

14 **Knowledge workers are likely to outlive their employing organization.**

15 Even if knowledge workers postpone entry into the labor force as long as possible—if, for instance, they stay in school till their late twenties to get a doctorate—they are likely, with present life expectancies in the developed countries, to live into their eighties.

16 And they are likely to have to keep working, if only part-time, until they are around seventy-five or older.

17 The average working life, in other words, is likely to be fifty years, especially for knowledge workers.

18 But the average life expectancy of a successful business is only thirty years—and in a period of great turbulence such as the one we are living in, it is unlikely to be even that long.

19 **Even organizations that normally are long-lived if not expected to live forever—schools and universities, hospitals, government agencies—will see rapid changes in the [period of turbulence](#) we have already entered.**

20 **Even if they survive—and a great many surely will not, at least not in their present form—they will change their structure, the work they are doing, the knowledges they require and the kind of people they employ.**

21 Increasingly, therefore, workers, and especially knowledge workers, will outlive any one employer, and will have to be prepared for more than one job, more than one assignment, more than one career. ¶¶¶

22 So far, this book has dealt with changes in the environment: in society, economy, politics, technology.

23 *This concluding chapter deals with the new demands on the individual.* ¶¶¶

24 The very great achievers, a Napoleon, a Leonardo da Vinci, a Mozart, have always managed themselves.

25 This in large measure made them great achievers.

26 But they were the rarest of exceptions.

27 And they were so unusual, both in their talents and in their achievements, as to be considered outside the boundaries of normal human existence.

28 Now even people of modest endowments, that is, average mediocrities, will have to
learn to manage themselves.

29 Knowledge workers, therefore, face drastically new demands:

30 1. They have to ask:

31 Who Am I?

32 What Are My Strengths?

33 HOW Do I Work?

34 2. They have to ask: Where Do I Belong?

35 3. They have to ask: What Is My Contribution?

36 4. They have to take Relationship Responsibility.

37 5. They have to plan for the Second Half of Their Lives.

38 What Are My Strengths?

39 Most people think they know what they are good at.

40 They are usually wrong.

41 People know what they are not good at more often—and even there people are more
often wrong than right.

42 And yet, one can only perform with one's strengths.

43 One cannot build performance on weaknesses, let alone on something one cannot do at
all. ¶¶¶

44 For the great majority of people, to know their strengths was irrelevant only a few
decades ago.

45 One was born into a job and into a line of work.

46 The peasant's son became a peasant.

47 If he was not good at being a peasant, he failed.

48 The artisan's son was similarly going to be an artisan, and so on.

49 But now people have choices.

50 They therefore have to know their strengths so that they can know where they belong. ¶¶¶

51 There is only one way to find out: *The Feedback Analysis*.

52 Whenever one makes a key decision, and whenever one does a key action, one writes
down what one expects will happen.

53 And nine months or twelve months later one then feeds back from results to
expectations.

54 I have been doing this for some fifteen to twenty years now.

55 And every time I do it I am surprised.

56 And so is everyone who has ever done this. ¶¶¶

58 IV Relationship Responsibility

59 Very few people work by themselves and achieve results by themselves—a few great artists, a few great scientists, a few great athletes.

60 Most people work with other people and are effective through other people.

61 That is true whether they are members of an organization or legally independent.

62 To manage oneself, therefore, requires *taking relationship responsibility*. ¶¶¶

63 There are two parts to it. ¶¶¶

64 The first one is to accept the fact that other people are as much individuals as one is oneself.

65 They insist on behaving like human beings.

66 This means that they too have their strengths.

67 It means that they too have their ways of getting things done.

68 It means that they too have their values.

69 To be effective, one therefore has to know the strengths, the performance modes and the values of the people one works with. ¶¶¶

70 This sounds obvious.

71 But few people pay attention to it. ¶¶¶

72 Typical are people who, in their first assignment, worked for a man who is a reader.

73 They therefore were trained in writing reports.

74 Their next boss is a listener.

75 But these people keep on writing reports to the new boss—the way President Johnson's assistants kept on writing reports to him because Jack Kennedy, who had hired them, had been a reader.

76 Invariably, these people have no results.

77 Invariably, their new boss thinks they are stupid, incompetent, lazy.

78 They become failures.

79 All that would have been needed to avoid this would have been one look at the boss and ask the question: "How does he or she perform?" ¶¶¶

80 Bosses are not a title on the organization chart or a "function."

81 They are individuals and entitled to do the work the way they do it.

82 And it is incumbent on the people who work with them to observe them, to find out how they work and to adapt themselves to the way the bosses are effective. ¶¶¶

83 There are bosses, for instance, who have to see the figures first Alfred Sloan at General Motors was one of them.

84 He himself was not a financial person but an engineer with strong marketing instincts.

85 But as an engineer he had been trained to look first at figures. ¶¶¶

86 Three of the ablest younger executives in General Motors did not make it into the top ranks because they did not look at Sloan—they did not realize that there was no point writing to him or talking to him until he first had spent time with the figures.

87 They went in and presented their reports.

88 Then they left the figures.

89 But by that time they had lost Sloan. ¶¶¶

90 As said before, readers are unlikely ever to become listeners, and listeners are unlikely ever to become readers.

91 But everyone can learn to make a decent oral presentation or to write a decent report.

92 It is simply the duty of the subordinate to enable the boss to do his or her work.

93 And that requires looking at the boss and asking “What are his or her strengths?

94 How does he or she do the work and perform?

95 What are his or her values?”

96 In fact, this is the secret of “managing” the boss. ¶¶¶

97 One does the same with all the people one works with.

98 Each of them works his or her way and not *my* way.

99 And each of them is entitled to work in his or her way.

100 What matters is whether they perform, and what their values are.

101 How they perform—each is likely to do it differently.

102 The first secret of effectiveness is to understand the people with whom one works and on whom one depends, and to make use of *their* strengths, *their* ways of working, *their* values.

103 For working relations are as much based on the person as they are based on the work. ¶¶¶

104 The second thing to do to manage oneself and to become effective is to *take responsibility for communications*.

105 After people have thought through what their *strengths* are, how they *perform*, what their *values* are and especially what their *contribution* should be, they then have to ask:

106 “Who needs to know this?

107 On whom do I depend?

108 And who depends on me?”

109 And then one goes and tells all these people and tells them in the way in which they receive a message, that is, in a memo if they are readers, or by talking to them if they are listeners and so on. ¶¶¶

110 Whenever I—or any other consultant—have started to work with an organization, I am first told of all the “personality conflicts” within it.

111 Most of them arise from the fact that one person does not know *what* the other

person does, or does not know *how* the other person does his or her work, or does not know what *contribution* the other person concentrates on, and what results he or she expects.

112 And the reason that they do not know is that they do not ask and therefore are not being told. ¶¶¶

113 This reflects human stupidity less than it reflects human history.

114 It was unnecessary until very recently to tell any of these things to anybody.

115 Everybody in a district of the medieval city plied the same trade—there was a street of goldsmiths, and a street of shoemakers, and a street of armorers.

116 (In Japan's Kyoto there are still the streets of the potters, the streets of the silk weavers, the streets of the lacquer makers.) One goldsmith knew exactly what every other goldsmith was doing; one shoemaker knew exactly what every other shoemaker was doing; one armorer knew exactly what every other armorer was doing.

117 There was no need to explain anything.

118 The same was true on the land where everybody in a valley planted the same crop as soon as the frost was out of the ground.

119 There was no need to tell one's neighbor that one was going to plant potatoes—that, after all, was exactly what the neighbor did too, and at the same time. ¶¶¶

120 And those few people who did things that were not "common," the few professionals, for instance, worked alone, and also did not have to tell anybody what they were doing.

121 Today the great majority of people work with others who do different things. ¶¶¶

122 As said before, the marketing vice-president may have come out of sales and knows everything about sales.

123 But she knows nothing about promotion and pricing and advertising and packaging and sales planning, and so on she has never done any of these things.

124 Then it is incumbent on the people who do these things to make sure that the marketing vice-president understands what they are trying to do, why they are trying to do it, how they are going to do it and what results to expect. ¶¶¶

125 If the marketing vice-president does not understand what these high-grade knowledge specialists are doing, it is primarily *their* fault, and not that of the marketing vice-president.

126 They have not told her.

127 They have not educated her.

128 Conversely, it is the marketing vice-president's responsibility to make sure that every one of the people she works with understands how *she* looks on marketing, what her goals are, how she works and what she expects of herself and of every one of them. ¶¶¶

129 Even people who understand the importance of relationship responsibility often do not tell their associates and do not ask them.

130 They are afraid of being thought presumptuous, inquisitive or stupid.
131 *They are wrong.*
132 Whenever anyone goes to his or her associates and says:
133 "This is *what* I am good at.
134 This is *how* I work.
135 These are my *values*.
136 This is the contribution I plan to concentrate on and the results I should be expected to deliver," the response is *always*:
137 "This is *most helpful*.
138 But why haven't you told me *earlier*?" ¶¶¶
139 And one gets the same reaction—without a single exception in my experience—if one then asks:
140 "And what do I need to know about *your* strengths, how *you* perform, *your* values and your proposed *contribution*?" ¶¶¶
141 In fact, a knowledge worker should request of people with whom he or she works—whether as subordinates, superiors, colleagues, team members—that they adjust their behavior to the knowledge worker's strengths, and to the way the knowledge worker works.
142 Readers should request that their associates *write* to them, listeners should request that their associates first *talk* to them and so on.
143 And again, whenever that is being done, the reaction of the other person will be:
144 "Thanks for telling me.
145 It's enormously helpful.
146 But why didn't you ask me earlier?" ¶¶¶

147 Organizations are no longer built on force.
148 They are increasingly built on trust.
149 Trust does not mean that people like one another.
150 It means that people can trust one another.
151 And this presupposes that people understand one another.
152 Taking relationship responsibility is therefore an absolute necessity.
153 *It is a duty.*
154 Whether one is a member of the organization, a consultant to it, a supplier to it, a distributor, one owes relationship responsibility to every one with whom one works, on whose work one depends; and who in turn depends on one's own work. ¶¶¶

155 **The Second Half of Your Life**

156 As said before: For the first time in human history, individuals can expect to outlive organizations.
157 This creates a totally new challenge: What to do with the second half of one's life?
158 One can no longer expect that the organization for which one works at age thirty will still

be around when one reaches age sixty.

159 But also, forty or fifty years in the same kind of work is much too long for most people.

160 They deteriorate, get bored, lose all joy in their work, “retire on the job” and become a burden to themselves and to everyone around them. ¶¶¶

161 This is not necessarily true of the very top achievers such as very great artists.

162 Claude Monet (1840-1926), the greatest Impressionist painter, was still painting masterpieces in his eighties, and working twelve hours a day, even though he had lost almost all his eyesight.

163 Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), perhaps the greatest Post-Impressionist painter, similarly painted till he died in his nineties and in his seventies invented a new style.

164 The greatest musical instrumentalist of this century, the Spanish cellist Pablo Casals (1876-1973), planned to perform a new piece of music and practiced it on the very day on which he died at age ninety-seven.

165 But these are the rarest of exceptions even among very great achievers.

166 Neither Max Planck (1858-1947) nor Albert Einstein (1879-1955), the two giants of modern physics, did important scientific work after their forties.

167 Planck had two more careers.

168 After 1918—aged sixty—he reorganized German science.

169 After being forced into retirement by the Nazis in 1933, he, in 1945, almost ninety, started once more to rebuild German science after Hitler’s fall.

170 But Einstein retired in his forties to become a “famous man.” ¶¶¶

171 There is a great deal of talk today about the “mid-life crisis” of the executive.

172 It is mostly boredom.

173 At age forty-five most executives have reached the peak of their business career and know it.

174 After twenty years of doing very much the same kind of work, they are good at their jobs.

175 But few are learning anything anymore, few are contributing anything anymore and few expect the job again to become a challenge and a satisfaction. ¶¶¶

176 Manual workers who have been working for forty years—in the steel mill for instance, or in the cab of a locomotive—are physically and mentally tired long before they reach the end of their normal life expectancy, that is, well before they reach even traditional retirement age.

177 They are “finished.”

178 If they survive—and their life expectancy too has gone up to an average of seventy-five years or so—they are quite happy spending ten or fifteen years doing nothing, playing golf, going fishing, engaging in some minor hobby and so on.

179 But knowledge workers are not “finished.”

180 They are perfectly capable of functioning despite all kinds of minor complaints.

181 And yet the original work that was so challenging when the knowledge worker was thirty

has become a deadly bore when the knowledge worker is fifty and still he or she is likely to face another fifteen if not another twenty years of work. ¶¶¶

182 To manage oneself, therefore, will increasingly require preparing oneself for the second half of one's life.

183 (The best books on this subject are by Bob Buford—a very successful businessman who himself has created his own second half of life.

184 They are *Half Time* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994] and *Game Plan* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997].) ¶¶¶

185 There are three answers:

186 ***The first is actually to start a second and different career (as Max Planck did).***

187 Often this means only moving from one kind of an organization to another. ¶¶¶

188 Typical are the middle-level American business executives who in substantial numbers move to a hospital, a university or some other nonprofit organization, around age forty-five or forty-eight, when the children are grown and the retirement pension is vested.

189 In many cases they stay in the same kind of work.

190 The divisional controller in the big corporation becomes, for instance, controller in a medium-sized hospital.

191 But there are also a growing number of people who actually move into a different line of work.

192 Increasingly, for instance, students in American Protestant theological seminaries are forty-five—rather than twenty-five-years old.

193 They made a first career in business or government—some in medicine—and then, when the children are grown, move into the ministry.

194 And so did a friend of mine who, after thirty years as a successful art museum director and curator, entered a seminary at age 55. ¶¶¶

195 In the United States there is a fairly substantial number of middle-aged women who have worked for twenty years, in business or in local government, have risen to a junior management position and now, at age forty-five and with the children grown, enter law school.

196 Three or four years later they then establish themselves as small-time lawyers in their local communities. ¶¶¶

197 We will see much more of such second-career people who have achieved fair success in their first job.

198 These people have substantial skills, for example, the divisional controller who moves into the local community hospital.

199 They know how to work.

200 They need a community—and the house is empty with the children gone.

201 They need the income, too.

202 But above all, they need the challenge. ¶¶¶

203 ***The Parallel Career***

204 The second answer to the question of what to do with the second half of one's life is to develop a *parallel* career. ¶¶¶

205 A large and rapidly growing number of people—especially people who are very successful in their first careers—stay in the work they have been doing for twenty or twenty-five years.

206 Many keep on working forty or fifty hours a week in their main and paid job.

207 Some move from busy full-time to being part-time employees or become consultants.

208 But then they create for themselves a parallel job—usually in a nonprofit organization—and one that often takes another ten hours of work a week.

209 They take over the administration of their church, for instance, or the presidency of the local Girl Scouts Council, they run the battered women shelter, they work for the local public library as children's librarian, they sit on the local school board and so on. ¶¶¶

210 ***And then, finally, the third answer—there are the “social entrepreneurs.”***

211 These are usually people who have been very successful in their first profession, as businessmen, as physicians, as consultants, as university professors.

212 They love their work, but it no longer challenges them.

213 In many cases they keep on doing what they have been doing all along, though they spend less and less of their time on it.

214 But they start another, and usually a nonprofit, activity. ¶¶¶

215 Here are some examples—beginning with [Bob Buford](#), the author of the two books, mentioned above, about preparing for the second half of one's life.

216 Having built a very successful television and radio business, Buford still keeps on running it.

217 But he first started and built a successful nonprofit organization to [make the Protestant churches in America capable of survival](#); now he is building a second, equally successful organization to teach other social entrepreneurs how to manage their own private, nonprofit ventures while still running their original businesses.

218 But there is also the equally successful lawyer—legal counsel to a big corporation—who has started a venture to establish model schools in his state. ¶¶¶

219 People who manage the “second half” may always be a minority only.

220 The majority may keep doing what they are doing now, that is, to retire on the job, being bored, keeping on with their routine and counting the years until retirement.

221 But it will be this minority, the people who see the long working-life expectancy as an opportunity both for themselves and for society, who may increasingly become the leaders and the models.

222 They, increasingly, will be the “success stories.”

223 There is one requirement for managing the second half of one's life: to begin creating it

long before one enters it. ¶¶¶

224 When it first became clear thirty years ago that working-life expectancies were
lengthening very fast, many observers (including myself) believed that retired people
would increasingly become volunteers for American nonprofit institutions.

225 This has not happened.

226 If one does not begin to volunteer before one is forty or so, one will not volunteer
when past sixty. ¶¶¶

227 Similarly, all the social entrepreneurs I know began to work in their chosen second
enterprise long before they reached their peak in their original business.

228 The lawyer mentioned above began to do volunteer legal work for the schools in his state
when he was around thirty-five.

229 He got himself elected to a school board at age forty.

230 When he reached fifty, and had amassed a substantial fortune, he then started his own
enterprise to build and run model schools.

231 He is, however, still working near-full-time as the lead counsel in the very big company
that, as a very young lawyer, he had helped found. ¶¶¶

232 There is another reason that managing yourself will increasingly mean that the
knowledge worker develops a second major interest, and develops it early. ¶¶¶

233 No one can expect to live very long without experiencing a serious setback in one's life or
in one's work. ¶¶¶

234 There is the competent engineer who at age forty-two is being passed over for
promotion in the company.

235 There is the competent college professor who at age forty-two realizes that she will
stay forever in the small college in which she got her first appointment and will never
get the professorship at the big university—even though she may be fully qualified for
it.

236 There are tragedies in one's personal family life—the breakup of one's marriage, the
loss of a child. ¶¶¶

237 And then a second major interest—and not just another hobby—may make all the
difference.

238 The competent engineer passed over for promotion now knows that he has not been
very successful in his job.

239 But in his outside activity—for example, as treasurer in his local church—he has achieved
success and continues to have success.

240 One's own family may break up, but in that outside activity there is still a community. ¶¶¶

241 This will be increasingly important in a society in which success has become important.
¶¶¶

242 Historically there was no such thing.

243 The overwhelming majority of people did not expect anything but to stay in their
"proper station," as an old English prayer has it.

244 The only mobility there was downward mobility.

245 Success was practically unknown. ¶¶¶

246 In a knowledge society we expect everyone to be a "success."

247 But this is clearly an impossibility.

248 For a great many people there is, at best, absence of failure.

249 For where there is success, there has to be failure.

250 And then it is vitally important for the individual but equally for the individual's family—
that there be an area in which the individual contributes, makes a difference, and is
somebody.

251 That means having a second area, whether a second career, a parallel career, a social
venture, a serious outside interest, all of them offering an opportunity for being a leader,
for being respected, for being a success. ¶¶¶

252 The changes and challenges of Managing Oneself may seem obvious, if not elementary,
compared to the changes and challenges discussed in the earlier chapters.

253 And the answers may seem to be self-evident to the point of appearing naïve.

254 To be sure, many topics in the [earlier chapters](#)—for example, Being a Change Leader or
some of the Information Challenges—are far more complex and require more advanced
and more difficult policies, technologies, methodologies.

255 But most of the new behavior—the new policies, technologies, methodologies—called for
in these earlier chapters can be considered EVOLUTIONS. ¶¶¶

256 Managing Oneself is a REVOLUTION in human affairs.

257 It requires new and unprecedented things from the individual, and especially from the
knowledge worker.

258 For in effect it demands that each knowledge worker *think* and behave as a *Chief
Executive Officer*.

259 It also requires an almost 180-degree change in the knowledge workers' thoughts and
actions from what most of us—even of the younger generation—still take for granted as the
way to think and the way to act.

260 Knowledge workers, after all, first came into being in any substantial numbers a
generation ago.

261 (I coined the term "knowledge worker," but only thirty years ago, in my 1969 book *The
Age of Discontinuity*.) ¶¶¶

262 But also the shift from manual workers who do as they are being told—either by the task
or by the boss to knowledge workers who have to manage themselves profoundly
challenges social structure.

263 For every existing society, even the most "individualist" one, takes two things for granted,
if only subconsciously: Organizations outlive workers, and most people stay put.

264 Managing Oneself is based on the very opposite *realities*: Workers are likely to outlive

organizations, and the knowledge worker has mobility. ¶¶¶

265 In the United States MOBILITY is accepted.

266 But even in the United States, workers outliving organizations—and with it the need to be prepared for a *Second and Different Half of One's Life*—is a revolution for which practically no one is prepared.

267 Nor is any existing institution, for example, the present retirement system.

268 In the rest of the developed world, however, *immobility* is expected and accepted.

269 It is “stability.” ¶¶¶

270 In Germany, for instance, mobility—until very recently came to an end with the individual's reaching age ten or, at the latest, age sixteen.

271 If a child did not enter Gymnasium at age ten, he or she had lost any chance ever to go to the university.

272 And the apprenticeship that the great majority who did not go to the Gymnasium entered at age fifteen or sixteen as a mechanic, a bank clerk, a cook—irrevocably and irreversibly—decided what work the person was going to do the rest of his or her life.

273 Moving from the occupation of one's apprenticeship into another occupation was simply not done even when not actually forbidden. ¶¶¶

274 The developed society that faces the greatest challenge and will have to make the most difficult changes is the society that has been most successful in the last fifty years: Japan.

275 Japan's success and there is no precedent for it in history—very largely rested on *organized immobility*—the immobility of “lifetime employment.”

276 In lifetime employment it is the organization that manages the individual.

277 And it does so, of course, on the assumption that the individual has no choice.

278 The individual is being managed. ¶¶¶

279 I very much hope that Japan will find a solution that *preserves* the social stability, the community—and the social harmony that lifetime employment provided, and yet creates the mobility that knowledge work and knowledge workers must have.

280 Far more is at stake than Japan's own society and civic harmony.

281 A Japanese solution would provide a model—for in every country a functioning society does require cohesion.

282 Still, a successful Japan will be a very different Japan. ¶¶¶

283 But so will be every other developed country.

284 The emergence of the knowledge worker who both can and must manage himself or herself is transforming every society. ¶¶¶

285 This book has intentionally confined itself to [MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES](#).

286 Even in this last chapter, it has talked about the individual, that is, the knowledge worker.

287 But the changes discussed in this book go way beyond management.

288 They go way beyond the individual and his or her career.

289 What this book actually dealt with is:

290 THE FUTURE OF SOCIETY

291 [Thought-scapes, brainroads and brain-addresses](#) for navigating a changing world – a world moving toward unimagined futureS