

BUILD YOUR PERSONAL BUSINESS PLAN

If you want a successful working life, going with the flow is not an option says **Stephen Bruyant-Langer**. You need a plan to achieve what you want from work – and life

Life has taught me that you need an overarching ambition in order to succeed. You need to remain learning agile in order to be able to reinvent yourself. And you need to have the courage to commit yourself in order to be happy.

My approach to both personal and professional life is that if you can dream it, you can do it. But in the necessary soul-searching process you must be ready to look the monster in the eye: the monster in this case being the sum of your self-limitations. Throughout your life you have constructed a truth about who you are; this truth limits you in the exploration and utilisation of new experiences that could disrupt this idea. In turn, this self-imposed limitation means that you stop learning. There is no Truth with a capital T.

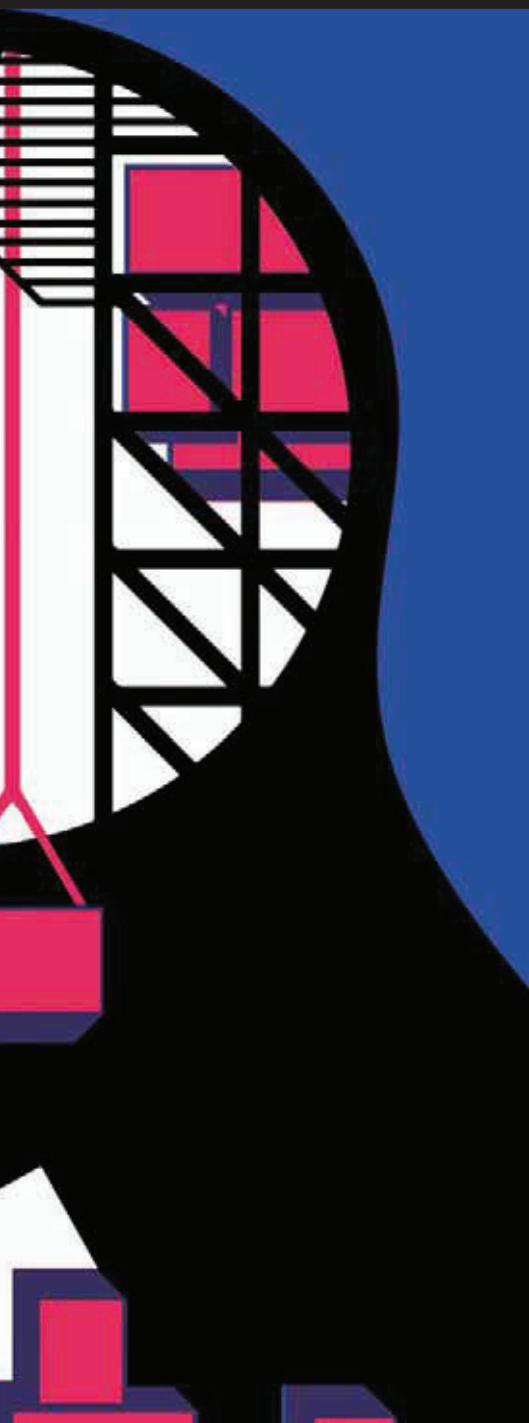
The *Personal Business Plan* will help you answer some fundamental questions and help you survive, live and thrive. I have known leaders who have lost themselves in success – who have derailed and fallen into the abyss of stress, substance abuse, addiction, or depression. The need to make the most of your strengths without overdoing them – without derailing – seems to be more relevant in the 21st century than ever before. You must reduce the risks in your personal life in order to perform in business life – and vice versa. I'll help you find your own way through the labyrinth – becoming maze bright and organisationally savvy. My mission in life is to make you happier.

A business plan is a well-known concept,

and an ambitious business plan has many qualities. It is precise, it is complete and it is specific. It relates both to the short run and to the long run. First and foremost it can be executed. The *Personal Business Plan* allows you to perform judicious pivotal shifts around a fixed starting point: your values. It gives you renewed flexibility and certainty in your personal choices. As a dynamic document it offers you the opportunity for ongoing documentation of

and building on your life experiences. Most of the time, we have difficulties making important personal decisions. It is much easier for us to make decisions about something that doesn't directly affect our own emotions or our own future. I remember a very successful CEO who told me that he had never taken any fundamentally existential decision. He had simply followed the flow. And now he felt a void. When you make personal choices you also discard personal





you to make an existential decision about “where” to go than executing the plan, once you have made it. The steps then are often self-evident.

The perplexity and the doubt - everything that lures you into delaying instead of acting - exist because you still haven't answered some fundamental questions about your life situation, your life ambition and your dreams.

The Four Leaf Clover has become my signature. By using this core concept you will experience the different parts of your life falling into place. You will obtain a clear picture of your existential platform and you will improve your life. You will be able to act it out by turning thoughts into action - and action into value.

Here, the Four Leaf Clover illustrates how my four professional roles support each other instead of competing with each other. I see myself with one foot placed at the centre of the clover, pivoting around leadership while I act in my four different professional roles. I see life as a continuous three-dimensional positive learning spiral with the four leaves as the foundation. It is only exciting for me as long as I continuously learn something new. I interact with some of the most interesting individuals on this planet, some of whom I recruit, some of whom I coach, some of whom I teach, and some of whom I write about. All in all, it's a highly inspirational and cross-fertilising environment - our common challenge is to live life to the full and get the best out of it.

How would your own Four Leaf Clover look around the central theme of reinvention? You will discover elements of convergence in your life and see new connections between events you have until now seen as independent from each other. This will give you a new sense of purpose and guide your actions - specifically it will help you use the word “no” more effectively. It is always easy to accept new challenges and say “Yes” to new tasks - it is also socially desirable - however, for most people it is extremely hard to let go of old expertise and routine tasks. In the future your acid test will be: “On which leaf does this task belong and does it promote my vision of my future self?” If it doesn't, then your answer should be “no”.

Think of the Four Leaf Clover as a tool you use in order to relate the different roles you fill in your life to each other. First and foremost, look for synergies: how does one leaf support the others? Do you build

leadership competencies by being chairman in your tennis club? Do you become a better communicator by writing letters to the editor? Can your interest in new technology give you an advance on the job market of the future? Can the fact that you are digitally savvy help your organisation? And can your task of introducing and “on-boarding” new colleagues be developed into a teaching competency?

The ultimate goal must be to design a Four Leaf Clover that supports your reinvention - which secures that you are moving and not stuck in status quo. You must frame some existential concepts that make you thrive and which support you in your long-term development. And remember, you never get tired when you work for yourself. Even when the exercise is successful you will still need to change the leaves from time to time. The Four Leaf Clover is a tale that you tell yourself and which helps you see the meaning in the activities that you are carrying out. And in that process you become robust and 100 times more convincing. It is as if you have finally found yourself.

If you approach your career as professionally as you approach your tasks then you will be successful. But if you approach your life as professionally then you will become happy. Self-observation will lead to self-awareness. By documenting your behaviour and your dreams you will progressively align the two and prioritise the actions that lead you towards your ultimate goal. ■

FOUR LEAF CLOVER TOOL



Stephen Bruyant-Langer has worked as a senior partner, headhunter and top executive coach at Korn/Ferry International and lectures at Copenhagen Business School

opportunities and that is very difficult for most people. It seems risky not to keep open all potential scenarios. Have the courage to commit yourself. Please remember that history never shows the alternative. You will be rewarded for making decisions - the right decisions.

When we have finally made a tough decision, then we are often good at executing it. Once you have decided what you want with your life, then you can plan the work as linearly as you plan any other project. It is the “what” that is difficult, not the “how”. You are used to solving problems: it is much more challenging for

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