

- > Executive Coach
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Skills for Living & Leading in the Google Age

I'm first an executive coach – which means that I work with people trying to make changes in their careers. Everywhere I go, I hear clients say, *“All I do is sit in meetings. It's such a waste of time. I wish I could just get my work done.”*

These people are longing for the past, when employees had well-defined assignments and areas of responsibility. In those days (and it was just a few years ago) it was possible to go to the office, work on a specific task, and pass work along to next person. The only person we really had to please in those days was our boss.

Well, I have news for all of the people who just want to get their work done. In today's business world, the meetings are the work. And if you think you spend a lot of time in meetings now, well, fasten your seat belts. Because we're only going to spend more time in meetings as time goes by.

Why? Because our organizations and business model have drastically changed. Successful businesses have gone from being hierarchical, assembly-line-type machines to fluid international organisms, powered by technology and going at breakneck speed.

Today's organizational chart would not be boxes stacked on top of each other at all – it would be clusters of overlapping cells. It would look, appropriately enough, like a network. In this flat, wired, interconnected world, what we used to call “people skills” are not simply nice-to-have qualities that earn extra points on your annual performance review and popularity in the coffee room.

Here are the skills you'll need to survive in today's “flat” office environment:

- **Collaboration.** Logically enough, self-sufficiency isn't one of the winning traits in this inter-dependent, connected world. The key is collaboration. It really doesn't matter how high you are in an organization or how solitary you think your work is – there are people who affect your performance. I had one client whose mother wrote novels. Can you imagine anything more solitary than that? And yet, this novelist needed an editor, a team of readers, an agent, and an admin to “get her work done.” It really does take a village to do anything today.
- **Communication.** Also, in this high tech world, there aren't many barriers to participation. It really is about who has the best idea, not what rank they hold in the hierarchy. The power shifts are constant – again, think organism.

In this kind of world, people have to talk. They also have to make themselves understood. They have to get others to buy into what they want. They have to encourage and nurture creativity and develop consensus. They have to get people to contribute their best. They have to encourage, not squelch, new ideas.



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Skills for Living & Leading in the Google Age (Continued)

Guess what the medium is for this type of interaction? Meetings! Meetings, and conference calls and web calls and phone calls and text messages and all the rest of the things that are preventing you from “getting your work done.” See why you need to change your own attitude?

- **Creativity.** We’ve been saying this for years, but the past is irrelevant. What you need to know today is not how things have been done in the past. You need to know how to deal with information, and sense into the future.

This is going to be difficult for us, because everything we have been doing is about replication and quantification. The way I describe it is like a child – you expect your children to grow and change. In fact, if your baby just stopped developing at five months old, you’d take them to the hospital!

These are the kinds of expectations we have to have about our new organizations. They are going to change, and change is good.

