

A woman with glasses and a white shirt is leaning over a table, engaged in a discussion with a group of students. The students are seated around the table, looking at a portfolio of small images. The room is bright, with large windows and walls covered in similar small images. The overall atmosphere is collaborative and educational.

9 Skills That Will Get You Placed

Dr. Aditya Dev Sood



In my experience, young people typically think of the process of getting a job in three stages: first, they think about job openings and where to go looking for them. Then they think about how to do well in an interview. And then lastly they might -- just might -- think about how to perform well once they get their first job.

What if we were to flip this around and ask how to do really well in your first job? If you are the kind of person who can perform with excellence from the moment you are hired, well recruiters will be chasing you. So the first question will evaporate. If you had the ability to excel in your job, then surely taking about it with people before the fact will be a cinch. So the second hurdle will be overcome automatically.

All over our higher education sector there is so much focus on placement interviews that we forget that education is actually supposed to be about building skills in young people to ensure lifelong success -- not just a first job. If young people really possessed the right skills, they would find success regardless of whether their institution has set up a placement interview or not. Moreover, they would have a vision for their future, a framework through which to evaluate different life opportunities. Rather than chasing after some job, any job, they would be in the driver's seat for the rest of their working life.

For the rest of this little ebook, I want you to think of these three challenges as being fused together: 1. finding a job opportunity, 2. doing well at your interview and 3. excelling at your future job. One will happen because the other two can happen, and they will only happen together.

If you will follow the following 9 steps, you will be able to land the first job of your dreams and enjoy a successful professional career thereafter as well. But take these steps seriously and don't skip over them. When you do the right things, the right things will happen for you.

1

Start getting to know yourself

All through our education system young people are encouraged to do better at exams, apply for science and engineering streams, pursue professional courses, sit for entrance exams. Amidst all of these mad pressures, when will you get a moment to think about who you really are and what you want to do with your life?

Over the past two decades I've met plenty of young people who are studying disciplines because their parents want them to, because it is the done thing, because they got in, and not because that was what they really wanted to do. They waste years of their life this way, and then, in their late twenties or early thirties the truth finally comes out: I've always been a creative person. I've always wanted to work with people. I've been thinking about something to do with food. For some people it is still possible to make a change. For others there is a longer period of regret and recrimination.

This is your life. You get one of these. You must make the best choice you can at every stage of your life. If you make mistakes, well those are your mistakes and you will learn from them. If you fail to make your own mistakes you're not living your own life -- you're living someone else's idea of your life.

Pull out a sheet of paper and write down the things that make you you. Good things, bad things, interesting things. Things that describe you. Things you have done. Things you want to do. Now put it away. We will come back to it at the end of this little ebook.



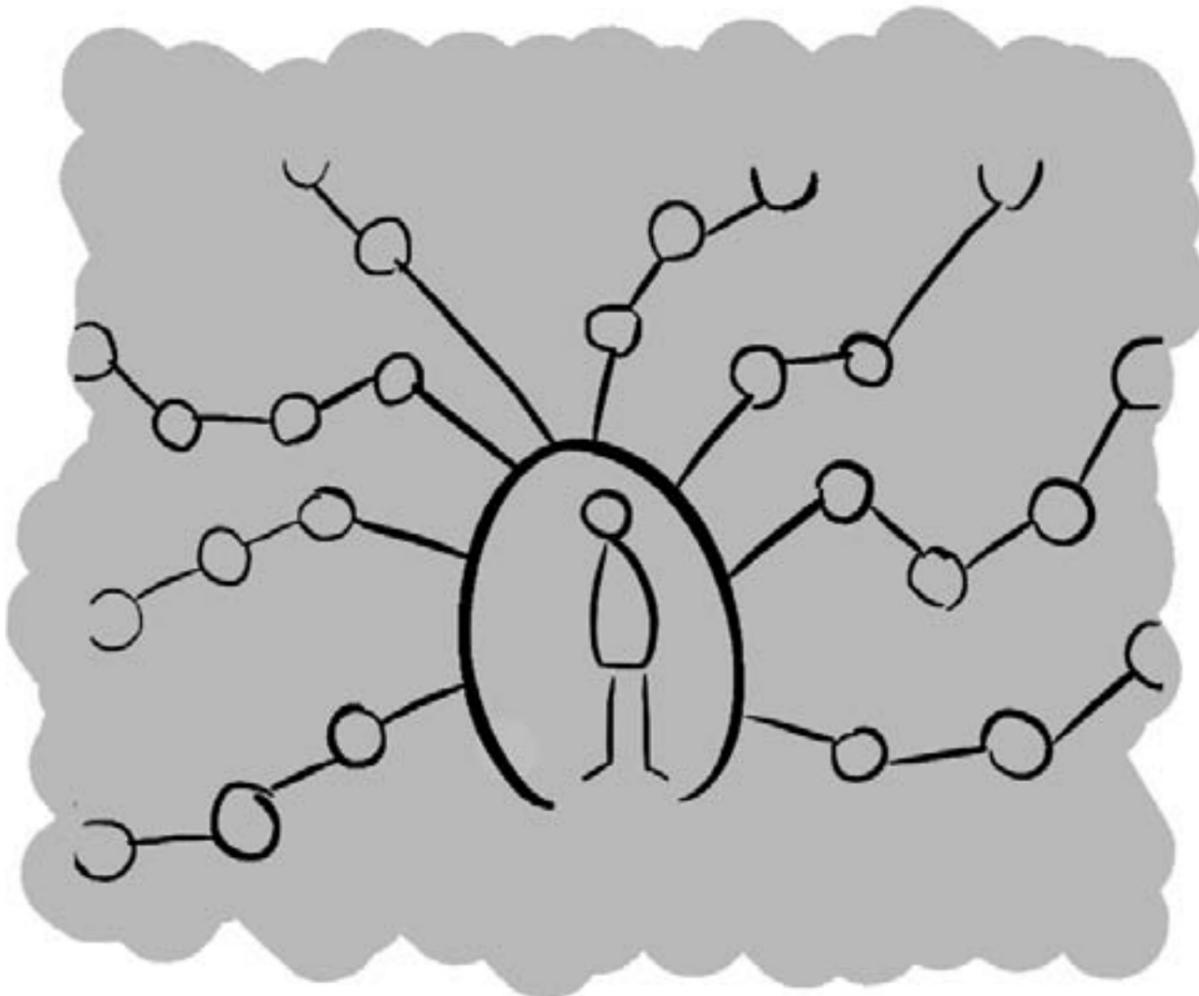
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Reach out to people who can help you

When young people begin thinking about looking for work their world seems suddenly to change. Earlier their world seemed to be made up of family, school friends, neighbors, friends from childhood. Now they are forced to ask who among these can possibly help them find work?

You'll never know until you ask. Each of us is blessed with a social network that is unique, which makes up our individual perspective upon the world. It is a resource that only we have, which no one else can have. How you use this resource is up to you. Have you told everyone you know what you're about to do? Have you explained to them what qualifications you have acquired? Have you asked them to think of someone whom you can talk to? Have you emailed them your resume?

I'm always astonished how often each of us fails to do this simple exercise. And its not only young people -- people in my office, and even I myself can fail at this. The task is simple: open a computer spreadsheet, or take a lined sheet of paper and list down all the people you can think of who might help you with what you're trying to accomplish. Now call each of them. Now follow up the call with an email. The network will take a little time to begin rumbling, but to even get set into motion you have to take the first step.



3

Show yourself to the world

When I go around to different campuses and colleges around the country and meet young people, I ask them how many of them maintain a blog. In an auditorium of one hundred students maybe one shy girl will raise her hand. This is a great shame. The world over, society is changing because of web and social networks, which have made it so easy -- and necessary -- for us to express ourselves in writing the same way we do by speaking.

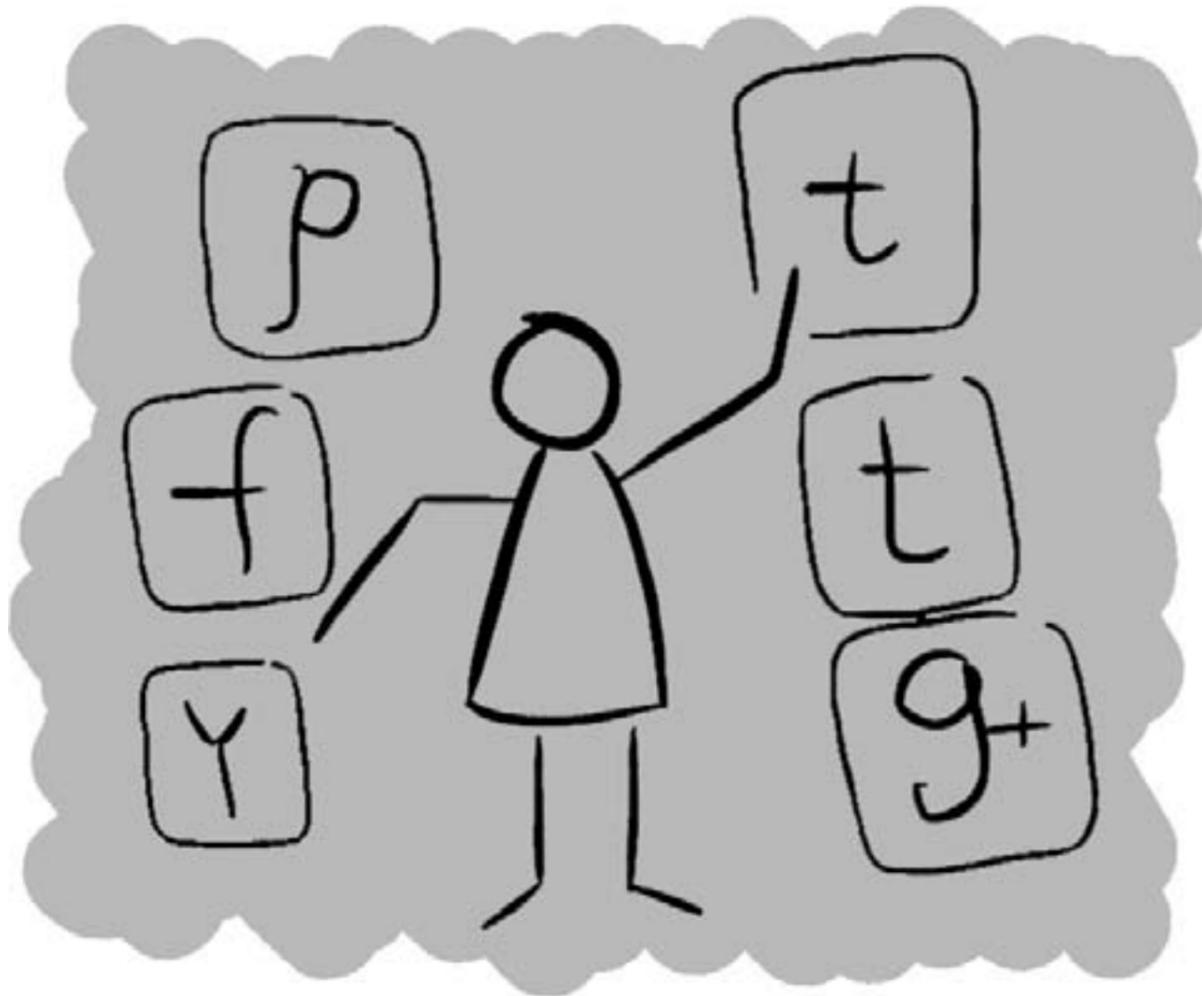
Using wordpress or typepad or many other platforms you could start a blog in as much time as it might take you to apply for a new email account. With email only a few people can read your thoughts. With blogs, the whole world potentially has access.

The great value of blog writing is that it hones the skills of the mind as well as of the self. You will find yourself writing quicker, with more skill and humour and impact over time. You will also find that you have a deeper sense of self, a point of view on more things in the world. Writing is a very powerful practice and it is the main way in which you can interact with people you don't already know face to face. Do not underestimate it: To be able to write clearly and meaningfully will distinguish you from the larger proportion of people on the planet.



4

Let yourself be discovered



Some years ago, when I first started using Twitter, I came across a young man named Ashwin, who was still a student. He was very helpful online, and helped me learn some of the basics of the platform. His Twitter feed was full of interesting ideas from his classes. He seemed to have a bright, positive outlook on the world, and even though he was still getting his post-graduate degree, he was already in touch with many highly networked people on Twitter. At one point, when I wanted to make plans to visit his institute in Ahmedabad, instead of reaching out to the campus authorities, I tweeted him directly. He told me that he was busy setting up a campus day for a global mobile technology company, but he would set up a visit for me soon.

It was no surprise that Ashwin was busy setting up a campus event for a company -- like me, they must have come across someone who knew him, which must have led to him becoming their host on campus. That kind of exposure for him will easily convert to any number of professional opportunities once he graduates.

I've always been struck at how some young people are always online and connecting with so many people around the world, while others seem to get lost in the corridors of their institution. Those who are online on LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest and any number of other platforms are multiplying the potential opportunities that might come their way. Those who do nothing make nothing happen for themselves. Without knowing it, each is creating their own kind of karma for themselves.

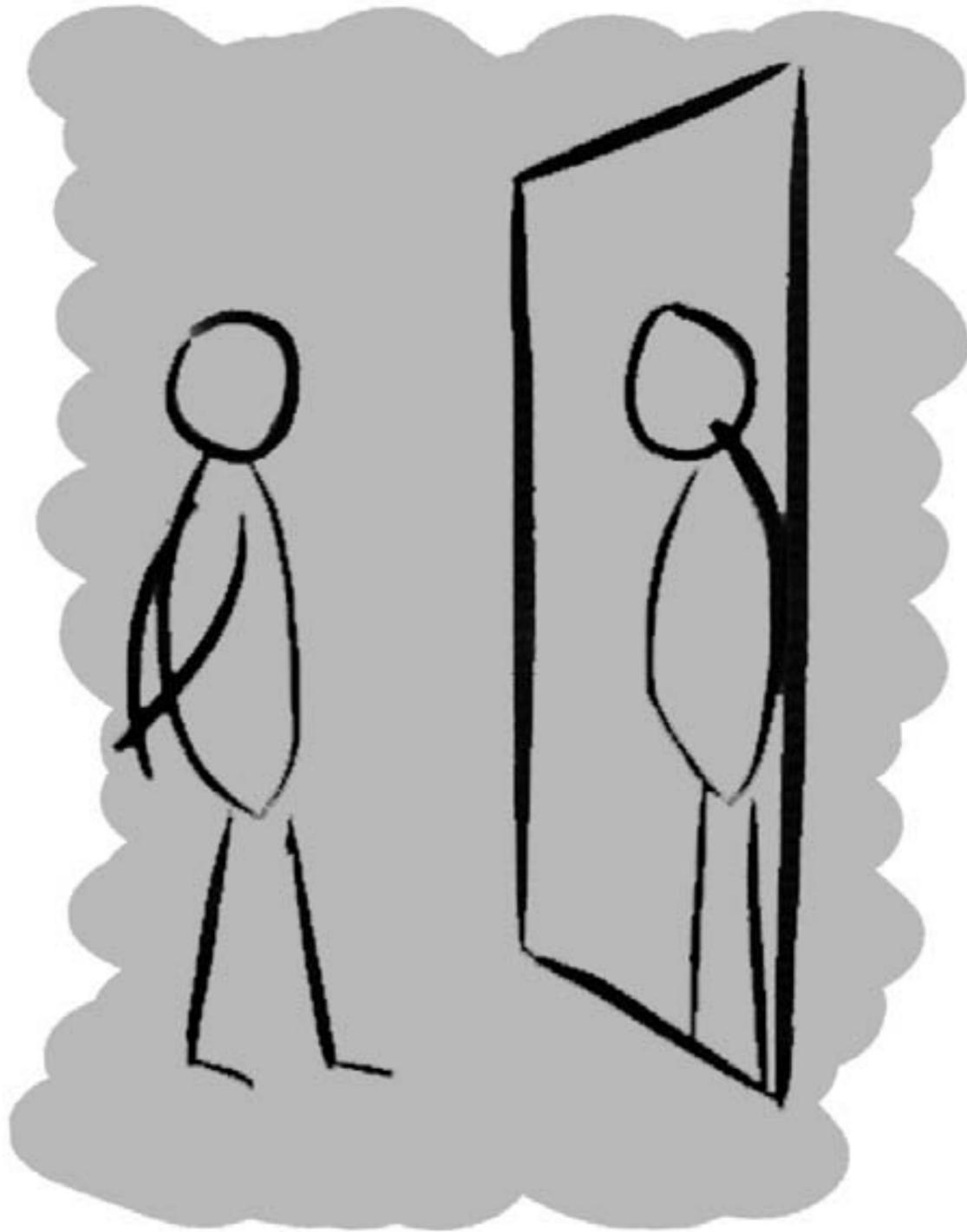
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Practice your elevator pitch

When you're on the phone with a recruiter, when you sit down to an interview, you're giving a stranger a glimpse of who you are as a person. Most young people try to practice their interviewing skills as if those are something different from their everyday professional and life skills. Who you have made yourself as a person will shine through your interview, so to have a good interview, you must focus on building up who you are.

There must be a way to summarize all the things that are important about you in three short sentences: What is your name? What are your qualifications? What do you want to do?

It's that third question that's the killer. What do you want to do? If you don't know, go back to Step 1 and practice. If you do know, spend more time refining how richly you imagine and articulate that goal. Say it to yourself. Tell a friend. Practice in front of the mirror. Then stop. When you go into that interview you will be able to say it without having to think about it. And it will be true.



6

Develop your public persona

I had an employee once named Shaifali. She was razor smart, and such a hard worker. She could talk to all kinds of people with confidence and many times people thought she had all these qualifications and credentials that actually she did not even possess. Once, in an organizational workshop she confessed that she found it difficult to talk to people and network, but that because it was an essential part of the job, she would take a deep breath and kick-off into a professional crowd, chatting people up left and right, impressing them with her knowledge, her networking skills, and her personality.

Only that was not her true personality. It was, in a sense, a professional mask she wore. A way she had of carrying herself when she was at work, which might be very different from how she was with her close friends and family. Most of us have to develop this form of professional identity when we join the working world.

One of the major mistakes young people make is to not realize that they must adopt a professional style when they come to work. I've seen young people join my organization and call me sir, and go right through the day yes ma'am and no ma'am to everyone around them. That may be okay in college, but it is not okay in a professional business. You must behave as if you belong there. You must observe and internalize how other people behave and get comfortable with it. Else, everyone will always just treat you as a new intern and you'll never get a chance to prove yourself.



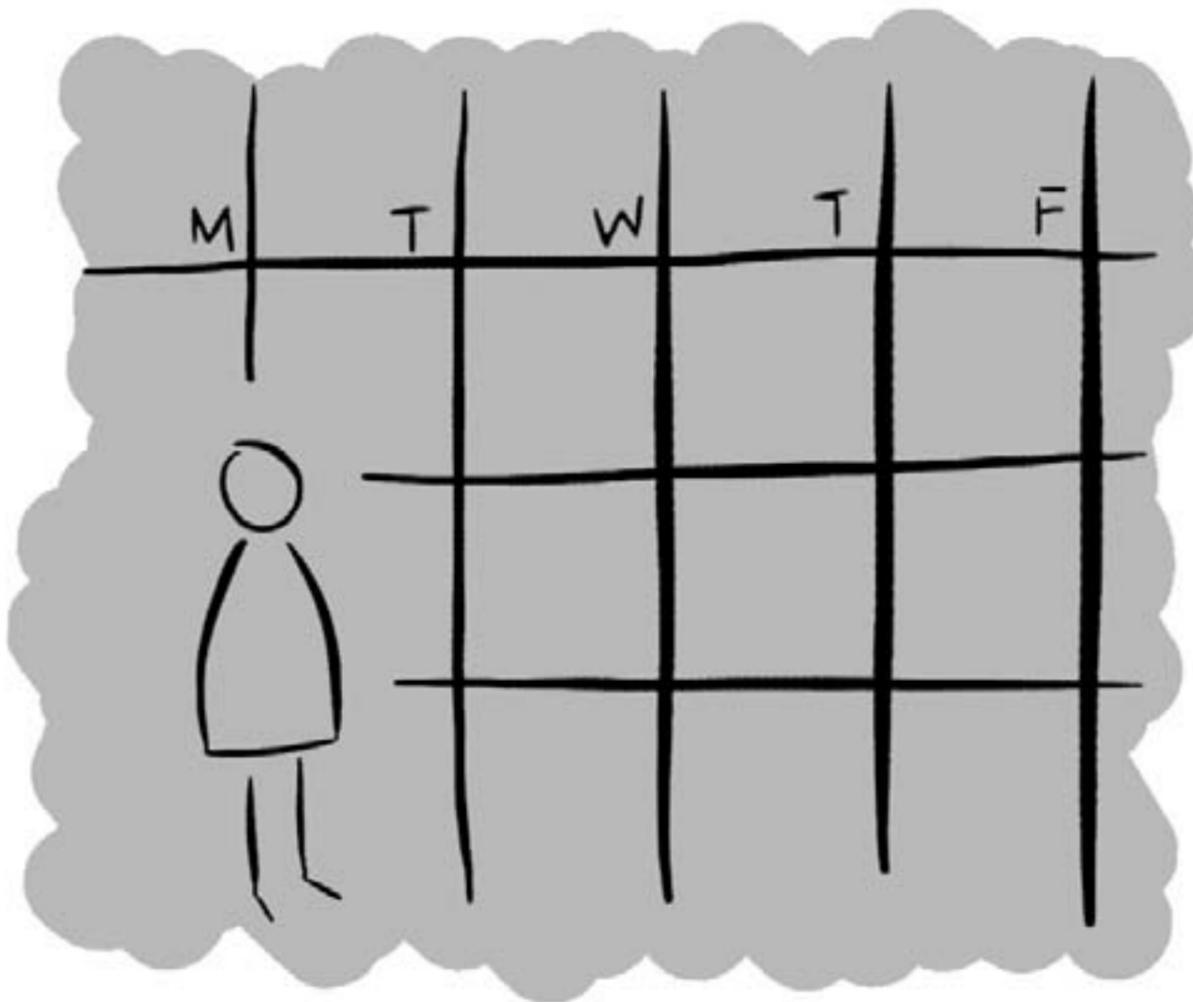
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Take control of your time

If there is one basic skill that young people always lack, it is their ability to manage their own time. This is not about being punctual and leaving early -- this is about imagining their time visually, as a resource that they can allocate on different tasks. If you have a gmail account then you also have a google calendar with it. It won't take you more than a few minutes to set it up. The benefits to you will be lifelong.

I have been using a digital calendar for almost a decade. I also use an online document as a to-do list or task sheet. Every Sunday evening I plan out the week ahead and block things out using my digital calendar.

When you go to your first interview and mention that you plan your time this will set you apart from so many competing candidates. This is because most professionals know that if you can't plan your own time, you will never be able to manage anyone else's. When you join your first team and show that you can be more efficient and responsible than others among your peer group you will be given more responsibility and you will come across more opportunities to rise



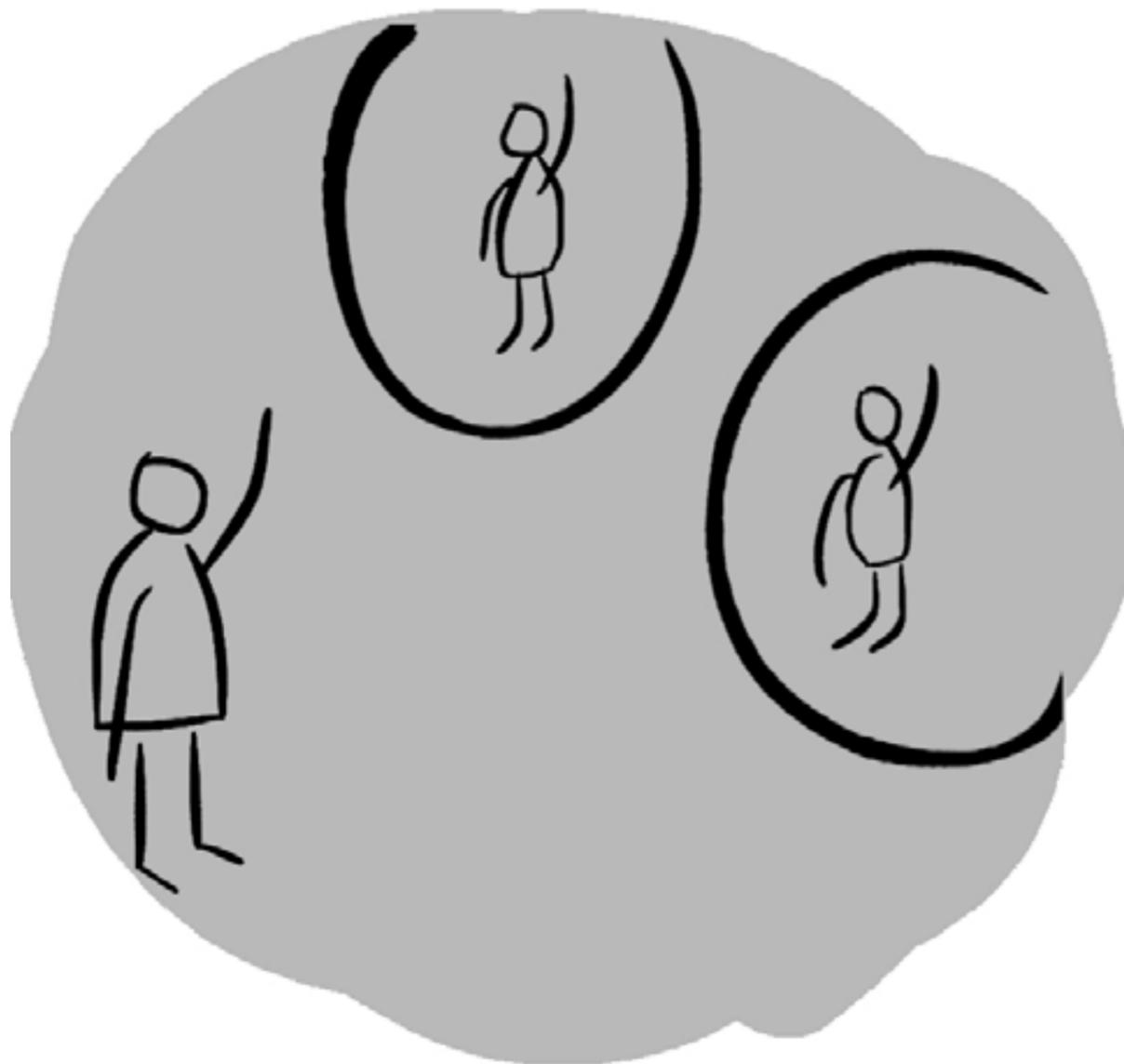
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Join communities of professional interest

When you were in school perhaps you took an interest in dramatics. Or maybe you were on a sports team. Or did you debate? Each of those activities made you a more interesting person, beyond the daily grind of the classroom and the annual exam cycle. As you enter the professional world, you must develop a new set of interests, ones that cross-cut between your immediate job and a slightly wider set of professional concerns. These could range from how to use technology better to how to run workshops better to how to outsource better. It could be anything that builds on your current position, but takes it to the next level of generality and perhaps to a level of social or societal responsibility.

There are any number of professional groups active on LinkedIn, from market research to manufacturing to quality assurance to human resources management. People who contribute regularly to these forums tend to be remembered as go-getters and forward-leaners. When it comes time for them to ask a favor there will be that much larger a community ready to support them.

But that's not the main reason to join these kinds of networks. In the modern world everything we learn in college is already obsolete by the time it arrives into the public domain. Your skills will need a major refresh every five years. You will have evolved and the times will have evolved as well. If you can learn to teach yourself using such online tools you will be at the top of your game and among the most prized human resources for the rest of your working life.



9

Create a plan for your future

Here's a somewhat difficult exercise: compose an article about yourself written in a business newspaper fifteen years in the future. You must describe what you have achieved in the next 15 years and what you are about to do next. Do you think you will have the kind of career that someone else might write about? Can you get yourself to imagine it? Go ahead and give it a try.

Now look at what you have written and compare it with the description you provided of yourself in Step 1. Do you feel this person will get to those heights that you have described fifteen years into the future? For most people there will be a gap -- a gap of skills, of knowledge, of social networks, of mentors, of life possibilities, but most of all of confidence. But that's okay. The point of the next fifteen years is to keep filling out all those things that are missing in you by using resources from the world around you!

If you can now make a realistic assessment of what kinds of skills you want to start building into yourself, you might be ready to take the next critical step towards the forward journey of your life.

Good luck with your path. If you ever want to chat about how your career path is developing, I'm always here for you.

Feel free to stop by the Adianta campus in New Delhi. Or turn the page for details on how to write to me.





Aditya Dev Sood is Chairman of the Adianta School for Leadership and Innovation based in New Delhi. He is the founder and CEO of the Center for Knowledge Societies (CKS) and of the Bihar Innovation Lab (BIL). He posts frequently at www.designpublic.in/blog and more occasionally at www.3quarksdaily.com.

He is a former Fulbright Scholar and has two doctorates from the University of Chicago. He is now writing a book on India's Innovation Path, which draws on his academic training as well as his many years of innovation consulting in India and in other emerging economies.

Dr. Sood has worked with young people for more than a decade. Many of those he has mentored have gone on to jobs with major companies including Samsung and Nokia among many others. Still others have gone on to pursue higher studies in the US, the UK, Finland, Denmark and Sweden. He has a passion for education and for instilling in young people the desire to succeed by acquiring innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership skills.

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