

# STRATEGY

AND THE

# FAT SMOKER

CHAPTER

“Find your passion” is common career advice... **CONTINUE**

BY **DAVID MAISTER**

**“FIND YOUR PASSION” IS COMMON CAREER ADVICE.** But doing so can be a difficult process. Successful people often appear to have had a rational career progression, with each step a seemingly sensible preparation for the next. The truth, however, is that most successful business careers have been based on experimentation and opportunism.

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You must never settle, never give up, never coast, never just accept what is, even if you are currently performing at a high level. You must always search for the next thing you think you can feel passionate about, so that you will have a burning reason to show the discipline and drive that will distinguish you.

You must then throw yourself into it wholeheartedly and work at it with as much commitment as you can muster until you can answer three questions:

- Is this as exciting as I thought it was going to be?
- Is there a market for this? (Will anyone pay me to do it?)
- Can I make a contribution that others are not (yet) making?

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The key lesson is that lifelong drive and determination, the burning passion to get somewhere next, are the primary ingredients in personal (and organizational) success.

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The good news is that it's amazing how many times you can mess up in life and still succeed. As Winston Churchill reportedly said, "Success is the ability to move from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm."

If moods, emotional states, and characteristics such as determination and enthusiasm are the keys to individual success, what does all this mean for companies and firms?

The most important lesson is that, if they are help their people and their organization overcome the fat smoker syndrome, then managers must, above all else, have the skills of being net *creators* of energy, passion, drive, and enthusiasm in other people. It's obvious, but it's still scarce.

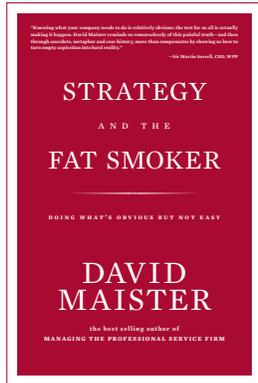
How well does your firm measure up to these behaviors and states of mind?

**As Winston Churchill reportedly said, "Success is the ability to move from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm."**

- New challenges are eagerly, continuously sought out.
- The firm and its people never rely on momentum for their success, but are always seeking to build new capabilities.
- Compared to key competitors, the people in the firm are distinguished by a superior, burning passion to get somewhere new.
- The firm emphasizes and requires adaptability, flexibility, and responsiveness as key virtues.
- The firm's strategies are created through continued and repeated experimentation.
- The firm is markedly superior in creating (not just hiring for) energy, excitement, enthusiasm, drive, determination, passion, and ambition.
- The firm sustains energy and investment actions both when things are going badly and when things are going relatively well.
- Management is held accountable for its ability to create and sustain drive, enthusiasm, passion, ambition, commitment, and excitement in the individual members and groups that make up the organization. Managers who cannot do this are replaced.

Yes, these are tough standards. But if individual success is based on outperforming the determination of others, it surely follows that an organization that cannot create and sustain it must be in trouble, no matter how much organizational momentum it has.

## INFO



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Click here to get more details or buy a copy of David Maister's *Strategy and the Fat Smoker*.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Maister is widely acknowledged as one of the world's leading authorities on the management of professional service firms. For two decades he has acted as a consultant to prominent professional firms around the world, on a wide variety of strategic and managerial issues. In 2002, he was named as one of the top 40 business thinkers in the world (Business Minds, by Tom Brown, PrenticeHall/Financial Times). He is the author of the bestselling books *Managing the Professional Service Firm* (1993), *True Professionalism* (1997), *The Trusted Advisor* (2000), *Practice What You Preach* (2001) and *First Among Equals* (2002). These books have been translated into 14 languages. For seven years, he served as a professor on the faculty of the Harvard Business School (1979-85), prior to launching his consulting practice. He lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

In March of 2005, he finally took his own advice, gave up smoking and lost 30 pounds.

Visit his website at [www.davidmaister.com](http://www.davidmaister.com).

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