



# Essential Management Skills

## Part 4 - Personal Improvement, Understanding Yourself & Your Self-Image

## **PART 4 - Personal Improvement, Understanding Yourself & Your Self-Image**

In this session we move on to looking after #1.

YOU!

We are going to look at your personal improvement, techniques to understand yourself a bit better and also your self-image.

We have got lots to cover so let's get ready to rumble!

Sean

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## Your Personal Improvement Plan

Could you please dig out your personal improvement plan for me before we start this session - thanks.

What do you mean you don't have one!?

Come on, dust it off and let's get on with it.....

It's what? At the bottom of your drawer gathering dust? "What personal improvement plan?" you ask!

Okay okay - I'll let you off, but let me ask you this question:

Why are you focussing on everyone else's development apart from your own?

I know I made a joke of the above scenario but 80% of the managers that I meet do not have Personal Improvement Plan in place.

I find this staggering!

Just because you are a manager doesn't mean that you are at the end of the personal development road.

Instead it means that you are actually starting out again but at a completely different level.

In fact, if you do not focus on your personal and professional development you are more than likely going to struggle now that you are playing at a completely different level with a new set of players and rules!

You need it more now than you have ever done in the past. So now is the time to step back and put the wheels in motion and to create one!

Do you understand yourself? Your motivations? Your values? Your standards?

## How well do you understand yourself?

In the last session we talked about managerial styles, how people learn best and what their preferred way of thinking is, but what is yours?

Have you taken a managerial styles questionnaire to find out? Have you taken a learning styles inventory?

Are you aware of whether you think in pictures, sounds or feelings? Do you know what you value the most in life?

What are your attractions? What are your repulsions?

What motivates you? Why are you in the job that you do?

What is your managerial style in times of conflict?

To strive forward it is always prudent to take current stock of where you are now.

## Learn how to minimise your weaknesses and improve upon them

Everyone likes to do the things that they are good at. However, it's a different kettle of fish when we have to do things that we are not so good at!

Let's concentrate on improving your weaknesses and get you an action plan to improve those areas of your working life.

## Improving your weaknesses

I'd like you to write out below the top 3 weaknesses that you have got.

1.

2.

3.

These can be skills, knowledge - you name it!

Any area of your working or personal life (if it is affecting your time at work) where you feel "inadequate" or "unfulfilled".

These weaknesses are in your skills and the things that you are not so good at.

Ask yourself – "If I improved these areas/skills I would have a lot more chance of success in all that I do?"

Some of them could be – Communication skills, your appearance, networking, listening etc.

What I want you to do now is to focus in on what you need to do in order to improve each area.

What will you need to do? Who can help you? What resources do you need? When will you start? Write these out.

For each improvement I would also like you to write out:

How each improvement would increase your confidence? How it will make you feel?  
What do you need to do to make it happen? Who can help you? When will you start?

## Don't be afraid to make mistakes!

The great Managers are not afraid of making mistakes! Learn from the past! Never, ever, beat yourself up about what has happened in the past or some of the mistakes that you have made.

I know that's easier said than done.

One major contributor to one's confidence levels to do a good job has been the experiences and events that have happened in the past.

Two people can go through the same experience yet one is confident and the other is not. Why is this?

Well, it's how you use what has happened in your past.

The people with high confidence levels, people like myself, learn from experiences in the past rather than dwell and get down by them.

There are no failures only outcomes! Failure is an opportunity. It is an opportunity to learn from your mistakes and to take stock of your situation.

I don't even like to use the term failure. Whatever you do in life there are inputs and outputs. There are no failures, just outcomes. A former Boss of mine said:

"If you are not making any mistakes, you are not actually doing anything"

This is perfectly true and I have used this phrase with every person that I have lead in the workplace.

I have always encouraged my staff to try new ways of working and learning from the experience.

The real winners in life DO make mistakes.

Winners however, learn from them whereas losers usually give up when the going gets tough.

I failed my driving test 3 times before I passed.

Each time I failed, I learned the lessons where I had gone wrong and made sure that I didn't make them again.

Sure, I didn't repeat the same mistake twice – I just found other ways of failing the test!

There was a lesson to be learned about life though. Every time the Test instructor said that I had failed, I felt so low it was unbelievable but I was determined to pass the test.

I turned up for each test wiser and more knowledgeable.

The fourth test resulted in the Test Instructor stating that "It was the best piece of driving they had seen in a long time".

Just think, if due to my demoralisation, I never retook that test over and over again, that "Best piece of driving" would never have taken place and I wouldn't have had the opportunity to drive the BMW's, the Audi's I have owned in the past and the Porsche that I drive today.

In your quest for success, no matter what it is, you will make mistakes along the way.

It will help you to overcome these setbacks if you acknowledge from the outset that you will make mistakes and it is all part of the learning experience.

It's an old cliché but a good one:

"There are many battles that are won or lost, but it is the side that wins the War in the end that are the victors"

## **THE FEAR OF FAILURE**

People's fear of success stems from their terror of failure.

They sacrifice the possibility of achievement, wealth and fame rather than risk making any mistakes.

Many opt out and avoid failure by doing nothing.

Too many people emphasise their weaknesses rather than their strengths.

They program themselves negatively to expect failure rather than positively to expect success.

If you start to imagine all of the reasons why you simply cannot succeed, then you will not even have the strength to try.

We all have the natural aversion to being embarrassed when things go wrong or to be made a fool of in the presence of others.

This holds people back and causes them to, dare I say it.... PROCRASTINATE. When success comes within their reach, fears of the unfamiliar prompt losers to cling to their comfortable old self-defeating ways. They stay within their comfort zone.

Successful people push straight through these fears and move even closer to their goals and on to bigger and better things.

They break out of their comfort zones and develop new ones. Here are some step by step guidelines to learn from the past:

- Appreciate what has happened
- Write down what you could have done differently
- If you have to go through something like that again what would you change in your attitude and what would you change in the tasks that you completed
- Teach others about your experiences so they learn from what you did
- Forget about it and move on to the next outcome!
- Learn how to beat stress once and for all!

## Being a manager is a stressful job!

Been there, done that and lost my hair over it! ;-)

But it needn't have been the case, if only I had known at the time of how to control it.

So how can you manager your stress levels? Here are my top 3 tips!

### 1. Be Organised

If you are leaving tasks open ended or failing to follow through this will have a massive impact upon your stress levels. You need completion in these areas, write down what is outstanding and either do them or bin them on a regular basis.

### 2. Exercise

You need to get away from it all and have a regular exercise program. Even if this is just a walk around the park, you need to take some of your frustration out on the treadmill, on the punch bag or simply strolling around the park and taking in the fresh air can make you feel fantastic.

### 3. Relaxation and Rest

Mental stress is caused by an overuse or misuse of the mind. For instance, if you perform intense mental work many hours a day, or if you work long hours on the computer, it can cause an imbalance in Prana Vata, the mind-body operator concerned with brain activity, energy and the mind.

To address this make sure you get a good night's sleep, have a regular massage, try aromatherapy, meditation or just go to a ball game!

Anything where you can just switch off, even if it is just for an hour or so.

## What is your self-image telling others?

The way that you look and act has an impact on how you are treated and perceived by others.

Like it or loathe it we are a looks dominated society so as someone at the top it is important to focus on the image that you want to portray to others.

Someone once said:

"If you treated your friends, the way you treat yourself, would you have any?"

Your first task is to write down the image that you would like to come across to others by the way that you dress, act, grooming etc. Write this down on a piece of paper.

Pretend that you are a member of your peer group at work answering questions about you!

Answer the following as that person:

- Do you command respect and authority?
- What image do you portray by the way that he/she dresses?
- Do you take pride in his/her personal appearance?
- Do you wear the same clothes all of the time?
- Do you come across as confident?

I'd also like you to be brave and ask some of your peers and friends these questions as well.

After all of that, I'd like you to write down any specific actions that you need to take to bridge the gap between the image that you want to portray and the image that others have of you.

Next time we will be looking at ways to make sure that you succeed in your role and the advice that you receive from others.



## About MTD



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Sean McPheat is the **Chief Executive Officer** of the multi-award winning **MTD Training Group**.

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