

# Introduction

**The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential . . . these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence.**

*Confucius*

**D**o you want to be a winner? Yes, of course you do. Silly question really. Because, by definition, if you're not winning, you're losing. And no one wants to be a loser.

In sports, there's always a clear victor. Whether it's in a tennis tournament, a football match, a 100-metre race or something else in track and field, it's easy to spot the winner: it's the person or team that scored the most points, ran fastest, threw furthest, lifted more weight or whatever.

But how exactly do you win *in life*?

If you think about it, life is full of opportunities to win or lose on a daily basis. Every time we have a discussion, negotiation or disagreement with a colleague or boss, family member or friend, we could win by persuading them to do things our way.

Then there are the breaks that make the biggest differences in our lives – those inflection points such as job interviews that could take our lives in amazing directions if we win. They don't come along very often, but beat the other candidates to win the job and you may get greater responsibility, more exciting work and a bigger salary. It could present you with fresh opportunities and take your career to a whole new level. Lose and you end up with nothing.

Or think about those presentations we have to deliver occasionally. Sell your product or service to a client and you could land a big account with perhaps a juicy bonus for yourself. Present a novel concept successfully to investors and you could find yourself a mogul in the making. Appeal to a group of potential donors about the merits of your charity and you could find them lavishing funds on your cause.

This book is about winning the argument, the pitch, the job and – ultimately – the race. So, come with me if you would like to win. **Do you want to be a winner? Yes, of course you do.**

## The appliance of science

Before we move on, let me pose a question and try to answer it too: Why should you do what this author – this Rob Yeung guy – is telling you? After all, you may have read other books telling you to do things this way or that but maybe not got the results you wanted.

Allow me to answer the question by telling you a bit about me. I started my career as an academic. After graduating with an undergraduate degree in psychology, I worked for a year as a research assistant before embarking upon a three-year PhD in psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry, a five-star-rated research department and part of King's College London.

And what I primarily learnt in those seven years was the importance of *evidence* – of having scientific *proof* about what works and what doesn't.

Even though we may not think about it often, evidence matters in so many areas of our lives. Imagine if doctors prescribed drugs or recommended surgery on the *hunch* that it might help patients.

Without quantifiable evidence that their techniques worked, they could end up harming rather than healing. No, clearly we want doctors to treat patients using only medicines and techniques that have been trialled and *proven* to work.

Or consider how you would feel if a team of engineers said that they had designed and built a brand-new kind of aeroplane that should be able to get from London to New York using less fuel than ever before. The only snag is that they haven't done any tests. They wholeheartedly *believe* that it will work. However, they have *no proof* that it will be able to make the journey across the Atlantic without falling apart or bursting into flames. Would you get on that plane!?

Make no mistake: evidence has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the things we do are safe and genuinely valuable in our everyday lives. So why should this not be the case in the realm of self-improvement too? Surely if we aspired to lift our game and boost our performance – either in our professional *or* personal lives – we should follow only recommendations that were supported by proof, right?

## The science of winning

I completed my doctorate in psychology over 15 years ago. Since then, I've been working as a psychology consultant to companies ranging from perhaps the world's favourite airline to high street banks such as HSBC, accountancy firms including KPMG and media organizations such as the BBC.

I train managers in how to become better leaders – in how to inspire and engage employees to work more productively. I coach entrepreneurs and salespeople on how to win over investors and clients. I run workshops and give speeches on topics ranging from how to

identify talent in the workplace to becoming more charismatic and confident. And in all of my work, *I try as far as possible to recommend techniques and interventions that work (i.e. ones that are backed by scientific evidence).*

The good news is that there is plenty of research into the science of career success and life satisfaction. There are professors at leading business schools – experts in marketing, economics, management and human communication – as well as psychologists and other scientists at top universities all over the world working tirelessly to figure out what helps certain individuals to get ahead.

My job is simple: I'm just presenting this stuff for you in one handy collection. If you want ways of getting ahead that are proven to work, this is the book for you.

As we move from chapter to chapter, I'll illustrate the various principles and techniques I recommend with case studies of folks I've met or worked with. In some cases, I've changed people's names and some personal information to protect their anonymity.

But hopefully these stories will allow you to see how the tools and tactics within this book may be able to help you too.

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## Navigating through this book

I've laid out the book into five chapters and a conclusion, as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Developing a Winning Outlook.** A substantial body of research tells us that a critical factor that differentiates winners from losers isn't what you do – but how you *think*

about yourself. So, before I get into how to win arguments or pitch ideas and so on, in this chapter I'll tell you how you can set yourself up with this winning perspective.

- **Chapter 2: Winning the Argument.** Psychologists know that most people aren't very good at getting their point across. Some individuals are too aggressive (which only makes others resent them), while many are too passive (which means they rarely get what they want). Thankfully, research tells us how to come across well: to be assertive, influential and persuasive while at the same time being respected and even liked. Want to know how? In this chapter, I'll present the tools and techniques that allow us to broach differences of opinion and get what we want.
- **Chapter 3: Winning the Pitch.** Pitching is the skill of influence, persuasion and selling *anything*. Of course, that's useful for selling actual products or services if you work in sales. More importantly though, pitching means being able to sell ideas and even ourselves – skills that we *all* need, no matter what we do for a living. Want to raise money for charity? You have to sell your cause. Want to get that promotion? You have to sell yourself. Want someone to go out on a date with you? Yes, even that is selling. But rather than trying to turn you into a pushy salesperson, I'll give you a scientifically proven weapon for influencing, persuading and pitching just about anything: storytelling.
- **Chapter 4: Winning the Job.** Job interviews are arguably the most significant inflection points in our careers. Get the right job and all sorts of opportunities could open up. But rather than tell you stuff you already know, I'll cover some counter-intuitive but useful findings based on the science of job hunting. For instance, what does psychology say about lying during interviews and our chances of getting caught out? What eight

interview questions have psychologists discovered you *must* know the answers to? And, if there's *one* thing you could do to improve your chances of finding a brilliant new job, what would it be? I'll reveal the answers to these questions – and more – in this chapter.

- **Chapter 5: Winning the Race.** Ever wondered what the secret, unspoken rules of success at work are? This chapter has some answers as researchers now know a surprising amount about the skills and behaviours that allow certain individuals to leap forwards in their careers while others languish behind. I'll talk about the importance of doing all of the stuff that *isn't* mentioned in your job description. I shall explain the ways in which managing your working relationships leads to better prospects and promotions. I'll also cover how modern careers require a novel kind of thinking about developing the *right* skills – and how you can find a niche that will propel you up the career ladder.
- **Conclusions: Onwards, Upwards and Over to You.** This book is packed, packed, packed with content and it would be easy to take on too much or feel overwhelmed by everything that you *could* be doing. Rather than leaving you to struggle with putting the principles into practice, I'll finish the book with easy-to-follow guidelines on how to set effective goals and keep your motivation high. All you need to do is put in the work and your success is pretty much guaranteed.

### Over to you

I hope that this is a book you can *apply* rather than a book that you will simply read and then set aside. So throughout the book, I shall include boxes like this one to spell out how you could put certain principles or manoeuvres into practice to benefit not only your professional but perhaps also your personal life.

There are lots of books out there on how to get ahead in life. But I truly believe that this book is unique because the tools and techniques within it have been *proven to work*. Based on scientific evidence, we know that certain skill sets and mind-sets help people to succeed.

But this isn't a dry, technical manual about how to win in life. As well as being educational, I guarantee that the book will be entertaining too. Along the way, we shall discover how thinking about pies and baking can help us to become better negotiators. We'll learn what Harry Potter, Luke Skywalker and Jesus Christ all have in common. And we'll see how asking for a ridiculously massive salary can genuinely help you to extract more money from your boss.

**This book is unique because the tools and techniques within it have been proven to work.**

Ready to get started? Let's begin in Chapter 1 by investigating how our beliefs can either trap us or empower us to change. Because it so happens that just a single sentence may be all it takes to alter your ability to achieve.