

# STRATEGY AND THE FAT SMOKER

CHAPTER

Our firm, like our best competitors, is aiming at familiar goals... [CONTINUE](#)

BY **DAVID MAISTER**

**OUR FIRM, LIKE OUR BEST COMPETITORS, IS AIMING AT FAMILIAR GOALS.** We will succeed not by aiming at different targets than our best competitors do, but by devising better ways to reach those same targets.

Since clients hire people, not firms, our success will be built a partner at a time. If, and only if, each partner is finding some way to make himself/herself more valuable in the marketplace each year, then the firm will succeed. In turn, this means that the role of the firm is to help each individual grow as a professional. The firm exists to help its people succeed, not the other way round.

The need for personal development is life-long. The minute you begin to cruise, to rely on skills learned last year, that's the moment you begin your decline. Success comes not to those who swing for the fences every time at bat, but to those who commit themselves to a continuous program of constant improvement, base hit by base hit.

### **The firm exists to help its people succeed, not the other way round.**

Senior professionals, in my opinion, have five key responsibilities, for which they should expect to be held accountable.

First, and foremost, all individuals and every team must satisfy their clients, and we should be vigorous in establishing processes which ensure this is happening.

Second, those running client assignments or engagements must be responsible for building skills in themselves and others, thereby adding to the human capital of the firm.

Third, those in charge of assignments have a responsibility to contribute to the economic success of the firm by running their engagements profitably, and constantly seeking out ways to improve the economics of their work.

**We must not glorify those who occupy managerial positions, but choose the person most skilled at managerial duties, and keep them and reward them only if they perform the role well and make a difference to the performance of others.**

Fourth, everyone should participate *in some way* to developing our business by attracting and winning quality new work and new clients that allow us to stretch, learn, and grow. This does not mean just getting *more* business, it means getting *better* business.

Last, but not least, every person has a responsibility to contribute to the success of others. We need to act as a partnership, and not a collection of solo operators (or independent offices) trading under the same brand name.

If someone has accepted a responsibility, and agreed upon a goal, then we should get out of his or her way and let the individual do it. None of us should wait to be told what to do, or how to do it.

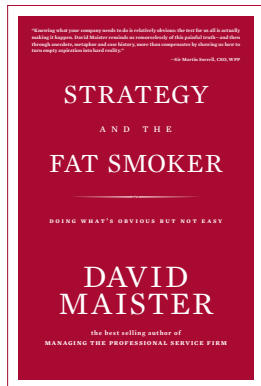
We must not glorify those who occupy managerial positions, but choose the person most skilled at managerial duties, and keep them and reward them only if they perform the role well and make a difference to the performance of others.

Managers should also be deeply involved with the activities of the people in the group they are responsible for. They should be available to resolve issues, form teams, provide assistance and make it easier for other people to focus on their clients. Managers should be hassle absorbers, not hassle creators.

That's not all I believe, but it's enough for now. I hope you watch me carefully to ensure that I live by what I advocate.

If not, well then, you know what to do. Let me know!

## 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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