THE INTERNATIONAL
BESTSELLING SERIES

THE RULES OF WORK

Samples Pages

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Study the promotion system

When you start your career, it is at the lowest level and you gaze upwards at the boss, the manager, the managing director, with reverence and awe. One day, inevitably, you will age, gain experience and ascend to greater heights yourself. Either that or maybe start up on your own. And for most people that's about it. Career-wise they meander vaguely upwards, often getting side-tracked and stopping at a level where they seem comfortable, coasting, happy. And that's it. Career over. Game over. Very sad. Unless that's really what you want. And if you're a committed Rules Player, I doubt it.

The Rules Player never meanders or arrives anywhere vaguely. You plan. You know the system and use it. You understand the steps to be taken to get you from A to B and onwards and upwards all the way to Z.

You have to study the promotion system if you are to enter it and profit from it. It is simply no use waiting for something to turn up, or for fate to take a hand and propel you upwards by luck or chance. You have to seize the day and make your own luck. You have to know exactly how to avoid all clichés and elevate yourself within the system.

So, what is the promotion system within your industry? Do you know it? Have you studied it? Study the background of others who have been there before you. If not, chances are you are relying on luck to get you somewhere. This may be fine and it may get you where you want to be but it is unreliable – bit like doing the lottery in the hope it'll make you rich and you can retire. It might happen but it's not likely.

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Making a promotion chart:

- within your industry look upwards to the most senior position that can be held (or the highest you could possibly expect yourself to aim for, they should really be the same thing – mark this)
- now look at the lowest – mark this
- now plot all the steps in-between
- now mark your own place
- now list the steps needed to get there.

You now have your own promotion chart and can cross off each step as you make it.

(The same principle of steps also works if you decide that rather than ascend where you are, you'd like to set up on your own and be entrepreneurial rather than corporate.)

While you are doing this, also list all the skills/experience, etc. that you would need for each step to be made successfully. Next to this, you can add what you have to do to acquire these – where you must go, what you have to learn, what you need to study. You can add these back into your long-term plan and your five-year plan.

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YOU HAVE TO SEIZE THE DAY AND MAKE YOUR OWN LUCK

Develop a game plan

Developing a game plan is a bit like an actor choosing a part and learning their script. Your game plan has to be who you are going to be. Not many people choose consciously to be a loser but that's where they end up. Don't let it happen to you. And it doesn't happen, once you seize the initiative and develop a game plan.

Your game plan is a sort of personal mission statement. It is different from setting objectives, which is how to be the person your game plan decides you are.

So who are you going to be? Successful? A failure? Someone who gives up? Someone who picks themselves up, dusts themselves off and starts all over again? A brilliant career strategist? A loser? None of these?

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Obviously, you could decide to be ruthless, unpleasant, cruel, vindictive, but we assume you won't – a Rules Player is never any of these. Your game plan should include your qualities as well as what sort of game you want to plan – 'I will be successful and still be a thoroughly nice person'.

Not many people sit down and consciously carry out this exercise. It may seem simple but it is an essential tool to get you to where you want to be. If more people did this, they wouldn't end up as prats, or the office bore, or a gossip, or frighteningly callous in their dealings with their colleagues. If we all had to sit down and write our game plan – and then live by it – we might all end up as nicer people. There is no bad karma in trying your hardest to be pleasant, co-operative, helpful, friendly, kind and honest in your dealings with others around you. Who would sit down and write, 'I am going to be a complete and utter bastard and stitch up as many people as I can, be disliked by everyone and generally make myself as unpopular as possible'? Yes, no one would write it, but I've worked with quite a few who live by it as a game plan.

Yes, they may be successful but how do they sleep at night? How do they live with themselves?

I once worked with a fairly senior manager whose technique was to arrive, walk through the department, bawl out as many people as he could, go to his office, put his feet up with a coffee for half an hour and then walk back again being as nice as pie to everyone. When I questioned him about this, he said, 'It keeps them on their toes. They never know where they are with me'. He was genuinely disliked by everyone, feared by most and commanded zero respect from his peers. Good game plan. Not.

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Set objectives

An objective is a simple one-sentence mission statement that you can use to get you through your day. It is almost impossible to be successful or to get promoted if you don't set objectives.

An objective outlines the key important ingredients in your work recipe. Suppose you have a meeting to go to. Now we all hate meetings: they can be interminable, boring, unproductive, counter productive – and an endless source of irritation and argument. You know that Anji from accounts is going to be there and will endeavour – usually successfully – to wind you up. You know you'll get side-tracked and end up discussing the relocation to Swindon when it doesn't even affect your department. You know you'll end up discussing budgets for the exhibition stand when that's six months away and it hasn't even been decided that you're going to take a stand at the NEC this year. So, set an objective:

- 'I will speak only on matters I know about and understand and are relevant to me at this meeting and no matter what Anji does I shall not rise to the bait.'

Good. Now stick to it.

Suppose you have to present a report to the Finance Committee about the new costings of the wild flower meadow to go in front of head office's new buildings. You know the Finance Committee can waffle on for hours about irrelevant topics such as whether it is better to have oxeye daises or marsh buttercups and all you need to do is present them with the cost of seeds, mowing equipment and haymaking provisions without getting caught up in the minutiae of which flower is most attractive in spring. So, set an objective:

- 'I will present my report and, once comments have been made, will make my excuses and leave. If the committee insist on discussing matters that are irrelevant to my being there I shall assertively point this out and leave.'

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Good. Now stick to it.

Use an objective for every area of your working life. They take but seconds but they do help highlight:

- what is wrong
- solutions to what is wrong
- action to be taken to correct what is wrong
- ways to prevent the problem recurring.

IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BE SUCCESSFUL OR TO GET PROMOTED IF YOU DON'T SET OBJECTIVES

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