



THE DRIVERS OF SUCCESS - MAKING YOUR MARK IN THE CHALLENGING AND COMPETITIVE BUSINESS WORLD *By John Gatherer*

Everyone has something special to offer to make a difference in whatever line of work or employment you are in. Regardless of your past upbringing, family and community environment and education, we all have specific and unique qualities, abilities and learning that have been forged along the roller coaster ride of one's life experience.

The work and business environment is changing at a breakneck pace and we are continuously cajoled about how to survive and cope with the daily pressures of work life. Most of the time we are so engulfed in endless Monday to Friday work activities that we approach our responsibilities and especially our critical issues, crises and deadlines in a pretty ad hoc way – hoping to put out as many fires as possible, as we shoot from the hip!

We are so engrossed in the crucible of operational requirements and demands – appointments, meetings, projects, targets, production, sales and reports that we normally do not have the time or discipline to see how effective we are in our performance or where we stack up relative to our career aspirations.

It is essential to have a future strategy for yourself – and to get into the habit of using critical questions that continuously shape both your thinking and actions around your personal improvement and self-management goals. We want to stand out from the crowd and be the best we can be, but the harsh reality is that life is like a contest with hundreds of thousands of participants jockeying for position - so what is the recipe for success? We know all the rules about planning – strategic plans, operational plans, business unit plans, budget plans, project team plans and we even have a spread sheet and checklist around our holiday plans!! But how often do we stand back, look at the big picture and plan and track our own success in life?

What then, is the mark of a successful person, a high flyer, an achiever – a person who is going places? He or she is often described as having an edge, a special distinctiveness and a unique flair that catapults that person to the front and makes them stand out from the crowd. The answer is actually centred on ourselves - our own personal brand which we need to cultivate, shape and exploit - those attributes, strengths and mindset shifts that can be applied and channelled into our work and our life that unleashes our potential to our full advantage, often with breakthrough results.

In order to effectively build and promote your personal brand, you need to be regularly exploring the following questions:

How do I sell myself? How genuine do people see me? What do I have that is different from others? How do I come across to people? What real promise do I have? What do I prefer doing in life? Do I

have a sense of direction? Am I satisfied with my current status and track record? How relevant is my repertoire of skills?

Through countless interactions and observations across company management teams and delegates to our workshops, conducted internationally in the fields of Leadership Development and Talent Management, we believe that the successful player or the real achiever has a natural instinct and ability in combining a number of key drivers into a **winning recipe**.

- **Purpose** – you need to push yourself relentlessly as to what you want in life, what specific targets you set, what milestones you have identified on the path to getting there, and the end goal which you envisage or picture for yourself.
- **Self-mastery** – in the end it is all about self: the awareness and insights you need in order to take action, the accountability you require to keep to the plan you have chosen, the discipline necessary to execute your skills, and the confidence to build on the belief that you will succeed ;
- **Mindset** – attitude is the glue that holds all this together; the difference between impossible and possible is a state of mind; if you cultivate the correct positive thoughts, possibility thinking and appropriate inner conversations, you will be surprised at what a difference this makes in your approach to any challenge or threat;
- **Action** – you need to commit and be proactive to ideas and possibilities, take the initiative and even calculated risks and be persistent and determined in your quest for effective results and high performance;
- **Change** – you need to understand the changes occurring in the world, organisations, the workplace and at a local level. Stay informed, so that you are positioned to respond and cope with change. In particular, be willing and able to move out of your comfort zone and personal 'view' of the world, by making that shift towards what really works in the current and new context;
- **Continuous learning** – cultivate an attitude of curiosity and openness to new information, experiences, exposure and opportunities. Set yourself stretch targets and respond to feedback from others on how you can hone your skills and knowledge and achieve better results.
- **Creative thinking and initiative** – change is about difference and difference comes from different thinking. The solution to today's challenges comes from bold, innovative thinking and an unwavering belief to try new ideas, approaches and experiment with different options from what was applied before.

I hope that the above collective list (the magnificent seven) will inform the way you take stock and plan your life and career ahead. The world is changing exponentially at a blinding rate. We need to build our own success and quality of life from essentially the best we can be. It is imperative that we have the awareness and foresight to continuously be honing our skills, knowledge and skill sets – and even re-inventing ourselves where necessary. There is an age-old adage that I've heard used to apply to top talent – "if you're good, you're good!" I believe that it has now met its sell by date! In today's tough, competitive business world in which we find ourselves – you have to be great to get ahead.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JOHN GATHERER

John has over 38 years' experience in the fields of HR, labour relations, training and development, leadership and strategic change management, having held senior and executive positions in Anglo American plc. and the De Beers Groups. John joined Debbie Craig at Catalyst Consulting as Principal Consultant, specialising in strategic change, leadership development, talent management and executive coaching, working locally and internationally. John brings a deep and practical knowledge and expertise to his roles as facilitator, consultant and organization development specialist as well his ability to think strategically and design innovative solutions. John has managed large scale people management projects and transformation journeys in Africa, Asia, China, the UK, India, Kuwait, Australia and the USA.

John has co-authored a book, "I am Talent" with Debbie Craig, on optimising potential and career aspirations, has written numerous journal articles and contributing chapters to Management education publications and presented at conferences and workshops. John's other passions include photography and travel and he has written and published a number of photographic "coffee table" books on African Wildlife and Adventure Travel.

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