

WHAT REALLY MATTERS
FOR YOUNG
PROFESSIONALS!

HOW TO MASTER 15 PRACTICES TO
ACCELERATE YOUR CAREER

GARY RYAN

What Really Matters For Young Professionals!

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“Wow! This book is jam packed with useful and practical strategies for young professionals wanting to take the next step up in their careers. In a time where young professionals are constantly asking for more mentoring and training, this book is the perfect do-it-yourself manual to improve your employability.”

**Alicia Curtis, professional speaker and creator of
www.ygenclub.com**

“What Really Matters for Young Professionals is a timely, easy to read and extremely practical book full of tips and strategies for young people. Gary Ryan has compiled a must-read blueprint for anyone under 30 who is looking to truly accelerate their career in this competitive age.”

**Michael McQueen, professional speaker and author of
*The ‘New’ Rules of Engagement***

“This book is the definitive tool for young professionals with loads of expert knowledge who need to quickly develop high-level employability skills. It can also be used by managers and HR professionals for induction of their graduate recruits, or young at heart professionals willing to adjust to the contemporary workplace. If you want to succeed in the 21st century as a high-performing individual I recommend you read this book.”

Renata Bernarde, Relationship Manager and Career Counselor

“Gary Ryan has written a book which caters for those of us who are lifelong learners and hungry for self improvement. Gary has a straightforward philosophy, intermingled with stories from his own life and theoretical underpinnings, that we are ultimately responsible to demonstrate leadership traits, irrespective of the positions we hold in our careers and with our families.”

Gavin Sharp, Organisational Psychologist

Who Should Read This Book?

Congratulations! If you are in the first ten years of your career then you already have an advantage over your career competitors because you are reading this book. You are just over 100 pages away from commencing a journey that *will* enhance your employability which, in turn, *will* increase the speed at which your career progresses. However, this book does come with a catch. The 15 practices shared within the following pages of this book are not just for reading. They are for *doing*.

Since 2002, I have been providing development services for Young Professionals. While technology and our world have changed over that time, a number of core concepts and practices have remained important for career advancement. This book collates 15 of the most important practices that you can use to enhance your employability over the first ten years of your career.

Think about what an increased speed of career advancement means for you. Think about the financial independence, the greater control over your time, the capacity to live more of the lifestyle that you desire. If you really want those things, then read this book *and* 'practice' this book.

Malcolm Gladwell, author of *Outliers*, has suggested that successful people have spent 10,000 hours of practice mastering their talents. The secret for these people is that they have sought out and found many, many opportunities to practice. They seek out ways to learn and develop. They don't sit back and wait for opportunities to come to them. In fact, they *create* opportunities to practice, just like you can.

A *huge* benefit of this book is that each of the 15 practices include step by step instructions for you to quickly master them.

My intention is to help you to make the best of your early years in employment. This book, along with our Online Learning programs, is one way to ensure that you leverage your development so that you create the career(s) that you desire. For information regarding our e-learning programs, please visit www.orgsthatmatter.com.

Each chapter is relatively short and contains explicit strategies and advice with regard to answering the question, “How do I...?”. You can read the book from start to finish or ‘jump’ around from one chapter to another. If one chapter has an explicit relationship with another chapter, the other chapter is clearly identified for you.

The sooner you start to adopt and practice the concepts outlined in this book, the sooner you will enhance your capacity to create the career that you desire. So, I encourage you to start now; don’t delay your development for one second longer!



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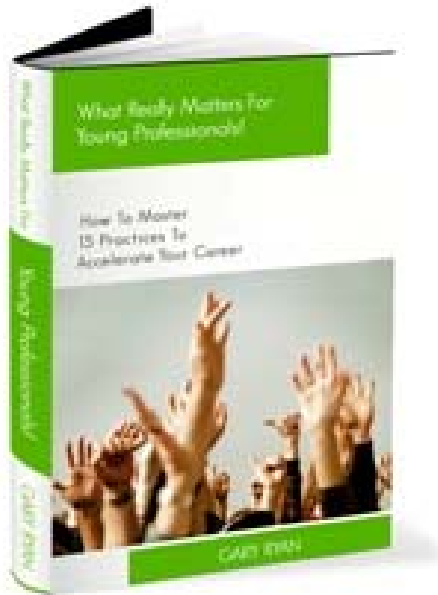
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What Really Matters for Young Professionals Checklist

Tick the box if the statement applies to you.

- I have recorded a current story for each of the ten core employability skills
- I have identified my core personal values and am clear about how I display them when at work
- I have clear examples of how I have used my organisation's values to guide my work
- I understand how my thinking affects what I see and how I behave at work
- I have a clear approach to leadership that I have adopted and use whenever opportunities arise
- I have an approach that I use to develop groundrules for the teams in which I work
- I treat my organisation's community spaces with respect at all times
- I understand 'Systems Thinking' and apply it in my role
- I understand how 'Structure Drives Behaviour' and have modified structures to create the behaviours that I desire
- I have a structured process that I use to slow myself down from 'jumping to conclusions'
- I know how to use multiple communication channels to communicate important messages effectively

- I have current mentors whose wisdom I regularly access
- I have a deliberate approach to service excellence that informs my work
- I understand 'Servant Leadership' and practice it every day
- I have a structured approach to my time management practices



Available from www.orgsthatmatter.com

&

www.amazon.com

Results

Add up your ticks. See below for your results.

Score	Interpretation
0 - 5	<p>At this point in time you have a low understanding of your employability skills. You are also unable to leverage your experience to ensure that you create opportunities for yourself.</p> <p>What to do now? Read this book and put into practice the <i>What to do now</i> sections at the end of each chapter. This will enable you to quickly enhance your understanding of employability skills and will enhance your capacity to accelerate your career.</p>
6 - 10	<p>At this point in time you have a moderate understanding of your employability skills. You have some capacity to leverage your experience, but you are not leveraging it to your full capacity.</p> <p>What to do now? Read this book starting with the chapters that address your employability skills gaps. Commence practicing the steps in the <i>What to do now</i> sections and you will quickly enhance your capacity to accelerate your career.</p>

11 - 15	<p>At this point in time you have a well developed understanding of your employability skills. You have a high level of capacity to leverage your experience and you are seeking to 'go to the next level' in your career.</p> <p>What to do now? Read this book focussing on the practices that you have not yet fully mastered. Commence practicing the steps in the <i>What to do now</i> sections and you will quickly enhance your capacity to accelerate your career.</p>
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15 PRACTICES TO ACCELERATE YOUR CAREER

PRACTICE No.1: LEARN HOW TO CAPTURE YOUR STORIES

PRACTICE No.2: DISCOVER YOUR PERSONAL VALUES

PRACTICE No.3: HOW TO OWN YOUR ORGANISATION'S VALUES

PRACTICE No.4: HOW WHAT YOU THINK AFFECTS WHAT YOU SEE

PRACTICE No.5: IDENTIFY A LEADERSHIP STYLE THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH YOUR VALUES

PRACTICE No.6: HOW TO CREATE GREAT TEAMS BY DEVELOPING GROUNDRULES

PRACTICE No.7: LEARN TO RESPECT ORGANISATIONAL 'COMMUNITY' SPACES

PRACTICE No.8: DEVELOP YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF SYSTEMS THINKING

PRACTICE No.9: DISCOVER HOW STRUCTURE DRIVES BEHAVIOUR

PRACTICE No.10: LEARN HOW TO SLOW YOURSELF DOWN FROM JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

PRACTICE No.11: HOW TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE IMPORTANT MESSAGES

PRACTICE No.12: RECRUIT MENTORS

PRACTICE No.13: DEVELOP A SIMPLE APPROACH TO SERVICE EXCELLENCE

PRACTICE No.14: FOLLOW DEE HOCK'S SERVANT LEADERSHIP EXAMPLE

PRACTICE No.15: DISCOVER FOUR QUADRANTS TO BETTER MANAGE YOUR TIME



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INTRODUCTION: LEVERAGING YOUR EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

Employability skills are a range of generic skills that, irrespective of your technical expertise, are considered by employers to be critical skills for high level performance. Employability skills are also known as 'transferable skills', 'employee attributes' and/or 'key competencies'. Some universities also use the term, 'Graduate attributes'. The level of expertise that you are expected to have in relation to these skills is related to the level of the job for which you are applying or are striving to achieve. As an example, the level of communication skills expected of a prospective CEO is different to those of a part-time supermarket check-out operator.

With more and more people throughout the world gaining academic qualifications, the point of differentiation and individual competitive advantage stems from how a person has continued to develop their employability skills. Some people believe that it is important to develop their employability skills so that they can obtain a job. Once they have a job, then they believe that they no longer have to worry about developing these skills. Today's reality is that jobs are no longer guaranteed for life and employees must continue to develop themselves if they wish to remain employable (hence the term, 'employability skills'). Seeking opportunities through on-the-job learning or through training and development experiences while you have a job are critical to maintaining high employability.

Ten Skills to Enhance Your Employability

1	<i>Teamwork</i> : The ability to work effectively in a team
2	<i>Communication</i> : The ability to effectively communicate with a wide variety of people, including the ability to write effectively and to communicate with numbers
3	<i>Problem solving</i> : The ability to solve problems both individually and in the context of a team
4	<i>Leadership</i> : The ability to positively influence and lead other people in the achievement of organisational objectives, including the ability to use systems thinking
5	<i>Planning & organisation</i> : The ability to effectively manage your time and the resources that are available to you
6	<i>Life-long learning</i> : The ability to demonstrate on the job learning and your approach to taking responsibility for your ongoing learning
7	<i>Self-management & personal vision</i> : Having a high degree of self-awareness and a personal vision, including understanding how your work integrates with the achievement of your personal vision
8	<i>Initiative & enterprise</i> : The ability to see opportunities to help and to be able to immediately take effective action
9	<i>Technology</i> : The ability to use technology appropriately and to integrate it into business improvement opportunities
10	<i>Service excellence</i> : The ability to provide high levels of service in the way that you perform your work

Maintaining a high level of employability while having a job is critical from the perspective of increasing your chances for promotion. Also, a high level of employability correlates with high performance. High performance is one of the most valid job security strategies that an employee can implement. While there are no guarantees in this world, if all things are equal and an organisation has an equal choice between letting a poor performer or a high performer go, the poor performer will nearly always be asked to leave first.

Consciously developing employability skills is an important process that many people forget to do. In our work with graduate employees we often hear them refer to their part-time experiences like this: "I was just an administration assistant", or, "I just worked at a gas station." Having performed many menial jobs throughout my youth and undergraduate studies, I have formed a view that there is never a situation where what you are doing or have done is 'just a job'. All jobs create the opportunity in some way, even if only in a small way, to develop employability skills. The same is true for full-time employment.

The 15 practices outlined in this book are collectively unique. You will not find these practices packaged in this way for you anywhere else. The practices include a number of approaches that you may have heard about before but did not know how to put into practice. This book provides step by step approaches to enable you to both develop yourself and enhance your employability. Your personal competitive advantage will result from 'doing', not from 'reading'.



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PRACTICE No. 1:

LEARN HOW TO CAPTURE YOUR STORIES

In this chapter you will learn how to capture stories that reflect your experience and development. Storytelling is a critical tool for helping to advance your career.

Capturing your employability skill development experiences, in the form of stories, becomes a critical step in the process of being able to demonstrate your experience in an interview. If you haven't consciously developed your employability skills then you are unlikely to be able to re-tell your stories in an interview that demonstrates how you have used those skills in practice. Over 95% of interview questions are commonly behaviourally based (that is, you are asked to provide evidence of having developed a skill, as opposed to making up an answer for a 'what if' style question). Therefore, it is critical to be able to have a range of stories at your disposal to share in an interview.

For each employability skill we recommend the STAR technique for capturing your stories. The technique works as follows:

STAR Story Technique

S	Situation	What was the high level situation that you were involved in?
T	Task	What was the task that you (usually in a team context) were trying to achieve?
A	Actions	What actions did you personally take to achieve the desired outcomes of the task?
R	Result	What was the result of your efforts? What did you learn?

An example STAR story follows:

Situation

In my first graduate role for (insert company) I had an opportunity to work on a project that involved working with people from five different departments.

Task

We were responsible for creating a pilot technology program that would enable the seamless transfer of information throughout all the departments.

Actions

My role was to arrange meetings with the Leadership Teams from each of the five departments to identify their specific communication needs. I was required to liaise with the Team Leaders from each of the five departments and ensure that they were continuously included in communications regarding the progress of the project. Once the project was completed I arranged all of the final presentations to the Leadership Teams and played a major role in presenting the material.

Result

The pilot project was accepted and was rolled out throughout the rest of our organisation. I continued to play in a role in the roll-out of the technology and I am still performing this function in my role today.

This story may have initially been recorded as a *communication* story. It could also be told as a *service excellence* story, a *teamwork* story, a *problem solving* story, a *planning* story and a *leadership* story.

Practice No. 1: Learn How To Capture Your Stories

Quite simply, this story is ready to be used for any one of six interview questions!

I recommend that you review your stories once every three months. It is possible that you may not need to update them, but if you keep them fresh and update them as better ones come along, then you can be sure that you will be well advanced in your preparation when an opportunity is provided to you.

Once you have captured your stories all you have to do is listen carefully in an interview to the questions being asked, and then tell the most appropriate story for that question. As we have just seen, a significant benefit from recording your stories is that many stories contain a range of employability skills.

Capture your stories!



For example, a leadership story may also include aspects of teamwork, communication, problem solving, etc. Once you have your leadership story prepared you also have the capacity to tell the

same story from the perspective of these other skills. In the context of an interview you may be asked a question about teamwork. For one reason or another, the teamwork story that you have prepared may not be the 'best' story or example to use in response to that specific question. Your leadership story, on the other hand, may be better suited to the question that you have been asked, but told from a teamwork perspective.

In this way, the ten stories that you prepare (one for each of the employability skills previously listed) can turn into 40 or 50 stories when you walk into an interview. How confident do you think you would be if you walked into an interview with 40 or 50 genuine stories? Most people say, "I'd be very confident!". The key is to follow the flow of the interview and to select the most appropriate story for the question that has been asked.

The bottom line is that you should spend some time preparing your stories, ensuring that they have been drawn from a range of experiences, such as:

- ✓ Your current role
- ✓ Part-time work
- ✓ Volunteer roles
- ✓ Travel
- ✓ Sport
- ✓ Music
- ✓ Drama/theatre
- ✓ University
- ✓ Community service

...and providing that you have kept your stories current (unless, of course, you have a 'classic' story) you will *guarantee* that you will be the best prepared that you could possibly be for an interview.

In concluding this chapter, consider the following questions:

1. What are your employability stories?
2. How prepared are you to confidently enter an interview with a bag full of genuine stories that truly reflect your experience and development?

What to do now



1. While reading this chapter several stories may have begun to float through your mind. Use the template provided (you have our permission to copy this template as often as you need, providing you do it for your personal use only) to record your stories now. Do it while they are fresh in your mind. Don't worry about whether they are perfect – it is more important to capture an initial version. It also doesn't matter if they aren't written with correct grammar. Ultimately, you will be telling the stories in an interview so you only need to record them in a way that makes sense to you and will help you to be able to tell the story.
2. Keep your stories in a file that you can easily access and remember to update your stories as you go.

This story is an example of (insert employability skill)

Situation - What was the high level situation that you were involved in?

Task - What was the task that you (usually in a team context) were trying to achieve?

Actions - What actions did you personally take to achieve the desired outcomes of the task?

Result - What was the result of your efforts? What did you learn?

ABOUT GARY RYAN



Gary Ryan is a consultant, author and speaker who helps organisations, organisational leaders, graduate employees, graduate students and undergraduate students to be the very best that they can be. He is passionate about helping organisations to matter to their people, their stakeholders and customers, their community, and their environment.

Through helping employers align what they say with what they do, as well as helping current and future employees do likewise, Gary believes that he really can help organisations matter.

Holding several degrees including a Bachelor of Education in Physical Education (1994), a Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management (2002) and a Master of Management (2004), Gary has always applied theory from a practical perspective. However, the more educated that he has become, the greater the gap between theory and practice he has observed. One of his reasons for founding Organisations That Matter (www.orgsthatmatter.com) and the OTM Academy (www.otmacademy.com) was to close this gap. The intention of this book is to do likewise.

Married with five children, Gary also runs marathons to maintain his health and fitness.

ABOUT ORGANISATIONS THAT MATTER

Organisations That Matter specialises in helping organisations matter - to their people within the organisation, to the people the organisation serves, and the people within the broader community within which the organisation exists.

To achieve this, Organisations That Matter serves:

- ✓ Executives, Businesses, Government and Community Organisations
- ✓ Universities and Schools
- ✓ Young Professionals
- ✓ Students

Our major services include:

- ✓ Strategic Advice
- ✓ Facilitation
- ✓ OTM Plan for Personal Success™
- ✓ Facilitating OTM Strategic Conversations™
- ✓ Consulting
- ✓ Mentor Program Education
- ✓ Personal and Group Mentoring
- ✓ Employability Development Programs
- ✓ Learning and Change Reviews
- ✓ Behaviour and Performance Materials
- ✓ Keynote Speeches
- ✓ Theme Weaving
- ✓ Free Membership to the OTM Academy (www.otmacademy.com)

Please email info@orgsthatmatter.com or visit: www.orgsthatmatter.com for more information.

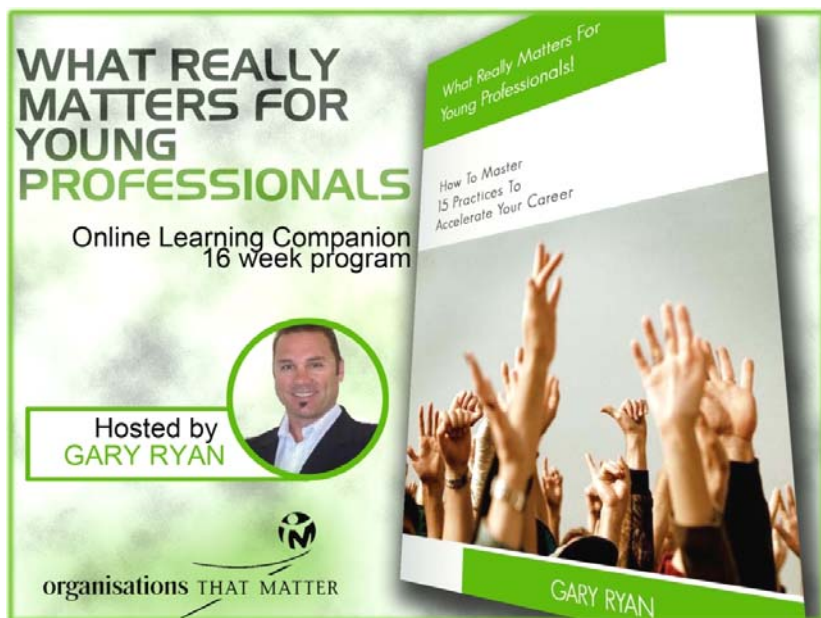
ONLINE LEARNING COMPANION

Are you concerned that you will read this book but not ‘do’ this book? If so, a 16 lesson Online Learning Companion program is available (You can choose to complete the 16 part program over 16 days, 48 days or 16 weeks). For each lesson you will receive an email that will enable you to focus upon and master each of the 15 practices outlined in this book. Each lesson includes links to resources and materials and will take between 10 to 30 minutes to complete.

Simply register for our *What Really Matters for Young Professionals* Online Learning Companion program at:

www.orgsthatmatter.com/online-courses.

At the conclusion of the Online Learning Companion program you will have significantly enhanced your mastering of the 15 practices outlined in *What Really Matters For Young Professionals!*





The OTM Academy is an Online Community created by Gary Ryan, founder of Organisations That Matter. The academy exists to provide ongoing support to Organisations That Matter clients as well as prospective clients. The focus of the academy is purely on the practical application of tools and resources for personal and professional development. Members include CEOs, Entrepreneurs, senior managers, young professionals and university/college students.

The theory is simple. The more individuals who are better able to put theory into to practice, the more individuals will be able to positively influence organisations.

In turn, teams, departments and organisations themselves will be better positioned to treat the people within the organisation as human beings. Organisations themselves will then be better positioned to treat the people they serve to the level they deserve which will enable organisations to achieve the outcomes they desire. As organisations achieve the results they desire, this reinforces the positive benefits of treating the people within the organisation as human beings. In short, for an organisation to matter, people matter.

Organisations are created by people, which is why I focus on developing people first. It's not rocket science, is it!

Please join us at the OTM Academy (www.otmacademy.com) – it's free to join and I'm confident you will receive significant value from your membership.