

IMPROVE
PERCEPTION

INCREASE
VISIBILITY

EXERT
INFLUENCE

Getting **AHEAD**

THREE STEPS
to TAKE YOUR CAREER to
the NEXT LEVEL

Joel A. Garfinkle

Foreword by Marshall Goldsmith,
author of *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

Praise for *Getting Ahead*

“So many executives I know are always looking for ways to take their careers to the next level. Joel Garfinkle shows them how in *Getting Ahead*. By focusing on three key aspects—perception, visibility, and influence—this book presents a compelling case for what an executive needs to do to become a more credible leader. Each chapter ends with handy summary steps that readers can put into gear for themselves. *Getting Ahead* is a welcome read for anyone seeking to advance his or her career.”

—**John Baldoni**

Author of *Lead Your Boss:*
The Subtle Art of Managing Up

“*Getting Ahead* delivers. Definitely providing a step-up and step-ahead perspective on how to make a difference and get recognized for doing so, it is full of practical ideas and applications for managing a career without the customary politics and b.s.! This book is an enjoyable and fresh read with a lot of interesting examples.”

—**Barry Z. Posner, PhD**

Professor of leadership at Santa Clara University
Coauthor of *The Leadership Challenge*, *Credibility*,
and *The Truth about Leadership*

“The book is chock-full of quotes, cases, ideas, and tools. Anyone who wants to get ahead will find this book thorough, well written, easy to read, and quickly applicable.”

—**Dave Ulrich**

Coauthor of *The Why of Work*
Professor, Ross School of Business,
University of Michigan

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“Joel Garfinkle offers smart strategies to stand out from the crowd—which is extremely important if you want to build an influential network and move forward quickly in your career. He wraps the strategy in riveting stories and offers practical advice. I like this book.”

—**Keith Ferrazzi**

Author of *Who’s Got Your Back* and *Never Eat Alone*

“This book provides tremendous insight into who you are and how you can have a bigger impact on those around you. If you’re really serious about boosting your career, reading *Getting Ahead* will be one of the best moves you can make.”

—**Sydney Finkelstein**

Professor, Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth College

Author of the best seller *Why Smart Executives Fail*

“*Getting Ahead* is a book that will help you manage your career. Joel Garfinkle provides practical, actionable ideas you can use to get ahead. The book delivers on its promise.”

—**Mark Sanborn**

Author of *The Fred Factor* and
You Don’t Need a Title to Be a Leader

“Good ambition is a great asset. This book helps you put that ambition to work.”

—**Jim Champy**

Coauthor of *Reengineering the Corporation*

“*Getting Ahead* breaks down success into three profoundly simple principles to systematically and pragmatically elevate your career. Joel Garfinkle gives you the tools to be an exceptional difference maker and value creator in our complex, dynamic world.”

—**Kevin Cashman**

Best-selling author of *Leadership from the Inside Out*
and *Awakening the Leader Within*

“In this insightful book, Joel Garfinkle provides his brilliant PVI model to help you gain the competitive advantage needed in today’s marketplace.”

—**Jon Gordon**

Best-selling author of *The Energy Bus* and *Soup*

“*Getting Ahead* is a must-have resource to accelerate and advance as a global leader. The powerful three-step process clearly outlines what a leader must do to maximize his or her potential. It provides practical advice for leadership development and is a must read.”

—**Phil Harkins**
CEO, Linkage, Inc.

“*Getting Ahead* lays out, in very straightforward terms, a simple and practical model that leaders can use to seize the reins of their own careers while identifying and supporting the essential development of their employees.”

—**Beverly Kaye**
Coauthor of *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em*

Foreword

In *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*, Joel Garfinkle hits upon three significant and important aspects of leadership—perception, visibility, and influence. Like Joel, I stress developing perception or taking control of how others see you (your reputation) and exerting your influence no matter what level you are at in the organization (effectively influencing up) as an integral part of my own leadership philosophy.

With this book, Joel takes us on an incredible learning journey in his exploration of taking control of how others see us—or our reputation. Our reputation, what other people think we’ve done lately, is basically a scorecard kept about us by others. It’s when our coworkers, customers, friends, and sometimes strangers grade our performance—and report their opinions to the rest of the world. Although you can’t take total control of your reputation, there’s a lot you can do to maintain and improve it. Joel explores this concept to its fullest here in *Getting Ahead*.

Another fascinating aspect of leadership explored in *Getting Ahead* is exerting influence in the organization—no matter what level you are at! Peter Drucker once said, “The great majority of people tend to focus downward. They are occupied with efforts rather than results. They worry over what the organization and their superiors ‘owe’ them and should do for them. And they are conscious above all of the authority they ‘should have.’ As a result they render themselves ineffectual.” The fact of the matter is, though, that every decision is made by the person who has the power to make that decision—this is not necessarily the right person or the smartest person or the best person—and this is something with which we all must make peace. Making peace

with this fact will inevitably help you do a much better job of influencing decision makers, which will, along with all of the teachings you'll learn in this book, help you to convert your good ideas into meaningful action.

As Joel says, “performing to the best of your ability is necessary at every level of your career.” And this is a book that will help you do just that. Whether you are a new employee, in middle or upper management, a CEO, or a future leader, take in the information Joel has put in these pages, apply his PVI (perception, visibility, influence) model to your own career and organization, and watch as changes happen and you experience the heights of career success!

—Marshall Goldsmith
Executive coach and best-selling author of *Mojo*
and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

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Introduction

We cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are.

—Max De Pree

Writer, industrialist, former CEO of Herman Miller, Inc.

What Makes One Person More Successful than Another?

Who comes to mind when you hear the phrase *successful leaders*? Do you think of someone you work with now? Are these leaders people from your past employment? Or are they individuals

The most successful leaders have gotten to where they are by leveraging and applying perception, visibility, and influence better than anyone else.

you've only seen from afar or read about? Do you know how these successful leaders advanced and achieved the promotions they desired, or how they became recognized as being highly capable, credible, and respected by upper management? Perhaps the most pressing question is: ***What do they do that is so different than what you are doing?*** You search for the answers, wondering what the secret ingredient is and how you can get your hands on it. You want to know what makes one person more successful than another, or—more bluntly—exactly what these people have that you don't.

The answer: perception, visibility, and influence.

The most successful leaders have gotten to where they are by leveraging and applying perception, visibility, and influence better than anyone else. By honing these three areas, you too can fast-track to the next level and become both a valued employee and an in-demand leader.

You've likely heard throughout your career that you perform your job well, produce exceptional results, are smart, are extremely competent, and have a desired expertise. You might be surprised, however, that this kind of recognition hasn't necessarily guaranteed your success. The reality you face at work is that talent, results, and competence alone simply will not allow you to attain the success you deserve. It's time to stop being surprised by this, and instead take control of your professional future.

If you want to take your career up a notch, this book will provide you with a model to do exactly that. The best part is that you'll start from where you are right now—by tackling all of the professional struggles, issues, challenges, and deep-seated

The reality you face at work is that talent, results, and competence alone simply will not allow you to attain the success you deserve.

habits that have been so hard to overcome. This book provides a step-by-step program that will push you to surpass whatever is in your way and remove your limiting career blind spots.

No matter what you've achieved at work over the years, your current position is your starting point. You now need the:

- *Commitment* to change.
- *Willingness* to do whatever is required.
- *Dedication* to reach your desired level.
- *Courage* to stay steadfast.
- *Ability* to take the necessary steps forward even in the face of fear.

By tapping into these elements of strength within you, you form a powerful energy source that will propel you to career heights you never before deemed possible. Yes, it will be difficult. You'll be inspired and energized, however, by the immediate

results you achieve as you begin to apply the PVI model—perception, visibility, and influence—to your work.

You *can* do this. I know because I see it happen all the time. The experiences of hundreds of my clients have proven how quickly positive changes in work situations can occur. They conquered challenges that initially seemed impossible to overcome, and arrived at levels they were not expected to reach. They did so by working according to a vital realization: that improving how others perceive you, increasing your visibility, and exerting influence are the exact factors that determine your future success.

This book has three parts that we are about to look at in more detail:

- Part One: Improve Your Perception
- Part Two: Increase Your Visibility
- Part Three: Exert Your Influence

Based on your current career circumstances, you might find yourself drawn to one part more than another. By itself each part provides value. However, formed together—as the PVI model—is how this book is meant to be understood. Transformation and advancement of your career come from the complete implementation of the PVI model (see Figure I.1).

Improve Your Perception

Create the right image of yourself by taking control of how others see you, so that the perception of you accurately reflects your impact on the organization.

People constantly are forming opinions of you based on how you act, what you do, and how you behave at work. These

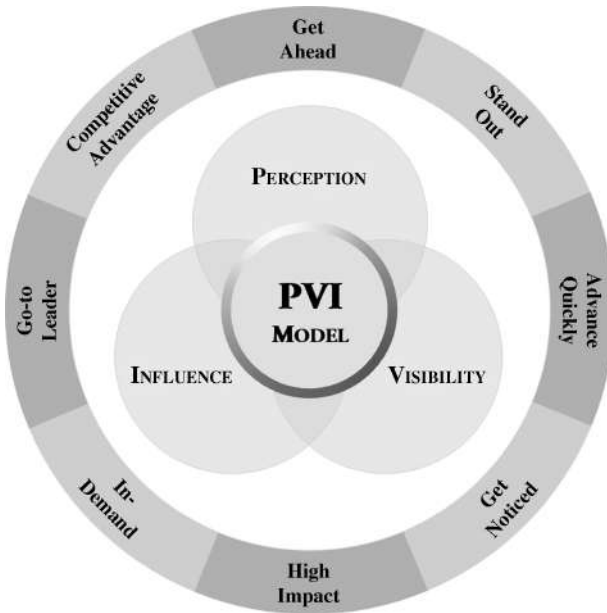


FIGURE I.1 PVI Model

impressions have a direct impact on how you are perceived. Others' positive or negative discernment of you affects myriad elements of interaction—how they treat you, the level of respect you receive, and the overall success you gain at work. This is precisely why perception management is vital to your professional success. If you don't take control of how others see you, you will undermine both your career and your future success. People will form opinions about you without any input from you. You can't leave the fate of your career in someone else's hands.

Increase Your Visibility

Increase your profile across the organization and among higher levels of management by standing out and getting noticed.

Visibility makes you a known, valued, and desired commodity at your company. Take a look at the successful employees at any organization: Every single one is visible. If you fail to make yourself recognized at work, you run the risk that your peers and management may not actually know who you are, what work you're doing, the impact you are having on the company, or the overall value you bring to the organization. Increasing visibility is vital to success.

Exert Your Influence

Have impact and leverage your power to alter, change, and improve situations, regardless of your position or level of authority.

With influence, you move organizations forward and change outcomes for the better. You motivate, arouse interest, and sway others to do what is deemed important. You are depended on and seen as a difference maker who has the courage to make tough and important decisions. Without influence, your career stalls and comes to a standstill. You must have the courage to make an impact and be influential.

The following story emphasizes the impact that one person can have when perception, visibility, and influence are fully leveraged.

The Unknown Giant

Success means having the courage, the determination, and the will to become the person you believe you were meant to be.

—George Sheehan
American author and cardiologist

In 1944, cardiac surgery pioneer Dr. Alfred Blalock, renowned chief of surgery at Johns Hopkins University's medical school, was about to begin open-heart surgery on a 15-month-old baby who weighed only nine pounds. This operation, meant to fix the congenital heart defect called blue baby syndrome, had never before been performed on the heart. The medical establishment of the time deemed any operating on the heart to be off-limits, taboo, and essentially impossible.

Over 700 of the best doctors and researchers in the world were watching and waiting for this groundbreaking surgery to begin. Surprisingly, Dr. Blalock refused to initiate the process without one particular person present: He said that he must have his laboratory assistant, Vivien Thomas, at his side in order to commence surgery.

Racism and segregation were extremely rampant in Baltimore in the early 1940s. Vivien Thomas was African American. When he would wear his white lab coat, people were shocked. Typically, the only African American employees at Johns Hopkins University were janitors.

People were even *more* shocked when Dr. Blalock delayed the high-profile, controversial procedure to wait for Thomas to arrive and assist him. Blalock demanded that Vivien stand on a stool behind him to provide step-by-step instructions on performing the surgery.

Who Was Vivien Thomas?

Even in the face of such discrimination, Vivien Thomas was positively perceived and respected. Many people knew about his intelligence and skills, which allowed him to exert his influence completely. He earned this level of respect from Dr. Blalock, who initially hired him as a laboratory assistant—a low-paying job that Thomas took because he needed the money. Within five years, Thomas began to do the same work as postdoctoral researchers, though he continued to earn a janitor's wages.

Despite the fact that he had absolutely no medical training, Thomas worked 16 hours a day, performing hundreds of experimental surgeries on dogs in an effort to correct the condition that had come to be known as blue baby syndrome. In fact, Dr. Blalock was the one who had previously assisted Thomas during these operations on dogs. These hundreds of experiments gave Thomas much greater experience, which was precisely why Dr. Blalock needed him by his side when preparing for the 1944 breakthrough surgery, which actually led to curing the blue baby syndrome. In addition to guiding Dr. Blalock through blue baby surgeries, Thomas invented the instruments to perform the corrective heart surgery. These instruments are now commonplace in modern operating rooms.

The Legacy of Vivien Thomas

Vivien Thomas influenced generations of surgeons and lab technicians by teaching them operations that helped save thousands of lives. Dr. Blalock required all surgeons to learn surgical techniques from Thomas, techniques that eventually turned these surgeons into some of the most prominent medical doctors in the world.

Though the outside world did not perceive him as such, Thomas was an equal and a peer to the medical doctors with whom he worked. He didn't let his status or official job title as lab technician limit the ways he used his talents and skills. He stood out, got noticed, and became invaluable. *Despite his apparent lack of power and authority, Thomas became a difference maker who saved the lives of millions and changed the surgical profession forever. His influence became his legacy.*

Dr. Levi Watkins, the first African American cardiac resident and first African American chief resident in cardiac surgery at Johns Hopkins, said this about Vivien Thomas: "I think he is the most untalked about, unappreciated, unknown giant in the African American community. What he helped facilitate

impacted people all over the world.”¹ Dr. Watkins continued, “I think the implications are extraordinary. Take a man like this, without much formal anything, that impacts on inventions, and also impacts on the nation’s premier heart surgeons. I look at him as a global person that rose above the conditions of his time.”²

Vivien Thomas received an honorary doctorate from Johns Hopkins in 1971. After 37 years of altering people’s perceptions, gaining worldwide visibility, and influencing the lives of millions, Thomas finally was recognized as a teacher and appointed to the medical school faculty.

Why This Book Is Important

You have to learn the rules of the game. And then you have to play better than anyone else.

—Albert Einstein

American (German-born) physicist and Nobel Prize winner

For over two decades, I have had firsthand experience working closely with thousands of executives, senior managers, directors, and employees at the world’s leading companies. Before starting my own company, I lived and worked in London, Hong Kong, and San Francisco doing performance-improvement consulting for Ernst & Young in Hong Kong and change-management work at Andersen Consulting (now Accenture) in San Francisco. Since 1997, I’ve owned an executive coaching company that provides me access to clients from around the world and in countless industries.

This experience has provided me with a unique and expansive perspective on what both employees and employers want, need, and desire at work. No matter where my clients are from, what companies they work for, or what their titles or responsibilities are, I’ve seen a pattern in the kind of qualities that make

one person more successful than another. I've learned that while everyone has access to perception, visibility, and influence, it's only the most successful leaders who fully utilize these elements.

Throughout this book, you'll be reading about what the best leaders have done to become renowned. As Seth Godin explains in his book *The Big Moo*, "Nothing is original. Most composers, great or not so great, are working with the same musical alphabet of pitches. It's putting the pitches together differently that creates something remarkable."³ Even though everyone has access to perception, visibility, and influence, it's the combination of all three—the unique PVI model—that is the difference maker in leading you to extraordinary success.

Many of my clients protest that they're "too busy" to make the effort to bring perception, visibility, and influence into their work lives. They are consumed by and can barely keep up with their daily responsibilities. They oversee too many projects and have extensive to-do lists. They have seemingly endless meetings and are overwhelmed by e-mails. I'm guessing that many of your objections would sound the same. Well, let me ask: Do you think that leaders of large organizations receive fewer e-mails than you? Do they have fewer projects to work on, or shorter to-do lists? No. The difference is that they take time to prioritize perception, visibility, and influence. Despite the sense of urgency and importance that these demands provoke, these leaders still are able to make perception, visibility, and influence a vital part of their professional lives.

These well-known leaders understand the kind of time and effort that are necessary to make their top priority a reality; they appreciate the importance of improving their perception, increasing their visibility, and exerting their influence. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, "The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight. But they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night."

Focusing your attention on perception, visibility, and influence will have an immediate impact on your career. It will lead colleagues and managers alike to value and appreciate your contributions. You'll advance quickly while you gain recognition, enhanced responsibility, and increased respect.

Whom Is This Book For?

Show me an individual who does a good job and nothing else, and I'll show you an individual who will do the same good job almost forever.

—Lloyd G. Trotter

Former president and chief executive officer of GE Industrial

The Following People Will Benefit from This Book:

- New employees.
- Midlevel management.
- Upper management.
- Future company leaders.
- Minority employees.
- Managers providing this book to their employees.
- C-level (CEO, CFO, CIO, COO, CMO, etc.) leaders providing this book to their employees.

There are four attributes that directly contribute to your future success: *performance*, *perception*, *visibility*, and *influence*. Each of these four is weighted differently based on the point you're at in your career: a new employee, a midlevel manager, or in upper management.

This book's message focuses on three of the four attributes—perception, visibility, and influence. Performance is highlighted only in this section as a means of describing four time-specific career attributes. Of the four, performance is the one most often highlighted in books, journals, and other publications. No matter what position you are in, you must maintain a certain level of

baseline performance to remain employable. Performing to the best of your ability is necessary at every level of your career. Developing perception, visibility, and influence, however, is an option and choice to which most professionals give little conscious attention. *Getting Ahead* is written specifically to bring your attention to the step-by-step PVI model that will ensure your future career success.

As you move from new employee to midlevel manager and ultimately to upper management, your focus on each of the four attributes for success will shift and change. The percentages listed for each in this section were revealed based on extensive research, including surveys and interviews with my executive coaching clients.

You might notice in the diagrams how performance dips extremely low (2 percent) in upper management. At this level, employees must be performing at the level required of them; otherwise, they never would have reached upper management. Thus, after reaching a certain level of career advancement, performance becomes a nondistinguishing skill.

New Employees

Performance is especially important when you're a new employee. You must quickly build a solid track record by doing your job exceptionally well and ensuring that all of your duties are fulfilled without issue. The chapters on perception are the most important area of focus for a new employee. You want to make the best impression and have others value your input. New employees also should concentrate on increasing their visibility; it allows you to quickly become known and respected. Important members of the company will take notice when a new employee's visibility reaches their level. This is also a time when you want to be aware of the *influencers*—the people in the organization who make the key decisions that impact others (see Table I.1 and Figure I.2).

TABLE I.1 New Employee Table

NEW EMPLOYEE	
ATTRIBUTE FOR SUCCESS	PERCENTAGE
Performance	51%
Perception	29%
Visibility	15%
Influence	5%



FIGURE I.2 New Employee Pie Chart

Midlevel Management

All three areas of PVI are important for the midlevel manager. You want to adjust others’ perception of you so that they see you as someone who truly belongs in a senior-level position. You need the powerful and influential individuals in upper management to recognize, know, and respect you. You want to influence others by having them see you as a major player who can have a significant effect on the company. As you continue to excel at your job duties and responsibilities, others’ expectations of you will shift. You’ll be measured more by the impact you make on the overall organization,

and less on what you can achieve through performance alone (see Table I.2 and Figure I.3).

TABLE I.2 Midlevel Management Table

MIDLEVEL MANAGEMENT	
ATTRIBUTE FOR SUCCESS	PERCENTAGE
Visibility	42%
Perception	30%
Influence	20%
Performance	8%

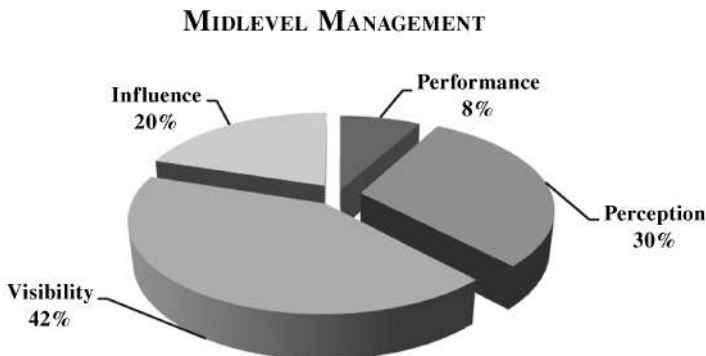


FIGURE I.3 Midlevel Management Pie Chart

Upper Management

The book's third section, on influence, is most relevant to members of upper management, though you will benefit from reviewing the sections on perception and visibility as well. As upper executives, you spend most of your time influencing significant results and people's behavior. By influencing others, you increase your value to the overall organization. Though it might sound counterintuitive, performance actually has an

almost minimal effect on your future career success. Although your expertise allows you to maintain the perception and respect you’ve established over the years, you must now perpetuate the positive nature of that perception and shift it toward ever-increasing respect. While visibility isn’t as important as it used to be, as a person in upper management, you still need to make sure you have visibility to other executives who identify you as someone who drives the company’s success forward (see Table I.3 and Figure I.4).

TABLE I.3 Upper Management Table

UPPER MANAGEMENT	
ATTRIBUTE FOR SUCCESS	PERCENTAGE
Influence	56%
Perception	25%
Visibility	17%
Performance	2%

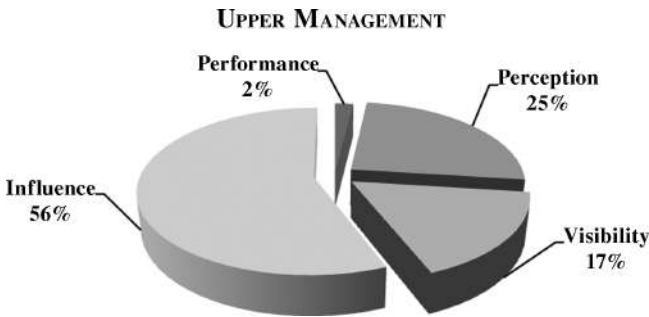


FIGURE I.4 Upper Management Pie Chart

There are four other specific groups who will benefit greatly from this book:

- **Future company leaders.** People in upper management are constantly on the lookout for fast-rising, high-potential employees. These are the up-and-coming stars—the organization’s aspiring and emerging leaders. These talented employees need someone in upper management to recognize and mentor them as they develop PVI traits. To ensure the company’s continued success, it’s the responsibility of these upper-management employees to cultivate leaders and make sure they are learning the important aspects of PVI.
- **Minority employees.** As the number of minority employees within companies grows, management needs to reflect a similar level of diversity. A highly diversified management team is necessary to meet the company’s needs. For example, women have been lacking leadership roles inside companies for decades. Now organizations are seeing women as a vital ingredient for future success. Minorities need a competitive advantage. PVI provides people with the necessary tools they need to compete and succeed.
- **Managers providing this book to their employees.** This book is an ideal tool for managers to gift to their employees. Employees need to focus on all three areas, with perception and visibility being the two most critical. Staff members want to make the right impression; they need advocates who are willing to tout their accomplishments and value to the company. PVI will help employees reveal themselves as effective players. Once they gain visibility, they can start to influence outcomes and compel others to see them as vital components of future management. Employees who fully leverage PVI become more valuable to a company, as their level of production and their overall contributions enhance the company’s bottom-line performance.
- **C-level (CEO, CFO, CIO, COO, CMO, etc.) leaders providing this book to their employees.** We live in a

time in which one employee can revolutionize a company or, for that matter, one start-up can revolutionize an entire industry. Employers have to recognize that they have hidden talent within their organizations. If they cannot unlock that talent and make it more visible, the company will underperform. They owe it to themselves to invest in these skills and to create a culture in which people are encouraged to lead and will be rewarded when they do. When employees build their perception, visibility, and influence, they are not just helping themselves; they are benefiting the entire company.

Stand Out from the Talent around You

A potential leader can hardly afford to wait to become a legend in his own time; to satisfy us, he must almost become a legend ahead of his time.

—Brock Brower

From “Where Have All the Leaders Gone?”

Life, October 8, 1971

You might think that you already understand the seemingly simple concepts of perception, visibility, and influence; they should not be too complicated to learn and understand. But this book is about more than learning and understanding these notions. Actually increasing your PVI at the level this book asks of you is a much more challenging concept. It’s never easy to change the entrenched behaviors that undermine complete utilization of your PVI. This objective requires a certain level of action, commitment, and follow-through. I’ve seen my clients do what is necessary to propel themselves forward in their careers, and I know you can do the same.

By committing to improving your perception, visibility, and influence, you’ll naturally begin to adopt new behaviors and habits. Neural pathways will be created as a rewiring of the brain occurs. As pioneer in leadership Warren Bennis said, “A person

does not gather learnings as possessions but rather becomes a new person with those learnings as part of his or her new self.”⁴

Perception, visibility, and influence will help you stand out from the gifted group of stars that surrounds you.

Therefore, you’ll start to notice new opportunities. You’ll seek out ways to become more visible. You’ll take control of how others see you, and make sure that it’s an accurate reflection of your impact. You’ll identify opportunities to take initiative and show your worth and value at work. You’ll feel a renewal of fresh energy for your career.

At a certain stage in your professional life, you’ll be working with the best. Everyone will be as good as or better than you. It becomes more difficult to gain the recognition and promotions you deserve. Chris Carmichael, Lance Armstrong’s personal coach and the U.S. Olympic Committee’s Coach of the Year in 1999, advises, “You have to work hard and be smart to stand out. You’re no longer competing against just a handful of talented people; you’re playing against people just like you who were selected from a far greater candidate pool.”⁵ Perception, visibility, and influence will help you stand out from the gifted group of stars that surrounds you.

Gain the Competitive Advantage

If you don’t have a competitive advantage, don’t compete.

—Jack Welch

Former chairman and CEO of General Electric

As members of a technologically advanced society, our ability to be faster, quicker, and smarter is challenged daily. Either you keep up or you’ll be run over. Many companies today function within a cutthroat atmosphere in which employees either produce results or are let go. You have to keep proving yourself and ensure that others value your efforts and contributions. When you apply

perception, visibility, and influence, you gain the competitive edge necessary in today's intense and aggressive atmosphere.

Work is competitive. We operate in a global environment and are therefore forced to compete on a worldwide platform. If you want to stay ahead of the global competition, you must use each of the three areas of PVI fully. This book shows you how to do exactly that.

The fiercest competition you are likely to encounter will occur in the battle for promotions. You may work at a company where a bunch of executives (including your boss) sit around a table discussing whether you should receive a promotion. They talk about your character, your leadership qualities, the projects you manage, the people you oversee, the results you achieve, and your overall performance. Each manager tries to sell his or her candidate as the most deserving person for the promotion, while other members of the group will want to know why *you* deserve it. This environment is so competitive that you need to hone every asset you possibly can. Leveraging PVI will be the key to your success in scenarios like this one. It will help you to better compete with others and emerge victorious. Instead of worrying that a company can easily replace you, by implementing this PVI model, you will become irreplaceable.

Dedicating the necessary time and making PVI your top priority will give you the competitive advantage. You'll gain the most from all your efforts at work. You'll utilize your talents and reach your full potential. Increased productivity, performance, and job security will become commonplace.

Get the Most from Your Time at Work

If people knew how hard I had to work to gain my mastery, it would not seem so wonderful at all.

—Michelangelo

Italian painter, sculptor, architect, poet, and engineer

You spend one-third of your life—more than 100,000 hours—at work. To gain as much as possible from an endeavor to which you dedicate such a high percentage of your time, you must leverage PVI.

Employment represents a certain type of relationship in which both sides gain something from the other. Employees gain money, satisfaction, intellectual stimulation, connection, friendships, recognition, success, power, and more. Companies and employers gain increased profit, continued success, faster results, constant growth, sustainability, increased value, and constant productivity.

The problem with this exchange, however, is that employees can give *too* much of themselves. This occurs when your responsibilities increase, hours grow longer, you work harder, demands escalate, you become stressed out and overwhelmed, you miss spouse's and kids' events, and basically you have less time for anything but work.

PVI will help you gain more from your efforts and make the exchange between what you gain as an employee versus what your employer gains from you more equal. You'll be able to:

- Actively promote yourself as an asset and valuable person inside the organization.
- Increase your visibility to gain others' recognition and appreciation for your efforts.
- Be a person of influence who makes key decisions inside the organization.

Elevate Your PVI

We have to do the best we can. This is our sacred human responsibility.

—Albert Einstein

American (German-born) physicist and Nobel Prize winner

People resist working on PVI for a few reasons. For one thing, it's not a part of their job description, and they aren't sure what the exact value of their efforts will entail. Moreover, PVI might seem too confrontational and challenging. It extends beyond many individuals' comfort zones due to the amount of risk taking involved. It takes a lot of courage and confidence to create an ideal PVI state. If your job or next role needed an MBA, you would go to business school and work toward it. But working to increase PVI seems more daunting because it is less structured. This book gives PVI a structure. The vulnerability necessary to put oneself out there to be seen, to influence others, and to change people's opinions requires a tremendous amount of strength and persistence.

Despite the resistance many of us encounter—especially from ourselves—it's vital that each person dedicate extra time and effort to improving his or her PVI. You can't just sit back and do your job without placing the necessary energy and focus on this area. If you don't engage PVI, someone else will—and that person will pass you by and never look back. In his book *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, author John Maxwell shares a story that emphasizes the importance of PVI in developing your competitive advantage: "Former pro basketball player Bill Bradley attended a summer basketball camp at age fifteen conducted by 'Easy' Ed Macauley. During that camp, Macauley made a statement that changed Bradley's life: Just remember that if you're not working at your game to the utmost of your ability, there will be someone out there somewhere with

The vulnerability necessary to put oneself out there to be seen, to influence others, and to change people's opinions requires a tremendous amount of strength and persistence.

equal ability. And one day you'll play each other, and he'll have the advantage. How do you measure up against that standard?"⁶

Make the commitment to implement as many of the ideas, concepts, tips, suggestions, and

The one thing that's common to all successful people: They make a habit of doing things that unsuccessful people don't like to do.

—Michael Phelps

insights shared in this book as possible. Every step you take to elevate your PVI will make a substantial difference in your career success. You must put in the work and dedicate yourself

to improving your PVI. Show the dedication that swimmer Michael Phelps had to in order to become the greatest Olympic champion ever, with 16 Olympic medals and a record eight gold medals at the Beijing 2008 Olympics. As Phelps said, “. . . the one thing that's common to all successful people: They make a habit of doing things that unsuccessful people don't like to do. . . . There are plenty of people with some amount of talent. Are you willing to go farther, work harder, be more committed and dedicated than anyone else? If others were inclined to take Sunday off, well, that just meant we might be one-seventh better. For five years, from 1998 to 2003, we did not believe in days off.”⁷

It's this type of daily dedication and commitment to improving your PVI that is needed for you to escalate your career to the next level. This book will show you how. Let the journey begin.

The best journeys answer questions that, in the beginning, you didn't even think to ask.

—180° South

1

Power of Perception

There is no truth. There is only perception.

—Gustave Flaubert
French writer, author of *Madame Bovary*

How Do You Want to Be Known?

One morning in 1888, a man wakes up and goes outside to retrieve his newspaper. He returns to his home and sits down in his favorite chair as he does every day. He begins reading the newspaper and quickly turns to the obituary section. The man's brother has just died, and he wants to read what was said about him. In the obituary section, he is struck by the large headline: "The merchant of death is dead." He continues reading. The article tells of a merchant who became "rich by finding ways to kill more people faster than ever before." He finishes reading the obituary, closes the newspaper, and sits in shock. He is speechless and doesn't move. The obituary is supposed to be about his brother, but it was mistakenly written about him. He is alive—not dead—reading his own obituary.¹

This man, the inventor of dynamite, certainly doesn't want to be remembered as a "merchant of death." He decides to take

his fortune and use it to establish awards for accomplishments in various fields that benefit humanity. These awards are eventually granted to such famous people as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, and Nelson Mandela.

The person who established these awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize, was Dr. Alfred Nobel. He is remembered today for establishing the Nobel Prizes—not for his explosive inventions. Though Dr. Nobel was initially perceived one way, he was able to completely change the perception people had of him and ensure that he was remembered in a positive light.

The Power of Perception

Leadership is a performance. You have to be conscious about your behavior, because everyone else is.

—Carly Fiorina

Former chairman and chief executive officer
of Hewlett-Packard Company

You are being perceived, either positively or negatively, every day of your work (and personal) life. Others are constantly viewing and making judgments of you. The impact of this perception can happen quickly; it takes only a few seconds to form an opinion. Even though you don't have control of how others view you, you do have control over your actions, which can substantially affect others' perceptions. David Sokol, chairman of the board of MidAmerican Energy Holdings Company, said, "My father taught me that it is difficult to control others' perceptions, but I can always control my own actions, and these actions can, over time, alter those perceptions."²

While this book focuses on how you can take *some* control of how others see you, it's important to note that there *is* a limit to the amount of control you have. In other words, you

can do only so much. You can't influence someone's perception 100 percent of the time. Recognizing this limitation helps you accept the circumstances when you encounter people who simply won't change their perceptions of you. Though unchangeable situations like these are rare, it is necessary to mention them. This entire section is focused on others' beliefs about you, and how you can beneficially alter them.

Proactively shaping others' perceptions of you is a key strategy for standing out, gaining credit for your work, and, ultimately, achieving career advancement.

The power of perception is important because it completely determines how people view you, and, therefore, how they act toward and around you. Their opinion can be positive or negative. If it's negative, it can undermine your career. You'll have to work even harder to make sure people appreciate your value and notice your overall impact. If it's positive, it can enhance your career and make it easier for you to attain what you want. Either way, you want to influence perception so that you are being seen as you want to be seen. When you can alter people's opinions to benefit yourself—by compelling others to see you as a valuable and impactful person at work—you will gain respect and influence. Proactively shaping others' perceptions of you is a key strategy for standing out, gaining credit for your work, and, ultimately, achieving career advancement.

Just as Dr. Alfred Nobel showed that he could make a choice—one that not many people would have made—to change others' opinions of him, you too can make choices that will positively affect perception. You want people to see you as the talented, smart, effective employee that you are. To be viewed as anything less would be a disservice to you and to all the effort that you put into your job. Having people on your side recognizing your talents and your worth will greatly enhance their appreciation for what you do.

What Is Perception?

It's not what you look at that matters.

It's what others see.

—Henry David Thoreau

American author and poet, best known for his work *Walden*

Perception is what someone notices, sees, or is aware of. When you perceive, you often unconsciously observe what is happening without being consciously aware of the content that's forming in your mind. The author of an article titled “Unwritten Rules: What You Don’t Know Can Hurt Your Career,” Laura Sabattini, PhD, says, “Employees learn not only by observing individual behaviors, but also by noting how people interact with one another, dress, and communicate verbally and nonverbally (for example, through body language but also via e-mail and at meetings).”³ You often form opinions when you have preconceived ideas about a topic or person you’re observing, even if what you observe isn’t real or true. Perception takes the prior knowledge you already have and filters your observations through this lens.

So how *do* others see and create an opinion of you? Perception is affected by a variety of factors, including:

- What people notice about you.
- The behaviors that make an impression.
- The image you have.
- The attitudes you project.
- The opinions you hold.

I have chosen to not address how appearance (clothing, grooming, style, etc.) affects perception and image, as there are many books already devoted to the subject. While it’s certainly important, it’s not an aspect of perception discussed in this book.

Beware of Ego Vision

You need to be honest with yourself about who you are before you can focus on the way you want others to perceive you. Everyone wants the promotion when the opportunity comes along. However, most of us fail to see that we may not be performing strongly enough in the areas that we need to excel in to receive a promotion. One client of mine who works at one of the largest design firms in the world said, “I have had people who think that because they can design a bathroom, they’re ready to lead a design team for an expansion of a 150,000-square-foot addition to a mall.”

You can begin by conducting a candid assessment of your true skill level. By comparing the way that others perceive you with your genuine skill level, you can determine whether your current ability corresponds to where you want to go. This is essentially about getting to the next stage, and to do that, you must be able to assess yourself—and your skill level—correctly. Though you might believe that you’re ready for advancement, you may not be evaluating your skill level accurately. You need to figure out what abilities are needed at the next level and discern whether you have them before you even consider the next step.

People can’t exert influence if their own perception of who they are is delusional. Before embarking on the next step, you have to ask, “Based on my current skills, am I ready to take on the next level?”

How Does Perception Work?

The reality of life is that your perceptions—right or wrong—influence everything else you do. When you get a proper perspective of your perceptions, you may be surprised how many other things fall into place.

—Roger Birkman

American psychologist and expert on behavioral assessment

Where does perception begin, and how does it progress into forming an actual opinion about something? Perception always starts with an observation that ultimately becomes cemented in your mind as the truth. The perception process includes eight levels that the mind goes through to create an ultimate and unwavering perception that you believe is your reality (see Figure 1.1).

The first step in the perception process is to *observe* something, such as a person, event, or situation. The step following this initial observation is to make an *assessment* of what you have observed, which involves reviewing and trying to understand it. After assessment, the formation of an *opinion* occurs. This entails the need to contemplate information that the mind collects. Opinion leads directly to the tendency to make a *judgment* based on the feelings, thoughts, and opinions developed. The moment a judgment becomes active in your mind, you have initiated the process of *perception*.

Once perception has started, the *reality* of what you see begins to take effect. This provides a level of certainty. Once the perception becomes the reality, the person begins to think that this is what he or she actually *believes*, and develops faith and confidence in this belief. The final step occurs when one

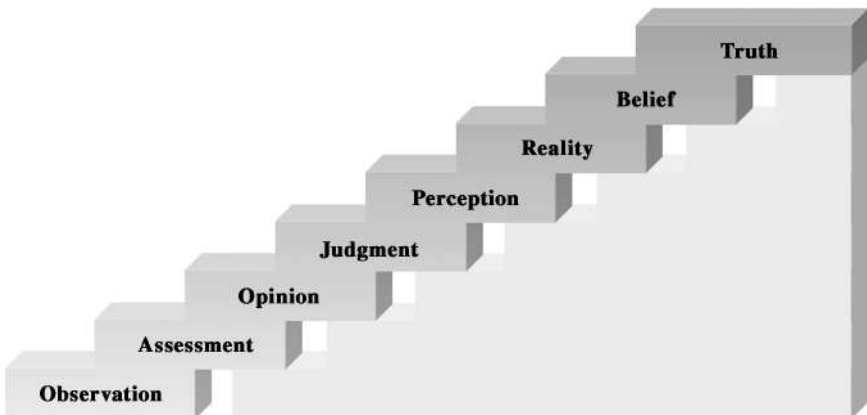


FIGURE 1.1 The Perception Process

considers the perception to be *truth*. The truth provides such certainty for a person that it makes it difficult to change or alter the perception that one has created.

By understanding these eight levels, you'll be equipped with the necessary awareness to challenge the perceptions people have of you. Further, you will resist forming unfounded opinions and judgments of others.

In an article titled "Perception Matters," Mike Myatt, managing director of coaching and leadership firm N2growth, took the expression "seeing the glass half empty or half full" and expanded the number of people who could view the same glass in many different ways.

It is quite clear reviewing the 11 different viewpoints that everyone can view the same situation differently. These are excellent examples of how perception changes based on each person. Someone's disposition, prior experience, and background directly impact how one views others. As you can see, 11 vastly different observations are created by answering the simple question, "Is the glass half empty or half full?"

1. **The Optimist:** The glass is half full.
2. **The Pessimist:** The glass is half empty.
3. **The Salesperson:** How much water would you like your glass to hold?
4. **The Accountant:** Does the glass really need all that water?
5. **The Attorney:** If there are enough people on one side of this issue I can file a class action suit.
6. **The Investment Banker:** I'm only 50 percent leveraged.
7. **The Engineer:** The glass is twice as big as it needs to be.
8. **The Quantum Physicist:** The glass has a 50 percent probability of holding water.
9. **The Philosopher:** If nobody looks at the glass, who's to say whether it's half full or half empty?
10. **The Politician:** Let's take a poll and then I'll render my opinion as to how full or empty the glass is.
11. **The Servant Leader:** Whatever the amount of water, I'll use it first to quench the thirst of those I lead.⁴

These 11 statements illustrate the fact that others constantly perceive you in a variety of ways, based on their own outlooks, attitudes, and backgrounds. Now imagine what it's like when you move beyond the simple subject of viewing a glass of water and take it to the most complicated living creatures in the world—human beings. Every person has his or her own unique way of viewing you. The more fully you can understand this concept and recognize the numerous ways in which you might be perceived, the greater control you will have over how that perception impacts how others view you. Without this knowledge, you allow people to develop their own (usually false) perceptions of you, founded through their own history and influence. When you understand how one seemingly straightforward situation can be viewed a million different ways, you begin to see the power of how perception affects others' opinions of you.

Why Is Perception Important?

It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently.

—Warren Buffett

American investor, industrialist, and philanthropist

Everything you do on a daily basis is being observed and documented inside the brains of every single person with whom you come into contact. These interactions can be extensive (for example, having conversations with your boss or employee) or limited (for example, copying someone on an e-mail). In either case, everyone has an opinion of you that directly affects your ability to be promoted, receive assignments you want, get a raise or bonus, and more.

Everything you do is being remembered by someone.

Everything you do is being remembered by someone. This is why perception is important. Case in point: A senior director at Procter & Gamble recently contacted me for coaching. He had spent three months focusing on improving the perception others had of him so that he could win a promotion when the next promotion cycle came around. When the time came, someone else was chosen instead of him. This was when our work began.

I told him during one of our coaching sessions, “Imagine that all of your colleagues have been watching everything you’ve been doing for five years. Although your actions have made an impression on them, they aren’t even aware of this impression. It’s not until they are asked during the promotion cycle, ‘Do you think that *this senior director* deserves a promotion?’ that they will call up all the unconscious situations, circumstances, observations, evaluations, and opinions they have generated in the five years of interacting with you.” The truth of this statement surprised him, and he immediately knew it to be accurate. My client realized how the perception others had of him during the previous years had negatively determined the immediate promotion cycle for which he had spent only a few months preparing.

Perceptions clearly have a substantial impact on your career. Once formed, they are difficult to change, and attempting to do so can take a long time. An article titled “Shape Perceptions of Your Work, Early and Often” points out: “Perceptions are also self-sustaining because, once people have formed an impression of another, they stop actively gathering new information.” In other words, once I have decided that you are smart, I won’t pay as much attention to every little thing you do, which means you can more easily get away with being not so brilliant without my noticing.⁵

People will rely on the perception they have of you rather than the actual work, accomplishments, and value you’ve contributed. As I clearly conveyed in the case with my client, the

past five years of perception are more important in determining whether you are promoted than are the three months (or even days) during which you hastily prepare before your performance review or next promotion cycle.

The Benefits of Perception Management

You are only as wise as others perceive you to be.

—M. Shawn Cole

Ensuring that you create the right impression inside your company will enable you to greatly benefit your career. The following describes the advantages of managing perception.

Impact Your Career Advancement

How quickly and successfully you advance in a company is a result of the perception you create, not just the merit you have accumulated or the skill level you have achieved.

Example: A senior business development manager who worked for Cisco Systems for 11 years contacted me for coaching because he wasn't advancing up the corporate ladder as quickly as he wanted to. Even though he had solid performance reviews and excellent job skills, he had gone four years without a promotion.

This man's attitude was that his work should speak for itself, and that he didn't need to do anything to help improve perception. By operating under this mind-set, he did very little to increase his exposure or visibility with senior management. Thus, executives at his company didn't know how valuable he was to the organization, which negated any opportunities for career advancement.

Keep Your Status as a Desired Employee Inside the Company

You can't rely solely on skill, merit, and hard work for employability and career success. You realize at some point in your career

that your continued achievement at a given company is based on perception.

Example: Two employees, both accountants but at two different firms (Ernst & Young and KPMG), came out of college and worked at their respective companies the same amount of time. They put in long hours, worked hard, and had similar skill sets. They both had nearly identical career success. On paper, they seemed to be very similar. However, one got laid off and the other one didn't. Why would this happen? Discussing the situation further, the two friends realized that one had created a better perception in his organization than the other had. Even though they both worked hard and developed first-rate skills, one had earned a reputation of not being much of a team player. This was all it took for the person to be laid off.

You can't rely solely on skill, merit, and hard work for employability and career success.

Perception is important; it can directly affect whether you are a desired employee. If an organization doesn't find you desirable, then you lose employability.

Eliminate the Negative Ways Others May See You

Others can view your behavior and attitude negatively. They may dislike you or look unfavorably on something you do. You want to eliminate these damaging perceptions and take actions that cause others to see you in a more positive light.

Example: Five people attend a regular weekly business meeting. Each has some personality trait that others might view negatively. One person talks too much; another doesn't listen well; the third person is quiet and doesn't speak up very often; the fourth is outspoken and assertive with her opinions; and the fifth person acts like a know-it-all, coming across as arrogant and condescending.

None of these people have any idea that they're exhibiting a behavior that someone else dislikes. The key to eliminating these habits is to begin to notice how your behavior affects

others. For example, when you speak up, do others begin to lose interest, look away, make faces, or become agitated? Observing others' reactions to you is the first step to becoming aware of the very actions that others find objectionable and then to being able to change them.

Reduce the Number of Career-Limiting Maneuvers

While it may take only a few moments to do something that others perceive critically, it becomes a career-limiting move and can impair you professionally for a long time to come.

Example: An employee and his manager were e-mailing each other back and forth about how to handle an issue with a client, and were both being honest about this client's particularly difficult personality. Some of these remarks were disparaging. When the manager provided, via e-mail, a detailed solution to resolve the issue, the employee decided to forward this e-mail to the client. However, the employee also accidentally included the electronic trail of disparaging private comments the manager had thought to be making in confidence. The client took offense to what was said in the e-mail and pulled the account from the firm.

Imagine that you were the manager in this scenario. You would have judgments and a strong opinion about the employee who made this error. You might judge the employee as careless, and most likely you would be hesitant to trust him again. It might take months or even years to restore this confidence.

Protect Your Online Public Image

The world is nothing but my perception of it.

I see only through myself. I hear only through the filter of my story.

—Byron Katie

American speaker and author, specializing in self-inquiry

The online world has added yet another dimension to the importance of perception. The World Wide Web was nonexistent 20 years ago, but its impact today has huge ramifications for your image. In 2010, the Nielsen Company produced a report about the effect of social media, which found that 75 percent of U.S. households (and 74 percent globally) visit a social networking site regularly. In short, three out of four people with whom you interact are engaging in social networking.⁶

Every online social networking site (for example, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace) is out there for anyone to view. For that reason, you need to be aware of how you are portraying yourself in this public way. Whatever you do can be viewed by your company and directly affect how others perceive you. This is why it's best to separate your private life from your professional life whenever possible.

If you choose to display information on your social networking sites publicly, be aware that you always are connected to and representing the company for which you work. Its brand and image are extremely important to it. You must take care not to say anything negative online about your job, boss, coworkers, salary, lack of raises, and so on, because everything you say directly reflects on your company. People have been fired because of statements they posted on social networking sites. You also want to be careful about posting pictures from parties, vacations, or other personal events that portray you unfavorably or unintentionally reveal information about you. A client of mine told me once that his coworker had called in sick on Halloween. The following week, however, her boss saw pictures of her on Facebook in costume, looking quite well.

This is especially true if you are (or are about to be) looking for employment. Remember that employers don't just use online search engines to research job candidates. They rely more and more on social networking. In fact, a study conducted by employment search engine CareerBuilder.com found that nearly half of employers use social networking sites to research

potential job candidates. Information technology companies are especially likely to screen candidates this way; two-thirds of tech companies surveyed scour sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and MySpace to gather an up-close, behind-the-scenes look at candidates they can't determine from merely interviewing or reading résumés. So if you're in the job market—or may be in the future—be aware of what you put out on the Internet. If it's out there—good or bad—it's just a mouse click away from a hiring manager. And the results can be catastrophic. CareerBuilder.com's survey revealed that one in three employers found content that caused them *not* to hire a candidate.

It can feel as if you are just writing in your journal when you are on these social networking sites, and you might assume that only your friends (outside of work) will read them. It's easy to forget how vast is the network of people who can read what you write. You must always remain aware of how you are portraying yourself.

Here are a few tips to ensure that others perceive you positively online:

- Search your name on the Internet to see what content is on the Web.
- Check out other major social networks to assess whether you have made the impression you want to make.
- Identify the Web pages where you have posted information about yourself (including your résumé or other work-related items) and make sure they are up-to-date and positively reflect you.
- Remove any negative content.
- Provocative or inappropriate photographs or information top the list of red flags to employers. When in doubt, take it out.
- Create favorable content about yourself and try to make it appear as high as possible in search results.

- Use privacy settings so that your personal information and photos aren't viewable by the public.
- Write and submit well-researched, articulate letters to the editors of the top trade publications in your industry. Focus on current, relevant issues.
- Purchase your name as a domain name and create an active website that makes the best impression possible.
- Post on free publisher websites articles that you've written that convey your expertise.
- Write comments on other blogs that show your level of intelligence and expertise.
- Create a blog and write quality content for it.

The perception you create at work can be directly influenced by what you publicize on your social networking sites. Review all of these sites immediately, and remove anything that portrays you in a negative or unfavorable light.

I provide a summary of the key points and specific action steps at the end of each chapter. By implementing each of these ideas, you'll fulfill your PVI potential and reach your deserved next level.

Summary and Action Steps

Chapter 2 discusses the seven different influencers that directly affect and alter perception. Before we deal with these topics, let's review the material from Chapter 1 and see what actions you can take based on what has been covered.

Summary

- *Perception occurs on a daily basis.* Other people are constantly observing and forming opinions of you. Even though

perception directly affects how people view you, you do have control over your actions, which can alter perceptions.

- *Understand the eight levels of perception* (see Figure 1.1). Perception starts with an *observation* and ends with someone believing this perception as the *truth*.
- *Perception can directly affect your career advancement*. Perception helps you remain employable and reduces the number of career-limiting moves. Using your perception to your benefit eliminates the negative ways others might view you, and continues to enhance your level of desirability.
- *Online social networking affects perception*. If not monitored correctly, social networking can negatively affect the way members of your company perceive you. What you say and post is out there for public view, so it's important to be aware of how you portray yourself.

Take Action Now

- Consider how others perceive you in your company, both positively and negatively. Review the section “What Is Perception?” to help you generate ideas and information. Schedule with yourself a 30-minute self-reflection session that provides you the time to write out a description of how you are perceived.
- Conduct an assessment of your skill level wherein you honestly analyze your skills in terms of where you are versus where you want to be—and what you need to do to close this gap. Make two lists: one with the current abilities you possess, and a second one that identifies the skills needed at the next level. Compare the two and discern where you need to focus your improvement efforts right now.
- Review the section on “The Benefits of Perception Management” and select which one most resonates with you. Have you ever found yourself in a situation similar to any of

these—as either the person being perceived or the one seeing someone else in a certain light?

- Review all of your social networking sites from two perspectives. First, make sure you portray yourself as you want to be perceived. Second, make sure you represent your company's image appropriately.

share it



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