

Part 1: Introduction

Chapter 1: The Stretch Imperative

Tomorrow's workplace is being shaped by megatrends underway now. As people work longer, it has become necessary to reshape the identities we form in our careers. The reality of today's environment leads us to three key career imperatives.

Dreams

*Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.*

—Langston Hughes

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THE STRETCH IMPERATIVE

Jade stepped out on her apartment's patio to survey the city peeping through the river fog. For the next three weeks, her apartment would be taken over by a couple from Chicago, arranged through AirBnB. Her Uber was ten minutes away, according to the app, to take her on the first step to Cuba. Her editor at the city's major daily had assigned her to do a story on how the recent trade policy changes impacted medical care practices for both that country and the United States. U.S.-made prescription drugs, once under embargo, were now saving people's lives in Cuba. Cuban medical practitioners had some advice on public health policy to share in return: Cuba had the highest average life expectancy rates in the region—almost 79 years.

When she graduated ten years ago, Jade had dreamed of traveling to foreign countries and reporting on important stories, but her chosen field of journalism was in great upheaval. Although college prepared her with the fundamental skills she needed, the massive technological changes and industry-wide job hemorrhaging left behind an uncertain career path. In the last ten years, she had held jobs with nine different employers and had dozens of side contracts to gain experience and make ends meet.

Along the way, she realized that, in order to create the career she wanted, she needed to look at new media jobs. In truth, the jobs were both exciting and daunting because she would have to personally morph to learn new skills. Jobs like website designer, media app developer, growth hacker, emerging media editor, audience strategist, blogger, and podcaster seemed to be everywhere. While she experimented working at startups in some of those roles, she also started a blog called *JournEmerge*, about the experiences of journalists and their journeys as they adapted to the changing world. Ironically, her shift to new kinds of journalism landed her a traditional role at one of the world's largest dailies. A hiring manager followed her blog and Twitter feed and reached out to her when a spot opened up.

From her feedback on her blog, she knew life could have ended up very differently, as one person who left a post on her blog said. "Hi, I'm David, and thanks so much for your blog. My story is a lot like others on this site. I just didn't see it coming. I was so clueless. When I got my pink slip and went out to sit in my car, I noticed the new-car smell. Only that morning I'd loved the smell, but now it felt like a chain around my neck.

"I don't want to sound overly proud, but I thought I was immune. I had been nominated for three Pulitzer Prizes, won numerous investigative awards, and worked in Tokyo, Beijing, London, and São Paulo. None of the writers on staff had as much global experience, and only a few had won as much journalistic recognition. Well, clearly that didn't work out.

"The paper hired a young newsroom chief who kept asking me about my social presence and what I was doing to promote my stories. Honestly, at the time I thought that was ridiculous and completely ignored her. Not a good idea.

"Fortunately I got a job pretty quickly with an international consulting firm. They thought my global experience, especially living in Asia, and writing skills would make me a good analyst. Looking back, they should have, but I just wasn't ready to leave my old mindset behind. I still wanted to report independently and with ruthless truthfulness.

The clients didn't always appreciate those values. I bombed out after only 18 months.

"Finally I had that apocryphal 'aha' moment. Two pink slips inside of two years will do that for you. Either I had to change, or my kids would be on their own for college. I had promised them a college education, and I am not a person to renege on my promises. I contacted the boss who had laid me off, took her to lunch, and asked her to mentor me.

"She was incredibly gracious and spent a half-dozen sessions with me. Her mentoring helped me see the new world of media. Not long after, I got a job with a global research firm and I've been there almost seven years. My kids have both now graduated. I just wanted to let your readers know that it is possible to transition at any age. You just have to be open."

David and Jade's stories are like those of so many of us who prepared for careers that have ended up far away from our original vision. With an eye toward the future, still early in her career, it was easier for Jade to adapt as her industry shifted. David took longer to let go of a world that no longer existed. Your story may be different from theirs, but no matter what company, field, industry, or geography you are in, to be ready for tomorrow, you will need to stretch beyond your capabilities of today.

Who Do You Want to Be Tomorrow?

Gallup reports that the majority of us are disengaged at work. Pointing the finger at leadership for this state of affairs is easy to do. According to the Gallup Chairman and CEO, Jim Clifton, "Of the approximately 100 million people in America who hold full-time jobs, 30 million (30 percent) are engaged and inspired at work. So we can assume they have a great boss. At the other end of the spectrum are roughly 20 million (20 percent) employees who are actively disengaged. These employees, who have bosses from hell that make them miserable, roam the halls spreading discontent. The other 50 million (50 percent) American workers are not engaged. They're just kind of present, but not inspired by their work or their managers."

Engagement, then, is all about the bosses, if you believe Gallup. Logically then, the only options you have are to change bosses or stay in an unhappy situation.

We disagree.

Engagement is not a one-way street and not all on the shoulders of the boss. That's like saying a marriage is all up to just one partner. We believe you have the power to change from disengaged to engaged and to realize your career dreams, no matter what kind of boss you have. Why leave your development, your happiness, and your career in the hands of someone else? Engagement scores have not shifted dramatically in the fifteen years Gallup has been measuring them, in spite of millions of dollars of training for managers. Something needs to change.

Studs Terkel, author and Pulitzer Prize winner, said, "Work is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying." Work is integral to a fulfilling life. Your only job satisfaction should not be direct deposit. You can find meaning, be engaged, and build a stunning career. Boss optional.

Earlier in her career, Barbara worked closely with Fred Rogers, a children's advocate and television host. Fred was completely engaged in his work and personally responded to every letter from the children of the world who wrote to him. After nearly four decades of work, suffering from cancer, Fred started working from home. He asked the staff to continue to send him the letters, and he answered his last letter the day before he died. This is more than a strong work ethic; this is engagement at its most empowering and compassionate.

Imagine if everyone, yourself included, was as engaged in your work as Fred Rogers. And we can be, regardless of present or past work situations, education level, or even childhood expectations. Perhaps you are the first generation to complete college, just as Barbara and Karie are in our families. The future you could imagine for yourself might have been defined by the experiences of your parents. You wouldn't be the first to get advice from your parents that limited

your future. Leonard Nimoy, the late acclaimed actor who played the character Spock in *Star Trek*, was told by his Ukrainian-born father, Max, that if he wanted to pursue acting, he needed to get a practical skill that would serve him well throughout his life. “Learn to play the accordion,” Max Nimoy urged. “You can always make a living with an accordion.” Fortunately for *Star Trek* fans, he didn’t follow his father’s advice.

Even if your launch into your career was enabled by a strong financial and family support system, you may have found that your equivalent to Nimoy’s accordion advice was pressure to get a practical degree, for which you hold no passion. Or perhaps you took that well-paying “tangent” job in order to pay down your college loans. Or maybe the job you held for years was sufficient, served its purpose, and you’ve only recently discovered your true passion.

As people live and therefore work longer lives, it becomes necessary to reshape the identities we formed in our careers. We absolutely can prepare for a new future, fulfill a reinvented set of dreams, and surpass any goals we set out at the beginning of our career journeys.

Our undertaking as authors is to share our extensive research and personal experiences in order to give you the capacity to be fully engaged, prepared for the future, and to stretch to the next level, no matter where you are in your career. We also want you to avoid career heartbreak, obsolescence, and loss of purpose.

We will help you:

1. Learn career management tools that you can implement on your own, without the need for big financial or company resources;
2. Choose from a broad set of options and strategies on how to approach work and develop your career, so that you have the flexibility to pick what works within your own situation; and
3. Assess your current reality and plot a path to achieve your dreams so you can be prepared for tomorrow’s workplace.

The future beckons. Will you remain one of the 70 percent of the disengaged zombies at work? Or are you facing obsolescence, like

David, the Pulitzer Prize nominee? Instead, what if the life you are living is your bucket list, and all you want is to ensure that you get to live more of the life you have, work and all? It's time to stretch, to prepare for tomorrow's workplace, and put yourself in control of the career of your dreams.

The Workforce 2020 Research

Our research mission was to discover how changes in the global economy and shifting demographics will impact the employment and talent marketplace. We collaborated with SuccessFactors—an SAP company—and Oxford Economics to conduct twin studies of executives and employees across 27 countries to find out what the future workforce is thinking, wanting, and worrying over.

In addition to the global surveys, we interviewed and talked to over 300 people, and consulted with dozens of academic or corporate learning experts to refine and validate our practices. We reviewed over 1,000 academic papers, kept booksellers in business with book deliveries, and clicked through countless of the web's estimated trillion pages.

Survey respondents were clear that they need development in order to be prepared for tomorrow's workplace. Around the world, the number one concern people expressed was that their ability and skills to perform rapidly changing jobs would render them obsolete. Additionally, only 50 percent of the employees from our survey believe the skills they have today will be the skills they need just three years from now.

See more details about our research and findings in Appendix A.

Megatrends That Will Affect Your Future

In order to point ourselves in the right direction, first we need an idea of where we are going. When we plan for tomorrow, we have to assume the work environment will be different than it is today. That is truer now than ever. Before we get started in practical career tools

to future-proof yourself, we'll give you an overview of the factors that are sure to change the world of work tomorrow.

We have identified seven megatrends that will certainly have an impact on the types of jobs, entrepreneurial opportunities, and skills needed for workers in the future. Entire books are written about these trends. This big picture review is meant to help you see how they might affect you and what you will need to do to prepare for the workplace of tomorrow.

Globalization

A major shift in where business is conducted is occurring now. McKinsey estimates that half of the world's largest companies will be headquartered in what are now emerging markets, such as Brazil, India, and eastern European countries. By 2030, nearly two-thirds of the global population could be middle class. As the world develops, the economic picture shifts radically. Pressure from global competition and other factors resulted in over 40 percent of the companies that were in the Fortune 500 in 2000 falling off the list by 2010. These were replaced largely by new global entrants and technology companies. Still, the Fortune 500 had revenues in 2014 equivalent to almost 72 percent of US GDP, double what it was in 1955.

In just the last decade, Brazilian company 3G has purchased established brands such as Kraft, Heinz, Anheuser-Busch InBev, Tim Hortons, and Burger King. Then, following an established 3G management pattern, they aggressively managed out costs and consolidated departments, resulting in the loss of thousands of jobs, while expanding to international markets and delivering increased profits.

Even high-achieving companies in growing industries face the pressure of globalization. For example, at the same time the visual effects company Rhythm and Hues was winning their third Academy Award, this time for *Life of Pi*, their bankruptcy proceedings were going through the court. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that "like most large U.S. visual effects firms, Rhythm & Hues already was under pressure because of generous tax subsidies in foreign countries

including Canada, competition from lower-cost developing markets, and boutique shops that use off-the-shelf technology.”

The types of jobs most affected by globalization will be ones that can be done anywhere in the world and shipped over the Internet, like the computer and digital graphics industry already has demonstrated. Paraphrasing John Donne, no person, company, industry, or country is an island in today’s world, standing of themselves. We are all inter-connected.

Demographics Shifts

In many economies around the world, advances in healthcare and declining birth rates have resulted in a population that is graying and a workforce that is shrinking. In the United States, 11,000 people a day turn 65 and this trend will continue until 2030. People are living and working longer, with the average retirement age for most people working now expected to be 66, up from 57 two decades ago. Among those people over 55 in the U.S., an astonishing 43 percent have less than \$25,000 saved for retirement, and many see no end to working in the foreseeable future.

Japan’s population continues to decrease and Europe experienced a 1 percent decline in the overall population in the last decade. According to the United Nations Population Division, Germany, Italy, and Spain are all expected to experience population declines ranging from 14 to 25 percent. By 2030, China will have nearly as many senior citizens aged 65 or older as children aged 15 and younger, resulting in a workforce deficit.

On the other end of the spectrum, Millennials are now the largest generation in the workplace in most countries, and their voices, connected through social media, will increasingly alter the workplace culture. The Millennials replacing the exiting older workers are generally more tech-savvy, with eight in ten believing that the Internet has changed life for the better, while less than half of the oldest generation of workers believe the same. Gen Xer’s, born between 1964 and 1979, have also embraced technology, beginning in the 1990s with their BlackBerry devices. We expect that Millennials will increasingly

assert their values and experiences on everything from an expectation of simplicity in work processes and technology to benefits, pay, and development requirements.

Diversity is also on an uptick. Women comprise about 47 percent of the U.S. workforce, up from 38 percent in 1970, and are outnumbering men in college attendance. Millennials are increasingly diverse, and U.S. demographers estimate that non-whites will be the majority by 2040. In many countries, immigration is also changing the face of the workforce. Shrinking workforces leave too few jobholders, especially in entry-level positions, requiring immigrants to sustain the economy. This increasingly diverse workforce will demand more representation in leadership positions and in pay equity.

Explosion of Data

When they call it “big data,” they mean really big. Experts estimate that from 2009 to 2020, data will grow 4300 percent. That data will be in the form of content from the past that can be readily structured into a database, and will also increasingly include unstructured data such as that found in social media sites like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Vine, and so on.

Increasingly, the data will be generated by machines that are connected to one another via the Internet, also called the “Internet of Things.” In 2011, 20 typical households generated more Internet traffic than the entire Internet in 2008. Organizations that can mine this data to reveal customer trends will lead the markets of the future.

Already, the demand for people who can make sense of all the data is soaring. In 2015, IBM estimated that the global need for data scientists is 4.4 million jobs, but only one-third will be filled. Cyber security and privacy are concerns as well, as more information becomes automatically connected without human intervention.

No matter what field you are in, the interface with data and machines will increasingly become a factor. Sensors, location-enabled applications, and machines from your car to your refrigeration will all be feeding you with personalized data to improve the productivity and quality of your life. Imagine having your

hotel room set to your preferred temperature when your phone approaches within an hour of your arrival, or your fitness application sending a stream of data to your healthcare provider to create a personalized health plan.

The United Nations has declared access to the Internet to be a basic human right. So the Internet is here to stay. People of all generations worry that being constantly connected and monitored is a potential threat. It is, however, where we are headed.

Emerging Technologies

Already there are indicators of jobs that are going away based on new and emerging technologies. In April of 2015, the first driverless car to cross the United States arrived at its destination in Manhattan after nine days. Whether drivers or pilots are completely eliminated in the near future remains to be seen, but as one pilot sitting in coach next to Barbara said, “I’m only up front to make you feel comfortable that someone is there. I’m not really needed.”

Another technology that is being used in unique ways is 3D printing. Manufacturing will move from being a subtractive process to an additive one, where objects are built in layers by printing rather than by machining away from a block of material. People have created an amazing array of objects on 3D printers, including shoes, acoustic guitars, drones, bionic ears, guns, and cars—the list goes on. Thus, imagine the role of designers in the future who can sell their printing instructions for anything to anywhere in the world.

One of the many emerging technologies worthy of mention is robotics. Japan is expecting one in three of its population to be over the age of 65 by 2030, and one in five to be over 75, creating a major requirement for the care of the elderly. Not surprisingly then, Japan is on the leading edge of using robots in service roles. A hotel opened in Japan in 2015 with lifelike robots, called actroids, serving as the check-in staff. Robots can also provide room-to-room delivery of food, newspapers, toiletries, and such items. Aid assistance in nursing facilities is on the horizon, meaning many of the entry-level jobs in those areas will become obsolete. How soon will you interact with a

robot providing customer service? The answer may be sooner than you think.

Climate Change

Climate change will have a strong economic impact in the future. The OECD anticipates that by 2050, more than 40 percent of the world's population will live under severe water stress, resulting in floods or drought that, combined, can put the economic value of assets at risk at record highs. The 2015 mandated water controls in California are just an example of what we can expect in the future. The cost of water and the need to cut back on development could easily have, for example, California-based organizations eyeballing expansion locations near the rainforests of Oregon, or see the popping up of new businesses along the South-to-North Water Diversion Project in China. People follow economic development shifts, so expect people to migrate in search of jobs.

Consolidating and reducing facilities in favor of environmentally friendly buildings is a top priority at many organizations. Economically, it can only make sense to position corporate assets in locations at low risk of climate destruction.

Finally, becoming efficient with resources is socially responsible and cost beneficial. Organizations need to adapt to increasing regulations controlling energy efficiency, waste, water leakage, urban congestion, transportation efficiency, land degradation, freight impact, and other factors. Allowing employees to work virtually also reduces the need for facilities and helps organizations minimize their carbon footprints.

Redefined Jobs

What is a job? Look over a few definitions on the web and it's easy to see that few of us are still limited to Google's first meaning: "a paid position of regular employment." Sure, we have paid work, but from only one source and in a regular fashion? That is less likely due to the increase in part-time and contract work. The percentage of part-time workers to full-time workers remains high, possibly as employers resist hiring people for more than 30 hours a week to avoid paying

benefits. The reality of the 40-hour workweek, single-employer job is elusive to many, and now experts estimate that one-third of all U.S. workers are freelancers or contractors.

Instead, the definition of a job looks more like the second meaning from Google: “a task or piece of work, especially one that is paid.” Piecing together multiple gigs at the same time or freelancing in a series of work-for-hire roles is a new normal. According to Freelancer.com, some of the fastest growing opportunities are PowerPoint creation, accounting, report writing, designing Facebook landing pages, and community management.

Rarely are jobs assigned or taken on as a result of a strategic plan to build your skills and capability, thus preparing you for the future of work. Instead, the nature of fluctuating workloads requires moving to meet those needs, whether your skills and motivation match or not. Over 83 percent of executives told us they plan on increasing their use of contingent, part-time, or flexible workers in the next few years. The nature of work is going to be increasingly a transactional task exchange, which is to say, those with in-demand skills will be hired to accomplish one specific project, rather than given a full-time position.

Even if you have a full-time job or have started an entrepreneurial venture, you can build new skills by taking gigs on the side. Some of the many sites available that match people with project requests are Crowdspring, Upwork, or Freelancer. Technology advances and shifting market demands also create new categories of jobs. Just a few of the jobs that didn’t exist ten years ago include app developer, market research data miner, admissions consultant, social media or community manager, cloud computing services—and the list is growing.

The nature of how work gets done is rapidly shifting. Co-location workspaces are popping up all over the place to allow people who don’t work for the same organizations or in the same field to work in the same place and perhaps find ways to unexpectedly collaborate. Work is happening everywhere, all the time. Even the lines between workday and personal time are blurring, since work and personal time blend and overlap. Work is no longer a place, but a thing.

Complexity

Complexity is increasing for both organizations and individuals. At the organizational level, complexity multiplies with layers upon layers of government regulations, in multiple countries, combined with requirements from customers with their own unique specifications. In our survey of executives, increasing regulations was one of the top concerns for being able to compete in the future. Complicated regulations can create complex processes and policies.

The massive amounts of available data, although holding great promise for market insights or productivity gains, are only useful when paired with the capability to meaningfully understand and apply insights to decisions and processes. Organizations that can streamline and simplify structures, processes, systems, and cultures will have the competitive advantage in the future.

At the individual level, the need to master this complexity and balance competing demands is also on the increase. Stanford researchers identified a number of stressors that affect overall health and wellness for employees, including long hours, job insecurity, extraordinary job demands, work-family conflict, unfair work situations, and others. Whether you are in a large or a small organization, the constant volatility, uncertainty, change, and ambiguity result in job complexity that make decisions more difficult and increase the demand for simplified processes.

Studies agree resoundingly that these megatrends are forging the working landscape of the future. Some trends may seem far removed from your everyday world; others you may already be experiencing. All of them have the potential to change the way we work in substantial ways, threatening to make many people and even experts in their fields obsolete. Do you know how soon you will be one of the affected, whether your skills are about to become irrelevant?

Do You Have a Sell-By Date?

Although incredibly accomplished and skilled in his field, our award-winning journalist David missed the signs pointing to his inability to maintain a job in the field he loved. When we originally talked to him

and asked why he left journalism, he said, “I didn’t leave journalism. Journalism left me.” David had a sell-by date that he didn’t realize existed until it had expired.

There were many indicators he should have picked up on, but his focus area was too narrow at the time. As Marshall Goldsmith, author and executive coach, says, “What got you here won’t get you there.” The skills and experience that made David successful early in his career didn’t prepare him for a day when social marketing of his content was a necessary job requirement. Fortunately, he was able to reboot, fail at a major consulting firm in his next role, but then bounce forward into a successful career in a research firm, where his global experience and interviewing skills have served him well.

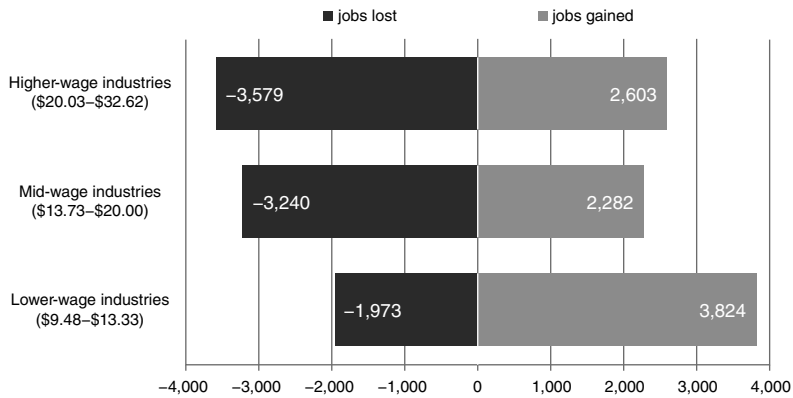
Today is not your grandfather’s work world or even your mother’s work world. Dynamic forces are at play, shifting even the world’s largest corporations with a trickledown effect that hits you. Fifty years ago companies stayed on the Fortune 500 list an average of 75 years. Now it’s 15 years. Only 67 companies stayed on the Fortune 500 list in the period from 1955 to 2011, as new companies with new market approaches displaced the old ways of doing business. And the rate of churn is increasing. The iconic gold watch presented as a retirement gift after 50 years of loyal service in your grandfather’s work world is as antiquated as the white leisure suits of the 1970s or the boy bands of the 1990s.

David is only an example of one of many journalists who found they faced a completely evolving industry with no sure steps toward an employment future. Print media was one of the hardest hit industries during the financial crisis of 2008, but it wasn’t the only one. According to Scott Timberg, music and culture writer, severe cuts across whole job categories included:

- 19.8 percent decrease in graphic design over four years
- 25.6 percent decrease in photography over seven years
- 29.8 percent decrease in architecture over three years

Although the total number of jobs lost was regained by 2014, the types of jobs regained were not of the same quality as those that had been

FIG 1.1 Net Change in Private-Sector Employment (in Thousands)



Jobs lost: January 2008 to February 2010

Jobs gained: February 2010 to February 2014

Source: National Employment Law Project

lost. Middle- and higher-income jobs were replaced by low-income jobs, as shown in Figure 1.1. As a result, from 2003 to 2013, the typical U.S. household experienced a 36 percent decline in inflation-adjusted net worth.

But as Jade’s and David’s stories showed, there is hope for those who reinvent themselves to stretch to the future. The effort is worth the payback.

The worry of becoming obsolete is not new. Change is just happening at a faster rate, making us worry about it far sooner in our careers. The concept of sell-by dates started in the most unlikely of places and was originated by a less-than-reputable character. During the 1920s, Chicago earned a reputation as a city where mobsters enjoyed free-range operations. The most notorious of these was Al Capone, also known as Scarface. He was believed to have ordered dozens, if not hundreds, of murders, including the St. Valentine’s Day massacre. Bootlegging during Prohibition was an important part of his criminal empire.

But even gangsters face the threat of changing business models. Before his crimes caught up with him, Capone had made a few attempts

to polish up his public reputation and go straight. None of them lasted long. As the repeal of Prohibition seemed inevitable, Capone sought to establish business alternatives to bootlegging. Given that he already owned a distribution system to get his illegal alcohol around the city, he considered how to use the equipment, skills, and contacts he already had for the inevitable day when alcohol was once again mainstream. “Do you know,” he would say, “they got a bigger mark-up in legit fresh milk than we could ever get away with in booze? Honest to God, boys, we been in the wrong racket all along.”

Realizing his impending obsolescence, Capone and his protégés first cornered the market on stamping equipment. They then lobbied the Chicago City Council to regulate milk cartons by stamping them with expiration dates. That innovation was the first time sell-by-dates were used on milk to indicate freshness. It is a practice that remains to this day. By no means is Capone a model of citizenship we would advocate to emulate, but his story does demonstrate that a scrappy approach to thinking about the future can be wildly effective.

Capone was interested in keeping his product visibly fresh in order to effectively market and sell it. An expired product is not sellable. Pass the sell-by date significantly, and the product heads for the waste fields. The same applies to workers. The importance of keeping our skills and abilities fresh in order to be competitive in the job marketplace is mandatory. To keep nudging our own sell-by date out further, we must be in constant refresh mode. We must constantly stretch.

● **stretch**

streCH/verb

1. To reach beyond your capabilities of today to be ready for tomorrow
2. To expand your viewpoints and skills beyond your current state
3. To be relentlessly resourceful in pursuing your career dreams

The question is not whether you have a sell-by date. You do. The real question is what you are doing to extend that date. Depending on what field you are in and how up-to-date your experiences and education are, that sell-by date might be soon, or it might be a few

years away. Even though your skills might have an expiration date, your dreams don't, which is why the practices offered in this book become critical.

The Stretch Imperatives

There is no future in any job. The future lies in the person who holds the job.

—George W. Crane

From write-in comments on our survey and interviews, we repeatedly heard three themes that represent the

realities of today's workplace. These themes represent the climate that we address in this book. We call these the Stretch Imperatives. To provide you with the best set of practices to build a successful career, we must address the realities of today's environment.



Stretch Imperative 1: It's All on You

Not only is your engagement all on you, but your development is too. In our research, the number one attribute executives valued in employees was a high degree of education and qualification. Yet fewer than one-third reported that their companies offered incentives or benefits related to obtaining more education, whether it was degree-oriented or job-specific. Only 34 percent of employees said their company was able to give them the training they need.

At a 2013 convention of Chicago's top chief human resources officers, one of the keynote speakers, an HR leader from a Fortune 500 company, proclaimed, "I am not responsible for anyone's development but my own." There was a moment of silence. Had he actually just said that out loud? Then the audience began cheering him. Resoundingly. Indeed, it's all on you.

If you want to become a leader, it's even more on you. We asked executives in our survey to rank their top employee attributes. They told us they value the willingness to follow more than leadership ability. As a result, you have to build leadership skills on your own if you want to be prepared for the demands of management roles. In a review of the

17,000 leaders who went through one firm's training programs, they reported that the average age managers received their first leadership training program was 42, even though the average age most became leaders for the first time was 30. For those first twelve years, leaders were on their own to manage with inherent skills or those they acquired independent of their organization's support.

Even though organizations may offer information on careers at their firms, few offer guidance or development at the personal level. The pressure of simply keeping up with the work in your queue today makes it difficult to proactively stretch in preparation for tomorrow. It's easy to fall behind.

Elaine typifies what can happen while being focused on delivering results day-to-day without an eye on the future. After college, she worked at a local manufacturing company in human resources. With two years of experience and her college loans paid off, she went back to earn an MBA. Networking through friends and family, she landed a job in a large aerospace company in the southwest. With regular promotions, a marriage, and two children, the years slipped away.

At the fifteen-year mark, the company decided to do a major reorganization and the department head announced that everyone in her department would have to reapply for his or her job. Elaine decided to test the market while the reorganization was underway. Feedback from the few recruiters she talked to seemed frightening. Being in the same industry and company for so long, they said, could limit her options and might even put off some potential employers.

Although she was able to hold onto her job, the experience helped her realize she could no longer be a passive sojourner in her career. She began to seek new opportunities at work, achieved a new certification in her field, and began to focus more on an external network. Never again, she vowed, would she feel so at the mercy of her employer for her livelihood.

To help you take on the responsibility for your own development we explore how to learn on the fly and be open in your thinking to new or different opportunities.



Stretch Imperative 2: You Need Options

One size definitely doesn't fit all when it comes to preparing for tomorrow. Even if you have a defined career path at your company, you may not be willing to follow that prescribed plan. For example, the first five years at a top-tier consulting firm can involve 100-hour weeks and constant traveling, only to have that exhausting schedule continue once the initial dues are paid. Or at some companies, there are strong rules about how long you have to be at a certain grade level before promotion, regardless of your capabilities or merit. You need options in order to maximize your personal development.

As one of our survey respondents said, "[I want] to move more towards working independently, taking project-based work that grows my skill set while giving me the opportunity to network further. I do not see myself continuing to work in an office 9 to 5 setting, and flexibility is my goal." Others thrive in the corporate world, or perhaps enjoy an entrepreneurial small business environment. Some naturally take to the 24/7 work life of the modern workplace, while others want the freedom to go home to their families after 6 p.m. without work following them.

To increase your options, we cover some key practices on building a network and in gaining experiences. We also include five to seven strategies in every practice, letting you custom-fit your stretch solution based on your situation. Pick the strategies that work best for you.



Stretch Imperative 3: You Have Dreams

Our survey respondents and interview subjects shared hopes and aspirations for building their careers now to achieve loftier goals in the future. That might be bigger and more significant roles at your company or another one, or it might mean starting your own business. What we heard loud and clear is that you want more for yourself and your family, and you are willing to take the steps to be career-ready.




Whether it is more money, development such as mentoring, or an opportunity for challenging work, you are clearly thinking about the future. As one respondent said, “I’ve been a marketing professional for some time and have a lot of contacts. I have a goal in mind, but I am not seeing light at the end of the tunnel in this company. I plan to switch jobs and get a good one in a bigger organization soon.”

Performing today is important, but you care about the bigger picture. When we asked what is the most important factor influencing employees’ job satisfaction, the number one response was “meeting overall career goals.” As this respondent affirms, “I want to focus on developing as a person, not just improving job performance.” You don’t only want to be ready for a job tomorrow—you also want to grow as a person to have even more career options for the future. You want to stretch.

To help you realize your dreams, we look at how you can leverage your career experience to not just bounce back but also bounce forward to embrace your dreams for the future.

An Overview of the Five Practices

Our goal as authors is to help you stretch, avoid becoming obsolete, and be engaged at work. We have combined the lifetime of our experiences developing people, conducted original research, interpreted the extensive research of others, and now aim to deliver a practical set of solutions. From our research, we found five practices that people who stretch to their potential employ. The five practices connect to the Stretch Imperatives, as shown in the chart below.

STRETCH IMPERATIVE		STRETCH PRACTICE	
	It's all on you	Learn on the Fly	Be Open
	You need options	Build a Diverse Network	Be Greedy About Experiences
	You have dreams	Bounce Forward	

Since the first Stretch Imperative confirms that it's all on you, you must be able to:

- Learn on the fly in any situation
- Open your thinking to a world beyond where you are now

Because you need options, these practices included in the second imperative will help you:

- Connect to the people who can help you make your future happen
- Seek experiences that will prepare you for tomorrow

Finally, to ensure you are able to fulfill your dreams, as cited in the third imperative, we offer some motivational strategies to:

- Bounce forward and stay motivated through the ups and downs of a career

These five practices form the foundation for supporting your ability to reach your career goals and to be resilient and prepared for a future you have yet to envision. We believe these are the five practices that will help you stay on the path to a flexible and sustainable future.



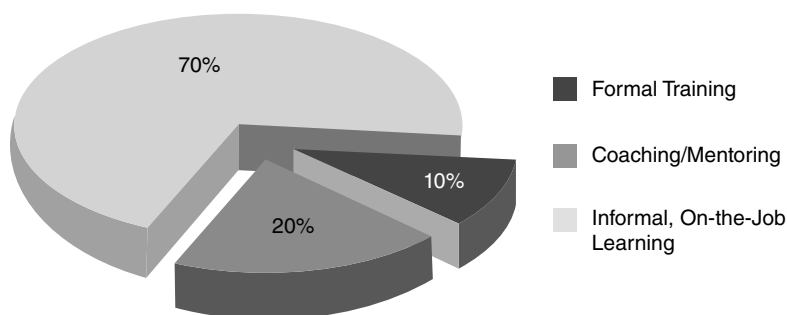
Stretch Imperative 1: It's All on You

Practice One: Learn on the Fly

How much time did you spend in training classes last year? Or in time with your manager or mentor? In the learning industry, there is a common maxim introduced by the Center for Creative Leadership called the 70-20-10 model, as shown in Figure 1.2. The model suggests that 70 percent of learning happens informally while on the job; 20 percent through relationship with others like coaches, managers, or mentors; and 10 percent from formal coursework or training.

Informal learning happens in many ways. These can include casual conversation with co-workers, experiences such as expanded roles and responsibilities, using new tools and technologies, working on teams or programs outside of your normal responsibilities, or taking on a completely new role in a volunteer position outside of work. Since

FIG 1.2 70-20-10 Model



most of how you learn is unstructured, having strategies and tools to learn on the fly is one of the most important ways you can stretch to your potential.

Kurt is an example of someone unprepared to learn on the fly. Frustrated with feeling he was stagnating in his role as a project manager and knowing from feedback that people wanted him to be more “take charge,” he knew he needed help. He went to the local bookstore and scanned the self-help and career titles to learn about being more decisive. Overwhelmed with the choices, ironically he walked out with nothing because the decision was too difficult.

Unlike Kurt, we have found that expert learners have a specific set of techniques they use to develop themselves. We will provide you with tools the experts use and also help you avoid the most significant learning traps people fall into when learning in the context of their work.

Practice Two: Be Open

Even though you may have the ability to learn, there is a mindset about approaching work and your environment that is either open or closed. Are you willing to be vulnerable about not knowing everything, or do you position yourself as already knowing everything there is to know about a topic? As Liz Wiseman, author of *Rookie Smarts*, says, “Rookies are unencumbered, with no baggage to weigh them down, no resources to burden them, and no track record to limit their thinking or aspirations. For today’s knowledge workers, constant learning is more

valuable than mastery.” To be open, we must recognize that the world is shifting faster than we can possibly change ourselves.

In Chapter 3, “Be Open,” we will give you techniques for soliciting feedback in safe and unconventional ways and help you assess how open you truly are. We provide key strategies for developing your skills to be open to seeing opportunities in new ways and to identify small decisions you can make along with big ones to move your career forward.



Stretch Imperative 2: You Need Options

Practice Three: Build a Diverse Network

Many of the people we interviewed told us that the strategy they used to stay current and stretch their own horizons was to hang around the right people. Those might be smart people, connected people, younger people, older people, or powerful people. But which of the following two networks would serve you best in getting a job?

The first option is a network of people who are close to you, friendship, community, or family who are always there to see you through thick and thin. You know you can count on them to help make introductions and provide small favors in your job quest. You are strongly tied to these people.

The second option is a network of acquaintances with whom you are likely to have less frequent contact. We are not talking about your Facebook friend George Takei, but the people with whom you might have had lunch once or twice, or whom you met at a professional conference and kept up an occasional email exchange with or see at an annual holiday party. This network might be a little more geographically diverse and not as concentrated as the first network. Chapter 4, “Build a Diverse Network,” explores the function and application of both your networks and the surprising answer to what networks you need when.

Depending on the type of job you have and your personal style, the strategies for building a network may differ. We will provide you a range of approaches and when to use each one, depending on your type of job and your personal style.

Practice Four: Be Greedy About Gaining Experiences

Given the same experiences, two different people might not each gain the same growth of knowledge and capability. As Douglas Adams wrote in *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*, “Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so.”

The collection of meaningful experiences, with a deliberate approach can be the most powerful way to stay up-to-date and current in your role. Michael Webb, senior vice president at HSBC in Canada, passes on advice from his father: “Be absolutely greedy about experiences.”

In Chapter 5, “Be Greedy About Experiences,” we will provide you with ideas to consider to develop more capabilities both inside and outside the confines of your current job. We also help you contemplate what to do if your current experience is with a bad boss, or whether your good boss may be keeping you from stretching to your potential.



Stretch Imperative 3: You Have Dreams

Practice Five: Bounce Forward

One of the biggest factors determining how well you navigate your success in the future is how much grit you have. Grit is a combination of perseverance with a passion for long-term goals, needed to sustain you through setbacks. But we not only have to bounce back from setbacks, we must also bounce forward toward a goal that keeps us learning and growing. Being absolutely determined is a strong predictor of success, which is why perseverance through setbacks so often leads to success.

If you’ve ever said, “I’ll never do that again,” it is likely because the impact of the failure or bad event is bigger than any number of good events strung together. Negative events are powerful learning tools. Bad is stronger than good, at least when it comes to learning and locking in long-term memories.

The solution, if we are to move forward and avoid stagnation, is to recover from a downfall with a drive to achieve a goal in the

future. Although failure is one of the worst setbacks, there are other types of setbacks that can be just as debilitating. False starts, such as declaring one academic major in college only to realize in your senior year that you have no passion for it, can be just as hard because of the sunk costs and the feeling that you are abandoning a set path.

Another type of setback is disruption, usually from events out of your control. The company you work for could be acquired, or regulatory environments could change, like the repeal of Prohibition affecting Al Capone's livelihood. And then there are the missed opportunities we each have in our past. These can cause us to look backward and dwell on what could have been instead of what can be. Determination and grit can see you through any of these setbacks, and Chapter 6 will provide some motivational strategies to help you persevere toward a long-term goal.

The Story of Brandon

Brandon, a director of training, is an example of someone who had to discover what goals he felt passionate about and then stretch to achieve them. Diagnosed with ADD and dyslexia, a psychologist told his mother that a high-school degree would be aiming high and college was out of the question. With strong support from his parents, he obtained a BS degree in psychology, but was unsure what he wanted to do. He first worked in construction, then as a camp counselor. As he worked various jobs, he realized he liked working with people more than working with his hands.

Upon returning from a year of traveling the world, he decided to go into sales. Quickly realizing he hated sales, that experience was chalked off to learning what he didn't want to do. Still unsure, he decided to earn an MBA, and then focused on finding a job in adult education.

His first boss in a corporate training position was, as he put it, "absolutely horrible," but when that boss moved on, he got the opportunity to move up. "Something clicked in," he said. "I struggled for six months, but then I realized that learning on the fly was okay."

Brandon has finally landed in a field that he can pursue in almost any industry, as all but the smallest companies have training departments. Looking back, he now sees how every one of his working experiences combined to make it possible for him to find the job that ultimately clicked.

Brandon learned how to bounce forward through a number of obstacles, false starts, and the disruption of a bad boss. He tried a variety of experiences to see what fit, all the while defining the working environment he liked best. He learned to use his network for both support and to find positions. Brandon is engaged. Are you ready to thrive as well?



Stretch Summary

- You are in charge of your engagement with your work.
- The number one concern of employees around the world is their position changing or their skills becoming obsolete.
- The stretch imperatives are the three resounding themes from employee and executive interviews and write-in comments. They are:



It's all on you. You are the only one who can drive your career development. Don't rely on your boss or your organization to engage you.



You need options. Not everyone is able or willing to relocate or make a major career shift if the company demands it. You need options from which to choose in considering how to prepare for tomorrow.



You have dreams. Whether those dreams are in the organization you are in now, somewhere else, or as your own boss, you dream about doing more.

- The five practices to future proof yourself for tomorrow's workplace map to the Imperatives:

It's all on you:

Learn on the fly

Be open

You need options:

Build diverse networks

Be greedy about experiences

You have dreams:

Bounce forward

