The SECRETS of SUCCESS at WORK

10 Steps
to Accelerating Your Career

The secrets of success at work

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Richard Hall

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Foreword

THINK OF THIS as being a book-sized career manual.

When it comes to planning our lives and our careers and then trying to make the plan come true, most of us live in a fog of confusion. Few have a destination in mind. Even fewer have a route map.

We have a vague sense about getting along and doing well but few of us are sure exactly why and spend periods of our lives slightly or very discontented.

The word "career" itself is a bit strange.

It sounds, surprisingly, much more exciting: full of images of surging speed, racing, shooting stars, momentum and, perhaps surprisingly, more of a sprint than a marathon.

Hawks and racehorses seem generally to know where they are going and they do it with style, speed, and focus. So let's take that need for speed as the first thing to tackle.

Not rocket science you say—and you are right. It's much more complex. Any fool can build a rocket. Very few can build careers that give them what they deserve, let alone a lot more.

Have a destination, have a map, have a plan and recognize—pragmatically—that doing well in your career and being good at

it's not always the cleverest who do best

doing your job are not necessarily going to be the same thing. It's like exams—it's not always the cleverest who do best.

So here are ten strategies for maximizing your chances of doing well or much better than you'd hoped. They are shameless crutches on which to lean and with which to leverage your talents so you look as good as possible. It's about marketing yourself so you achieve the best you can.

I want you to win even when you shouldn't; get promoted; get an eye-watering salary increase when you were worried about being fired.

But most of all I want you to have fun.

Even in the toughest times we should aim to enjoy life.

As Jerry of Ben & Jerry fame (and very considerable ice cream wealth) reflected:

"If you don't enjoy it why do it?"

This book tells you how to win and enjoy yourself doing it.

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Introduction

How to find your own "WOW" factor (and then how to develop it)

YOUR WOW FACTOR IS THAT THING which everyone has, although many people keep it very well hidden, and which if nourished or encouraged would make them stand out from the crowd. Winston Churchill was hopeless academically, the incredibly rich Felix Dennis—entrepreneur and author—was allegedly worse, J.K. Rowling was unpublished until she thought of *Harry Potter* and the rest is, well, the rest is magic.

They all had or have WOW factors that they identified and developed.

But what is WOW? It stands for "Walk on Water." It's that moment "when one's wonderful"—when you've made a good speech or you're revelling in your manager's

it's a moment of sheer infallibility

praise. It's a moment of sheer infallibility, when nothing is impossible, when you want them all to "bring it on."

(And it also stands for "Wow!"—that noise you make when you are incredibly impressed by something or someone. Amazement and awe in just three letters.)

Everyone has moments in their life when they do something that turns on a light in their head and when they become reborn in some intriguing way. It's that moment when you—and the outside world—look on yourself with new eyes and see new talent. It is, in short, a career-defining moment.

It's like falling in love. But falling in love with what you do, in the office.

Making the magic of WOW happen

By believing you can

You don't hope for the best, you don't pray for it, you visualize yourself doing it. The next time someone says, "Can you do something?" say "Yes," and then work out how you are going to get it done.

By practice

Congratulations. You've taken my advice. You're down to speak at an annual company conference and you're really not that skilled at public speaking. So that's another fine mess I've got you into. Will you sink like a stone or walk on water? First of all believe in yourself, secondly set aside lots of time to work on the presentation, thirdly get some one-to-one presentation coaching (which the company will pay for because it's actually in its interest to do so). But most of all practice, practice, practice.

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By working with a sponsor

Someone senior you like and trust who will help you in constructing your presentation and make the idea of "WOW" come to life. Someone who will mentor you. They themselves probably "wing" it a bit now, but in you they'll see the energy, hope, and nervousness of a younger them.

Walking on water is what happens when you believe in yourself, work at it, share ideas, and listen to experts.

Examples of WOW moments

Re-launching yourself

The deliberate attempt to change the way you are perceived.

"She was a very attractive woman. She was loved and admired by a lot of people but they'd gotten comfortable with her. She was a little in the 'good old ...' category. The sort of person you could always rely on. Not so much WOW as MOM. One day to everyone's surprise she went blonde. Very blonde. And everyone took notice. Someone said, 'It was like the sun coming out. I looked at her afresh instead of taking her for granted, and I said—WOW.'"

Becoming a challenger, a questioner, and an advocate It's called discovering your critical faculty.

"He was promoted in his first job. That felt terrific; he felt he deserved it but was none the less pleased. And then his critical faculty kicked in—Why this? How that? Why not try...?—that sparked off an amazing energy surge and he became a somewhat antagonistic, highly competitive, and impatient brand manager who became a question machine in a hurry. 'I knew I could walk on water because I knew my

stuff, I knew intuitively how to do magic and how to connect with the consumer—I just knew. I also knew I could and would win.' Under his stewardship a number 2 or 3 going—nowhere brand became brand leader in months." WOW.

Being asked to join the club of the accomplished

A WOW moment for many is being accepted by your peers.

A potter friend of mine was recently invited to display her "art" with the Sussex Guild, a fairly choosy group of extraordinary craftspeople, at its show at Michelham Priory, Upper Dicker in Sussex. Invited along for support, I was skeptical at first until I realized I was in the presence of vast talent and possibly, from time to time, pure genius; people who loved what they did and lived for it. My potter friend was aglow with the pride of acceptance by her peers. WOW.

Focusing on what you want to do

We only have one life. WOW.

I read about a guy who had a horrendous accident on a ski lift that collapsed, crushing him and leaving him clawing his way back to safety with his one good hand. Certain death behind him, an agonizing climb in front. He

survived and after a long convalescence resigned from an important, well paid job and started his own business. His lesson? We only have one life. WOW.

Keeping faith with your vision and never giving up

Henry Heinz of blessed baked bean fame had a vision—literally. He believed that by making a great-looking, pure

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product and putting it in transparent jars the potential consumer could see how good it was. His business failed a couple of times before it roared into life. He put on his bowler hat, left America and made his way to London, to Fortnum & Mason. The buyer accepted all six products Henry showed him—and Heinz was made. This was a triumph of vision over initial reverses; a stubborn determination to focus on success. WOW.

You can't believe you can walk on water until you have that sudden moment of self-belief, then you take a first step and WOW it happens, it suddenly happens.

So you've walked on water—once or twice. How do you develop it? How do you keep it up?

Learning to develop that walk-on-water walk

Once you've tasted that unbeatable feeling it'll be hard to forget it, or not want to repeat it again and again. Here's how you do that.

Remember the feeling of that first breakthrough moment

What triggered it? Go through a pre-flight check before you try to recreate it so all the conditions and expectations are the same. It's what any pilot or good presenter does. It's what any "water-walker" always does.

Build your self-confidence

You do this through really knowing your stuff. You won't walk on water if your knowledge is leaky. Always be

be prepared to withstand any amount of challenge or rebuttal prepared, know your story, know the facts. And be prepared to withstand any amount of challenge or rebuttal.

Always be ready to present your case

Don't be caught unprepared. Be ready to stand up and sock it to them. More walk-on-water moments are achieved by a good public performance than anything else. The more practiced you are as a presenter the more effective your walking will be.

Deserve praise and make sure you get it

Without feedback you have no radar system. What's more the most apparently self-confident person still needs to be told they have done well, that they have been a star and, indeed even, that they have really done brilliantly. Work with people who always give you honest feedback. But work with people who make you feel good about yourself so their feedback, even if critical, also focuses on the effective bits of your performance.

Building that walking-on-water feeling so it becomes second nature

Once that sense of "I can really do this and do it well" hits you, once you know you can actually walk on water, you'll want to do it again and again:

- You build on it by practice, by rehearsing more and in a more focused way than anyone else in your company.
- You build on it by trying to see things from other points of view.

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You build on it by hanging on to the memory or vision of what it actually feels like to win.

- You build on it by trying to love what you do; by exuding a real sense of exuberance about what you do and how you do it.
- ♦ You really build on it by teaching others how to achieve it too. The best way of reinforcing your learning is by teaching others how to do as well or better than you.

Visualize that walk-on-water moment and you're halfway toward making it a norm as opposed to an exception.

Retaining that WOW feeling

Retaining the WOW feeling needs good and caring management from those above you but, for your part, you need to make those around you feel good about you and believe

keep the magic going as long as possible

that they are working with a winner. Confidence is fragile—don't break it by careless indifference. Don't take it for granted because that "winning feeling" is uniquely special—ask anyone in sport who's been on a roll.

I believe it's the role of all leaders to get their people to feel as though they can walk on water, to create an exclusive WOW club that everyone wants to join. It's also their role to keep the magic going for as long as possible.

But we live in strange times and nothing is certain forever. The one thing we all have to be (and it's essential we retain this) is confident that we will always do our best, and do it calmly and quickly.

How do you measure WOW?

Ask an actor and they'll probably answer, "By the applause level." It's a cross between your own self-awareness and a powerful sense of empathy you create with whoever your audience is—your boss, your board, your peers, your staff, your customers.

As I write this book a young man is learning to juggle outside our house. Yesterday he was really pretty awful and kept on dropping the third ball. He'd then do it with two and include some fancy moves as well. But juggling with two is easy isn't it?

Today, after hours of practice, I saw a huge improvement in his performance. He was juggling with three balls for longer and then with a bottle and two cups. As often as he dropped one he regrouped and tried again.

I suspect his WOW moment will come next week if he carries on like this.

Donald Bradman, the cricketer and the world's best ever batsman, practiced with a cricket stump and a golf ball thrown against a barn wall. All great golfers practice virtually non-stop. For them it is their life. WOW equals "work-ohwork." The harder you work and the more you try the better you will do.

WOW happens when you focus on whatever things you are best at or at which you could be exceptional if you tried hard enough.

Jack Welch, whom most would agree was the greatest CEO of our generation, said:

Determine your own destiny or someone else will.

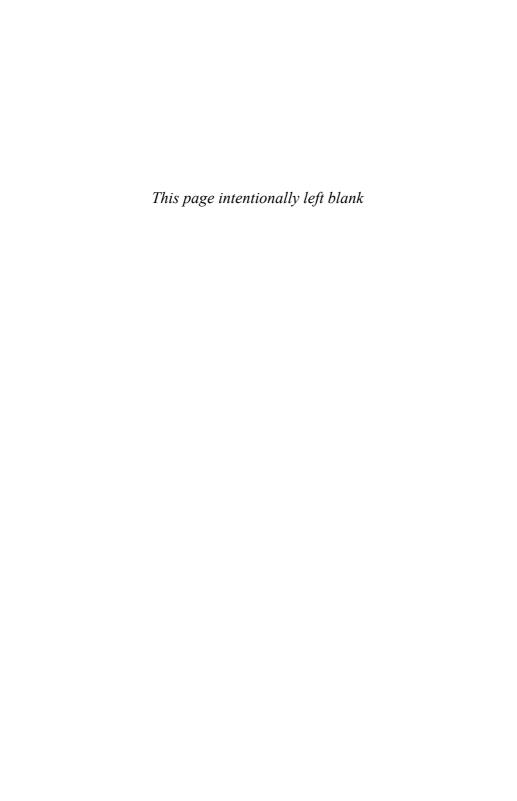
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Things to think about

◆ You create your WOW moment by having that liberating feeling of self-determination and then really going for it.

- ◆ So get yourself in the best "I can really do it" mindset and you, too, may have that "walk-on-water" feeling.
- Create stimulus around yourself.
- ◆ If you feel good, you'll probably be good.
- ◆ Discovering, building on, and retaining WOW is a mind thing which then leads to a successful performance thing which then leads on to an employer appreciation thing and it is one you can easily achieve if you think hard and positively enough about it.
- ◆ You also have to be prepared to take risks—to put yourself on stage doing a presentation or in a meeting arguing a case with the risk of failure.

Go for it. See how many WOW moments you can have this week.



Look in the mirror. That's the real you ... say hello and be amazed

Why knowing yourself well is a powerful secret weapon.

WHILE ALL THE EXPERTS, FROM MOTIVATIONAL WRITERS to the most inspirational gurus, will tell you that achievement of just about anything is in your grasp, that all you have to do is want it enough, no one explains that you have to understand what you are working with. So you could be a concert pianist, county cricketer, writer of business books. It's easy peasy, they suggest. Just dream it and do it.

Hmmmm!!!! That's what I say. Let's not underestimate this rise to glory.

And without the absolute certainty of who you are, what you are, your pluses and minuses, and your hopes and fears, you really aren't going to get very far.

But how well do you know yourself already?

On the face of it this seems an absurd question to ask. You ought to know yourself very well since you've been your most constant companion all your life. But you've probably paid little attention to yourself, to how others see you and how you see yourself.

As so often, we miss the most obvious things in life. We take ourselves for granted. We miss what's sitting in front of us. Our unfulfilled talent—our WOW factor—hiding under that ton of modesty.

This failure to be a "me-expert" leads to some very odd decisions that we make in life. Like quite simply ending up in the wrong job for which we are wildly unsuited. Like waking up one morning and finding we have married the wrong person. Or, worse still, like waking up one morning, alone.

How self-knowledge can change your behavior

This happened a very, very long time ago and I am not particularly proud of it. Three of us, after a Japanese meal with a lot of sake, went to a Soho strip club.

Seedy Soho. We went down a dirty narrow staircase. Cobwebs drifted across our faces. We heard ... nothing. Pushing open a filthy curtain we found ourselves in a large and untidy storeroom. My companions were uneasy, the more so when two large Mediterranean-looking guys appeared, aggressively telling

us to "get out." Yes, we had been conned. My companions booked it. Now whether it was the sake or a sense of injustice that left me rooted to the spot I can't be sure. I decided to reason with them. In fury they rushed at me with baseball bats, looking very menacing. "Look, this is silly, you are intelligent guys. Let me explain why I am unhappy." My would-be assailants looked a little puzzled. "Get out," one said quietly, "I'm not intelligent." "Of course you are," I told him. "I can see intelligence in your face." "What about me?" asked his colleague rather grumpily. I assured them they were both intelligent, very intelligent and that their behavior was strange because it was at odds with this. They agreed with the analysis and led us all (my colleagues still waiting outside for me to emerge) to a proper strip joint further down Dean Street where strippers glorying under the names Patricia Bronte, Charlotte Eliot, and Matilda Austen did their stuff. "Sorry for the misunderstanding," said my swarthy bouncers as they led us in. "No, thank you. It's been a pleasure meeting you," I said—and it had been. They even looked intelligent as they said goodbye and strode off into the night.

This is a story about them, not me. It was their confrontation with something that had been sublimated that resonated so powerfully in their brains. They were quite intelligent—they'd forgotten that's all. And when reminded they behaved gently and intelligently. Tell someone they are "a fool" by the same token and see their behavior worsen.

Getting to know you, getting to know all about you

self-knowledge is the single most powerful tool Unless we work at knowing who we really are and what we could really do, we are unlikely to head in the right direction. But if we do work ourselves out and can say with confidence "this is the real me" then we are

in great shape to create a new and upward-looking career. Self-knowledge is the single most powerful tool for achieving the ideal job and career path that is right for you, not for that image of yourself that you'd like to have.

In simple terms, knowing the raw materials you've got to work with in "making it happen" for your career is the starting point. Everything else is fantasy.

So you have to start by forensically testing who and what you are, and who you could be and who you are unlikely to be (however much you might want to be that ideal).

But a word of caution. This isn't easy. It needs you to work hard, dispassionately, and with brutal honesty. It might even prove a little uncomfortable. Knowledge, as Adam and Eve discovered, comes at a cost.

Working out your strengths and weaknesses

Unless we bother to ask ourselves some really simple and important questions about where our talents and our passions at work lie, we'll miss out on the most basic and most useful self-analysis.

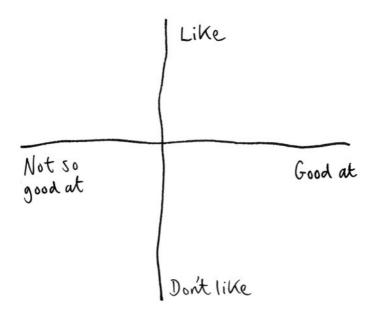
John Scott, a leading HR guy who heads HR at PWC in the Middle East, said:

Get someone to do something they really enjoy and you'll be looking at a successful person.

He then added, being a big, corporate HR guy (actually he's not overly corporate in the worst sense of that word), that it maybe wasn't quite that simple.

Well it actually is that simple. Try this self-administered test and see how unfair previous appraisals have been.

In each quadrant of the chart you'll be seeing things you are good at or not so good at, and dislike or enjoy doing.



And here's the list of things I want you to put in the appropriate quadrant:

- 1 Data and math
- 2 Writing reports
- 3 Working alone
- 4 Presenting
- 5 Coaching people
- 6 Criticizing people
- 7 Praising people
- 8 Making things happen
- 9 Being creative
- 10 Delegating tasks
- 11 Leading people
- 12 Getting up to go to work on Mondays
- 13 Dealing with a crisis
- 14 Being tidy and well organized
- **15** Traveling
- 16 Having to work late or over the weekend
- 17 Being off-site
- **18** Selling

When you've done this exercise get two close colleagues and friends to give their view of you by doing the exercise as if in your shoes. Be excited by the discoveries you make because they will give you a much more precise fix on the talent base, real and perceived, that you have to work with.

Apart from anything else you now have plenty of positive stuff to think about. Stuff that can inspire you to try harder; stuff that can help you make it really happen, happen fast, and happen explosively; stuff that confirms hidden views about yourself like, "I hate spreadsheets and I know Lucy is great at them."

You now have a pretty good sense of the turbocharged vehicle—whoa! It's not turbocharged yet... but carry on reading—that will take you on your route map to your destination in life.

Creating the right first impressions

Assuming we have gotten a pretty good handle on our own self-analysis, most of our lives we need to do justice to ourselves and never more importantly than when meeting people for the first time.

We all know that it takes just a few minutes to decide if

the person in front of you has an appealing personality and story to tell. That's why speed dating is so popular. That's why Malcolm Gladwell's book *Blink* resonates so powerfully. (It argues that very often snap judgements can be more effective than a

make sure you always pass the "snap judgement" test

cautious decision.) So play to that and make sure you always pass the "snap judgement" test. Avoid the couldn't-care-less, take-me-as-you-find-me trait that can be so off-putting.

Kenneth Clark, MP and one-time contender for Conservative Party leadership, was one who simply didn't care how he looked. The trouble was he seemed incredibly scruffy. A

brilliant mind and a powerful personality spoiled by an eggsplattered tie and scuffed suede shoes. First impressions are very important and the first impression we give is what we see in the mirror.

So the first piece of advice on this mission to improve our self-knowledge is to buy a full-length mirror and spend a long time looking at and thinking about ourselves. This is the raw material with which we have to work.

Narcissistic? Not really. It just helps you focus and maybe realize how to be a better actor. It might guide you to reflect on how to learn to be still as well as how to be engagingly energetic. How, in other words, to work with what you've got.

Knowing how others see us: taking a 360-degree view

Knowing yourself is terrific but knowing how you are perceived by others really takes you to another place. A position of greater power than you may ever have had before—a position from which to market yourself as opposed to just being yourself. And deep at the center of this book is a belief we can make more of what we've got so as to please those we want to please if, that is, we know what we've got to work with in the first place.

How's your Scottish? No, mine's not that good either so I've translated what follows into simple English. Read Robert Burns the Scottish poet and be in the presence of wisdom:

Oh would some power the gift be given us
To see ourselves as others see us

It would from many a blunder free us And foolish notion.

Burns describes this potential power as ego-reducing and risk- and mistake-averting. We'll talk about egos in a minute but here's a way of unleashing that power.

Divide a circle into six segments, containing those people closest to you, and work really hard on how you think the people in each of those segments regard you—your strengths and weaknesses—and how they are likely to be helpful to you. (See the next page for an example.)

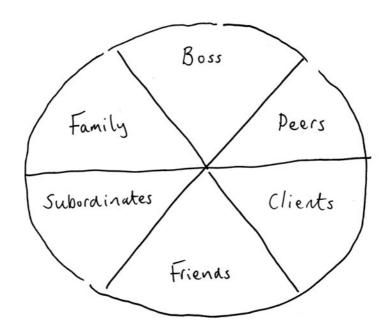
If you find this hard to do, that will in itself have taught you something of value. And if you can't really do it at all (which I doubt) then do you have problems? Yes, you really do.

About losing your ego

There's a good ego—self-confident, self-esteem, happy, bravado ego. A well-balanced person ego. And there's a plaster-over and fill-in-the-character-cracks superiority complex covering up an inferiority complex sort of ego. In other words we are in Jekyll and Hyde territory.

Keep your confidence but lose that need to feed your self-glorification—and do it now. That may temporarily put an end to any thought of your becoming CEO but you may benefit from that.

I have seen many people with an ego bigger than their talent bent on a career of self-mortification by being seen as the worst of all mixes—arrogant and mediocre.



What do those close to you really think of you?

You've got to accentuate the positive ...

These lyrics by the American songwriter Johnny Mercer should be carved on everyone's "to do" list:

You've got to accentuate the positive

Eliminate the negative

Latch on to the affirmative

And don't mess with Mr In-between.

You've got to spread joy up to the maximum

Bring gloom down to the minimum

Otherwise pandemonium

Is liable to walk upon the scene.

Why I like this so much (although I'd be cautious about being too evangelical a spreader of joy as it can be a touch irritating if it's overdone) is that it squarely focuses on the key thing anyone seeking career success must have—a positive frame of mind.

But you can't go about accentuating, eliminating, and latching on to, if you don't have a pretty firm grasp of your personal assets. So let's carry on seeing how to refine that.

What is your bottom line?

There's a story about George Bernard Shaw, the great literary figure, intellectual, and playwright of the first half of the 1900s. He sat next to a lady at a supper party and popped the question:

GBS: "Would you sleep with me for a million pounds?"

Lady: "Oh, Mr. Shaw, of course I would—you are such a wag."

GBS: "Madam, would you sleep with me for a pound?"

Lady (in outrage): "Mr. Shaw, what do you take me for?"

GBS: "We've already established what you are, madam. Now we are merely haggling about the price of your services."

In thinking about your career be very clear about what you will and will not do. About, in short, where you'd draw

the line. About what you would not do however much they paid you.

Get yourself a mentor

This may sound a bit grand for some folk but I love this quote from Hellerman and Joli who worked for the Cambridge International Group. This first appeared on Fast Company (www.fastcompany.com).

Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that mentoring is the single most valuable ingredient in a successful career.

And that's because having someone to confide in and talk to can remove a lot of stress from your life, allowing you to work things out. It can accelerate progress and stop you making esteem-blocking mistakes. Another brain and another conscience are useful things to have.

When it really comes to the crunch—if for instance you

good mentoring can make a big difference to whether you succeed or not are going after a big promotion or salary increase, or if you are under threat in your job—good mentoring can make a big difference to whether you succeed or not.

So how do you get a mentor? There are three ways.

1 Look under the various organizations you'll find under "mentoring" on the Web. You'll get an idea of what's out there but it's a bit hit and miss, like looking under "restaurants" for somewhere to eat. But it may improve your understanding of the topic.

- **2** Go through your local Chamber of Commerce to get a list of possible local mentors.
- 3 Best of all ask someone whom you rate, someone at work or in HR or Learning and Development, who'll point you in a useful direction. A personal recommendation is best. Not all mentors are the same—the really good ones are exceptional, the not so good are, well, not so good.

Most mentors will charge and how much depends on various factors. Mentors for CEOs are more expensive than for more junior executives. If your company is paying, the fee will be higher than if you are paying yourself. Ask your HR people for help—most have a budget for such things provided you are specific about the help you need.

Understanding what you "believe" is most important to you

I got this from Lane 4, Adrian Moorhouse's business—that's the Adrian who won seven gold medals at swimming in the Olympics, European, and Commonwealth Games—who believes (and I quote from the brochure):

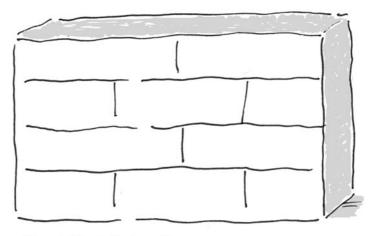
with the right kind of support, people can achieve excellence in everything they do.

I told you these motivators were upbeat people. Well, I was invited to a session run by Greg Searle—Olympic rowing gold medalist. (By now I was a getting a bit of an inferiority complex having merely played club cricket and mediocre golf—you must have had the wrong kind of

support, Richard, I consoled myself.) One of the exercises was a self-completion one called "The Self-Belief Wall."

Your Self-Belief Wall

In the top two layers of bricks put the achievements or assets you value most in your life. Include both personal and work ones—your choice. In the bottom two layers of bricks put the characteristics that you think are your greatest assets. Then I'll show you mine ...



Your self-belief wall

	nspiring teams	Having 2 great Marriag	t / six \
Captaining fow cricket teams	Havir	ig fon	making a difference
Enthusiasm	Energy	Reduced ego	Being a better listener
ot frightened f failure	Laugh		Constantly discovering new things

My Self-belief wall.

What was apparent in the group present that morning in the middle of a drizzly London was just how hard most people seem to find this exercise. Evidence, if nothing else, of how awkward many feel at lifting the curtain on their personality, their achievements, and failures. Try it—together with the rest of the exercises—and you should by now be pretty tooled up in terms of self-awareness.

In memoriam

And now for something similar but perhaps less demanding. It's a good, if slightly morbid, dinner party game—writing your own obituary or, more simply, what you'd want carved on your headstone when you die.

- Spike Milligan, the writer and comedian, wanted "I told you I was ill."
- ◆ Tom Peters, the American management guru, wants "He was a Player."
- ◆ I thought "He made others surprise themselves" wasn't bad. Nor was "He made us all feel better about life."

So you get the idea.

Focus on the one thing you want to reach for and express it in simple powerful language (for example, "She wanted to astonish the world as a singer and a lover: she did both.")

Do you know yourself better now?

"M" is for miracle—the miracle of self-knowledge. Here's the checklist to get you from "don't really know myself" to "know myself like the back of my hand."

- Mirrors—what do you look like?
- Maximum capability—what are you best at?
- Mentors—to bring out your best.
- ◆ Manage your ego—less "me" more listening.
- Marshall your strengths, achievements and self-beliefs.
- ♦ Must not dos—eliminate the stuff that lets you down.
- Many points of view—see how others see you.
- Memorials—what you want them to say about you.

Things to think about

- Really acute self-knowledge gives you an unfair advantage in life.
- ◆ But acute self-knowledge is unusual. Most of us regard our bodies, and the most amazing computers that exist, our brains, as things to be taken for granted.
- ◆ Imagine you were given a Lamborghini Mura and access to a hugely powerful computer.
- Now give yourself the curiosity to work out how to operate both and the ability to drive safely—and you are in a very powerful position.
- ◆ In your own way you are that car, you are that star computer. All you need now is to know it and go for it.
- Know yourself.
- ◆ Accentuate the positive you.
- Eliminate the negative you.
- **♦** *Amaze yourself.*