaxing and they give the best and no doubt they win the role.

• Work experience/track record. There are conflicting views on how you need to present your experience. Some would advise a chronological approach if you have bucket loads of experience and some would ask you to list it based on experience. I have seen that both approaches work in any role. There is no hard and fast rule to present your work experience. However, you need to ensure that you present it in such a way that it stands out. I know a senior manager who

summarises his experiences under different categories and provides a cumulative value of the benefits accrued by the organisation.

A straightforward approach but it is extremely effective. Instead of saying managed portfolio for XX bank for y years n number of times, simply stating 25 years combined experience managing the portfolio for X client to the tune of XXXX million or billion with an average return of 30% or whatever. Get the picture... Do not let the interviewers do the math... You add it and present it in such a way they would see you as THE candidate.. Most university career management centres focus mainly in this area. They work with graduates and help them polish their resumes.

A- Assets

It comprises their knowledge (i.e.| what they know), skills (what they do with what they know) and attitudes (how they do it). We will work with them to create an inventory of skills they have, need to have, should have based on their career goals and classify them into

• baseline assets: basic skills and essential personal attributes

• intermediate assets: occupational specific skills , generic or key skills and key personal attributes

• high-level assets: skills which contribute to organisational performance

Sometimes we tend to be extremely critical in evaluating our abilities and as a result undervalue and undersell our skill sets to the prospective employer. I have worked with numerous people who firmly believe that they don't have a specific ability but when we sit and discuss with them they suddenly realise that they do indeed have the skill they thought they didn't have.

Let me give you a common myth that people have, that they cannot sell. In reality selling is about understanding customer needs which warrants empathetic listening, identifying the apt solution to meet their current and future requirements, presenting it to them in a clear fashion and securing the deal. It has then got to be followed up by liaising with the office and ensured that the product or service is delivered in a manner that the customer was promised.

The ability to sell therefore depends on listening, understanding, analysing requirements and presenting solutions, project management and follow up. A vast majority of people who are convinced that they cant sell have these skills in abundance. The sales function requires that they bundle all these skills and use it consistently. That is all that is there to selling. When people realise that, something snaps in them and they get enthusiastic about selling. I have worked with people who believed that they were not creative and I have used the same techniques to help them unleash their creative potential. The answer to our inability to do or not do something lies within us. We evaluate our abilities based on our beliefs which could have

been strengthened based on faulty premises. So why should we hold ourselves back.

You need to make an inventory of skill sets and competencies that you possess. You could then look at specific roles which require specific competencies and skill sets. You could then list each role that you want to perform and list the skill sets below that. You then compare your existing skill sets against those and it will give you the skill gap. You can then start working on it.

I have helped many individuals bridge this gap and have guided them to sources and or opportunities through which these assets could be acquired. Normally we tend to look at any skill from our current context. If you start looking at a skill and ask the question is it transferable and if yes what are the aspects that could be applied directly and what needs to be realigned you will be surprised at how quickly your skills inventory gets built up. You can then use these transferable skills from one occupational or business context to another to enhance your employability.

I – Insights
The ability to realise or actualise 'employability' assets depends on the individual's personal and external environment and the inter-relationship between the two. In addition to having a clear career plan, skills inventory and clarity on roles, it is also crucial to gain knowledge of the industry, organisation and key personnel. You need to understand the sector and the industry very well. If you are

planning to apply for roles that span across sectors then you need to understand what are the demands of those sectors. There are a host of resources available for you to develop specific knowledge and insights. You have Mintel reports or KeyNote reports which will provide you with an understanding of the sectors. In addition to that you have Reuters Business Insights which gives you sector specific information. These books and publications can be accessed from the library and you should start using them. I had a client who used to maintain a scrap book summarising all the events that happens in their sector. However, that helped him acquire so much inside knowledge he was like a "walking google". In addition to that you need to link with individuals who are specialists in your sector. You could use online forums like linked in or attend the multitude of networking events or face to face events organised by organisations. When we work with our clients we normally provide them a framework and teach them to build and enhance their insights about the industry.

D- Deployment

These are a linked set of abilities which include:

•   Career management skills and life skills

•   Job search skills

•   Strategic approach

You might be good at something and you might seek the help of others to get something done. Deployment is the set of

abilities that will help you to acquire specific skills and strategies to get what you want. There is no point in working and collecting information etc unless and until you deploy or act on it. The fundamental difference between the dreamers and achievers is that the achievers have taken action to help them realise their dreams. It is the ACTION aspect that differentiates intentions and effort. If you have meticulously introspected your behaviour, abilities you have obviously spotted the gap. You need to invest time and effort to bridge the gap. If you do that you will definitely emerge as the WINNER.

The Common Mistakes:

Although I could have put together a list of dos and don't whilst submitting a resume or interview, there is not anything new that I can say that is not been already said. For the sake of convenience, I have compiled the information that I found on various websites in the following pages. These are some of the common mistakes made by individuals whilst submitting their resumes and during the interview process.

WHILST SUBMITTING YOUR RESUME [8]

Not following submission directions: Read the directions! Remember that first impressions last. Should you send in resume by Email, Fax or Snail Mail? Should it be formatted or an ASCII resume?

Not building personal relationships: Develop a personal relationship with your recruiter. You want someone who will sing your praises to the next person in the hiring process, especially if you are not an exact match or have some other special situation. Plus, when a cool job comes in, who do you think they will call first?

Bad manners

It's poor form to mail your resume to 45 recruiters in one email, especially when you display them all in the **To:** field!

Keep a log of where your resume has been sent. Don't insult the recruiter. (I'm not kidding. It happens!)

Applying when you are not even remotely qualified

Do not apply without considering the requirements. Do apply for jobs that are a bit of a stretch, but at least be in the ballpark. Do not do "shotgun" applications. Pay attention to the "must have" vs. "nice to have" requirements.

Not summarizing skills vs. requirements: Recruiters get tens if not hundreds of resumes a day. Not all recruiters have the time to read your resume from top to bottom–some just skim for keywords and needed skills. If you are qualified, the recruiter will write a summary of how your skills match the job requirements before passing it on. However, they are not adapt in your particular professional. Do you really want them to decide if you are a good enough match to pass on?

Be pro-active: send a matrix of the job requirements vs. your skills so they don't have to do it for you. If you don't have one of the needed skills, this is where you say, "I don't have XYZ, but I do have ABC, which is very similar." Suddenly, you are the recruiter's best friend:

- They didn't have to search for the information.
- You typed the summary for them.
- You pointed out important information they may have missed.

- All they had to do is verify the information and pass it on.

Misnaming your resume: Remember, recruiters get tens if not hundreds of electronic resumes a day. Put yourself in the recruiter's shoes. Would you want to receive 100 resumes a day named "resume.doc"? Name your resume so it can be found easily: for example, "Joe_Jones.doc"

Poor writing or formatting in resume: Your resume is the first sample of your writing skill. Programmers can get away with bad writing and formatting, but technical writers cannot!
If you are seeking a technical writing job, remember that documentation managers judge candidates based on their resumes and will disqualify you if you don't apply the same standards to your resume that you do your documentation.

- Pay attention to:
  - Headers, Indentation and White Space
  - Poor Use of Authoring Tool
  - Misspellings

Misplacing important items
Highlight your strengths. Minimize your weaknesses. For example, put the most applicable information, experience or skills near the top of your resume. Put less- or non-applicable experience near the bottom.

Not anticipating and answering questions: Recruiters wonder about oddities in resumes, so be pro-active and explain them.

- Gaps in Your Work History
- Your Citizenship or Work Visa Status
- Moving from Contract to Perm
- Moving from Perm to Contract (to a lesser degree)
- Need Relocation Assistance if Out-of-state?

Not keeping your skills current: You should know the latest tools in your profession. If you can really just pick them up in a week, how come you haven't already done so? There is no reason not to stay current.

In conclusion

- Follow submission directions.
- Build personal relationships
- Use good manners and netiquette.
- Apply for jobs for which you are qualified.
- Include a summary of how your skills match the job requirements when you submit your resume.
- Name your electronic resume so it can be identified.
- Apply usability factors to your resume like you do to manuals.
- Highlight your strength, minimize your weaknesses.

- Anticipate and answer questions.
- Keep your skills current.

The Common Mistakes:
WHILST ATTENDING AN INTERVIEW [9]

The job interview is the make-it-or-break-it part of the job application process. While the resume may get you the interview, the interview gets you the job. You want to impress your possible employer so much that nobody else will be appropriate or perfect for the job.

Not enough experience: Employers don't want to spend time to train and mentor new employees. The more experience you have, the less training you'll need. The best way to demonstrate your experience is to give the employer specific examples.

Not giving examples: The more you can quantify your work, the better. Employers want you to help their business succeed. If you just give them a bunch of empty words about your accomplishments, but not able to give any specific examples, you're out of luck.

Not doing your homework: Having no knowledge of the company is a big turnoff, as well as, not asking good questions during an interview. Explore the company online and prepare answers/questions.
- **Unprepared answers:** You know the typical job questions, so have them prepared. Know ahead of time your answers to questions such as, "What are you strengths and weaknesses? Where do you see

yourself in ten years? What can you bring to the company that nobody else can? What brought you to this part of your career?" These generalized questions will more than likely be asked of you on the big day.

- **Unprepared questions:** Just as much as must prepare the answers to give to your interviewer, you must also come prepared with questions to ask of the interviewer about the position and the company. Employers want to see people who think on their toes and are interested in the position as much as possible. Scribble down a few quick questions that you can ask at the appropriate time of the interview so that you are not trying to think on the spot of what to ask.

- **Forgetting to do your research:** If you are going on a job interview and know nothing about the company, than you are mistaken. You must learn as much as possible about the position and company prior to your interview. Therefore, you will be able to hold an intelligent and well-informed discussion about the company. You will also be able to ask questions more comprehensively.

Not demonstrating long-term potential: Employers would like people to work their way up in the organization. If you tell

them where you see yourself in a few years and it is not related to the company, kiss your chances goodbye. It's best to show that you want to and can grow with the company.

Lie: Any small lies, whether on your resume or during an interview may come back to you. Half of employers reported that they caught candidates lying and half of those employers automatically dismissed the applicants.

Talk negatively about current or previous employers: It's definitely tempting to tell what you think of your current boss, but not to the hiring manager. Employers say that it is one of the most detrimental mistakes a candidate can make. Turning negative things into positive is the best strategy in this case.

Not displaying positive attitude: A little enthusiasm will never hurt, especially when it comes to a new job. No employer want to hire disinterested or arrogant candidate.

Talking about money too early: It makes employers think that you care about the money, not about the job. As a general rule, never talk about salary before the employer does. Be honest about your salary history as employers can easily verify it.

Inappropriate online content: Online search and social networking sites are new places where many employers are checking up on prospective candidates. Every other employer does that and in 30% of the cases they find something that caused them to dismiss the candidate. Make sure to remove any inappropriate content that can work against you in an employer's eyes.

Being too personal: Candidates who provide too much personal information in the interview can reduce their chances to get the job. You might be setting yourself up for bias or may even offend some people. Though it's illegal to discriminate, some employers will do so, regardless.

Incorrect attire: Dress appropriately for the type of job interview. Always dress in more conservatively than you would normally. Make sure that you are not wearing outlandish colors, showing too much skin, or wearing too much jewelry (man or woman).

Slips of the tongue: Although this mistake is difficult to control, people often make them. People accidentally say the wrong thing, infer the wrong idea, or blurt out an insult or profanity. Any of these slips of the tongue can throw you out of the interview race. Concentrate on what you say, so that it comes out intelligibly and not incoherently.

Ringing of cell phones: Make sure your phone is off prior to the interview. Nothing is ruder or more disrespectful to an interviewer than listening to another ring.

Checking the time: Be careful not to glance at your watch or the wall clock in the middle of your interview. Perhaps you should take off your watch prior to the interview so that you have no chance of accidentally looking at your wrist.

Telling about other job offers: While you may think it appears desirable to speak about other companies offering you a position, it may come across as ridiculous in a job interview. It is important to keep matters separate. They may see you as someone who already has a job. Why would they want to give you their position if you've already got one somewhere else.

Dropping too many names: Again, this "do not" is a double-edged sword. While contacts are vital in the job market, they can often be used for the wrong purposes. You do not want to be seen as someone who gets by only on his or her connections.

Tardiness: Do not be late to your job interview. Rather, arrive around 10-15 minutes early so you can settle in, fill out paperwork, and allow your interviewer to get ready.

No smoking, no gum, no drinking. This is all comfort stuff for you, and none of it helps you here. Employers are more likely to hire non-smokers. At a lunch or dinner interview, others may order drinks. You best not

Winging the interview. Practice! Get a friend, a list of interview questions and a tape recorder, and conduct an interview rehearsal. Include a presentation or demonstration, if that will be part of the real interview. Start with introducing yourself, and go all through an interview to saying good-bye. Write out any answers you have difficulty with, and practice until your delivery is smooth (but not slick)

Talk, Talk, Talk. Rambling, interrupting the interviewer, and answering to a simple question with a fifteen-minute reply - all of these can be avoided if you have thought through and practiced what you want to communicate. Good answers are to the point and usually shorter

Fidgeting: While you will probably be nervous prior to and during your job interview, try not to fidget. It is distracting and

reads nervousness and anxiety. No employer wants a fidgety co-worker in the building.

Being unprofessional: do not forget why you are there – keep it professional and be serious. Though some interviews are set in a comfortable atmosphere that may trick you, remember to focus on your objectives and the said job description.

Not asking about the next interviewing process: once the interview has concluded, you should state that you are interested in the job and like to know about the next interview stage. Let the interviewer know your thoughts don't let him guess that the job is in your best interests.

Over confidence: an inflated ego drives bad reactions and antagonism. Do not exaggerate your achievements – be honest and humble. Many employers follow up asking your references about every aspect you have provided them.

Not following up after the interview: if you don't follow up with a thank you email/note or a letter after an interview, you may miss a good opportunity to present your interest about the said job

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Appendix: Goal Setting worksheet

Although this template can be used to identify and refine goals it would rather be more appropriate to use it with the help of a mentor. Agreed life does not proceed in a linear fashion. However, setting some targets with a certain amount of flexibility would certainly help. Although this is a standard template, we refine it to suit individual requirements and aspirations.

What do you want to be when you are (age) in your corporate career?

The position:

Responsibilities:

What are the skills required for this position? (Look at the job spec that you are targeting and list the skills, experiences and expectations for the role)

Map the routes that you can take to reach this goal – What areas should you be specialised in or what divisions you need to work to get there?

Map all the roles starting from your current position to the position you want to be in, the time frame for promotion for each role and evaluate the options.

Analyse your work life balance and engagement levels and identify routes that you could take.

Having identified the routes you could take zero down on two routes – one primary route which you are absolutely passionate about and secondary route which will help you get to your final objective which would be equally engaging. Choose a high risk route and a low risk route in a similar manner. Choose a route where you need to drastically change your profile or enhance your skill sets and choose a route which will help you to build your current skill sets and move towards your objective.

Select two routes from all these and then list the roles and the time frame you will spend in each role before moving up in order to reach your final objective.

For each role list the sets of skills, experiences and exposures that are required and the average time in that role by your predecessors. Use a separate sheet if required. If you think you can progress faster substantiate why and if you think you need more time then state why you feel so..

Identify the next two roles that you need to be in ___ years and combine the skill sets that are required for both routes that you could take.

List the skill sets required to perform your current (previous) role and list the skills that you need to acquire. Compare your current skill set with the inventory of skills you have come up in the previous section.

Evaluate skills that you think could be enhanced from the current role, skills that require a different role and skills that you need to be trained for..

Skills enhancement from current role:

Skill enhancement from current role but taking additional responsibilities:

Skills that you would never be able to improve with the current role

Other roles that can help you acquire those skills within the organisation

Roles outside the organisation that can help you enhance your skill sets

Additional training required

Summary

Target: Time:

Routes to take

Route 1:

Route 2:

Skill level: (Pyramid structure)

Steps Action plan: (Use separate sheets if required)