What Really Matters For Young Professionals!

How To Master
15 Practices To
Accelerate Your Career

GARY RYAN

What Really Matters For Young Professionals! How to master 15 practices to accelerate your career - Second Edition (ebook version)

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Who should read this ebook?

Congratulations! You already have an advantage over your career competitors because you are reading this ebook. You are less than 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 ebook does come with a catch. The 15 practices shared within the following pages of this ebook 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 ebook collates 15 of the most important practices that you can use to enhance your employability over the first years of your career.

Think about what an increased speed of career advancement means for you. Think about the money, 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 ebook *and* 'practice' this ebook.

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 ebook is that each of the 15 practices include step by step instructions for you to quickly master them.
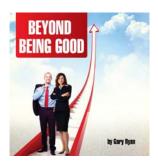
My intention is to help you to make the best of your early years in employment. This ebook, along with our e-learning programs, is one way to ensure that you leverage your development so that you create the career(s) that you desire. For information regarding our e-learning programs, please visit [Organisations That Matter](#).

Each chapter is relatively short and contains explicit strategies and advice with regard to answering the question, "How do I...?". You can read the ebook 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. An audio version of this ebook is also available if you would prefer to listen to it.

The sooner you start to adopt and practice the concepts outlined in this ebook, 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!

You can access a series of ebooks and other products from [Organisations That Matter](#)

You can also access the What Really Matters For Professional Development Podcast [here](#).

Yes For Success

Yes For Success is an online platform where you can access materials and programs that will enable you to create the Life Balance and Personal Success you desire.

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Thank You

Thank you for purchasing this ebook. I know that you will receive a lot of value from it.

Please respect our copyright and encourage others to purchase it as well, rather than breaching our copyright by forwarding it to them. A lot of work has gone into creating this ebook and I ask that you respect our effort over a long period of time.

Finally, I am always eager to hear from you regarding the benefits that you have received from practising this ebook, what you think could be improved and what strategies you believe were missing and should be included in the next edition.

I can be contacted directly at gary@orgsthatmatter.com.

Enjoy!

Gary Ryan

Acknowledgements

This major project has taken just under eight months to complete. Like any project there are a number of very special people who have contributed to its creation, so I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge them.

Firstly my wife Michelle. Not only do you inspire me every day with your dedication to our children, but you also support me with your precious time and input. Thank you for the many nights when I requested that you stay awake that little bit longer so that you could read a chapter and provide me with feedback. Without any question this book would not exist if it weren't for your support, feedback and suggestions. I love you and it's nice to be able to have that phrase in print for you!

Next, my five children, Liam, Sienna, Callum, Aiden and Darcy (who was born just after the physical book was released!). As the pages of this book highlight, you catalyse my thinking and help me to make sense of this wonderful world in which we live. Thank you for being yourselves, unique as each of you are.

Thanks to the following people who gave freely of their time to provide the 'brutally honest' feedback that I requested on my draft manuscripts. It really was humbling to have you all choose to give some of your precious time so that you could help me to make this book a reality. Thank you. You are; Kathy Papafotiou, Tania Rann, David Ure, Frank Catalano, Kane Johnson, Allan Preiss, Cecilia Chan, Belinda Boo, Troy Simmonds, Lloyd England, Sean Brush, Jim Poussard and Gihan Perera. Your feedback has also provided valuable benefits for the other three ebooks in this series.

A word of appreciation to the members of The OTM Academy who provided feedback on the cover designs. Thank you.

Thank you to Debra Kruske regarding your idea for the cover designs and Aaron Turnbull from Turnbull Web & Graphic Design who created the cover. Thanks to Sandra Kerr who provided the professional editing service for me (a huge task!).

I am confident that the time and effort of everybody involved has enabled me to create a worthwhile product. I hope that you are as proud of your contribution as I am.

For those of you reading the ebook, take the quick checklist on the following pages. If you discover that there are many gaps in your answers, then the ebook is for you, irrespective of how many years you have worked.

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

Results

Add up your ticks. See below for your results.

Score	Interpretation
0 - 5	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. What to do now? Read this book and put into practice the *What to do now* 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.
6 - 10	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. What to do now? Read this ebook starting with the chapters that address your employability skills gaps. Commence practicing the steps in the *What to do now* sections and you will quickly enhance your capacity to accelerate your career.
11 - 15	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. What to do now? Read this ebook focussing on the practices that you have not yet fully mastered. Commence practicing the steps in the *What to do now* sections and you will quickly enhance your capacity to accelerate your career.

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Table of Contents

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

Practice No.1: Learn how to capture your stories

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. 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.

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 is currently completing a Doctor of Business Administration program at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. 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 was to close this gap. The intention of this ebook 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:

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

Our major services include:

- ✓ Strategic Advice
- ✓ Facilitation
- ✓ What Really Matters
- ✓ Desired Futures
- ✓ Consulting
- ✓ Mentoring
- ✓ Development Programs
- ✓ Learning and Change Reviews
- ✓ Behaviour and Performance Materials
- ✓ Keynote Speeches
- ✓ Conference Packages
- ✓ Theme Weaving
- ✓ Membership

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

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