

CHAPTER 6

Developing Winning Work Habits

If you have only a few minutes to skim over this chapter, this is what you should focus on:

- Attend a weeklong management course
- Ban morning meetings
- The 4:00 P.M. Friday weekly planner
- Quality assurance checks
- Better-practice graphics
- Deliver bulletproof PowerPoint presentations

Attend a One Week Management Course

Many of us have little or no preparation for management. It is totally different from working as a direct-report team member. Your success now depends on how you can obtain output from your staff. It is hard to make the transition and far too easy to value your contribution on what output you create rather than looking at the collective whole.

A weeklong management course will help you to:

- Learn how to handle different situations through creative role playing.
- Create a useful network with your peers from different organizations (I have remained in contact with three members that I met over 18 years ago at a management course).
- Help prepare a shift in thinking.
- Understand the dynamics of a good team.

The things you need to look for in good management courses are in the checklist in Exhibit 6.1 and an example is provided in Exhibit 6.2.


EXHIBIT 6.1 Good Management Course Attributes Checklist
General

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Residential course of at least five days | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Based around some team exercises and role playing | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Some prereading requirement | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Your manager being required to complete a needs analysis and assessment of your current skill base | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. Course providers happy to give you contacts of previous participants | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Follow-up courses offered post the management course | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Course presenters have had in-depth management experience | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Good range of age and experience of other participants | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Course Content

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 9. Current management thinking and practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 10. How to manage teams effectively | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 11. Enhancement of communication skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 12. Leadership practices | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 13. Completing personal development plan | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 14. How to set strategy | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 15. Business disciplines at a strategic level | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 16. Impact of culture | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 17. Preparing plans that are adaptable in today's changing environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 18. Managing a budget (being fiscally responsible) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 19. Analyzing and solving complex problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 20. Negotiating | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 21. Resolving conflict | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 22. Delegating responsibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 23. Recruiting successfully | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 24. Finding a mentor | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 25. Handling difficult staff and peer relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 26. Understanding one's own personality traits, strengths, and weaknesses | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

How to Help Your Boss Be Successful

I have been lucky enough to hear the Dalai Lama. He talked about many things; one was “inner disarmament.” It put quite clearly the issue that we cannot have peace at home, at the workplace, or between countries if we do not have inner peace. The converse of inner peace must be inner conflict, and this permeates through to how we work with our colleagues and how we relate to our boss.

EXHIBIT 6.2 Management Course Outline Example

Part I: Overview of Management

- What is management and what role does it play?
- What do effective managers actually do?
- Selecting the appropriate management strategy
- Managerial competencies
- Mentorship and its importance to you

Part II: Self-management

- Making the transition from staff member to person in charge
- Determining individual competencies
- Managing time and setting priorities

Part III: Managing Others

- Planning the work—goal setting
- Organizing the work
- Choosing strategies for training, coaching, and delegation
- Communication skills and techniques
- Recruiting well—why it is the most important thing you do
- Principles and practices making up transactional analysis
- Motivating others through the feedback process
- Giving performance appraisals
- Monitoring the work
- Handling managerial challenges—counseling
- Servant Leadership—lessons from great leaders

Part IV: Action Plans for the Future

Methodology

This highly interactive program will provide individual exercises that allow you to work through the various management processes by interfacing with other soon-to-be managers. Case studies, role play, and group exercises are also utilized as a means of reinforcing what you have learned so that you are able to apply this in a practical, day-to-day manner.

The talk got me thinking about how many firms I have seen where there is disharmony between the manager and the staff. It is easy to blame the manager in this situation, yet when you look deeper you see a different picture. Many staff, when interviewed, had trouble with their last three managers, yet they fail to see the correlation.

A good relationship between the manager and staff is expressed by rock climbing, as illustrated in Exhibit 6.3.



EXHIBIT 6.3 A Rock-Climbing Relationship between the Manager and Staff

This exhibit tells many stories. Let's take the time to understand them:

- The person in front is your boss. He has the experience and technical knowledge (in most cases) to lead the team up known and uncharted routes.
- The leader needs to ensure his team is educated so that they can follow at a reasonable pace. The leader cannot climb successfully alone; he can only summit small mountains on his own.
- The staff should ensure that the boss is kept up to date on important conditions so correct decisions can be made.
- There is a degree of trust and respect as mountaineers' lives depend on their gear and fellow climbers.
- The first company I worked for had a recruiting diagram that showed each person up the rope wanting you to take their place so that they could move on themselves. The firm truly believed in the concept and it was an experience I have not had again.

So, if I were asked what advice I would give a keenly motivated individual, I would say, "Help your boss summit those high peaks." How? Simply look at the picture in Exhibit 6.3 again and it all becomes clear.

Focus on Your Boss's Goals

Concentrate on your boss's goals and make them your goals. Your goals should be a subset of what your boss is trying to achieve. If there is total

discord, you will need to appraise why you are in your current job, or work to change the focus of your boss.

Stop Commenting on Your Boss’s Weaknesses to Others

We all have weaknesses; why not focus on the strengths, and start talking about them to other people? You may just find that the more positive you are the more your boss’s performance improves. Nobody, including you and your boss, can survive for long in a negative environment.

Understand What Makes Your Boss Tick

A good starting point is to take courses covering the Enneagram, Hermann’s thinking preferences, and Myers-Briggs personality profiles; these will help you work better with your manager and colleagues.

Encourage Your Boss to Celebrate Success

Try an outing to a matinee film show—yes, you invest your lunch break, the boss invests the rest; make sure every birthday is celebrated, and remember staff with young children do not have extendible evenings!

Help Your Boss to Become a Finisher

One suggestion that worked for me is to work on a week-on/week-off basis—one week on a “finishing” focus and the other working on those nice new projects we so love to start. On the finishing week, nothing—I mean *nothing*—new can be started. Even the very thought is banned. Start finishing off those projects that your boss wanted but now has forgotten about or has put into the “too-hard basket.”

See the checklist in Exhibit 6.4 for ways of helping your boss.

How to Handle a “Bully of a Boss”

The most important point is that you can never change someone else’s behavior. Only they can. The best help to you is your mentor, who will have handled this situation before. Start off by learning to help your manager summit. This will improve the relationship and may lead to his departure to greener pastures.

If you have tried everything and life at work is miserable, you owe it to yourself to find an alternative position within the organization or as a last measure in another organization. No matter how bad it is, never resign, as you will find that the euphoria of being at home while others

EXHIBIT 6.4 Helping Your Boss to Succeed Checklist

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Are you helping your boss become more computer literate? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Do you provide your boss with decision-based reports? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Do you focus on your boss's goals? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Have you stopped commenting on your boss's weaknesses? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. Do you understand what makes your boss tick? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Do you help make work fun by organizing team functions? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Do you help your boss to become a finisher? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Are you looking for other mountains for your boss to climb? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 9. Do you enjoy your boss's successes as you have helped create them? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 10. Can you take criticism in a positive light? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 11. Do you accept differences and just get on with it? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 12. If you want to be emotional about your relationship with your boss or other employees, do you keep it to "one minute?" | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 13. Have you invested time and energy to find your inner peace? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

are suffering at work is short-lived and career damaging. Always look for a new job from a position of power (i.e., while employed).

Time Management: The Basics

There is a vast array of books and courses on time management. My suggestion is that you attend such a course every five years, to reenergize yourself. Writers on this topic talk about spending time on the key building blocks first. A good example I have seen delivered by Stephen Covey¹ is to ask a member of the audience to put rocks, pebbles, and sand in a container. The only way it can be done is to put the rocks (key tasks) in first, the pebbles (other service delivery tasks) in second, and the sand in last (the day-to-day dramas, meetings, etc. that sabotage our work). See Exhibit 6.5.

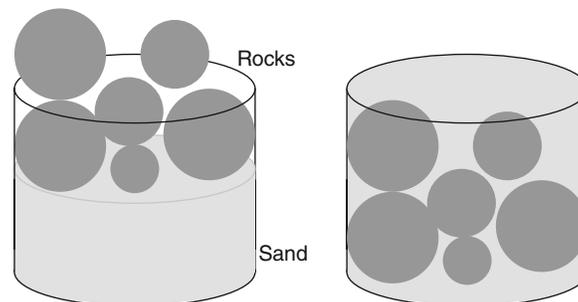


EXHIBIT 6.5 Putting the Rocks in First

 **EXHIBIT 6.6** Work/Home Balance Planner

Urgent	Work	Home
	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.
	6.	6.
	7.	7.
Nonurgent	Work	Home
	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.
	6.	6.
	7.	7.

Check to see that you have activities within these sections of your treasure map (tick if some action is happening).

Partner	Family	Living Environment	Health	Hobbies	Personal development	Work	Pension

Another technique I use is to list all work and life activities into urgent and non-urgent categories, as shown in Exhibit 6.6. The schedule will help ensure you have balance in your life and that you tackle the urgent things first. The key of course is to tackle as many as possible while they are non-urgent! See Exhibit 6.7 for a time management checklist.

A philosophy professor is lecturing to his students. He brings out an empty jar and golf balls. Filling the jar with the golf balls, he asks if it is full. "Yes," they reply. Then he lifts a container of dried peas and pours them in. "Is it full?" "Yes," they reply. Then he lifts a container of sand and pours it in around the golf balls and peas. "Is it full?" "Yes,"

(Continued)

definitely,” they reply. Then he pours in a cup of coffee. He explained, “Golf balls are the important things in your life—you must put them into your life first, otherwise you can’t fit them in. Dried peas—are the next most important things. Sand—thoughts, hobbies, holidays, daily chores.”

“So why the coffee?” a student asks. “To remind you to always have the time for a coffee with your friends,” the professor replied.



EXHIBIT 6.7 Time Management Checklist

Basics

1. Have you attended a time management course? Yes No
2. Are you spending at least half your time in the important-not-urgent quadrant? Yes No
3. Have you read any of the Covey books (*first things first*)? Yes No
4. Do you run an electronic calendar that reminds you of meetings, etc.? Yes No
5. If Microsoft scheduler is used in your company, do you block two-hour chunks of time so meetings are not allowed to decimate your day? Yes No

Better-Practice Time Management Habits

6. Do you avoid crisis by planning in advance? Yes No
7. Do you avoid commitments that do not fit into key result areas? Yes No
8. Are you courteous with people and ruthless with time? Yes No
9. Do you have set meetings with yourself planning the next few days, weeks, months and assessing progress in your key result areas? Yes No
10. Do you allow enough time between meetings in case one runs overtime? Yes No
11. Do you think that arriving just in time is actually being late, in other words, for a 9 A.M. meeting you arrive at 8:45 to 8:50 A.M.? Yes No
12. Do you work back from the time you need to be there and schedule in some contingencies? Yes No
13. Do you avoid taking that last call as you are running out the door? Yes No
14. Do you treat your electronic calendar alarm as a signal to get up and go (not as a flag to complete some new small exercise that will surely make you late)? Yes No
15. Do you plan for the next day, next week, next month on a rolling basis? Yes No
16. Do you focus back on your goals daily? Yes No

It is important to run your week in the most efficient way to service your customers and your workload. Thus, the number-one rule is not to allow others to disorganize you.

It is important to avoid having meetings during your key productive time. Yet that is the very thing we all tend to do.

Ask anybody about his or her productivity and you will find frustration about how time has been taken away in nonproductive activities. It never ceases to amaze me how many people schedule meetings in their prime thinking time, the first part of the morning. Would it not be better to schedule meetings toward the tail end of the day and leave the first two hours of the morning for working on your projects? Exhibit 6.8 depicts the impact on the working day. In other words, limit or ban morning meetings.

The main change in Exhibit 6.8 is that there are larger chunks of service-delivery time (the time spent catching up on projects, answering emails and phone calls, and so forth) and meeting times are rescheduled to the afternoons, allowing us to be more relaxed, having scored some early goals. In order to make this possible there need to be fewer meetings, and here are some suggested rules that might be useful:

- Avoid opening emails until 10:30 A.M.—this is covered later in this chapter.
- Have meetings only when all actions have been undertaken from the previous meeting.
- Block your service-delivery time three months ahead, so that your working day cannot be ambushed by others accessing your electronic calendar.

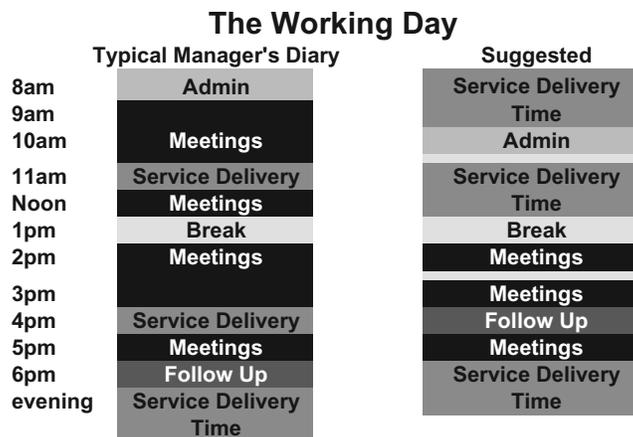


EXHIBIT 6.8 Working-Day Schedule

EXHIBIT 6.9 Costing Managers' Time

A manager's year may look like this:	Weeks	
Vacations (including public holidays)	6	
Sick leave	2	
Training and updating	2	
Time spent travelling to other offices, to training courses, to suppliers, stakeholders etc.	2	
Time spent handling "non-service delivery" communications, emails, phone calls (e.g Supplier marketing, company newsletter, handling spam etc.) say half a day a week	4	
Time spent on annual budget process (including time spent reporting against it)	6	
Time left for manager to spend on service delivery activities	<u>30</u>	weeks
	Total	<u>52</u> weeks
Service delivery hours per year (30 weeks × 45 hours a week)	1350	hours
Cost per hour base on the salary of \$75,000	\$56	per hour
Cost per hour base on the salary of \$100,000	\$74	per hour
Cost per hour base on the salary of \$125,000	\$93	per hour

- Cost all meetings (as a guide, each manager will be effectively costing the organization somewhere between \$60 to \$100 an hour; see Exhibit 6.9).
- Insist on outcomes from every meeting.
- Team leaders should monitor all meeting requests endeavoring to deliver the service rather than attending the meeting to discuss the service request.
- Attendees provide satisfaction ratings on meetings utilizing simple but effective intranet-based survey technology or the old-fashioned form (poor chairpersons would soon get the message).

By blocking off the mornings from meetings I now have the luxury of performing strategic, project-related tasks every morning. While for many readers this will not be totally achievable, you can start by blocking off the morning with project work and letting your peers know that "you do not do morning meetings."


EXHIBIT 6.10 4:00 P.M. Friday Planner Checklist

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Arrange a get-together with colleagues to ask for their opinion on something | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Arrange to meet those new colleagues who have arrived recently for a coffee | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Write down some open-ended questions for meetings scheduled for next week | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Think of the colleagues you are having the most problems with, reflect on the differences in a positive way and plan to say something positive to them next week | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. List all the deferred decisions you have, pick one, undertake the pros-and-cons exercise, and make a call, NOW (You will enjoy the weekend immensely) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Follow-up on a training session you have had and see how you can apply the lessons next week | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Think about whom you can give positive recognition to, and make three phone calls now and make their weekend, and yours! | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Do at least two actions from the meetings you have attended and send the material on to the appropriate person | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 9. Organize your network meetings for the next two weeks | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 10. Think about what innovation you will bring to the operation in the following week | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

The 4:00 P.M. Friday Weekly Planner

A sound practice I have seen is the planning of the next week on a Friday afternoon (see checklist in Exhibit 6.10). It has a number of benefits:

- It means that you can start Monday on the front rather than on the back foot.
- It can be followed by a team debriefing, which means everybody knows what they are doing the next week and thus there is no need to have the dreaded Monday-morning team meeting.
- It has the benefit of holding something in your mind and letting the subconscious do a bit of processing over the weekend.

Power Dressing

Some readers will have heard the saying, “Look a million dollars, feel a million dollars.” Power dressing is very important as perception is the key

factor here. Observe those who you admire and look at how they are dressed, and over time, as funds permit, replicate the look. You will find it does wonders for your confidence, especially in challenging situations when you know you are one of the best-dressed people in the room.

A good starting point if you are not known for your color sense is to get yourself color-charted. The experts in color have broken colors down to the four seasons. You are either a person who looks better in spring, summer, autumn, or winter colors. They will show you techniques to bring a traditional dark suit back into the color that suits you best through a suitably colored shirt, tie, silk handkerchief (positioned in the top pocket of the jacket), or broach in the lapel.

Preparing for Your Performance Review

Here are suggestions for preparing for a performance review:

- Prepare a mind map on your performance.
- Spend time thinking about positive outcomes even from those less than meritorious activities you performed within the progress review period.
- Think about the emotional drivers your manager will have and sell yourself around these (e.g., if your manager is concerned about the profile of the unit, think of ways you can help promote the unit by simplifying a procedure, by reducing requirements that are not needed, or by suggesting a more informative team intranet page that you personally manage).

Preparing a Monthly Progress Report

As mentioned earlier a monthly progress report should be brief and prepared quickly, via the use of a mind map. The one-page snapshot report should take no more than 30 minutes to write and five minutes to read. Remember that this report is important, so never issue it on the same day you wrote it. You need to sleep on it and review it for completeness the next day. See Exhibit 6.11 for suggested headings and layout.

Quality Assurance Checks

Far too often, in the pursuit of expediency, managers issue reports without spending enough time doing the quality assurance. See Exhibit 6.12 for a quality assurance checklist. The quality assurance of a report should include:

EXHIBIT 6.11 Monthly Progress Report Format

Monthly Progress Report

Success Stories Last Month

- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Lessons Learned

- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Status on the Monthly Objectives

- Launched the team’s intranet page ☺
- Progress with lifting profile of the team ☹
- Report on ☹

Goals for Next Month

- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

- **An allowance for a final quality assurance check.** Here are some basic quality assurance tips to help ensure that your work is of a high standard. It reminds me of a story about a good friend of mine who had to work all through the night to meet a tight deadline. Due to tiredness, his last version of the report was not checked thoroughly, and the result was a substandard piece of work. When he offered the excuse of being up all night, his manager had little sympathy. No matter how hard you have worked, always allow enough time for a read-through and other quality assurance checks.
- **The two-person read-through.** The only surefire way of picking up all errors is to have a call-through. What I do is have a staff member sit at my desk while I have the hard copy. The staff member reads out loud and I follow the words on my copy. We are in tandem. By hearing it read aloud, I can check the “dance of the words”—their rhythm—and thus amend to make it an easier read.
- **Computer read-back facility especially for people suffering from dyslexia.** Dyslexia is a crippling syndrome and many of us suffer from it. It means that we can easily transpose words or completely leave words out. Reviewing one’s own work with this disability is totally worthless. A must for any person suffering from dyslexia is to acquire a voice-recognition package that will also include the more valuable


EXHIBIT 6.12 Quality Assurance Checklist

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Ensure all spreadsheets used have built-in cross checks | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Look for unnecessary detail that can be removed (e.g., never show numbers that are less than 10% of the total) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Check to ensure there are enough suggestions on the next steps, thus ensuring implementation issues have been thought about adequately | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Have you looked for what is missing? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. Have you allowed at least one night between finishing the writing and the final review? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Perform a call-through (one person reads aloud to another who reads an identical version silently) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Cross check all references (appendices, headings, numbers) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Page through all printed copies (to avoid missing pages, poor printing, pages wrong way up) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 9. Avoid last-minute changes to tables as it is likely that cross references may become out of sync | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 10. Check all graphs back to source to ensure that they are the final version | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 11. Change the print cartridge if you have a major print run to avoid print cartridge failure (you can always reuse the partly used one) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 12. Use high-quality paper for those special reports where color graph reproduction is important | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 13. Seek a third-party review of logic and content (specifically ask them to ignore grammar, syntax, and so forth as this will limit their high-level review; you want them to keep on “seeing the forest as opposed to looking at the trees”) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 14. In every piece of work look, for the last two errors (Often you will not make the changes—they will never spot them!) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

tool, the *read back*. This tool can be acquired as freeware (such a package is called “Via Voice”). The computer-aided read back should not replace the two-person read-through on those important reports because you will miss out on some collective editing that occurs when two minds are working on the one document.

- A final look for those last two errors.** This is what I call the two-gremlin rule, which states that in every piece of work there are always at least two gremlins that sneak through. If I find them and they are minor, I leave them and release the report. If you do not find them, look again or someone else will spot them.

Remember that you need a sense of perspective here; if the error is minor, do not alter the report as the cost both in time delays and reprinting may not merit the change. If someone else spots an error, you simply congratulate the person, saying “Well spotted.” Never mention these errors. Let your manger find them if she can.

I would always correct typos on the first couple of pages or in the recommendations section, as these can undermine the report.

If time is really pressured, spend five minutes searching for the two gremlins, especially on the first few pages.

Contributing to Your Organization’s Intranet

It is important to start good practices now. So learn how to maximize your use of the company’s intranet as it will become a bigger feature in the future of all rising stars. (See Exhibit 6.13 for a checklist of the things you can do immediately.)

Making the Most out of Your Computer Applications

While some of the current senior management team may be technological dinosaurs, very soon being technically competent will be a prerequisite for all senior managers. Exhibit 6.14 provides some guidelines to ensure you make the most out of technology.



EXHIBIT 6.13 Checklist for Contributing to the Company’s Intranet

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. If there is a knowledge database in your organization, ensure your CV is loaded up | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Access the knowledge database for experts to help you | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Be proactive and help update your section’s Web pages every week | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Look for new applications that can be added to the intranet and be a vocal supporter | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. Understand all sections of the intranet | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Get onto some project teams that will bring additional features to the intranet | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Report to the webmaster any omissions or errors on the intranet | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Ask people from other departments what they like and dislike about your team’s intranet Web page and suggest changes based on their feedback | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |



EXHIBIT 6.14 Computer Applications Checklist

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Attend “update” training courses at least every two years | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. It is better to use your existing applications more efficiently than to spend all your training time understanding the next upgrade, as many of the changes may have little benefit to you | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Build a contacts database for your team if you do not already have one; it will be very useful and a good training exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Learn good file structure techniques if your organization does not already have a documentation management system | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. Be proficient with word processing, spreadsheet, database, email, and presentation software | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. For databases, the table structure should enable a minimization of repeated common data (e.g., company details should be in a separate linked table rather than repeating them for every contact person within that company) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Regularly search the internet for the latest free offering on using the technology you are having the most problems with | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Visit application gurus you have in the office whenever you are about to embark on a major development. They will have useful tips not covered in any manuals and they will be more than happy to help if asked nicely | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 9. Learn a new application at least once a year; this will help remove possible barriers you may have to new technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

In Pursuit of Slow

Early on in your career it is important to understand the importance of slow times. These are times when you have a chance to unwind and stand back. Many great managers have this ability. Instead of rushing off to the gym or going for a punishing 10km run, think about an activity that is profoundly “slow.” For example, slow activities include: a lunch time walk, gardening, fishing, making something with your hands, or restoring a vintage bike, boat, or car. Carl Honour’s² book, *In Praise of Slowness*, points out the benefits of many slow activities.

Better-Practice Graphics

Data visualization is an area that is growing in importance. No longer is it appropriate for well-meaning accountants and managers to dream up report formats based on what looks good to them. There is a science behind

what makes data displays work. The expert in this field is Stephen Few. Stephen Few has written the top-three best-selling books on Amazon on data visualization.

A must-visit for all corporate accountants, analysts, and managers is Stephen Few's company's website where he has lodged many high-quality whitepapers on the topic of graphical displays (www.perceptualedge.com/library.php).

Dashboards, where data is summarized for senior management or the board on one page in a combination of tables and graphs, is very common. In fact, in some companies the one page looks like the dashboard of a car, where the term originated from. Few has come up with a very useful list of common pitfalls in dashboard design, which are explained in detail in his whitepaper on the topic, "Common pitfalls in dashboard design," on www.perceptualedge.com/articles/Whitepapers/Common_Pitfalls.pdf.

While graphs are an art form and not a science, there are definitely good and bad graphs. The key is that they convey the message to the user, support the argument being made, and do not try and cover too many issues. Spreadsheet applications are the normal source for graphs and this means that most staff in the organization will be able to update and amend. If you are using a specialized graphics application, you may be drawn into the more scientific graphs, which are more suitable to a thesis than a business communication. Examples of good graphs are shown in the material that is available to readers of this book (see www.davidparmenter.com), and see Exhibit 6.15 for a better-practice graphics checklist.



EXHIBIT 6.15 Better-Practice Graphics Checklist

1. Insert graphs into tables in the Word document; this enables you to put formatted text underneath it or to the side, without complex tab arrangements. This also means that the graphs will auto-size to the width of the table when you paste them in, saving on formatting time. Yes No
2. Show 15 to 18 month trend analysis. That way you can compare last month against the same month last year and observing the trends leading up to these two months. Yes No
3. Avoid more than three trend lines as they will cross over numerous times and make the whole picture confusing. Yes No
4. With line graphs thicken the standard line so the color comes through clearer. Yes No
5. Use a pale-yellow background as all other colors sit well against this background. Yes No
6. Avoid more than five divisions in a stacked bar. Yes No

(Continued)

EXHIBIT 6.15 (Continued)

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 7. Wherever possible print in color. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Use a high-quality paper for the final copy. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 9. Put the title of the graph in the table rather than on the graph; it enables you to make an 11 th -hour change without having to go back to the source graph. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 10. Organize your workbook so that the worksheet names clearly show what graphs are in each sheet. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 11. Limit four graphs to a worksheet so that they can be seen on the one screen, this avoids hunting among spreadsheets for graphs six months later when you have forgotten which worksheet they are in. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 12. Keep it simple; there are many graphical options that may be fully understandable by yourself but do not convey the message quickly to the user. (Radar, bubble, and 3D surface graphs are so hard to read that two individuals can read the same graph and come to widely varying conclusions.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 13. When paste linking graphs into the document, select “manual link” option as opposed to “automatic.” Word attempts to update all automatic links when opening the document and this can corrupt graphs or lock up the machine if the source worksheet is not opened beforehand. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 14. Integrate your graphs with the text and avoid at all costs placing the graphs in an appendix. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 15. Mock up several different graph types when you are displaying data you have not shown in a graph form before. This way you can quickly see which type will suit the data best. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 16. If you have more than six lines of data split into multiple graphs showing an average (for a graph with absolute numbers) or total (for a graph with relative ratios). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 17. On common spreadsheets change the font on the graph. Disable auto-sizing as the text will dominate the graph when you enlarge it. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Delivering Bulletproof PowerPoint Presentations

This is a skill you need to adopt before you can be an effective manager. So it is best to start now. I will assume that you have attended a presentation skills course, a prerequisite to bulletproof PowerPoint presentations. The speed of delivery, voice levels, using silence, and getting the audience to participate are all techniques that you need to be familiar with and comfortable using (see Exhibit 6.16 for a checklist).

There are at least 25 rules for a good PowerPoint presentation:

1. Always prepare a paper for the audience covering detailed numbers and so forth so that you do not have to show detail in the slides (see rule 2).
2. Understand that the PowerPoint slide is not meant to be a document; if you have more than 35 words per slide, you are creating a report, not a presentation. Each point should be relatively cryptic and be understood only by those who have attended your presentation.
3. At least 10 to 20% of your slides should be high-quality photographs, some of which will not even require a caption.
4. A picture can replace many words; to understand this point you need to read *Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery* by Garr Reynolds,³ and *Slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations* by Nancy Duarte.⁴
5. Last-minute slide presentations are a career-limiting activity. You would not hang your dirty washing in front of a hundred people, so why would you want to show your audience sloppy slides? Only say “yes” to a presentation if you have the time, resources, and enthusiasm to do the job properly.
6. Create time so that you can be in a “thinking space” (e.g., work at home, go to the library, etc.).
7. Map the subject area out in a mind map and then create Post-It stickers for each point to help you organize your thoughts.⁵
8. Understand what is considered good use of color, photographs, and the “rule of thirds.”
9. For key points, do not go less than 30-pt-size font. As Nancy Duarte says, “Look at the slides in the slide sorter view at 66% size. If you can read it on your computer, it is a good chance your audience can read it on the screen.”
10. Where possible, if you are going to present on a regular basis, make sure you have a Exhibit PC, which gives you the ability to draw when you are making points. This makes the presentation more interesting, no matter how bad you are at drawing.
11. Limit animation; it is far better that the audience is able to read all the points on the slide quickly rather than holding them back.
12. Use Guy Kawasaki’s “10/20/30 rule.” A sales-pitch PowerPoint presentation should have ten slides, last no more than 20 minutes, and contain no font smaller than 30 pt.
13. Bring theatrics into your presentation. Be active as a presenter, walking up the aisle so that those in the back see you close up, vary your voice, get down on one knee to emphasize an important point; have a bit of fun and your audience will, too. Very few things are unacceptable as a presenter. A colleague even commented to me that their

boring “Welcome to Uni” session was totally revolutionized by the junior lecturer giving the talk naked (that, however, may be a little over the top).

14. Be aware of being too cute and clever with your slides. The move to creating a lot of whitespace is all very well, provided your labels on the diagram do not have to be very small.
15. Never show numbers to a decimal place nor to the dollar if the number is greater than 10,000. If sales are \$9,668,943.22, surely it is better to say, “approx. \$10 million” or “\$9.6 million.” The precise number can be in the written document if it is deemed worthwhile.
16. Always tell stories to relate to the audience, bringing in humor that is relevant to them. A good presenter should be able to find plenty of humor in the subject without having to resort to telling jokes. No doubt, some of the audience have heard the jokes and would rather hear them from a professional comedian.
17. Make sure your opening words grab their attention.
18. Understand Stephen Few’s work on data visualization if you are using graphs.
19. Have a simple remote mouse so that you can move the slides along independently of your computer.
20. Never use clipart; it sends shivers down the spine of the audience and you may lose them before you have a chance to present.
21. Practice your delivery. The shorter the presentation, the more you need to practice. For my father’s eulogy, I must have read it through 20 to 30 times. Each time breaking down at a different point, I even had my brother as a backup in case I was unable to deliver it. He sat in fear throughout the whole service. However, on the day, all the practice paid off and I was able to deliver a worthy eulogy—one that has been commented on by many as the best they had ever heard. The point I am making is that the best speech I have ever delivered is the one I prepared the most for.
22. Always remember the audience does not know the whole content of your speech, particularly if you keep the details off the slides; if you do leave some point out, don’t worry about it—they don’t know or would not realize the error.
23. If there has been some issue relating to transportation, technology, and so forth that has delayed the start, avoid starting off with an apology. You can refer to this later on. Your first five minutes is the most important for the whole presentation and must therefore be strictly on the topic matter.
24. Greet as many members of the audience as you can before the presentation, as it will help calm your nerves, and it will also give you

the opportunity to clarify their knowledge and ask for their participation such as at question time. The other benefit is that it confirms that nobody in the audience would rather be doing your role, so why should you be nervous?

- 25. At the end of the presentation shake hands with as many of the audience as possible by positioning yourself by the door when the audience leaves. This develops further rapport between presenter and audience.



EXHIBIT 6.16 PowerPoint Presentations Checklist

The 25 key rules are embedded in this checklist in the appropriate area, with number and indent. The number refers to the rule stated earlier in this chapter.



The Planning Phase

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Only say “yes” to a presentation if you have the time, resources, and enthusiasm to do the job properly (rule 5). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Create time so that you can be in a “thinking space” e.g., work at home, go to the library, etc. (rule 6). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Map the subject area out in a mind map and then create Post-It stickers for each point to help you organize your thoughts (rule 7). ^[i] | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Develop a purpose of the presentation. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. Have a goal for the number of slides you will need. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Perform research on the subject. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Do you know your audience? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Do you know why they are coming to the presentation? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 9. Do you know what their emotional drivers, points of pain are? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 10. Can you solve any of their problems? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 11. Do you know what you want them to do? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 12. Have you thought about why they might resist your suggestions? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 13. Do you know how you can best reach them? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

The Creative Phase

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 14. Always prepare a paper for the audience covering detailed numbers and so forth so that you do not have to show detail in the slides (rule 1). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 15. Max of 35 words per slide, each point should be relatively cryptic and be understood only by those attending (rule 2). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 16. At least 10 to 20% of your slides should be high-quality photographs, some will not even require a caption (rule 3). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

(Continued)

EXHIBIT 6.16 (Continued)

The 25 key rules are embedded in this checklist in the appropriate area, with number and indent. The number refers to the rule stated earlier in this chapter.



- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|
| 17. Have you read <i>Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery</i> by Garr Reynolds, ^{liii} or <i>Slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations</i> by Nancy Duarte (rule 4). ^{liiii} | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 18. Understand what is considered good use of color, photographs, and the “rule of thirds (rule 8).” | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 19. For key points, do not go less than 30-pt-size font (rule 9). | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 20. Limit animation; let the audience read ahead (rule 11). | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 21. Apply the “10/20/30 rule for all sales-pitches.” Ten slides, 20 minutes, and contain no font smaller than 30pt (rule 12). | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 22. Be aware of being too clever with your slides (rule 14). | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 23. Round all numbers (rule 15). | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 24. Understand Stephen Few’s work on dashboard design if you are using graphs (rule 18). | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 25. Never use clipart; it sends shivers down the spine of the audience (rule 20). | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 26. While you are creating avoid editing as you are going along—Do not mix editing with your creative side in other words, your first cut of a PowerPoint should never be edited as you are building it. Simply pour down your thoughts, leaving clues for your staff or peers to help in certain areas (see ahead for an example). | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 27. Review recent articles or recent seminars you have attended for clever and concise diagrams. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 28. Find some diagrams that tell a story. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| The Editing Phase | | | | |
| 29. The person preparing the slides needs to have attended a course on PowerPoint. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 30. Are you using the entire slide? (avoid using the portrait option for slides) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 31. Do you create a progress icon to show the audience the progress being made through a presentation? | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 32. Portrait pictures can be moved to one side and the title and text to the other. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 33. Are all detailed pictures expanded to use up the space of the whole slide? (ignore the need for a heading) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 34. Repeat a good diagram if you are talking about a section of it at a time. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| 35. Have slides read through by someone who has good editing skills. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |

EXHIBIT 6.16 (Continued)

The 25 key rules are embedded in this checklist in the appropriate area, with number and indent. The number refers to the rule stated earlier in this chapter.



- 36. If you have pictures of people, do you ensure that they are looking toward the slide content? Yes No

First run Through of the Presentation

- 37. Once the slides have been edited go straight into a full practice run with one or two of your peers in attendance. Yes No
- 38. Time the length and avoid any interruptions; the audience are to note down improvements as they are spotted. Yes No
- 39. Practice your delivery. The shorter the presentation, the more you need to practice (rule 21). Yes No
- 40. Prepare the master copy of the slides so you can check all is clear, and courier to seminar organizer. Yes No
- 41. If workshop exercises are to be included, read through these carefully and get them checked for clarity by an independent person. Yes No
- 42. Print slides three to a page except for complex slides that should be shown on their own. Yes No
- 43. Test your laptop on at least two data shows as some custom settings that maximize your network can prevent your laptop linking to data projectors. Yes No

Night before

- 44. Avoid late changes; nothing annoys the audience more than the presentation being in a different order to the presentation handout. Yes No
- 45. Always test the data show projector the night before if you are required to run it. (you may find you have a missing cable) Yes No
- 46. Carry a spare power extension lead and the standard laptop to data projector cable with you. Yes No
- 47. Add some more story clues for you on the slides if necessary. Yes No
- 48. Travel up the night before. (plane travel deadens the senses, can effect hearing and you cannot trust the schedules) Yes No
- 49. If possible, bring a spare data show with you for extra protection. Yes No
- 50. Avoid excessive intake of alcohol the night before, it reduces performance the next morning. Yes No
- 51. Bring your own laptop to the presentation. Yes No
- 52. Practice the night before especially the first five minutes. You will need to grab the audience's attention. Be good at telling your lead story (you will need a story in the first five minutes). Yes No

(Continued)

EXHIBIT 6.16 (Continued)

The 25 key rules are embedded in this checklist in the appropriate area, with number and indent. The number refers to the rule stated earlier in this chapter.

**On the day**

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 53. Use a Tablet PC which gives you the ability to draw when you are making points (rule 10). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 54. Bring theatrics into your presentation (rule 13). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 55. Always tell stories to relate to the audience, bringing in humor that is relevant to them (rule 16). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 56. Make sure your opening words grab their attention (rule 17). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 57. Have a simple remote mouse so that you can move the slides along independently of your computer (rule 19). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 58. Always remember the audience does not know the whole content of your speech, don't worry if you leave something out (rule 22). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 59. Avoid starting off with an apology. Your first five minutes is the most important for the whole presentation apologize later (rule 23). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 60. Greet as many members of the audience as you can before the presentation, as it will help calm your nerves, and it will also give you the opportunity to clarify their knowledge (rule 24). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 61. At the end of the presentation shake hands with as many of the audience as possible (rule 25). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 62. A brief run through the first one to five minutes at the proper speed before breakfast. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 63. Light exercise is a great idea to freshen the mind. (I usually go for a swim before I speak) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 64. At the first break meet with a sample of the audience and ask whether the material is of interest and about the pace of delivery. This will help pick up any problems and thus improve the assessment ratings. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 65. Run through an example of the workshop exercise to ensure every workshop group has the correct idea of what is required. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 66. Recap what has been covered to date and ask for questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

[i]Ibid., p. 28.

[ii]Garr Reynolds, *Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery*, New Riders, 2008.

[iii]Nancy Duarte, *Slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations*, O'Riley, 2008.

Searching the Web Efficiently

Effectively searching the Web can be a very frustrating exercise. Exhibit 6.17 provides some tips that may make you more efficient.



EXHIBIT 6.17 Web Searching Checklist

1. Set a time limit but be patient; many people miss the good links because they expect a useful link on the first page of results but it may take five to ten pages to strike a good link even with a good search result! The order of the results is usually in “closest fit” but this does not necessarily mean useful links at the start! Yes No
 2. If you find your search unhelpful, try another one (Lycos, Altavista, Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.). Yes No
 3. If you get more than 2,000 hits, refocus your search; (“topic + topic + topic”) will ensure that all three pieces occur in each hit. Yes No
 4. Remember that each search engine uses different cataloging techniques, so different engines/sites tend to be good at different types of searches. Yes No
 5. If a direct word search does not work, use topic searches (e.g., Roald Amundsen, the famous polar explorer, can be found quicker by searching for “polar explorers’” than by searching by his surname). Yes No
 6. Learn to use the advanced search capability (available on most search engines these days) and refine your search that way. The Lycos version uses “must have,” “should have,” “should not have,” and preferred language options (which can weed out all the languages you do not know). Yes No
 7. If the advanced search facility still does not track down the information you want, then try linking on from a simpler search (e.g., a site about polar explorers found by your search may not have a reference to Amundsen but it may have a link to a site that does). This sort of “springboarding” can be far more productive than simply querying a search site! Yes No
 8. Try to get your searches down to about 200 results. But do not stress if a popular subject brings up thousands of results; that is the nature of the Web. Yes No
 9. If you feel you are getting stuck in a mire of unrelated sites, it is not you; that is the nature of the chaos called the World Wide Web. It affects everyone that way sooner or later. Just relax, read a book for a few minutes, and try again when you have calmed down or had some inspiration. Yes No
-

Interview Techniques

Good interviewing is relatively simple. With about 15 to 20 minutes' preparation, you can look like a David Frost, a Michael Parkinson, or a Walter Cronkite if you cover the material shown in Exhibit 6.18. Please see Chapter



EXHIBIT 6.18 Good Interview Checklist

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Recheck venue of interview, especially if the venue is a meeting room that could be double-booked. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. State the purpose of the interview and reconfirm the time available. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Prepare up to ten questions using the <i>who</i> , <i>what</i> , <i>why</i> , <i>when</i> , and <i>how</i> as guides to the type of questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Remember, perception is everything, so have a good-quality folder and a high-quality pen (I use a high-quality fountain pen but there are risks attached to this). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. Position yourself at the interview to easily maintain eye contact with the interviewees and ensure the sun is not in anybody's eyes. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Allow the interviewee to cover topics slightly outside the question, but bring them back gently (an interview is like trout fishing; You need to give them line while they are running and bring it back efficiently and gently). | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Fight the temptation to join in on a diversion; if you think of an idea or a new question note it down and come back to it when you have completed all the other questions. (I put ideas in square brackets so I know it was not said by the interviewee, and I put new questions in the top-left corner of the first page.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. If involved in a project to improve processes, ask "What are the three changes you would most like to make?" | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 9. Take neat, brief notes (they should not detract from the pace of the interview) as it meets a number of objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It helps maintain your concentration—remember an interviewee can detect immediately if you have mentally wandered off. ■ It shows that you think what they are saying is important, and enables you to trap any good ideas that come to mind during the interview. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 10. Avoid more than two back-to-back interviews so you are fresh for each one. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 11. When ascertaining an opinion or a resolution during an interview, it is a good practice to summarize your understanding of what has been agreed. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Note: It is generally unnecessary to send your questions in advance to the interviewee.

I will never forget being taken to an interview by a partner in the London consultancy firm I worked for. He had prepared for the meeting meticulously, thinking about his questions. He asked the questions and then allowed the interviewee to cover topics slightly outside the question. He always brought him back gently to the question. He said that you will always be surprised by the gems you find. I now run interviews as I would land a hooked trout. I give them line while they are running and bring them back efficiently and gently.

Notes

1. A. Roger Merrill, Rebecca R. Merrill, and Stephen R. Covey, *First Things First*, Simon & Schuster, 1994.
2. Carl Honour, *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed*, HarperOne, 2005.
3. Garr Reynolds, *Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery*, New Riders, 2008.
4. Nancy Duarte, *Slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations*, O'Riley, 2008.
5. Ibid., p. 28.

