

# impact executives

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**‘Only when you operate with a combination of your strengths and self-knowledge can you achieve true and lasting excellence.’**

## Managing Oneself by Peter F. Drucker

We live in an age of unprecedented opportunity: with ambition, drive, and talent, you can rise to the top of your chosen profession regardless of where you started out. But with opportunity comes responsibility.

Companies today aren't managing their knowledge workers' careers. Instead, you must be your own chief executive officer. That means it's up to you to carve out your place in the world and know when to change course.

In **Managing Oneself**, Peter Drucker explains how to do it. The keys:

- Cultivate a deep understanding of yourself by identifying your most valuable strengths and most dangerous weaknesses
- Articulate how you learn and work with others and what your most deeply held values are
- Describe the type of work environment where you can make the greatest contribution

Only when you operate with a combination of your strengths and self-knowledge can you achieve 'true and lasting' excellence. **Managing Oneself** identifies the probing questions you need to ask to gain the insights essential for taking charge of your career.

History's great achievers e.g. Napoléon, da Vinci, Mozart - managed themselves - this is what made them great achievers. But they are rare exceptions, so unusual both in their talents and their accomplishments that they are outside the boundaries of ordinary human existence. Most of us, even those of us with modest talents have to learn to manage ourselves. We have to learn how to develop ourselves. We have to place ourselves where we can make the greatest contribution and we have to stay mentally alert and engaged during a 50 year working life, which means knowing how and when to change the work we do.

Most people, especially highly gifted people, do not really know where they belong until they are well past their mid-twenties. By that time, however, they should know the answers to the three questions:

- What are my strengths?
- How do I perform?
- What are my values?

Only then can they decide where they belong or better still, where they do *not* belong...

Drucker puts a lot of emphasis on building upon your strengths:

'Do not try to change yourself – you are unlikely to succeed. But work hard to improve the way you perform. And try not to take on work you cannot perform or will only perform poorly.' He does not believe in putting effort into improving areas of low competence. Rather he says,

'It takes far more energy and work to improve from incompetence to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first-rate performance to excellence. Yet most people, organisations

and teachers concentrate on making incompetent performers into mediocre ones. Energy time and resources should go instead to making a competent person into a star performer.'

Drucker then covers the shift in the organisational paradigm where in the past, workers were told what to do, but in today's world the knowledge workers want to take control of their environment and their roles. Key to this being successful is the ability to manage oneself. He concludes with an observation that in the past organisations outlived their workers and many of them stayed put.

However today, the opposite is true.

'Knowledge workers outlive organisations and they are mobile. The need to manage oneself is therefore creating a revolution in human affairs.'

### About the Author

Peter Drucker was a writer, teacher, and consultant. His thirty-four books have been published in more than seventy languages. He founded the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Non-profit Management, and counselled thirteen governments, public services institutions, and major corporations. Thomas A. Stewart is the editor of Harvard Business Review.

"The world knows he was the greatest management thinker of the last century,"

### Jack Welch, former chairman of General Electric Co. said after Drucker's death.

"He was the creator and inventor of modern management, In the early 1950s, nobody had a tool kit to manage these incredibly complex organizations that had gone out of control. Drucker was the first person to give us a handbook for that."

### Management guru, Tom Peters.

"Like many philosophers, he spoke in plain language that resonated with ordinary managers. Consequently, simple statements from him have influenced untold numbers of daily actions; they did mine over decades."

### Intel Corp. co-founder, Andrew S. Grove

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