

EXTRACT FROM...

Self-Leadership for Success

Achieving Success through a Strategic Journey of Self-Mastery

I believe in learning by doing, reflecting, sharing and continuously sculpting ourselves and our lives, thereby being open to the creative process of living. We are ultimately not in charge of our lives; however we are in charge of what we choose and even in the choosing we dance a creative dance of exploration, better enjoyed if we can maintain a sense of wonderment at what unfolds. Life is after all about the journey and not the destination. So enjoy your travels.

Marichen M Mortimer



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All quotes in this book are by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

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This book is dedicated to my beloved son Yurie Alexander,
with whom I have journeyed from “Antarctica to Bora Bora”.
You are my true soul travelling partner and make my life
shine.

To my mom and late dad, for your loving support and
encouragement.

Knowing yourself is an imperative for success.

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Foreword

I had the pleasure of attending Marichen's "Self-Leadership for Success" course as an observer. Originally I planned to introduce her, observe for a while and then leave for my other pressing engagements. After listening to her for a couple of minutes I was hooked. Needless to say I sent my Professional Assistant a message asking if it was possible to reschedule my diary for the day. She managed to free up a couple of hours. I found myself totally immersed in Marichen, her subject material and the way she made sense of self leadership for and with the participants. I guess I took the time to be quiet and still, reflecting with the participants, ignoring my crazy schedule for a couple of hours.

I hope you will enjoy the book as much as I enjoyed the "movie"! I certainly enjoyed both and as with any good book or movie, I can't wait for the sequel to be released!

Marichen, I wish you success and happiness; please continue the fantastic work you are doing.

All the best

Reinette Van der Merwe

Managing Director

Barclays

Bank

of

Botswana



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Preamble:

This book is not intended as an academic work, nor do I wish to compete with the myriad of self-help books available. Rather its purpose is to go on a journey with the reader, a journey of self-discovery, to gain insights and to provoke thinking around how we can be all that we are placed on Earth to be.

The content message is based on my years of working in the corporate environment in various industries, ranging from manufacturing to the IT industry, and working across functions from marketing to strategy, including leadership development. It is in the arena of leadership development, management and executive coaching that I noticed that it is really necessary for leaders to get to know themselves very intimately before they are able to lead authentically and from an inner place of guidance, as opposed to an outer place of force, as this is not sustainable in the long run. It is on this experience, and over years of observations of what makes truly resilient leaders and effective managers, that I have developed this book.

I therefore dedicate the book to all those who have crossed my path, with whom I have had conversations, and who sincerely seek to be the best they can be and to make a conscious choice to make a positive contribution to the world. We are all teachers and learners to each other.



Invitation to the journey

“The first move toward mastery is always inward – learning who you really are and reconnecting with that innate force.”

- Robert Greene

Dearest reader, welcome to this journey. This is your journey - a journey to get to know yourself better so that you can be the best that you can be in all the spheres of your life that you choose. I wish in the process that you become a beloved soul of the universe. If you are going to make the necessary shifts to be the best that you can be, to yourself and others, you can only do so when you recognise yourself as a beloved soul. When we feel good about ourselves we are able to offer that gift to ourselves and to others as well. I also believe that to be whole people we need to address all aspects of ourselves to create some form of equilibrium. If you are skilled at maths but can't dance, then attempt another form of creative pursuit such as cooking, gardening, painting, writing or woodwork. The list is endless and the outcome of feeling and being whole is deeply satisfying. (By whole I mean properly connecting into all our human aspects - mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and creative.)

This journey is a wonderful unique journey, because you have probably never walked it before. So I invite you to take some quiet time on your own while you immerse yourself in the book, so that you can be uninterrupted, allowing yourself

some graceful space to question and reflect where you need to in order to discover aspects of yourself that may have been hidden until now.

I invite you to have:

- An open mind to allow for exploration
- A good sense of humour to allow for a non-judgemental state of mind
- A sense of wonder to allow for self-discovery
- A sense of innocence so as to keep the ego excluded from your journey process
- Time to allow yourself to explore and reflect
- Commitment to honour yourself by being totally honest with yourself
- Patience to allow yourself to learn

And so we start our journey... The book is structured in such a way that it gives you context for the journey; we then explore self-leadership and the various aspects of it and we end with some thoughts for your next steps. Each chapter has an introduction, the shared journey and then some self-reflection questions. It is suggested that you read this book with a journal and make your notes on your self-reflection questions as you progress. This way you will gain the maximum personal benefit. The more you put into the process, the more you will get out. Guaranteed.

Enjoy the journey.

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Setting the context

“Everyone holds his fortune in his own hands, like a sculptor the raw material he will fashion into a figure. But it’s the same with that type of artistic activity as with all others: We are merely born with the capability to do it. The skill to mould the material into what we want must be learned and attentively cultivated.”

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

When we set out on a journey, we would like to know where we are going. This journey with me is no different to that. This journey, however, is one that will take you inwards. Given that we work in organisations where we are constantly chasing deadlines, performance targets and the like, we are not used to being quiet and still. This feels counterintuitive because we have stopped practising this vital skill which existed in our forebears and which we are losing day by day as we run on the treadmill we call our lives.

So, you are asked you to be patient and take time to be still. It is only in stillness that we can tap into our intuitive voice, our true guiding light.

A few questions to consider:

- Have you ever battled to make a critical decision while experiencing a battle between your heart and mind, and you then chose the option provided by the mind and it backfired?

- Have you ever felt disconnected from your feelings and if people ask you how you feel, your answer starts with: “I think....”?
- Have you ever experienced your mind taking you into a downward spiral of despair and you continue following this negative flow of thoughts?

So in order to create a full context, the following will be shared with you in this chapter:

- How to create a positive inner context daily
- The power of commitment
- What happens to us when we are faced with change, and the impact of the choices we make - reactive and creative
- Our intent
- The art and science of relaxation

Imagine the following scenario. You are in a team; I give each one of you a bag of mango pips with the instruction to go to Antarctica and plant them and to contact me as soon as they are growing. The plane leaves and off you go. Weeks go by and I don't hear from you. Then I call you and you inform me that there was no luck as the soil conditions are too tough and it is impossible to get the mango pips to grow unless you go the hothouse route. I respond that this is no problem: I am sending the company jet to collect everyone and we have a further surprise: you are now all going to Bora Bora.

I give each of you fresh mango pips and ask you to plant them and to contact me with the results. You are all ecstatic, but upon arriving in the paradise-like conditions of Bora Bora you toss the bag of mango pips aside and head for the bar where you order yourself a cool drink and thoroughly enjoy the place. When I call you a few weeks later you guiltily pretend that there is a bad signal and you put the phone down. Then you hastily retrace your steps to where you discarded the pips and to your amazement you find that the mango pips have grown into the beginnings of small trees! You call me immediately and I order the plane to bring you all back: mission accomplished! I ask you all upon your return: "So what happened?" The conclusion is that the conditions were conducive for the mango pips to grow in Bora Bora and not in Antarctica.

Life is very similar; when we don't create the environment that is conducive to allow growth, no growth will take place. Similarly, when we embark on our inner journey we need to create the inner conditions to allow for personal growth to take place. In order to do so we need to make a choice. Will we be creating Antarctic conditions for ourselves or Bora Bora conditions?but know this: When we choose we commit.

So how do we create Bora Bora conditions?

When we wake up in the morning the first thing we become aware of is our thoughts and we can choose our context for the day. To create Bora Bora conditions for ourselves we can decide, for example: "I will be positive throughout my day, no matter what. I know that I have the wherewithal to deal with

each and every challenge in a positive way.” Or you can decide something simple: “I choose to be positive”. Then during the day, whether things are tough or not, remind yourself of your early morning commitment and check in with yourself to see how you are doing. Keep yourself on track. Remind yourself of your commitment to remain positive.

Some true words by W.H. Murray about commitment: *“Until one is committed...there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elemental truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, the Providence moves, too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one’s favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way.”*

When you commit fully, in the words of the late Stephen Covey: *“The more involved you are, the more significant your learning will be.”*

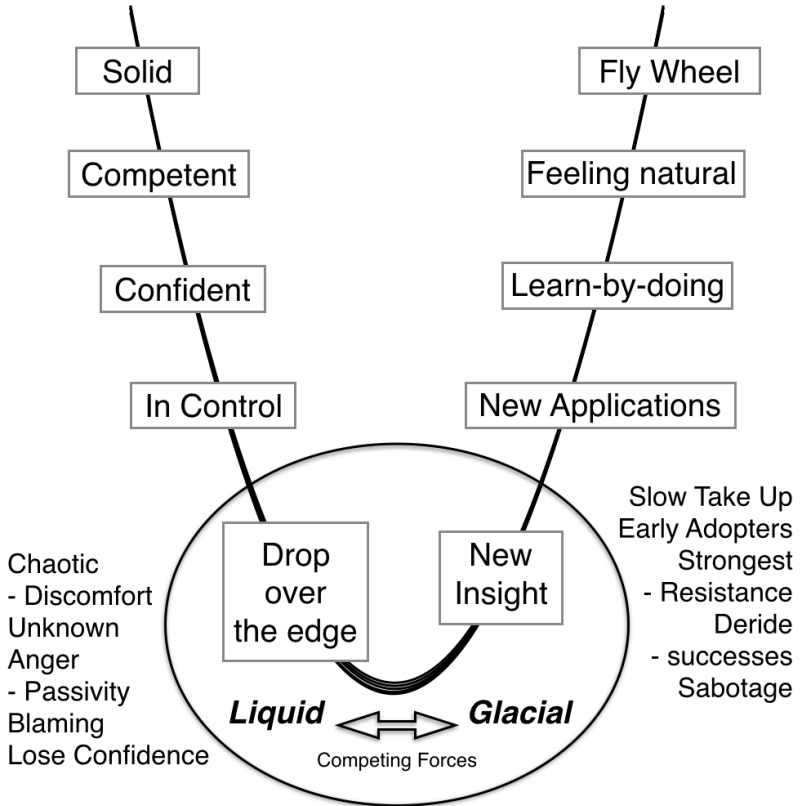
Our next concept to understand in this journey is what happens to us when we are faced with change?

- Do we resist it outright, because it makes us feel uncomfortable?
- Do we embrace it and say: “Bring it on”?
- Do we pretend it is not happening and bury our heads deep in the sand and wait for it to go away?

Your personal response to change could be any one of these or a combination of two of them or something quite different. It will vary according to your past experiences, for example, or to your current state of mind or the perceived risks associated with the required change. What is crucial is that you are aware of your own particular response to change and aware, too, that you have the ability to choose your response in a given situation.

The following diagram of the U-curve of change is based on the work of Otto Scharmer. He argues that the stages in the response to change are predictable for humans in general, although at any time different people will find themselves at different stages of this cycle. The most important requirement is to acknowledge that they are inevitable and natural. Going through them is the way humans adapt and adjust.

The U-Curve of Change



The left side of the curve shows us when we feel competent and in charge before we are confronted with the change. As we are faced with the impact of the change we slide down the curve, dropping over the edge, as it were, and we go into the liquid phase, where we experience a variety of emotions, ranging from uncertainty to anger. As we adjust we slowly start moving up the curve as we gain confidence. We can sometimes experience another slide downward, only to move upwards again, until we have mastered whatever the change was about.

For example, in business we could be facing a buy-out which would bring about a change in corporate culture, a change in who the boss would be and in possible working conditions. At this point we are faced with choices: we can leave and seek other employment or we can stay and choose how we will face the challenges. When we choose to stay, we move into the U-curve of change and make choices all along the way which influence our behaviour.

On a personal level, change could be anything from moving house, to starting or ending a relationship, or starting a family or losing a loved one.

When we are faced with change we are also faced with the possibility of personal transformation. So briefly, for the purpose of our journey, the simple definitions of transformation and change are:

Transformation means to alter in character or condition to another differing form.

With '**Change**' I simply refer to the substitution of one thing for another.

Transformation occurs when we reflect on our behavior and feelings and reflect on the responses we receive when we interact with other people both on a personal and a professional level. Transforming the way we think, feel and act will enable us to expand our inherent potential. Effective transformation requires balancing mind, body and soul. Imbalance leads to a loss of meaning, stifled creativity, a loss of productivity and stress that most often results in illness.

When we transform positively we allow for personal growth to take place. As when a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly, it is never an easy or a comfortable process, but the beauty that results is well worth the effort.

Self-leadership requires one to endure plateaus while learning to enjoy the journey and to find joy in the gain this brings. Transformation requires long-term, self-regulating, disciplined activities fed by regular honest feedback from others. When we are faced with choices we have the opportunity to choose to be either reactive or creative. As Victor Frankl so powerfully said: *"Between stimulus and response lies the freedom to choose"*

When we react automatically or emotionally we engage the amygdala of the brain. We then go into fight, flight or freeze mode, and respond with anger, denial, blame and

withdrawal. When we respond creatively we engage the neocortex, responding in a co-creative, heartfelt and rational manner. It is important to keep these acts in mind when we are confronted with change, and to watch our bodies and emotions and what these reveal to us about how we feel.

This brings us to ask ourselves the question: “When I respond, what is my intent?” In other words, what is the place where I am coming from? Is it a place of: “I am okay and you are okay; we can explore possibilities together to solve the challenges”? Is it a place of: “I am okay and you are not; I will therefore tell you what we will do”, or is it “You know best, you are more competent and I feel threatened but I will still force my decision and we will go in my direction”? When we walk the path of self-leadership, we become aware of the intent of our choices and the resultant behaviours, and the impact our intent has on the choices we make. We ultimately need to take accountability and responsibility for the choices we make and even the ones we choose not to make.

“Successful leadership depends on the quality of attention and intention that the leader brings to any situation. Two leaders in the same circumstances doing the same thing can bring about completely different outcomes, depending on the inner place from which each operates.” - Otto Scharmer (Otto Scharmer is a senior lecturer at Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management)

Finally, our last context creation topic is **relaxation**. You may ask yourself, why on earth relaxation?

Let me share a personal experience, and I am sure you will be able to share many related ones as well. In my first year at university, on day one of our accounting lectures, I walked in and the lecturer said in a very threatening tone: "Look to your left and look to your right. Only one of you three will pass these exams at the end of the year". This was not exactly an invitation to relax and learn the course to the best of your ability. Needless to say, the lecturer had me nervous from the initial moment and things never got better thereafter. He was unapproachable when I needed assistance to progress and in general I felt myself shut down towards the subject. I did not pass it at the end of the year. I deregistered from it and changed course.

Many years later, as I was doing my Masters degree, I had to do accounting again. On day one of the course I went to the lecturer afterwards and told him that I had to pass this course. I said I was prepared to work very hard but if I encountered difficulty I needed to know whether he would be available to assist. He looked at me in utter surprise and responded with: "Of course, that is my job." I shared with him my undergraduate experience and am pleased to say that he made the course so interesting that I passed the year with distinction.

This example illustrates a number of things - the intent of the two lecturers differed vastly and they thereby created two very different learning environments. The one created a tense, "only one out of three will make it" environment, whereas the other created an environment of "I will do my duty and make it interesting, and of course you can pass." They both got their

respective results, as did I. I learned an important lesson, namely that when we create a positive, relaxed, learning environment and allow ourselves and others to grow, we are more likely to achieve positive results. However, when we are tense it takes us longer to learn and our retention of information is not as good as when we are relaxed.

Moreover, it is now a researched medical fact that stress lies beneath many modern day medical conditions and the severity thereof.

Thus, relaxation is imperative, but how can we relax? Relaxation is both an art and a science. It occurs when we are able to let go of all expectations and connect with our senses in order to focus the mind and to become quiet. Science has taught us methods that we can apply to learn to relax.

The following is a relaxation exercise which you need to take your time with and do slowly:

Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.

Sit quietly in your chair with your back up straight. Place your feet comfortably on the ground. Place your hands on your thighs. Close your eyes. Become aware of your whole body where you are sitting. Become aware of your breathing. Feel the expansion in your chest as you breathe in and the contraction in your chest as you breathe out. Start to breathe slowly, in and out. Allow your breathing to become deeper and more relaxed. Now progress your awareness to your body. Consciously and with focus relax your shoulders, your arms and then your abdomen. Take a slow deep breath and

relax your stomach area completely. Relax your legs. Now, mentally scan your whole body and on the next inhalation and exhalation, relax your entire being. Visualise yourself feeling totally relaxed and sitting in a beautiful garden, surrounded by roses. Visualise one particular beautiful pink rose. See this rose as clearly as you possibly can. If you can, even smell its sweet, fresh fragrance. Enjoy the feeling and relax completely. Be in the moment admiring the rose, while feeling deeply relaxed. Now, take your awareness to your feet. Wiggle your toes and place them back on the ground. When you feel ready to return to the here and now, slowly become aware of your body sitting in the chair. Take a deep breath in and out and open your eyes.

Summary box:

In conclusion, one can see how important it is to create the necessary environment both internally and externally to ensure that you achieve the results you are interested in for your own growth. To create the inner context – daily choose between barren Antarctica and fertile Bora Bora. State your positive statement, for example, “I commit to being positive” and write it down and put it somewhere so that you are reminded of that during the day. Fully commit to your choice and see how the universe conspires to make things happen accordingly and if you are faced with challenges, how you handle them differently.

Be aware of your choices and whether you are being reactive or creative in making them.

Our intent from which we operate is critical as it directly determines how we conduct ourselves; choose your intent with awareness.

Consciously relax and create an environment that is relaxed if you want yourself and others to learn.

...END OF EXTRACT

As you may have noticed, we promised 2 chapters but ended up giving you 3 :)

To read the real transformative rest of this book, please visit:

<https://websitesilk.co.za/marichen-mortimer-shop.html>



