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**Ken Abrams**  
MCC

Ken Abrams is a Personal and Business Coach and Trainer who works with successful people who want to take their life and business to the next level! Ken has coached more than 300 entrepreneurs, executives, managers, sales professionals and coaches. He conducts both individual and group coaching sessions over the phone and in person, and customizes each coaching plan to meet his client's needs.

Ken, a member of the International Coach Federation, is a Master Certified Coach, trained by CoachU, the largest, oldest and most highly regarded coach training program in the world. Ken is a teacher and curriculum author for the school. Ken is also an international speaker and works with clients all over the globe.

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A NEWSLETTER OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RESULTS  
FROM KEN ABRAMS, MCC

Volume 2, Issue 2

## Making "Impossible" Thinking Possible

**"F**or the world is full of zanies and fools who don't believe in sensible rules, and don't believe what sensible people say," wrote Rodgers & Hammerstein, in their lyrics to the classic 1964 movie *Cinderella*. "And because these daft and dewey-eyed dopes keep building up impossible hopes, impossible things are happening every day!"

While most of us are not concerned with turning pumpkins into carriages, our businesses and our lives could be transformed just as powerfully by thinking "impossible" thoughts.

Think about it: How can things ever change—how can business, science or society innovate solutions to world dilemmas; how can our personal lives change trajectories—if we can only imagine what has been possible up to now? We might try to fix problems through automation, motivation and process improvement. But ultimately these efforts will stagnate until we change our mental models.

Our perspectives—the lenses through which we perceive and understand the world—affect all that we see and do. Problems occur when those perspectives become rigid and function more like prison bars, keeping us locked in set mental models, routines and behaviors.

What would happen if we broke out of the prison of those perspectives? What new patterns and relationships would we notice? What new actions would we take?

"What we perceive as 'the world' is as much inside our heads as outside," write the authors of *The Power of Impossible Thinking*, Jerry Wind and Colin Crook. "By realizing this and making choices about how we see things, we can become much more effective."

Thinking impossible thoughts is not just the realm of

fairy godmothers or eccentric inventors. We can all zoom in or out of our previous mind

Wind and Crook suggest a v  
see differently—before a crisi  
has made it too late. Here a

• **Listen to the radicals.**

nities are there in the sometimes "bizarre ...  
radical thinkers around you?

• **Embark on journeys of discovery.** Where can you travel—mentally or physically—to gain fresh perspectives on your organization? Your life?

• **Look across disciplines.** Often, "impossible" solutions develop at the intersection of several fields or departments. Crossing borders and moving into unfamiliar territory can help you see your situation from fresh perspectives.

• **Question the routine.** While routines create needed structure, they can sometimes lull us to sleep. Disrupting the routine, even in small ways, can help us awaken to new possibilities.

• **Recognize the barriers.** Becoming aware of the obstacles or fences that keep us from seeing new models is the first step to overcoming them.

• **Practice "flying upside down."** Like commercial airline pilots, who train in handling unusual emergencies, look for ways to prepare for outrageous scenarios.

• **"Destroy" the old model.** For example, how would you think about spending your days if you imagined living only six more months?

• **Envision multiple futures.** What are some potential scenarios for the future, and what will you need to succeed in each one? ●

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## Top 10 Sources of Stress

Ask people why they're stressed, and they're likely to say that it's these infernal deadlines or too much work and too little staff, or perhaps the family's overpacked schedules. And while these can certainly add to a pressure-cooker atmosphere, they're not really the greatest cause. At fault more than anything is the tremendous internal pressure and anxiety that we create for ourselves through the following:

1. **Self-criticism.** Tame your inner critic, focus on your strengths and forgive yourself.
2. **Powerlessness.** We are all powerful beyond measure. Open your eyes and see all the choices available to you.
3. **Perfectionism.** Do your best, but let the elusive "perfect" go.
4. **Worry.** Faith and action are the best antidote to worry, especially about situations we cannot control.

5. **Unrealistic expectations.** Life can never be problem-free. Our outlook can.

6. **Insecurity.** What we need to be emotionally secure is inside each one of us. Stop looking to others to provide it.

7. **Hurrying.** Try walking slower, chewing slower and working at a steady, but not frantic pace. You might be surprised to find yourself performing better.

8. **Comparing to others.** The question should be whether you have met your own standard.

9. **Pessimism.** When we expect the best from life, life has a way of handing it to us.

10. **Competition.** Try turning every encounter into a win-win situation rather than a win-lose one.

# Self-Quiz Do You Have Workaholic Habits?

There is a clear difference between enthusiastic, energetic work toward a highly valued goal and workaholism. That difference lies primarily in the emotional quality of the hours spent. Workaholism has a treadmill, joyless quality, not the bouncy, fun energy of a trampoline. And while working long, hard hours may help you accomplish a primary work goal, it likely will leave other areas of your life—family, friendship, intellectual stimulation, etc.—in shambles.

"Workaholism is an addiction," Julia Cameron says in her book, *The Artist's Way*, "and like all addictions, it blocks creative energy." Take the following quiz, adapted from Cameron's book, to help you figure out if you have workaholic habits. Even better, ask a few members of your family, or a few friends, to answer these questions for you. You may be surprised by what you discover.

True False

1. I work beyond normal office hours.
2. I cancel dates with friends or family members to do more work.
3. I postpone outings until my deadline project is done.
4. I take work with me on vacations.
5. I take my laptop with me on vacations.
6. I take work home with me on weekends.
7. I rarely or never take vacations.
8. My family and/or friends complain that I always work.
9. I seldom allow myself free time between projects.
10. It's a challenge for me to finish tasks.
11. Procrastination often keeps me working longer.
12. I set out to do one job and start on three more at the same time.
13. I work in the evenings during family time or time I could be reading for pleasure.
14. I allow calls and email to interrupt—and lengthen—my workday.
15. I don't make time for creative work/play a priority in my day.
16. Work always comes before my creative dreams.
17. I always take calls on my cell phone; it is never off.
18. I rarely allow myself down time to do nothing.
19. I use the word "deadline" to describe and rationalize my workload.
20. I often take a notebook or my work numbers with me when I go somewhere, even to dinner.

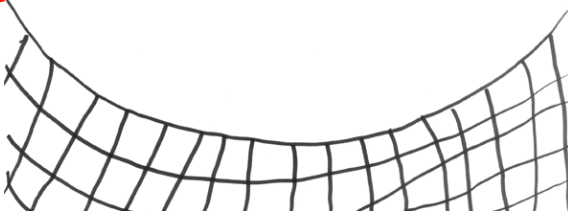
If you answered more true than false, you may benefit from exploring your attachment to work. For people with workaholic tendencies, work is often synonymous with worth, so the more the better. Work can also be a way to avoid looking at issues in your life. "Who's got the time?" the workaholic asks. If you would like help fighting your workaholic streak, please don't hesitate to call.

joy  
self-care

money  
work, time



**OPTION: USE THIS BOX FOR  
UPCOMING EVENTS INSTEAD**



What's out of balance in your life? What's your safety net?

## Recommended Reading

*You're in Charge—Now What? The 8-Point Plan*, by Thomas J. Neff and James M. Citrin

*May I Have Your Attention, Please: Build a Better Business by Telling Your True Story*, by Chris Hilicki

*Now, Discover Your Strengths*, by Marcus Buckingham & Donald O. Clifton

*Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, by Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan

*Today Matters: 12 Daily Practices to Guarantee Tomorrow's Success*, by John C. Maxwell

*Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive*, by Harvey B. Mackay

**"It is the follow through that makes the great difference between ultimate success and failure, because it is so easy to stop."**

—Charles F. Kettering, American inventor

# Increasing Personal Productivity

**O**ften it seems we're so busy putting out daily fires that we don't ever get to accomplish anything of real significance—those things that would make us happiest in the long run. Life becomes something to "get through" instead of an exciting path to greater fulfillment.

The efficiency of technology only increases the pressure we feel to do even more than ever before. All of it leaves us feeling too busy and robbed of a sense of accomplishment. So what can we do to increase personal productivity? Below are some tips to help you to get more done in less time—and do what you really want to be doing.

## Mission possible

Often busy-ness is a cover for not really knowing the best thing to be doing. To get around this, you must know your priorities for the moment. To determine this, you need know what your larger life priorities are.

Stephen R. Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, suggests writing a personal or organizational mission statement, a statement that summarizes your higher purpose and goals in life. Here's an example:

*To create a balanced, healthy and value-driven life by creating nurturing relationships and guiding others to see their full potential through my work as a therapist.*

Without a mission, you won't be able to say no to tasks. You can only know what to say no to when you know what to say yes to first.

## Self-motivate

We can learn all the self-management tricks in the book, but none of them will be worth a dime if we don't follow through and use them. That's where self-discipline comes in. There's no easy, painless way to enforce self-discipline, but if we don't utilize it, we will be left forever unfulfilled.

Brian Tracy, author of 35 books on business and personal productivity, offers some simple advice: Simply start *doing* what you know you need to do. Stop pushing it off for later. Once you start seeing the results that active self-discipline yields, the desire for the payoff becomes greater than your resistance to action.

To more easily promote successful self-discipline, Covey and Tracy suggest breaking down tasks into smaller chunks and then simply focusing on taking the first steps. This way all your tasks and goals won't feel so overwhelming, which makes it easier to take action.

## Clean up the loose ends

David Allen, author of *Ready for Anything*, points out how crises typically arise because secondary priorities have been neglected. He suggests working on unfinished tasks to open up your creativity. It's

more difficult to focus on the bigger, more urgent tasks when you're painfully aware of ongoing but necessary projects that you never seem to start, such as reorganizing your files, catching up with your accounting, or updating your phone book. So set aside some time—even if it's just an hour or two a week—to work on these longer term, but less urgent projects. However, don't let these tasks become distractions from working on the bigger picture goals.

## Shattering a myth

Many people believe that if they're organized they can't be as creative, as if having too much structure limits one's artistic expression. But Allen notes that every form of art needs structure. A painting or a photograph needs composition. Each individual scene in a screenplay needs to work with each other as a whole. The truth is, your creative capacity actually expands when you give it structure. That's because when you're organized, you actually know what to do and how to do it—as opposed to having all these wonderful, but unrealized, ideas bumping around in your head.

## Work when you're working!

If you want to maximize your productivity at work and balance it into the larger scheme of your life, focus is crucial. Tracy says the reason people's lives get out of balance is not because they have too much work to do, but because they do too little work. And he means they waste too much time when they're supposed to be working. If you have to, turn off the phone and shut down your email. You'll find the more work you do get done, the better you feel—which motivates you to keep doing more of the same.

## Balancing stress and recovery

Top athletes around the world know the value of alternating periods of intense activity and focus with periods of rest. Balancing stress and recovery is also critical in managing personal energy—and thus, productivity—in all areas of our lives.

"Too much energy expenditure without sufficient recovery eventually leads to burnout and breakdown," write Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in their book, *The Power of Full Engagement*. "Too much recovery without sufficient stress leads to atrophy and weakness. ...Full engagement requires cultivating a dynamic balance between the expenditure of energy and the renewal of energy in all dimensions." ●



## BEYOND the Box

*The following questions are designed to broaden perspectives, to open vistas, to widen the lens. There is no one right way to approach them. You can journal about them, talk to friends, create art, ponder them while driving or working out, dance them—whatever helps you explore "outside the box."*

1. What would an eagle's perspective be on this situation? An ant's?
2. What will have me step into my leadership as I give this presentation?
3. When I make presentations, where do I show up, and where do I not show up?
4. How is work/life balance related to purpose and meaning?
5. If what I've tried hasn't given me the results I want, what haven't I tried yet?
6. What might [blank] do in this situation? (Fill in name of role model.)
7. What keeps me focused in the present moment?
8. What in my life gives me a sense of self-worth... besides my work?
9. What's the relationship between self-discipline and self-love?
10. What's the relationship between action and recovery?
11. What are the loose ends in my life that need cleaning up?
12. What is the purpose of creating rapport?
13. What makes me feel in rapport with others?

# Developing Dynamite Presentation Skills

What's the difference between a dry lecture and dynamic presentation? Whether you're delivering a speech, conducting a workshop, presenting a new product idea or leading a teleclass, the answer is still the same: *interaction*.

When speaking, the goal is to connect to your audience in a personal way so your message will have more of an impact. This doesn't necessarily mean you have to constantly ask questions and aggressively involve your listeners verbally. What it does mean, however, is that you have to build a rapport with them. Although this is developed partially by the verbal content of your presentation, a good portion of it comes from less obvious—and often nonverbal—elements. Below is a list of ways to build rapport...while still being discreet about it.

- **Start off with a bang.** Begin your presentation with an interesting introduction. Introductions warm up an audience not only to your topic, but to you as a speaker as well. It's useful to view your introduction as a snapshot of what a listener can expect from the rest of your presentation. First impressions are powerful, so make the most of yours.
- **Speak to "one" person.** When speaking to a group, it's easy to get impersonal. To avoid this, imagine you're speaking to only one person at a time. Powerful presenters have a way of making each listener feel spoken to directly.
- **Make eye contact.** It's pretty basic stuff. If you look people in the eye, you connect with them more directly. Of course, if you're delivering your presentation or leading a class over the phone or Internet, your voice will have to convey this element of "I see you."

- **Control your speed.** Although it's obvious advice, it's easy to forget when you're nervous: don't talk too fast or too slowly. Talking too fast will make you appear uneasy, and listeners won't be able to catch everything you say. Talking too slowly makes you appear boring and dull...yawn! Try to find that middle ground where your natural personality is free to express itself.

- **Shake it up.** Vary the volume and rate of your speech—appropriate to your point, of course. When we talk to our friends one-on-one, we naturally vary these elements as our emotions and emphases shift. If you do this in your presentation, you'll come across as more human. *And more interesting.*

- **Don't be afraid to pause.** Strategically placed pauses make a point more dramatic and interesting, and as a result, more memorable.

- **Humor always helps.** Although you're aiming for a professional image, who says professionals shouldn't laugh? If you can make a joke (a funny one only!) or tell a humorous anecdote, go for it. Humor is the ultimate magnet in that it makes you more "real" and likeable.

- **It's about them, not you.** Instead of simply conveying information and the things you do (explaining features), couch this information in the form of a benefit. In other words, make it clear how it will make a positive difference in your listener's life. ●



*"Live your life each day as you would climb a mountain. An occasional glance towards the summit keeps the goal in mind, but many beautiful scenes are to be observed from each new vantage point."* —Harold B. Melchart

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