

## Getting Started Mentally and Emotionally

**P**eople arise in the morning in one of two ways: Thinking that there are obstacles and horrors and unpleasant tasks awaiting, and it will be a long, slow crawl through enemy territory; or thinking that it's another wonderful day full of opportunity and the potential to provide value for others, a glorious day, indeed.

### **How to Prepare Yourself: What You Know and Don't Know**

This is the marketing business. I don't care if your expertise is in finance, technology, change management, strategy, or duck calls; you're in the marketing business now. Marketing is the activity or business of promoting and creating the need for products or services. Don't be distressed if you aren't an expert in marketing, or don't know much about it, *because it's not taught very much in schools, even in MBA and other graduate programs*. This is why attorneys, accountants, tech people, and myriad others are lousy marketers.

No one has ever bothered to teach them, *and they haven't bothered to teach themselves*. But here you are, so good for you.

I'm not going to bore you with the gory statistics of small business and solo practice failures within a short time of launch. Instead, I'll focus on what intelligent and innovative marketing can do for you as we proceed. So the immediate point is to understand intellectually and feel emotionally what's required so you don't wind up as a negative statistic.

**Alan's Path**

I was introduced to a retired air force major general living in the west who had been a fighter pilot and an airbase commander. His job was to introduce me to potential clients—prospects—and then confer with me on how best to “close” a deal and make them clients. And he did, except for the last part. Like Willie Loman, he was a “smile and a shoeshine” but never wanted to ask for the business because the relationship was more important than the business. He'd rather jeopardize the latter to save the former. And this was a guy who flew combat missions.

Marketing is the creation or identification of need. Most people know what they *want*, but not what they *need*.

Responding to “wants” makes you a commodity, since many people can fill the “want.” Therefore, the sale is price-sensitive. But creating and fulfilling needs makes you unique, and not subject to price comparisons at all.

**Alan's Path**

A woman I didn't know called me in 1985 and asked, “Are you Alan Weiss?” I saw no harm in admitting that. “Do you own a Mercedes 450 SLC?” I said yes, thinking it might be a recall. “How would you like to own one of the first car phones in New England?” was her third question.

After about five seconds I replied, “How quickly can you get here?”

That was the last time I made a purchase from a “cold call,” but I never forgot it. She offered to fulfill a need I hadn't even realized I had.

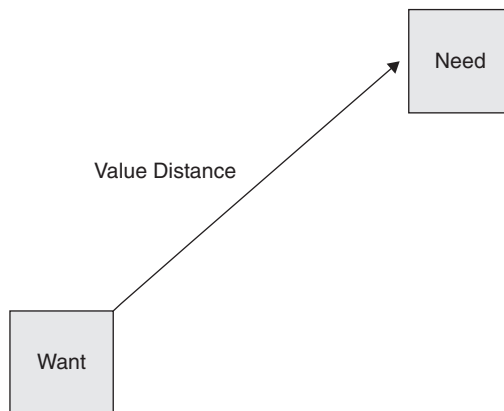
You can see this in Figure 1.1, which I call “the value distance,” and is predicated on not fulfilling a want (“We need a two-day leadership retreat”) but instead creating a need (“No, you need to formulate a strategy”).

You can never be content competing to satisfy “wants.” You must become adept at identifying or creating real needs, often not realized or understood. This must become “unconscious competency” where you do this automatically by understanding the need to ask, “Why?”

Why do you think you want a three-day retreat? (Because we’re unclear about our strategy.) Why do I want a new car? (Because my ego requires that I visibly demonstrate my success.)

When the value distance is significant, the return on the investment (ROI) of your fee is supported. If the value distance is the size of a postage stamp, then you haven’t really accomplished any change in value. Remember that behind every business objective is a personal objective to be satisfied, as well. Creating better teamwork and less friction will make things more efficient and productive, *but it will also preclude the need for the buyer to act as referee between warring parties, which the buyer hates doing.*

With these practices, throughout this book, you’ll be rising through this sequence.



**FIGURE 1.1:** The value distance.

Unconscious competency  
Conscious competency  
Conscious incompetency  
Unconscious incompetency

At the bottom level we can't do something and don't realize it needs to be done. (An infant can't tie a shoe, a person can't do a job, neither of them realizing that it needs to be done.) The next level indicates that it is understood and known that something must be done and the performer doesn't know how. At the third level, the job is done through specific acts: the shoelace requires a bow first, the job requires application of certain steps. Finally, the shoelace is tied and the job done without thinking about it (frighteningly, this is how most of us drive our cars).

But understand that we only learn *in conscious competency*. Thus, I'm taking you through specific steps in this book to maximize your learning consciously and quickly. (I rarely need to wear a tie anymore, but when I do I find myself back in conscious competency: first, cross one side with the other. . .)

## **How to Prepare and Embrace Resilience and Agility**

The two most important traits you'll need entering consulting will be resilience and agility. *Resilience* is the capacity not merely to recover from adversity and difficulty, but also to "bounce forward." Merely absorbing the setback and "regrouping" is insufficient. If a buyer says that "You really don't know our industry," you have to be able to point out that "And that's exactly why you need me!" instead of "But I can learn!" (More about that as you read on.)

*Agility* is the ability to move quickly and easily, a speedboat not a supertanker. This is how the solo consultant can be favored over the monolithic huge firm (and how the mammals outlived the dinosaurs).

### Alan's Path

While working at Merck for many years, I was told by a buyer that they had need for a huge, global, CRI (criterion referenced instruction) project and, while they preferred me for it since I knew them so well, it was mandated that the consultant had to be certified in CRI.

"No worries," I said.

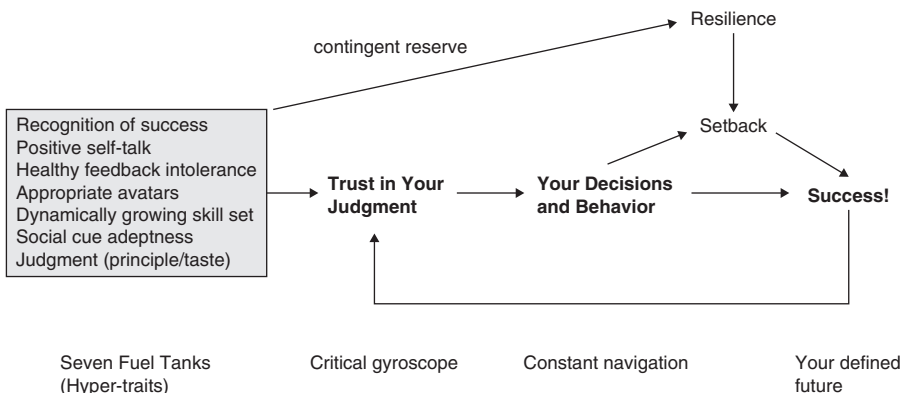
"Great," said the buyer, "let's meet a week from now and bring your certification."

I found that Bob Mager, the training guru, certified people in CRI. I called him and asked how I could achieve that. He said it was a 17-day program. I told him I had the coming weekend only. He invited me out to his place in Carefree, Arizona, and in two days he taught me CRI and how to make and drink a perfect Manhattan. The latter turned out to be a longer-lived benefit than the former.

In Figure 1.2 you'll see the power of resilience and agility.

You see on the left what I call "hyper-traits," which create the basis of your resilient power.

*Recognition of success:* The clear metrics for what constitutes success for you (and not just financially). This emphasizes that we're after success *and not perfection*. If you are a perfectionist you will never be resilient because you will never achieve perfection.



**FIGURE 1.2:** Resilience.

*Positive Self-Talk:* You can't start sentences with "I'm petrified by this meeting" or "I've never been any good at this." You need to adjust the language you use internally.<sup>1</sup> Your self-talk must be "I'm looking forward to this challenge," and "I'm getting better and better with these issues."

*Healthy Feedback Intolerance:* This is tricky, and often derails people and undermines self-worth. Accept feedback from people you trust and from whom you ask for it. *Never accept unsolicited feedback because it's always for the sender (I'm better than you and I'll show you why).* That may sound cynical, but it's honest. The question, "May I offer you some feedback?" from a stranger, or someone you don't respect, or someone you didn't ask, should be, "No, thank you."

*Appropriate Avatars:* Choose your exemplars carefully, and don't attempt to "become" them but *do* attempt to identify their successful behaviors that you're capable of emulating and employing for your own success.

*Dynamically Growing Skill Set:* Michelangelo said, after some of his greatest art was completed, "I'm still learning." If you're not learning, you're not growing. If you're not failing (hence, the need for resilience) you're just not trying hard enough.

*Social Cue Adeptness:* Watch and listen to what others are doing and expressing. Exhibit empathy and provide help if needed, and/or change your own habits if required. I've seen too many people using a knife and fork with oysters, and their fingers with a salad. If you're not the host at a dinner, don't choose the wine unless the host asks you to do so, and then politely decline.

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<sup>1</sup> To this day the best book on positive self-talk and, consequently, positive talk to others is Marty Seligman's *Learned Optimism*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1991. I invited him to speak at one of my conferences as a result.

*Judgment:* Most people don't trust their own judgment and seek help too often from people whose judgment is worse than their own. Don't try to validate everything you want to do or say. Stop self-editing. Use perspective about the issues. Thomas Jefferson said, "In matters of taste, swim with the tide; in matters of principle, stand like a rock."

Thus, these hyper-traits will provide confidence in your judgment, thereby creating better decisions and more effective behavior, leading to success. The hyper-traits are your "fuel," judgment your gyroscope to remain balanced, your decisions and behaviors your navigation system, and your success your defined future (whom do you want to be?).

Of course, we have to confront lack of immediate success and obstacles, and that's when the hyper-traits serve as a reserve to overcome setbacks *and bounce forward to success*.

It may be hard to codify self-worth improvement steps, but this schematic has worked for most people whom I coach in this field. Build the basic behaviors and skills necessary to give you confidence in your judgment and resilience when you nevertheless face obstacles.

Think of the professional services business this way: It's about providing often intangible value that must be accepted by the buyer as providing high ROI (I advocate at least 10:1 on your fee). Therefore, you are going to find obstacles in the environment, beliefs, and culture. Like a good attorney in a courtroom, you should never ask any question for which you don't already know the answer. But you must also be prepared for the practical range of the unexpected. You may hear that, "We're looking for a new sales vice president before we commit to anything," to which you can reply, "Wouldn't it be better if the new person were able to make use of a new system already in place?"

What you won't hear is, "The mother ship is expected to beam me up at 3 pm." (If you do, get out of there.)

## How to Build and Sustain High Levels of Self-Esteem

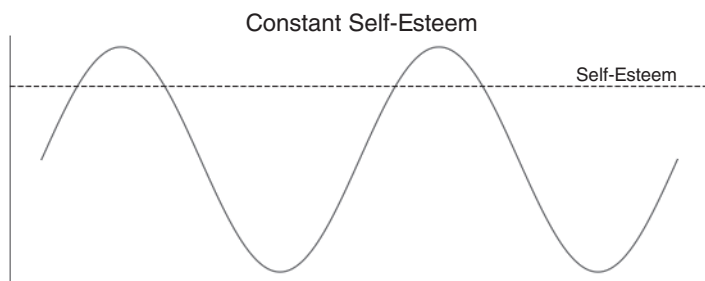
What we've discussed thus far depends on your level of self-esteem—your self-worth. You should never be as “up” as your last victory or as “down” as your last setback. This is illustrated in Figure 1.3.

You can't afford to allow your feelings of self-worth to be altered by every experience. Your self-worth should be constant—you are a worthy person, deserving of love, respect, and support, no matter what your recent experiences and decisions.

This is why constantly seeking the standing ovations and “10s” on “smile sheets” is irrelevant. I'm often paid to provoke people and make them uncomfortable, so I'm not looking for affection so much as respect.

Here's the best way to handle this constantly and avoid the peaks and valleys: Isolate negatives and generalize positives. If your proposal is rejected, say to yourself, “At this time, in this place, with this person, I was unsuccessful.” If your proposal is accepted, then say to yourself, “I've become quite a good marketer!”

By the way this is very important if you're raising kids. You tell the child, “That was a tough kick, no one could have defended that.” But if successful you say, “You've become quite an athlete.” On a poor grade on a test, you don't say, “You're not as good as your sister” or “You need to study more.” You acknowledge that it's one test and the next one can be better.



**FIGURE 1.3:** Constant high self-esteem.

With an excellent grade you don't say, "You got lucky!" you say, "You're becoming quite a scholar."

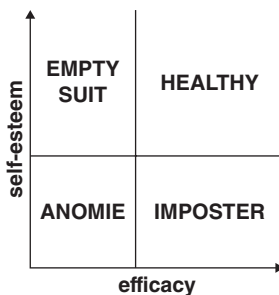
There's a difference between self-worth and efficacy. Efficacy is concerned with how well you do something, and the comparison is shown in Figure 1.4.

In the upper right quadrant is someone who is high in both efficacy and self-esteem. (Note that "efficacy" refers to skills important to your business and profession, not universally applicable. I'm a terrific writer and speaker, but I have zero musical ability and can barely play the radio.) So, this is a "healthy" person.

In the upper left we have high esteem but low efficacy. This is the famous "empty suit." (In Texas they call this "big hat, no cattle.") This person fails when results are never attained and/or their credentials are found to be false.

In the bottom right we have high efficacy but low esteem. This is the person who performs well but doesn't feel "worthy" of their successes.

Dr. Pauline Rose Clance published her findings after interviews with executives, athletes, entertainers and so forth, having found that more than 80+ percent felt unworthy of their positions or fame, despite their efficacy.<sup>2</sup> I've found that the same holds true today. It's fascinating that



**FIGURE 1.4:** Efficacy and self-esteem.

<sup>2</sup> *The Imposter Phenomenon: Overcoming the Fear that Haunts Your Success*, Bantam 1985.

many actors report feeling like “imposters,” most likely because they’re rewarded and awarded for being someone other than who they actually are. That person posing with the Oscar newly earned may actually be wondering if there will be any work in the future!

In the bottom left are those with neither efficacy nor esteem, and are usually alienated from work and even society. The French term is “anomie,” and there is a type of suicide termed “anomic suicide.”

When you inhabit the upper right quadrant you will be resilient and agile. When you experience setbacks and even “defeats” they won’t affect your sense of worth and of contribution.

The keys for you to attain and remain in the top right quadrant:

- Isolate negatives, generalize positives
- Don’t accept unsolicited feedback (which is always for the sender)
- Journal and revisit your successes
- Find the causes of “failures” to learn from them and not repeat
- Find the causes of “successes” in order to repeat them

### **Alan’s Path**

A buyer with a chip on his shoulder once said in front of the staff he had gathered for the meeting, “I’ve never heard of you!”

“Well, that’s odd,” I replied, “since I’ve worked with Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, Merck, and Mercedes, among others. So does that say more about me or about you?”

I didn’t get the business, but was confident enough to stand up for myself and realize more business would come.

## **How to Talk to Anyone at Any Time (L-D-R-B)**

Language skills have been the key to exerting influence historically, are the keys today, and will be the keys in the future. If I were to write

the twelfth edition of this book in some indeterminate future, they would still be the key. Neither AI nor any other sort of “short cut” or replacement will change that. Your ability to maximize these traits will provide you with far more power and success than any course or technology or guru:

*Speak* with expression

*Write* with influence

*Read* with comprehension

*Listen* with discernment

“Verbal” skills refer to the use of language in both spoken (oral) and non-spoken (written) forms. The language you use will directly affect the business you are able to obtain. The way you speak (and the way in which you are spoken about) will determine your brand, repute, evangelism, credibility, and a host of other traits that will be associated with you. The immutable sequences is this:

Language controls discussions, discussions control relationships, and relationships control business.

There is simple language, powerful language, and distinguished language. Never allow anyone to tell you to “dumb down” your language (or your attire, or your successes—I believe such advice comes from people with poor language, poor attire, and no successes in their attempts to pull all others down to their level of inadequacy).

Simple: hodgepodge

Powerful: farrago

Distinguished: gallimaufry

They all mean the same thing, but the people with whom you’re interacting and the environment in which you’re conversing can demand differing choices of words. Words are the most important tools of our trade.

Here's a quick test: Do you know the difference between (answers in the footnote):<sup>3</sup>

Connotation and denotation

Imply and infer

Flammable and inflammable

Expand your vocabulary whenever you can. Practice using figures of speech. For example, a metaphor for a hot day would be “hotter than Georgia asphalt in August.” (Which, indeed, actor Laura Dern said in the movie *Blue Violet*.)

An analogy or simile makes comparisons to known situations or occurrences. “He was like a loud frog on a silent night” might refer to someone snoring on a redeye flight and keeping people awake.

Here's a list of what we call “figures of speech”:

- Simile—Rachel is as bright as the sun. (Creating a parallel image.)
- Metaphor—The whole world is a stage. (Phrase applied not closely related to the point to underscore it.)
- Personification—The wind whispered in my ears. (Attributing a human characteristic to the nonhuman.)
- Apostrophe—“O William, you should be living now to see all this.” (Addressing a dead or missing person.)
- Alliteration—Sally sold some seashells. (Same letter in adjacent words.)

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<sup>3</sup> Connotation is a feeling provoked by a word beyond its original or common definition, such as “discipline”: denotation is the literal meaning of a word in contrast to any feelings evoked (“discipline” originally meant self-control but now also has negative meaning as punishment); speakers imply and listeners infer; and although often used interchangeably, flammable means easily ignited and burning rapidly, while inflammable means burning without an external source of ignition, such as gasoline that overheats.

- Assonance—I seem to like your little green trees. (Repetition of a sound in non-rhyming manner.)
- Hyperbole—I am so hungry I could eat a horse. (Exaggerated, unbelievable statements.)
- Oxymoron—Euthanizing their sick pet dog was considered an act of kind cruelty. (The use of completely contradictory terms.)
- Epigram—The child is the father of man. (A pithy and clever remark.)
- Irony—A fire station burned down yesterday. (A contrarian observance.)
- Pun—Life depends upon the liver. (Using varied meanings of a word or fact.)
- Metonymy—The Bench decided that the man is guilty. (Substitution of another name for what is actually meant.)
- Synecdoche—We need more hands to help us move this cupboard. (A part represents the whole or vice versa.)
- Transferred Epithet—She had a sleepless night. (An adjective attached to a noun it wouldn't otherwise be describing.)

### **Alan's Path**

I was being considered for a \$350,000 project at State Street Bank and my regular buyers couldn't approve that amount of money, so a meeting was set up for the CEO and me. His office was the size of a tennis court with memorabilia hanging and sitting all over the place. He was a former military officer, hugely successful, and known to be tough.

"So you're the consultant," he said, looking over from the four-foot width of his desk.

"I am," I confessed.

He said, looking me in the eyes, "Under my watch, we've had 22 percent annual compound growth over the last five years. How can you help us?"

In the next three seconds I would gain or "lose" a third of a million dollars. So I said, "How do you know it shouldn't have been 34 percent?"

He looked at me for three seconds and said, "You're hired."

Don't tell others, or worry about, or whine, that you're too young, or too old, or too poorly located, or the wrong ethnicity/gender/color/sexual orientation, or religion. Ninety-five percent of buyers seek value, first and foremost (and the other five percent you don't need). Focus on your spoken and written language, embroidered into those figures of speech, so that you are always an object of interest. You need to be provocative and even contrarian, and never derivative.

Remember the bestseller *Chicken Soup for the Soul*? I know Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, the authors, and they are more than terrific storytellers, they are brilliant marketers. But all those who were derivative (I'm not exaggerating too much—*Turkey Broth for Your Thyroid* or *Cannolis for Your Labradoodle*) didn't quite make out so well.

We'll take one more step in preparing you emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually by now creating and embracing your support system. This is not your "safety net"; this is how you achieve "escape velocity" in this new profession you're entering (and that, my friends, was a mixed metaphor).