

Author's Note

I completed this book just weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic emerged and began killing so many, frightening all of us, and radically disrupting our world. Who could ever have imagined that such grave challenges might be just around the corner?

This book was written to help you succeed in today's increasingly demanding and uncertain world of work. It is a guide to navigating through constantly shifting priorities and unclear lines of authority. It is about how to think and conduct yourself when there are so many factors outside your control.

Well, the world just got a lot more scary and uncertain. I never anticipated this book being the *How to Win Friends and Influence People* for the postpandemic era. Nothing in it speaks, directly, to social distancing, personal protective equipment, handwashing, or even working from home or videoconferencing. Moreover, no one can predict all the many ways this generation-defining crisis will reshape our society and the workplace.

But one thing is clear: we have all just experienced, firsthand and together, how very much can change—so very quickly and with so very little warning. Now so many of our workplaces have become “virtual,” organization charts are being redrawn almost by the hour, interpersonal contact has all but disappeared, and we are speaking to each other through screens. Even the most worthy,

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well-established missions and practices are being fundamentally challenged.

So why is this book more important than ever? Let me explain.

When everything around you spins out of control, what do you do? What *can* you do? You can control you. That's *all* you can do.

When boom goes to bust, who is still indispensable? Who will keep adding value, no matter what? Who will lead us through tough times? Who will pull more than their weight? Who will help us adapt and bounce back stronger than ever? Who will keep doing their best work very well, very fast, on time, and on budget? Who will do all this and, in the process, keep building up—rather than damaging—their working relationships?

It will be the ones I call “go-to” people. They are the people I've been studying for decades now, whose ways of thinking and conducting themselves are the basis of all the advice in this book. They are the indispensables, those upon whom you want to model yourself in the best of times—and especially in these most challenging of times.

But doing your job just got a lot more difficult and complicated. You and your colleagues, no matter where you're positioned on the organization chart, are relying on each other even more now than before. Many, after sheltering in place during the pandemic, will continue working remotely. Everybody will be under added stress for the foreseeable future, doing more with less, and tackling entirely new obstacles along the way.

Every new request will feel like a special occasion or a 911 call. You don't want to let anybody down, especially in this new, anxious world. You will want to keep proving yourself to be that indispensable go-to person.

In the postpandemic era, the would-be go-to person is at greater risk than ever before of succumbing to overcommitment syndrome. Fight it. If you try to do everything for everybody, you'll end up doing nothing for anybody.

Now more than ever, it will take extra savvy and skill to manage yourself, your many work relationships, and all the competing demands on your time and talent.

The techniques in this book were not specifically designed for the postpandemic era, but they might as well have been:

- If ever there was a time to adopt a true service mindset, this is it. The good news is that the more you serve others—by seeking to add value in every interaction—the more they want to build you up and help you out too.
- People are more likely to work things out with you, or take your word on something, when you're known for being aligned with the chain of command and you have a track record of making the right decisions.
- When you can get things done very well, very fast for people, those people will keep coming back to you.

Connection with people is the key. In the uncertainty of the postpandemic world, people will be our anchors, our relationships to one another a source of strength and security. Be a go-to person and build up your network of go-to people you know you can rely on. Invest in each other with intention. We can lift each other up and together be the jet fuel for the next great boom.

Bruce Tulgan, May 2020

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