



CONTACT: Tess Woods/tess@tesswoodspr.com/617-942-0336
Felicia Sinusas/felicia.sinusas@hbr.org/617-783-7704

THE ART OF BEING INDISPENSABLE WORK

Win Influence, Beat Overcommitment, and Get the Right Things Done

Bruce Tulgan

Today, more than ever, we all want to be viewed as an indispensable go-to person. However, in this new world of work, getting things done is more complex than ever. While in many companies there is a clear organizational chart, in reality, day-to-day working relationships are much more tangled. Trying to become indispensable means thinking we need to say yes to everything and everyone. But, collaborating with an increasing number of people leads us to being overwhelmed and prone to burnout. How can we win influence, tackle overcommitment, and get the right things done? That's the art of being indispensable at work.

For nearly three decades, Bruce Tulgan, bestselling author and founder of RainmakerThinking, has followed the latest developments in the workplace through several long-term organizational studies: on generational shifts in the workplace, best practices for leading and managing others effectively, and techniques for optimizing performance. Based on the insights he's garnered through his research, he reveals in **THE ART OF BEING INDISPENSABLE WORK** what truly sets go-to people apart, how they think, and what they do:

They understand the peculiar mathematics of real influence. Go-to people make the right decisions and get the right things done. Over time, they get a reputation for delivering, or having good reasons when they decline something. By doing the right thing for the long term, they add value to everything they do. As a result, colleagues want to do things for them, make good use of their time, and contribute to their success. That's real influence.

They lead from wherever they are. Today, many of us are constantly being asked to do things by people who aren't our boss, and where we must ask things of others who don't report to us. Go-to people understand what's required and what's allowed—up and down the chain of command—is the secret to success. Tulgan says the first step is to go vertically before going sideways (or diagonally): ensuring alignment on priorities, ground rules, marching orders, and next steps through regular structured communication.

They know when to say no and how to say yes. The secret to saying yes is to ensure the project is set up for success with a concrete plan—a clear sequence of events and ownership of next steps. Sometimes, instead of saying no, Tulgan reveals the better response is “not yet” because the opportunity doesn't have a clear plan and needs to be developed further.

They work smart. Go-to people identify what they do best and what they want to be known for. One of the ways to discover this, Tulgan says, is to create checklists, step-by-step instructions, or best practices for tasks, to better see where we contribute unique value. By professionalizing

everything we do and specializing in what we do best, we can steadily expand our repertoire of specialties.

They finish what they start. Go-to people understand that the way to win is to complete projects so they can take on new ones. The busier people are, the more they try to handle it all by being a juggler, but inevitably they will drop the ball. The secret to handling a long list of responsibilities and projects is to focus on one thing at a time. Tulgan recommends keeping a to-do list and scheduling time for each task, instead of toggling back and forth between them all. To make an intimidating project seem more do-able, break the work into small chunks and find gaps in your schedule for focused execution time.

They get better and better at working together. Relationships are key, but go-to people know the way to build them isn't through politicking and personal rapport. By focusing on getting work done, the work will go better. When the work goes better, the relationship will go better. Go-to people celebrate success with a supersonic thank-you. They channel finger-pointing into continuous improvement through after-action reviews. They also plan the next collaboration by looking around the corner with others.

They promote go-to-ism. Go-to people find other indispensable people throughout the organization and build new go-to people whenever there's a chance to do so. That way, if they can't say yes, they can recommend someone else who can help. That's how the upward spiral of real influence is built.

Nearly a century ago, Dale Carnegie's classic *How to Win Friends and Influence People* propelled millions of readers up the ladder of success. In this new world of work, Bruce Tulgan provides the must-read guidebook for achieving real influence and learning to thrive in **THE ART OF BEING INDISPENSABLE WORK**.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bruce Tulgan is a bestselling author, an adviser to business leaders all over the world, and a sought-after keynote speaker. Since 1995, Tulgan has worked with tens of thousands of leaders and managers in hundreds of organizations, ranging from Aetna to Walmart and from the US Army to the YMCA. He lectures at the Yale Graduate School of Management, as well as other academic institutions. Tulgan's books include the updated and expanded edition of *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy* and the bestselling *It's Okay to Be the Boss*. He is the Founder and Chairman of RainmakerThinking, Inc., and he lives in New Haven, CT.

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