

Introduction: Advice to Young Professionals

In this book we have so far looked at digital transformation from the perspective of the enterprise. We have looked at the impact of digital on various industries, understood the technology implications, looked at organizational change elements, then finally at how leaders need to step up and drive this change. In this last section, I want to change track and take the perspective of a young professional looking to build a career in the digital age.

If the digital age is a big change for the enterprise, then it is a big change also for the individual. If enterprises need to understand the fundamentals of the change and develop new rules to win in the digital age, the same is also true for the individual. If winning in the digital age is important for the enterprise, it equally so for the individual.

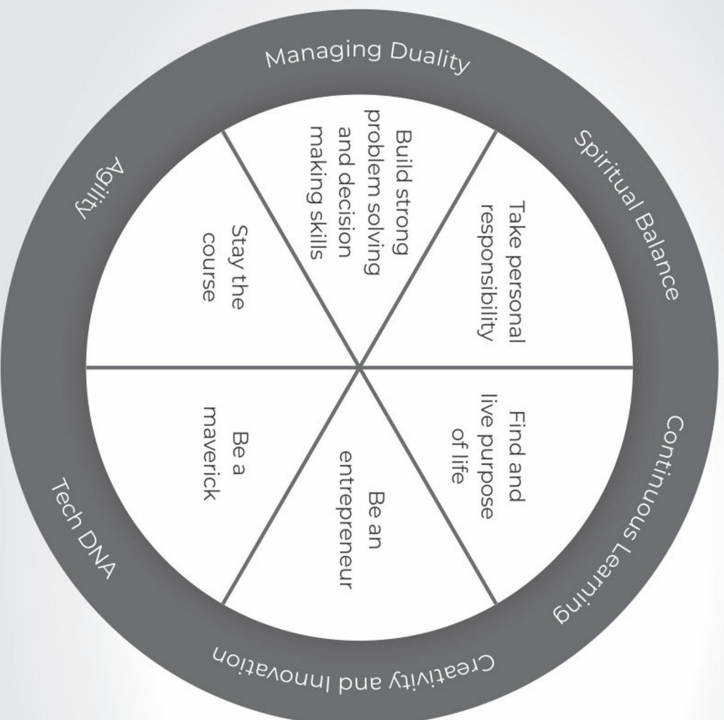
I believe the unprecedented disruption we are seeing in the digital age offers amazing opportunities to young professionals. This technology-based disruption is a great equalizer. Prior experience and successful track records are less relevant than before because you need to unlearn and learn the new rules of the game. In fact, the fresh perspective that young professionals bring to the enterprise is an advantage. They are ‘digital natives’, more intuitively able to

understand new technologies and how new businesses can be built using digital technologies.

So, how should a young professional prepare to win in the digital age? Many of the desirable competencies and mindsets for enterprises and leaders that we have talked about in the earlier sections are also relevant for young professionals. Prominent among these requirements are continuous learning, creativity and innovation, tech DNA, agility, management of duality, and spiritual and ethical balance. In addition to these six competencies and mindsets, there are six more points of advice I have for young professionals to win in the digital age:

1. **Find and live the unique purpose of your life.** In a period of constrained career opportunities, you have a limited set of choices. However, in this digital age there are vast opportunities for young professionals. That should release the pressure on them to conform to a narrow set of choices. It should liberate them to explore, find and live the unique purpose of their own lives. Discovery of one's unique purpose of life is a powerful source of energy. It helps you achieve your full potential and achieve lasting happiness.
2. **Be an entrepreneur.** Digital disruption is creating a host of new business opportunities. A supportive ecosystem makes it easier for entrepreneurs to get started. The risks are relatively low and the returns high. Being an entrepreneur in the digital age is a very attractive proposition. All you need is passion for an idea and risk-taking ability.
3. **Be a maverick.** The digital age is fast evolving and is multi-dimensional. To succeed you need to go beyond straight-line conventional thinking. Do not be afraid to challenge the norms and accepted ways of doing things. Being unorthodox and independent is a good thing. Mavericks like Steve Jobs and Elon Musk are the role models of the digital age.
4. **Stay the course.** While the digital age is all about fast pace of change and speed of action, staying the course is also important.

Mantras for young professionals to win in the Digital age



Disruption and opportunities in the Digital world

Longevity and steady progress (compounding) are key for success. Staying the course is difficult in an environment where there is a lot of frenzy around you. So patience and steadfastness are important qualities to build in the digital age.

5. **Build strong problem-solving and decision-making skills.** The VUCA world we are living in is characterized by high volatility and complexity. So, problem-solving and effective decision-making skills have become more important than ever before. These are foundational skills that every young professional should build in the digital age, irrespective of his or her choice of career.
6. **Take personal responsibility and drive change around you.** There are many challenges in the world around us - whether they are at the level of community, country or world. These range from pollution to socio-economic inequality to conflict, and at multiple levels. Young professionals need to take up the responsibility of tackling these challenges and driving change. Moreover, as you take personal responsibility, your zone of influence increases and you grow as a leader. In today's world, leadership is not about a position assigned to you but about the responsibilities you take on proactively.

I have expanded on these points of advice for young professionals across the chapters of this section.

Chapter 1 - Seven Success Mantras

In the VUCA world, we live life at such a fast pace that we rarely get a chance to pause. We keep running, mechanically, sometimes losing sight of where we are going. This can lead to fatigue, boredom and, eventually, burnout. Therefore, it is important once in a while to reflect on what is important to you and your plans for getting it, so you can anchor yourself. In this chapter I propose a simple framework, based on my experiences, which will help you define what success means. I give you seven principles for achieving the

success you want. It is important for any young professional to reflect on what success means to her and revisit it every couple of years.

Chapter 2 - Finding your 'Sweet Spot' - the Powerful Purpose of your Life!

In this chapter I move the dialogue one step further – from the framework advocated in the previous chapter to define success – to talk about how we can identify our unique purpose in life. Having a powerful and sustained life purpose is the key to both achieving your full potential and finding lasting happiness in life. It can spark the leader within you and lift you and your world to a different level. I believe our purpose lies in the 'sweet spot', or at the intersection of three forces: our passions, our unique talents and the important and ethical needs we have to serve. Finding your 'sweet spot' is not an easy journey, but one you must embark on and persist with.

Chapter 3 - Your Time is Now! - Ten Mantras for Young Entrepreneurs

The exciting part of the digital age consists of the availability of opportunities, funding, technology, and an active entrepreneurial ecosystem, making the launch of an entrepreneurial journey much easier than before. This is an opportunity every young professional should consider grabbing. In this chapter I have shared ten mantras for individuals who aspire to become entrepreneurs. I believe these mantras can improve their chances of success.

Chapter 4 - Lessons from Steve Jobs' Incredible Life Story

The previous chapters have been about leadership, professional success, and the frameworks that can be followed to achieve them. My dialogue would not be complete if I didn't talk about one of the most visionary leaders and entrepreneurs of our time, Steve Jobs. In

this chapter we look at the various lessons his incredible life holds for us, and which we can learn and take inspiration from. Some of the learnings that stand out for me include driving with passion; finding innovation at the intersection of engineering and arts, end-to-end ownership and simplicity. Steve Jobs was a maverick who broke many rules in his drive to create amazing products. This maverick spirit, of being unorthodox and independent, is becoming so relevant in the digital age we are in.

Chapter 5 - Five Lessons in Longevity and Greatness from the Giant Sequoias

In the previous chapter I wanted to bring out Steve Job's spirit of being a maverick and how that led him to greatness. However, there are many paths to greatness, and longevity and staying the course is another of them. In this chapter, I bring some inspiring lessons from the giant sequoias, amongst the oldest and largest living organisms on earth. The giant sequoia is a classic example of adaptation of an organism to survive adversity, of innovating to live and grow, of making the most of every situation presented to it, and of using the collective strength of the community to survive. I find the giant sequoia one of the most inspiring metaphors in nature for success.

Chapter 6 - Ten Things I Wish I Learnt in Business School

As many of you step into the professional world from universities or start moving up the enterprise hierarchy, you discover that what you learned in college can potentially be applied at work and to your projects, but only up to a point. You will come across situations where you are stuck at the crossroads of decision making, wishing there was something that could come to your aid. In this chapter I present ten powerful frameworks that I have distilled from my own professional journey. These frameworks will help the reader

in problem structuring and more effective decision making, both critical skills for the digital age.

Chapter 7 - Take Personal Responsibility and Change the World!

In this chapter, I encourage you to expand your concept of self and start taking broader responsibility. In our professional and personal lives, we will come across many situations that need fixing, gaps in processes, services, products, etc., and this can get frustrating. Whilst we spend a lot of time focusing on what other people are doing wrong and what they should do differently, we rarely look inside to see what *we* could do differently. This is a negative cycle; you land up changing nothing and only get frustrated. All of us have the potential to make a difference in the world around us, and we should start by taking small steps. If you simply act on what is within your zone of influence, that zone keeps expanding. As you take personal responsibility for the problems immediately around you, the leader within you grows. Taking greater responsibility is the surest way to your growth as a professional and human being.