

# Building Your Career Success Library

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*“I suggest that the only books that influence us are those for which we are ready, and which have gone a little farther down our particular path than we have yet gone ourselves” - E. M Forster*

*“I am a part of everything that I have read” -- John Kieran*

I have always been a voracious reader. Perhaps I should say I've always been a voracious buyer of books; despite my best intentions, my library grows faster than my ability to find time to read. I'm the sort of person who prefers the bookshop to the souvenir shop when on vacation. So wherever we go as a family, I always lug a bag of books back with me on the plane.

On a recent trip, I realized that I continually reference certain key books in my articles, and that these favorites deserve a special place in my library. I think that it is time to tell you more about these good reads.

## **Ideas + Action = Progress**

People frequently make the mistake of absorbing the new ideas present in great books and then avoiding the action required to implement those ideas in their lives.

During my college years I had a Volkswagen van (an old beater with wooden shutters on the windows and a wild paint job). I

bought every book I could about Volkswagen repair, from “Zen and the Art of Volkswagen Maintenance” to manuals produced by the manufacturer. I became a walking compendium of information about each and every aspect of the vehicle. I loved that van. But, thanks to my basic fear of anything mechanical, I quit without even buying a set of metric tools. I took my van down to the corner service station for an oil change.

When you seek out the following books, make sure you can do more than just read them. The material in these few books can lead to improved job performance and career prospects when combined with some specific action on your part. Pick up a wrench, and put these ideas to work.

### **Skills for the Contributor**

Two of my favorite books about making progress in an organization are “Intrapreneuring” by Gifford Pinchot and “Getting Things Done When You Are Not In Charge” by Geoffrey Bellman. Both of these excellent books offer a host of ideas about how employees can participate in today’s changing organizations to reach corporate goals and personal career success.

In “Intrapreneuring,” Pinchot describes how innovation is treated in two kinds of companies -- the traditional bureaucratic hierarchy (big pharmaceutical companies, for example) and the venture capital-backed start-up (a nanotech business). He finds that entrepreneurial young companies foster innovation, whereas some big companies often keep a lid on their best sources of innovation. “Intrapreneuring” involves promoting innovation and entrepreneurship within the confines of any organization; in effect, taking ownership of the process as an employee. One of my favorite lists of success rules is from this book.

In “Getting Things Done When You Are Not In Charge,” Bellman describes the important relationship between managing and leading. As many people in the biotechnology business know, you don’t have to be a manager in order to be a leader. Managing and leading are not different takes on the same job.

Many of my client organizations are set up in a matrix management style. In these scenarios, your skills in leading a project are not the same as those skills required by people who manage staff and resources. You can’t walk into a colleague’s office and dictate your requirements. You need a different sort of power . . . the power that comes through influence. I like the way that Bellman describes power and influence factors within organizations. His breakdown of what power is, how to recognize it, and how to acquire it are worth the price of this book. Personal power comes from within and sustains you far longer than power bestowed on you by a corporation.

Bellman says: “Personal power is much more than a job description. It includes a professional philosophy and values that are a part of a larger life purpose. It may be expressed in writing or may have never been fully articulated. But whatever it is, you use it daily in making decisions about what to do and how to do it. You seek it out in what you read and in your professional friends. You especially value it in those whose work is similar to your own. It does not suffer through repetition; it grows. You can identify it in those who are devoted to their work. This is where the real power is. This is the personal power that comes to individuals who are clear about what they want from their lives and who see their work as essential to the contribution they wish to make.”

### **Skills for Managing People**

Although many of today’s companies have moved to matrix responsibility for key projects, there are still opportunities for you

to manage others more directly. It is in this scenario that two more of my favorite books on managerial skills fit in. I learned a good deal from Albert Shapero's "Managing Professional People; Understanding Creative Performance" about the rather unusual aspects of managing creative people. Despite the scholarly and sometimes hard-to-read tone of this book, Shapero describes some fascinating aspects of what makes managing scientists and engineers so unique. I refer to this book regularly and it is an important part of my library.

Are you familiar with the studies that have been done on relating expectations to actual performance? In one interesting section of his book, Shapero recounts experiments in which groups of the same rats were given to students who were told that their animals were bred to be either "extra bright" or of noticeably "low grade intelligence." The rats that were expected to be very intelligent did well in running a maze from the very beginning, whereas those that were said to be dull performed so badly that sometimes they didn't even leave the starting gate. In addition, students who thought they had brighter rats found them to be more pleasant and likable than did the students who thought they had dullards.

Shapero's book looks at expectations and performance in the workplace and how they can affect creativity and results. His material on burnout and technical obsolescence makes this an excellent study for those who manage others in the fast-changing world of the startup company.

My other favorite in this category is an absolute classic in the field of managing creative people. "Six Thinking Hats," by Edward de Bono, is a book of such utter simplicity that at first glance it seems the exact opposite of the complicated text by Shapero. But managing professional people in environments like biotech or nanotech startups is really about directing the flow of ideas from

highly creative people; this forms a common ground between the Shapiro and de Bono books.

I had the pleasure of spending a good deal of time with de Bono at the “Career Development and Leadership Skills Seminar” that I organized in San Francisco in 1993. Edward is well known all over the world for teaching thinking as a skill. As a manager – and hopefully a mentor – don’t you think that teaching critical thinking skills should be a major goal of your job?

“Six Thinking Hats” describes a simple but effective way to become a better thinker. De Bono separates thinking into six distinct modes characterized by the color of the “hat” that you wear at the time. If you want a fresh approach at your project meetings and the spark of new ideas to invigorate your team, study this book and buy it for your colleagues. It can be read in two evenings and is easy to implement.

### **Skills for Life**

If you’ve spent any time reading CareerTrax articles in the past, you’ll know that I spend as much time writing about issues related to personal growth and development as I do about job hunting and careers. This is because being happy in your life and doing well all-around has a huge impact on your job success.

I’ve always enjoyed reading about other people’s experience with success. In “Peak Performers,” Dr. Charles Garfield studies the successful careers and lives of some of today’s top performers in business, sports, and the arts. He finds some interesting common ground among stars in these fields, much of it going back to a sense of mission that all peak performers exhibit.

In my opinion, Garfield is a peak performer himself. He is not only a prolific author and trainer, but he has also developed a reputation

as one of the hardest-working and most popular speakers on the lecture circuit. His book derives its energy from his own experiences. As a member of the NASA Apollo team that put a man on the moon, Garfield witnessed what people can do when given a mission and a common goal. He also experienced the sense of loss that can overcome a team when the mission is accomplished and an empty space follows. These feelings are similar to those in a pilot plant after the development of an important new drug has been handed off to the manufacturing team.

All of Garfield's examples are of people who have developed a marvelous acuity for dealing with others and getting their support. As Geoffrey Bellman's book explains, these people can create win-win situations in all of their relations. Much of this has to do with negotiation skills.

Negotiation is the topic of another favorite book: "You Can Get Anything You Want -- But You Have To Do More Than Ask" by Roger Dawson. Although Dawson tries to accomplish too much in this small book by going into issues such as personality styles and body language, he entertains and educates. In short, this one is a lot of fun. (I have learned that this book is out of print, but that a new Dawson title will be replacing it – anything that Roger Dawson writes about negotiation will be top-notch).

Dawson takes an overview of the negotiation process and dissects it into sections that make sense whether you are negotiating the sale of a technology or negotiating with your kids on where your vacation will be this year. If you want a Harvard MBA book on negotiation strategies, look somewhere else. But Dawson's witty and unique perspective is easy to grasp and makes the whole process fascinating. After reading "You Can Get Anything You Want," I went right out and used some of the tidbits and techniques that Dawson teaches. Isn't that the best test of a book's value?

I remember suggesting the Dawson book to a scientist I knew who was interviewing for a job. I thought it was important for him to learn a bit more about how interactions during the interview process are like a negotiation – even early on before an offer is extended. Unfortunately, he felt that the book was too “manipulative” and that good science would be recognized no matter how it was presented. Can you guess how the interviews went?

### **In Conclusion**

Building your own personal success library is something that can take many years, but it is an important part of your life and career. Let me know how you like these suggestions, and most importantly, share your own discoveries with me!

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4. Edward de Bono, "Six Thinking Hats" (Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1985).
5. Charles Garfield, "Peak Performers" (Morrow and Company, New York, 1986).
6. Roger Dawson, "You Can Get Anything You Want -- But You Have To Do More Than Ask" (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1985). May be currently out of print, but in most libraries. Also, available on audiocassette from Nightingale Conant Corporation (800) 323-3938

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