

## Lesson 2 Worksheet: Make Yourself Indispensable

The worksheet for this lesson will help you take action to develop your knowledge, skills, motivation and powers of leadership in order to become indispensable to the people who matter most to you.

Don't worry if you don't get through all of this in a week(!) – becoming a linchpin is a lifetime's work. For now, read through the worksheet and pick one or two areas that are most relevant to you right now, and start making some changes. And refer back to this worksheet periodically, to see what else you're ready to take on.

## 1. Have a superpower

In *Linchpin* Seth Godin talks about having a **superpower** – something you can do much better than anyone around you. Maybe you don't have this – yet. Maybe you have some idea of what it is, and you're working to develop it into a genuine superpower. Maybe you're still wondering what your special gift to the world will be. That's fine, sometimes these things take time.

But from now on, make it your mission to find and develop your superpower to the point where you become **“the one who does X”**. So that people don't even say **“who does X better than anyone else”**, because what you do or the way you do it is so remarkable as to be practically unique.

We're all born with talents, but only practice will turn talent into a superpower. Once you have an inkling what your superpower could be, it's time to set to work!

Here are a few ways to discover and develop your superpower:

- (a) Have another look at Lesson 1 <http://lateralaction.com/what-do-you-want> and play the 'Hunt the Thimble' game, by noticing what you are doing when you feel most excited/inspired at work.
- (b) Look back over your biggest successes at work. What common patterns can you see in them? What did you do that few – if any – other people could do?
- (c) Ask your friends, family, colleagues, boss, clients and/or customers what they think you're best at, and what they value most about you.
- (d) Download my ebook *An Introduction to the Enneagram* (<http://bit.ly/ayuDOI>) and try to work out which of the Enneagram personality types you are. Each type has particular strengths and weaknesses, which can give you clues to your superpower.
- (e) Read Marcus Buckingham's book *Now Discover Your Strengths* and take the StrengthsFinder test online at <http://www.strengthsfinder.com> (there will be an access code for the test inside the book).

## **2. Look at the big picture**

Superpowers are great but beware of becoming a narrow-minded specialist. Your power is only truly super when it comes to the rescue and benefits people around you. So you also need to look at the context in which you're operating.

David Armano calls this **T-shaped creativity** – combining deep specialist knowledge (the downstroke of the T) with broader, shallow knowledge about related disciplines (the cross-stroke).

([http://darmano.typepad.com/logic\\_emotion/2006/05/tshaped\\_creativ.html](http://darmano.typepad.com/logic_emotion/2006/05/tshaped_creativ.html))

So for example my specialisms are writing, coaching and speaking. A few years ago I took a Masters in Creative & Media Enterprises because I wanted to complement that with 'big picture' knowledge about business and the creative economy. And I'm trying to help you do the same by covering a wide range of professional skills in this course.

Make yourself T-shaped, by asking questions, searching on the web and reading books about:

- your colleagues' specialisms
- your company
- your competitors
- the economy
- different cultures

And don't stop at theoretical learning – seek out opportunities to learn by trying out new things, visiting new places and meeting new people.

If you're an employee, start thinking 'one up' by looking at the problems your boss is dealing with (and then 'two up', at the problems your boss's boss is dealing with).

When you do this, you start to see patterns and connections. You spot the meaningful trends. You can anticipate problems and avoid them. You start to gain a reputation as a troubleshooter, maybe even a visionary.

### **3. Decide who you want to help, entertain or inspire**

You can't please everyone all the time, let alone make yourself indispensable to them. You need to find your **tribe** – the people with whom you have most in common, who matter most to you (outside your family) – and who you can help the most.

For more on modern tribalism, read Seth Godin's book *Tribes*.

Your tribe could be:

- people who work in the same profession or creative medium as you (graphic designers, sculptors, jewelers)
- people with similar interests to you (heavy rock fans, tango dancers, foodies)
- people with similar lifestyles to you (commuters, houseboat dwellers)
- people with similar beliefs or values as you (political, religious, artistic)

You probably belong to several tribes, some of which are related. E.g. I'm part of a large tribe of artists and creatives, which includes several sub-tribes – poets, coaches, authors, creative entrepreneurs.

- What tribe(s) do you belong to?
- How do you recognize other members of the tribe? (Do you dress the same? Use the same jargon? Adopt the same gestures and body language?)
- Where do you go to meet other tribe members?
- Where do tribe members hang out online?
- How do you feel when you're with members of your tribe?
- **What can you do for the tribe?**

#### **4. Invest in yourself**

Knowledge is power. It's also fuel for creativity. The more you know, the more sources of inspiration you can draw on. Skills are even more valuable, since they allow you to *make something* out of all that knowledge. But you know that already – taking this course shows you're serious about your professional development.

Over the course of my career, I've spent a small fortune on training and invested countless hours in studying and practising. It's often been a struggle to find the time and resources to do it, but looking back, it's the best investment I could have made in myself, because without it, there's no way I'd have the opportunities available to me today.

But learning isn't just about taking courses and following a teacher's lead. These days, there are countless opportunities for informal daily learning:

- Reading books, magazines, blogs, newsletters and ebooks
- Watching videos
- Listening to the radio and podcasts
- Paying attention to the world around you

Make time for these activities every week – or every day, if you can. Read a book on your commute, listen to podcasts while you wash the dishes, or make time to catch up you're your favourite blogs during the day.

And don't forget the learning opportunities all around you – working with talented colleagues, dealing with challenging clients, talking to customers, noticing what the successful people in your field are doing. Look, listen, and ask lots of questions – even with the 'difficult' people!

## 5. Motivate yourself

If you want to be a linchpin, you can't wait for someone else to motivate you. You can't blame other people or a 'bad day' for not performing at your best. You can't take a 'sickie' because you don't feel like showing up. It's your responsibility to (a) make sure you're working on something that inspires you, and (b) deal with the obstacles that will inevitably get in your way.

I'll be looking at this later in the course, but here are a few suggestions so that your motivation doesn't peter out before then. 😊

- Start every project by asking yourself **'Why am I doing this?'** and make sure you have a good answer – because you might need it when things get tough!
- **Focus on outcomes and solutions**, not problems and blame. That way you're filling your mind with what you want, not what you don't want. Your emotions will respond accordingly.
- **Focus on the future**, not the past. You can't change the one, but you still have a shot at changing the other.
- **Focus on the people who persist and succeed and inspire you** – not the ones who moan and complain and give up and try to drag you down with them.
- **When things get tough – 'fast forward' in your imagination to a time when you've overcome the obstacle.** What difference does it make? What's the payoff? Keep the payoff firmly in mind, to encourage you to do what it takes. (If there's no significant payoff, maybe you shouldn't bother!)

## **6. Take the lead**

Last but not least, you need to become a leader.

Why? Because if you're working on something truly innovative, no one else will have thought of it yet. No one else will have taken the initiative.

It's quite possible no one else will see the point of it, at least at first. They may be scared, or resistant to it. They may need inspiring, reassuring, encouraging. In other words, they need a leader.

You may be thinking – as I used to – that you're just not cut out for leadership, you're not a born leader. But Seth Godin calls us out on that excuse – he says leaders don't lead because they have charisma, *they have charisma because they lead*.

I'm not saying you have to be a manager or a director, or to lead a company or start a social movement. But I am saying that sooner or later, you'll notice there are things you care about and want to change. And no one else seems to have noticed or cared enough to change them – yet.

The initiative is sitting there waiting – for you to take it. No one else.