

## GFMER COURSE

12 OCTOBER 2020

### WINNING AT WORK

#### **INTRODUCTION – WANTING TO WIN :**

Henry Ford said – *“If you think you can, you can; if you think you can’t, you can’t; both ways, you are absolutely right!”*

The general narrative of life goes like this -

- ✓ The world is stacked against us.
- ✓ Unless we are born into wealth, the chances of failure outweigh the chances of success.
- ✓ In any given field, there is a steep pyramid. and only a minority of people are able to climb to the top. In sports, the odds are even worse. Out of all the players and teams, there’s only one winner.
- ✓ Given all this, even we want to achieve something, we don’t believe we can do it, because there are too many obstacles, too many push-backs.
- ✓ We think we can’t, so we can’t. We don’t. We dare not. So, we settle for less.

This narrative is WRONG.

We are surrounded by people who have broken their shackles and achieved amazing successes.

They have started from nothing, and have built fantastic careers, businesses and wealth.

Let’s check out a few of these extraordinary people :

1. OPRAH WINFREY :
  - Brought up in rural poverty.
  - Years of physical and emotional abuse.
  - Learned her passion for communication.
  - Became a local TV star, joined a regional network and then a national network.
  - Today, she dominates mainstream media.

***“Create the highest, grandest vision possible for your life, because you become what you believe.”***

2. JACK MA :
  - Started as a tourist guide
  - Struggled through college
  - Applied for 30 jobs and rejected every time
  - Realized the power of the internet when he was 30
  - Set up Ali Baba in 1999

- Is currently seen as the most successful man in China

***"If you don't give up, you still have a chance. Giving up is the greatest failure."***

### 3. ELON MUSK :

- Day dreamer, bad student, was tested time and again
- Introverted and bookish. Bullied continuously
- Parents divorced when he was 10
- Learnt computer programming by himself; started building and selling games
- Built Zip2, Paypal, Tesla and SpaceX

***"When something is important enough, do it even if the odds are not in your favor."***

What did these people do different?

Three things :

- They believed in themselves,
- They decided their purpose, and
- They gave it everything they had.

Self Belief + Purpose + Performance = Success

We have to start with thinking we CAN.

Then, we have to know what we WANT.

Finally, we do whatever it takes to WIN.

In this module, we are going to learn the approaches and tools that we need to win.

## **SECTION 1 – GET, SET, GO!**

*“A journey of a thousand miles must start with a single step.”*

Your career journey must start with three steps.

Each step requires an answer to a question. These questions (and their answers) can change your life forever. They can lead you to an amazing career. They will make every day fulfilling and meaningful.

*The first question is : Who am I (What do I want)?*

Answering this question helps you discover your PURPOSE or MISSION.

Your purpose is your unique identity – it describes who you are, what motivates you, what and what is really important to you.

It articulates what success looks like, to you.

It crystallizes your aspirations, hopes and dreams.

It reveals your real purpose, your true north. It tells you WHY you should do what you do.

Writing and living your mission statement guarantees you meaning, significance and happiness.

Let me share with you a practical and real mission statement. My wife (who is an amazing baker) wrote hers many years ago.

**“I want to spread joy while creating art. I want to bake the perfect cake for each occasion, that will deliver an amazing experience as well as create an everlasting memory.”**

Ever since she decided that this was her mission, she has not only become a master of her art, she has found true joy and fulfillment.

*The second question is : Where do I want to go?*

Answering this question helps you describe your DESTINATION or VISION.

Just like your purpose defines your WHY, your personal vision describes your WHERE. Where am I going? Where do I want to be? Where is my dream destination?

A personal vision defines your ideal social media profile. It crystallises your dreams.

It gives you clarity. It removes ambiguity and doubt.

It allows you to know where you are and recognise when you detour.

It allows you to balance your life.

It helps you filter out distractions.

It inspires you to focus forward without looking back on past regrets.

A personal vision gives you control. It allows you to drive your choices and decisions, rather than leaving things up to chance or allowing others make decisions for you. You are in charge of where you are going, making it easier for you to get exactly where you want to be.

My wife, in her personal vision, said,

**“By 2022, I will be the first person my customers think of or recommend, when the topic is bespoke cakes. I will create and deliver at least 750 cakes per year. By 2022, I will learn to create gravity defying cakes and 5-tier cakes. I will teach at least 100 new students per year.**

She has followed through and has scripted her own destiny. Every cake she bakes is better and more beautiful than before. She has published her own cake book, “Baker’s Dozen”, teaches other aspiring bakers, and has brought joy into thousands of homes. Today, she has more than 2,000 glowing testimonials from grateful clients.

*The third question is : How do I get there?*

Answering this question helps you construct your ROADMAP or STRATEGY.

Once you have discovered your WHY and you have described your WHERE, your career roadmap helps you design your WHAT, decide your WHEN, and determine your HOW.

Your career roadmap will have three parts - tangible and quantifiable goals and milestones; realistic timelines; and the resources you need and the actions that you will take.

A roadmap is your GPS – it charts out the route to achieving your vision, it gives you the correct directions and the coordinates to follow.

It helps you figure out how to get there. It also gives you a way to determine how far you have come and how much more you have left to go.

It helps keep you from spending time on tasks that won’t bring you closer to your goal.

It helps you identify and focus on your priorities.

It gives you all the tools to achieve what you want.

Having a roadmap ensures that you will have no regrets when you get to the end. Once you have a roadmap, you can be confident that you will not be looking back and asking yourself “what if.”

My wife’s roadmap is straightforward. She lists specific milestones she has to achieve every year.

**“This year, I will create 5 new cake recipes, including Asian-fusion and flower-infused cakes. I will enhance the texture and flavor of my gluten/sugar/nut free cakes. I will publish at least 48 blogs and conduct 36 bake-alongs. I will teach at least 95 students.”**

By doing this, she feels an awareness of purpose, a feeling of control, and a sense of fulfilment.

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The answers to these three questions will change your life.

Who am I? Where do I want to go? How do I get there?

## **RITA WALKS THE TALK**

Through this module, we travel with **Rita** on her career journey, and learn how she used the principles in this module to move from Junior Executive to CEO in 20 short years.

Rita is from a lower middle-class family in Bangalore. She is an engineer from a Tier 3 college in India. She was a good student, but not exceptional.

Rita, however, was (and is) smart, ambitious and confident. She believed in herself and wanted to succeed.

When Rita joined my company at age 28, she had little experience or success, but had a burning desire to learn, grow and find joy in whatever she did.

Here are her words –

*“I was 28 years old. I was unhappy and dissatisfied. I was going through the motions in my career and my life, but not really enjoying what I did. This general misery was bleeding into my marriage and my relationships with my friends.*

*“I did not understand why. All in all, I had had a good childhood, a lovely family and a reasonably decent career. But something was missing.*

*“I joined Shesh’s team in 2006. In one of our first meetings, he asked me what I wanted from life. That was the first time anyone had asked me this question. I tried to answer, and after some stammering, realized that I had absolutely no idea.*

*“We spoke about the need for a purpose and a vision. In the beginning, I was sceptical. These seemed very theoretical ideas. Over the next few weeks, I thought more and more about my purpose. Finally, I asked for a few days leave, and spent these reading everything I could about personal missions and visions and roadmaps. I realized what I was missing. I was going through life without knowing my **why**, my **where** or my **how**.*

*“That was the busiest ‘holiday’ in my life. By the time I returned to work, I had drafted my own mission and vision statement. For the first time, I knew with certainty who I was, what I wanted and where I wanted to go.*

*“I went back to Shesh and shared this with him. Together, we analyzed what I had done, and polished the statements. Thereafter, we scheduled and had three meetings over weekends to work out a practical roadmap for me to achieve what I aspired.*

*“It is now 13 years. Every day of these 13 years has been fulfilling and meaningful. I get up every morning with anticipation and I go to bed every night with satisfaction. My career has bloomed; I am doing exactly what I want with the team I want. I am learning and growing all the time. I believe I am a more effective manager, a more capable leader, a better mother, a more supportive spouse and a more reliable friend. I am truly happy.”*

## **SECTION 2 – TAKING THE LEAD**

*‘Do not wait to strike the iron when it is hot. Make the iron hot by striking it.’*

Now you have your Purpose, Vision and Strategy. Your career journey has begun well.

What qualities do you need to make that journey efficient, effective and productive?

What qualities make up a perfect employee?

Discussions with CEOs and Organization Leaders across the world have shortlisted Four Qualities that define a perfect employee.

### *Being Proactive*

You need to think ahead, take initiative and do things without being instructed or asked.

This is called ‘self-management’. One must not need to be told what is expected. but should know what needs to be done, do it and then after reporting completion, move to the next activity.

This quality is also called ‘self-motivation’. Such an employee knows what his role is and does what it takes. S/he doesn’t get impacted by failure and keeps moving forward towards his goal.”

Such people are naturally positive, too. They look for and at the bright side, constantly see opportunities rather than problems, and motivate and encourage the people around them.”

### *Being Emotionally Intelligent*

You need to develop your ‘Emotional Quotient’ – your ability to be emotionally and socially aware,”

EQ describes your inclination to be friendly, open, responsive and flexible.

An emotionally intelligent employee also knows how to adapt to different situations and teams, and so, tends to be much more versatile.

‘Emotional Intelligence is not the opposite of Intelligence. It is not the triumph of heart over head – instead, it is a unique intersection of both.’”

### *Being Reliable*

You must be someone that your team and your colleagues can depend on.

Such an employee keeps her/his commitments, ensure delivery as per deadlines, arrives on time to meetings and appointments; and thus, is known to be dependable and consistent.

A reliable employee is far more valuable than a smart employee. A reliable person engenders trust, which is a bedrock of any relationship, within or outside and organization.

### *Being Resilient*

The final quality is resilience.

Resilience is the ability to adapt. It is a measure of a person’s mental and emotional plasticity.”

Resilience is also defined as the ability to get hit and then get up and keep fighting.

It connotes adaptability and agility. A resilient employee is usually a dependable and proactive one.

So, what qualities make up a perfect employee?’

- ✓ Being Proactive
- ✓ Being Emotionally Intelligent
- ✓ Being Reliable
- ✓ Being Resilient

Such an employee is termed a PERRfect Employee. And PERRfect Employees win big, move fast and go far.

### **RITA SEEKS “PERRFECTION”**

About a year and a half after Rita joined, she was overlooked for a promotion.

Rita was devastated. She had worked hard and delivered more than her share of results.

As was her practice, whenever she stumbled or fell, she got up and came to see me.

*“I really need to talk to you! They did not promote me! I worked so hard; I did everything they asked. I’ve stayed late almost every day. I really don’t know what to do...”*

It took some time, but I was able to calm her down. She was young, she was excitable, she was disappointed.

I started with some basic facts. Before we go on to the steps that can help us get a promotion, I said, let’s clear up some misconceptions (so that we don’t waste time on futile arguments) –

1. The world is not fair. This applies to the corporate world, too.
2. Being good in your job lets you keep your job. That’s all. (in an increasingly disruptive world, even that is iffy)
3. Punctuality, diligence, timely delivery – these are all great qualities. They are just not promotable ones.
4. Taking on more work is a good approach, but not if unseen and unnoticed.
5. Staying late can be a double-edged sword – are you working hard or are you just inefficient?
6. Being sincere and being naïve are two entirely different things.

As we spoke, Rita’s face changed. Long held beliefs were being questioned and even shattered.

She listened, and questioned, and argued. And gradually, step by step, she moved closer to the light.

Finally, we spoke about the Four Qualities.

Rita’s eyes lit up as I defined and described each one. She took notes, scribbling into page after page.

The meeting lasted three and a half hours. I was exhausted. Rita was energized. She jumped up, thanked me and left with a spring in her step.

Here are her words –

*"I was passed over for promotion when I was about 30 years old. I was horrified and heart-broken. I had worked hard and given my best. What more could I do?"*

*"Back I went to Shesh, and after consoling me, he spoke about the Four Qualities of a Perfect Employee. In that meeting, the course of my life took a new turn! I realized that talent and hard work were necessary but not sufficient conditions for growth. I needed to be seen as more, as someone who was trustworthy, dependable and capable, as someone who could be relied on under any and all circumstances."*

*"I started practicing the Four Qualities, and finding as many ways as possible to display them to my colleagues, my team mates, my friends, and yes, even my family."*

*"Over the next few months, not only did I feel more useful and productive, others started complimenting me on my proactiveness and my reliability. My husband told me that he had never seen me smiling so much or so willing to go out of the way to help others."*

*"I got my promotion next year. But that was not so important anymore. What made my day was my boss telling me that the team NEEDED me and that without me, they would never have achieved the stretch targets that we did!"*

### **SECTION 3 – ARMING YOURSELF**

The next step to winning is to arm yourself.

In today's VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world, you need to prepare to survive and thrive in a situation where the odds are against you.

You prepare by adding five weapons to your armory.

#### *Weapon # 1 : Situational Awareness*

Situational awareness is, in simple words, paying attention to your surroundings.

It is the ability to see, notice, evaluate, understand and manage the various stimuli around you.

It is critical to planning and preparing yourself for the changing, shifting world. It is necessary to ensure that we are not caught unawares and find ourselves on the wrong side of any table.

The best way to practice learning situational awareness is to ask yourself, or others, questions; you need to learn and observe before you can try it yourself. By asking questions, you are opening yourself up to the idea that you do not have all the answers, but all the answers can be found in time.

Being aware of the situation makes you a leader – you become observant and know how to respond quickly to tasks, planned or unexpected. In a work environment, your boss and colleagues will see you as reliable, confident, and trustworthy.

Trust your gut – your instincts will begin to practice situational awareness before your mind catches up, so listening to your initial gut feeling on a particular matter is, in fact, the beginning of situational awareness.

Listen to your co-workers – learn what they do, how they work well, what their project priorities are, and ask for advice when you need help. By communicating with other members of your professional team, you are able to gain more information and be more aware of the situation as a whole, not just your part in the plan.

Share your knowledge – providing information to team members and sharing your experiences helps strengthen your leadership skills, creates better communications practices, and makes you look good in front of your boss.

Be open – to suggestions, flexible with plans, able to think on your feet, and resist impulsiveness.

Know yourself – when you experience stress, make sure you know how your body will react and how you can combat it. Do you freeze up or panic? Do you run from a situation or blame someone else? Do you make mistakes or ignore problems?

Situational awareness will prepare you for the times you need to act quickly and want to take risks in a project. It will calm you when problems arise and train you to be observant in all aspects of life. Ultimately, you will succeed at a greater rate by being aware of your situations and knowing how to deal when the unexpected arrives.

### *Weapon # 2 : Flexibility & Adaptability*

What makes a person adaptable / flexible?

An open mind. You should be able to integrate new information and draw conclusions from it, and that you can switch from the detail to the big picture.

Receptiveness – particularly to change. Being able to respond with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn new ways to achieve targets and objectives is a key competency.

Creativity – actively seeking out new ways of doing things and having confidence to improvise or experiment.

Modification of behaviour – you are able to adjust your style of working or method of approach to meet the needs of a situation or emergency.

You should be able to :

- ✓ Look for positive ways to make changes work rather than identifying why change will not work (say "yes" rather than "no" as a first instinct)
- ✓ Adapt to change and new ways of working quickly and easily
- ✓ Make suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of changes
- ✓ Show willingness to learn new methods, procedures, or techniques
- ✓ Shift your priorities in response to the demands of a situation
- ✓ Bounce back from setbacks and maintain a positive attitude

### *Weapon # 3 : Networking*

Networking is about establishing and nurturing long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with the people you meet.

It has been proven, time and again, that the most connected people are often the most successful. When you invest in your relationships — professional and personal — it can pay you back in dividends throughout the course of your career.

Networking will help you develop and improve your skill set, stay on top of the latest trends in your industry, keep a pulse on the job market, meet prospective mentors, partners, and clients, and gain access to the necessary resources that will foster your career development.

Today, the burden is on you to take control of your career development. Hence the importance of networking for career development: as you network with people at your company, in your industry, and even outside your field of interest, you'll uncover opportunities to connect with different types of mentors and advisors, increase your visibility with senior management, further develop your areas of expertise, and improve your soft skills.

### *Weapon # 4 : Strategy & Tactics*

We have already discussed the need for a strategy or roadmap.

Combining this strategy with 'tactics' gives you the flexibility to shift gears depending on the situations and the circumstances, to choose the most optimal path for that moment in time.

By doing this, you will always be 'ahead of the curve', controlling your career proactively, rather than reacting to changes in an ad hoc and unprepared manner.

#### *Weapon # 5 : Learning*

Learn to be 'a student for life'.

Your knowledge needs to be continuously updated and refreshed. If it is not, your awareness, your networks, your strategy will soon be out of date; your plans will become stale, you will become rigid and inflexible.

Learn to read and listen and ask questions; to proactively seek to understand changing paradigms and norms, different cultures and behaviours.

When you win, spend time understanding why. When you lose, do the same. Every day is an opportunity to add to your knowledge and appreciation of the world.

#### *The Art Of War*

You are living in tumultuous and disruptive times.

You are at war. You are at war with political incompetence, corporate greed, geopolitical tension, black swans, climate change, morphing workplaces. Each of these can hurt you, render you and your family vulnerable and homeless, can cause you hurt and pain and suffering.

You need to arm yourself with these five weapons that will allow you to battle with and overcome the challenges that you face today and will face increasingly tomorrow.

#### **RITA GOES TO WAR**

About three years later, I left the company and moved on to a Chief Operating Officer role in Mumbai. It was difficult to say goodbye to all my wonderful colleagues, but my purpose and vision were clear, and I had to move on.

Rita and I kept in touch. A year later, she, too, left and joined a large chemicals firm as General Manager. Both of us got busy, and our messages and calls diminished.

One evening, about six months later, I received a call from Rita.

*"Shesh, the culture here is toxic!"* she said, immediately after saying hello. She spent the next half hour describing what a truly dysfunctional organization. I listened, said 'yes' in all the right places, and 'no' in all the right places.

We ended the call with Rita having vented (and feeling much better, she said) and my promising to send her a note on the weapons that she could use to battle her current environment. I sent the note on the Five Weapons the next day, after tweaking it a little to adapt to her situation.

She confirmed receipt, and after that, there was silence. We messaged back and forth a few times, but discussed nothing special.

A month later, Rita called again. This time, she was calmer. We spoke about our families and vacations that we had planned.

Here are her words -

*"Shesh, I am sorry that I have been out of touch since our last call. Ever since I received your note on the Five Weapons, so many light bulbs went off in my head!"*

*"I had gotten so used to working with managers such as yourself, that I had stopped being careful or observant of the environment. So, in this new company, I was not able to find my footing for quite a while. It was frustrating and difficult."*

*"Many of my colleagues are great, but the leadership has allowed the overall culture to deteriorate into one of nepotism and back-biting. Just a few bad apples are spoiling the whole barrel! I am enjoying my job and am not going to allow these people to spoil or derail my career."*

*"As soon as I read your note, I first ramped up my 'situational awareness'. Within a week, I knew what was going on around me and what the political map of the organization was. I started networking in earnest internally and ensured that I got included in the critical circles of influence."*

*"As I was doing this, I put together a clear plan on how I should navigate this terrain. Over the last 3 weeks, I have established a strong relationship with the Country Director, and he agrees with me that some changes are required. He has given me the carte blanche to progress on certain policy and process changes, which I believe will enhance transparency and communication, thus reducing the toxicity."*

*"In the meantime, I am learning as much as I can about 3 different functions here, as some managers may be encouraged to leave (because of their attitudes and behaviour) and I may need to step in, temporarily. This initiative of mine has further brought the Country Director to my side!"*

*"As you can understand, things are rather hectic, but all progressing in the direction that I want them to go! Thanks once again, Shesh – you always have been and are my knight in shining armour!"*

## **SECTION 4 – RECHARGING YOUR POWERS**

You have access to three super-powers.

### *The Power Of One*

Whenever you do anything, use the power of your mind to –

- a. Understand it
- b. Plan it
- c. Do it

The complexity of the task does not matter; the approach to it does. Whatever you do, do it as if it were the most important thing in the world.

You must do it first with your head, and then with your heart. When you finish, you must be confident that neither you nor anyone else could have done this better.”

Whatever you do, do it like you own it. When you start it, you must feel a sense of excitement. And, when you complete it, you must feel a sense of achievement.

This is the Power of One.

The Power of One is the power to believe in myself, to commit myself to whatever I do, and to give it everything I have.

Each one of us has this power. It is ours to choose and use.

### *The Power of Many*

Often, you will find yourself and your team failing.

Not because of external circumstances, but because, as a team, you are not working together well. And the two main reasons for this will be a lack of understanding of one another and a lack of trust in one another.

You need to understand yourself and the other people you work with. You need to build a solid foundation of trust amongst your team. You must all look in the same direction and work in alignment, regardless of seniority, capability or function.

Because, no matter how talented and capable you are, you will always lose if you play solo against your competitor’s team.

Because, alone, you may win the battle, but together, you will win the war.

You will always have access to the Power of Many. It is yours to choose and use.

### *The Exercise of Power*

Remember, every decision and every action of yours affects lives. They affect lives of your team members, your stakeholders, your colleagues, their families, your vendors, your partners. We must factor this in every investment you make, every risk you take.

Power is not about being in charge; power is about being there for the people in our charge.

The test of a true leader is not about how much power you have," he said. "It is about how much you empower others.

Leadership, in its essence, is the Power of One inspiring and harnessing the Power of Many.

Every one of us, in one or another situation, will face the test of Power. It is up to us to choose and use wisely.

### **RITA BECOMES POWERFUL**

Two years ago, Rita became CEO of a mid-sized Chemicals conglomerate.

She flew down to Singapore to meet me, carrying a large box of the sweets she knew I liked.

*"Thank you so much," she said, as we sat down for a drink. "Where I am today is because of everything you have taught me."*

She spoke about her new role, the company and the expectations that her Board had of her. She confessed that she was a little overwhelmed, but was confident that she would do well and succeed.

*"Any words of wisdom?" she asked, half playfully.*

We spent the evening discussing the three super-powers. About how she and I had mastered the Power Of One. About how she and I were constantly learning about the Power Of Many, and its various facets.

The next day, before she left for the airport, we had lunch.

Here are her words -

*"Shesh, my parents and you taught me about the Power Of One. Of how I should always be the best I can, and do everything with thought, planning and dedication."*

*"Many years ago, you taught me the Power Of Many. Of how I should be responsible for my team and empower them and be there for them."*

*"This week, I am going to be the most powerful person in my organization. Every decision of mine is going to affect lives. Those of our shareholders, our employees, their families, our vendors, our partners. I must and will factor this in every investment I make, every risk I take. I understand that Power is not about being in charge; power is about being there for the people in our charge."*

*"Thank you, Shesh, for teaching me that leadership, in its essence, is the Power of One inspiring and harnessing the Power of Many."*

## ***CONCLUSION – WORKING TO WIN***

When we began this module, we discussed the three things amazing successful people do differently :

- They believe in themselves,
- They decide their purpose, and
- They give it everything they had.

To win at work, you have to work to win.

You start with believing in yourself. In who you are. In what you can do. In your destiny.

Next, you discover your Purpose, define your Vision and design your Strategy.

To implement your Strategy and achieve your Vision,

- ✓ you develop the Four Qualities of the PERRfect Employee,
- ✓ arm yourself with the Five Weapons, and
- ✓ turbocharge your Thee Powers.

Like Rita, YOU will become unstoppable. The world will have no choice but cheer you on and let you win.