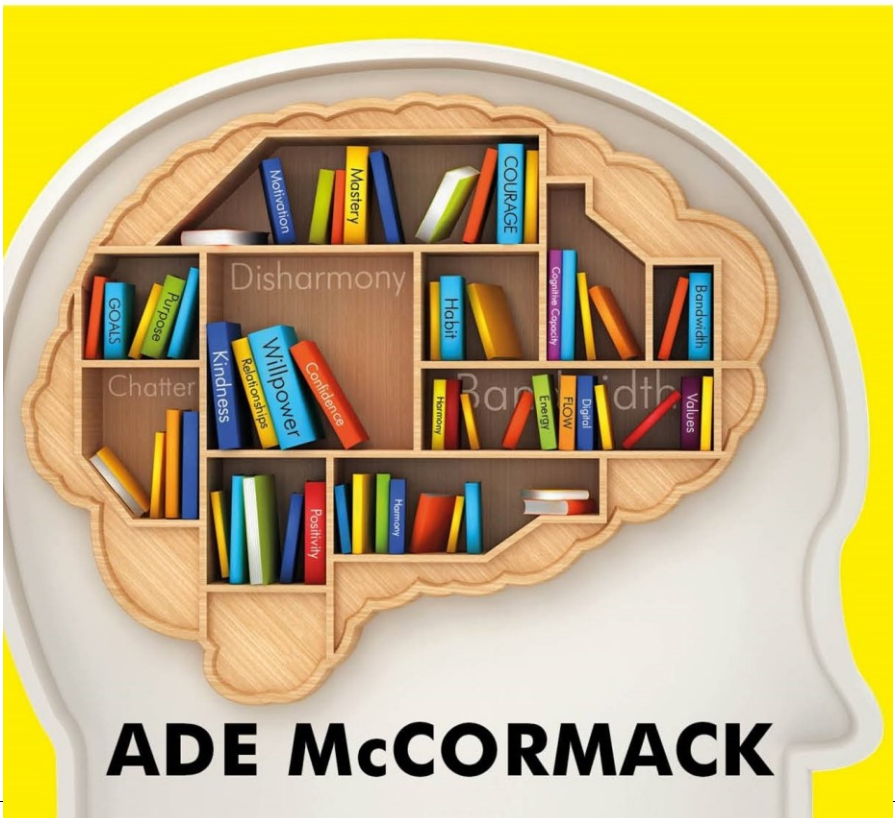


ATTENTION DYNAMICS

High personal performance
in the digital age



Attention Dynamics

High personal performance in the digital age

This document contains a sample of the content associated with this book.

It includes:

- The Table of Contents.
- The Preface. How to use the book.
- A calibration exercise.
- Chapter 1 – The Age of Distraction (in full).
- Chapter 2 – The Life Stack (sample)
- Chapter 4 – Life Enhancing Concepts (sample)
- About the Author.

Contents

Contents

Preface

How to use this book

Calibration

Orientation

1 The Age of Distraction

2 The Life Stack

3 Your 4 Key Relationships

4 Life-Enhancing Concepts

5 Meet Your Mind

6 Your Mental Worktop

The Problem

7 Inattention

8 Attention Thieves

9 An Inattentive Life

A Solution

10 The Unified Attention Model

11 Planning An Attentive Life

12 Life Tools – Physical

13 Life Tools – Psychological

14 Life Tools – Emotional

15 Life Tools – Social

16 Life Tools – Financial

17 Life Tools – Career

18 Life Tools – Lifestyle

19 Life Tools – Spiritual

20 Creating A Plan

Finally

Afterword

Appendix A: Business and Society

Appendix B: Glossary

Appendix C: Key Themes

Appendix D: References

About the Author

What next?

Table of figures

Table of figures

Figure 1 - The Life Stack

Figure 2 - Attention profile example

Figure 3 - The interrelationship between the environment, triggers, the conscious and unconscious.

Figure 4 - The Mental Worktop

Figure 5 - Enslaved v mastered life

Figure 6 - Health, wealth and happiness mapping

Figure 7 - Mapping to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Figure 8 - Surviving and thriving

Figure 9 - Anthropological drivers mapping

Figure 10 - The Unified Attention Model: Passengers

Figure 11 - The Unified Attention Model: The car

Figure 12 - The Unified Attention Model: Driver interface

Figure 13 - The Unified Attention Model elements

Figure 14 - The forces acting on discretionary thinking

Figure 15 – Keeping score

Figure 16 – Physical layer: Scoring example

Figure 17 – Psychological layer: Scoring example

Figure 18 – Emotional layer: Scoring example

Figure 19 – Social layer: Scoring example

Figure 20 – Financial layer: Scoring example

Figure 21 – Career layer: Scoring example

Figure 22 – Lifestyle layer: Scoring example

Figure 23 – Spiritual layer: Scoring example

Preface

Here's the premise. Attention mastery is critical to life mastery. Inattention could well lead to:

- Getting eaten by a predator.
- Seeing your life partner 'walk out the door' for the last time.
- Missing the train, and so missing the career-enhancing job opportunity.
- Waking up one day in an intensive care unit.
- Having your 'lunch' eaten by a competitor.

Understanding the dynamics of attention will help you 'optimise' your life. That is what this book aims to do.

I am conscious that life optimisation, as a topic, is not a recent trend. Ancient philosophers have laid the foundations on which the modern personal development industry is based. My justification for taking on such a bold theme is that I wanted to pull together the various drivers / levers that impact our personal performance into one cohesive approach. My premise is that attention is the most critical of the levers. It sits right up there with food, sleep and oxygen, as being critical to both survival and a purposeful life.

Professionally, I am a former technologist who today advises on the near future, particularly on how both people and organisations can thrive in it. Human performance is a key element of this.

Personally, I am a former track athlete (sprinter), who today practises a variety of martial arts. From the age of twelve, I have been fascinated by human performance, and have studied it assiduously throughout my life. Not least, because I needed, and continue to need, to optimise every element of my performance, given that I was gifted with a particularly average set of physical attributes.

Like many people in the second half of their lives, I reflect on the meaning of life, and what one might have done differently with a different testosterone-to-wisdom ratio.

Again, as someone who has practised martial arts for a significant period of my life, the concept of attention is quite important. Mulling over an altercation at work, whilst a sword is heading rapidly towards your cranium, can seriously impact how the rest of your evening pans out. I have experienced something similar firsthand. The encounter culminated in my right forearm snapping in half. The punctured artery and the hemorrhaging added further grit to the experience. And yes, my evening plans changed substantially. Martial arts, practised properly, require one to be extremely 'present'. Off the mat, they often inculcate philosophical curiosity and reflection on how these martial principles could be applied to less violent situations. But again, this is nothing new, or exceptional.

My ability to explore this theme through the lens of digital transformation is perhaps where I can add something new to the existing body of knowledge. This transformation from the industrial era to the digital age is seismic in nature, though many of us are too busy to notice. Again, my professional focus is on helping individuals and organisations thrive in this post-industrial age. My work takes me all over the world, advising and speaking on the changing nature of work, people and leadership. So, I am well positioned to see these tectonic changes from a global perspective.

The digital era is sometimes referred to as the digital economy, social economy and even attention economy. These terms all serve to highlight specific elements of post-industrial life.

In writing this book, I am endeavoring to show the importance of attention in respect of living your life in this age of distraction. Most importantly, it is a workbook with actionable guidance on how you can harness your attention to make the most of your precious time here on Earth.

Now, please, pay attention!

Ade McCormack, 2017

How to use this book

Attention Dynamics is a reference book, and so does not require you to read it as you would a novel. That said, it is structured in a logical order and, attention permitting, I would encourage you to read it, from start to finish. Thereafter you can dip in as your personal objectives dictate.

Structurally the book has three sections.

- Orientation.
- The problem.
- A solution.

Expanding on these sections:

Orientation

In this section, we explore how the shift to the digital era is changing our outlook, and impacting our attention.

We look at the key elements of modern life, along with an associated framework for showing their interrelatedness. We also explore our key relationships. Influential concepts such as willpower, motivation, values, kindness and courage, amongst others, are also covered. The notion of mastery is also introduced.

A guided tour of your mind is provided, along with a framework for how you might best manage it. Or at least gain an understanding as to why your quality of life differs from that of other people.

The problem

In this section, we explore inattention, and its pernicious impact on all aspects of our life. We also ‘call out’ the attention thieves, and explore the consequences of living an inattentive life.

A solution

Here, I present a framework to show how the ‘working parts’ of attention interact.

There is an opportunity to establish, through a simple exercise, where you might best place your attention in respect of improving your life. Given that many of us might need improvement across a myriad of domains, for example, work, health and social life, this book will help guide your priorities, and so avoid becoming overwhelmed.

We also explore some practical approaches for tuning our attention. Many of these are well established, but are distributed across a variety of sources. Thus, until this book, making it difficult for people to acquire a holistic approach to self-development.

You might say that this book aims to provide a ‘unified theory’ for self-improvement. It can also be considered a gateway to further exploration. Appendix D provides a bibliography of the referenced sources.

In writing this book, I have pulled together many themes, to provide a holistic framework for living an attentive life. These themes, habits being just one, are well covered both academically and in ‘easy to assimilate’ mainstream texts. Again, I have endeavoured to corral the disparate elements that impact attention, and thus impact living a meaningful life.

The challenge with pulling together many themes is that it places a burden on you, the reader, to keep track of them all. To alleviate that, I have included a glossary (Appendix B). I have also included a categorisation section (Appendix C) to show the interrelationship of the themes. Please make use of them should you become disoriented at any point throughout the book.

But first, let’s check that this book is for you.

Calibration

Do any of the following apply to you?

- You are frustrated by your general lack of time.
- You are not fully convinced that your investment in your career is paying off either financially or in the overall quality of your life. Others, perhaps less determined than you, are making better progress with seemingly less exertion.
- You are an athlete operating at the top of your capability, but are looking to improve your performance by making some ‘marginal’ gains.
- You are sometimes a little snappy with those close to you, and that saddens you.
- You have a sense of emptiness despite having acquired all the badges of success in the modern world.
- You are bewildered as to why some people are so cheerful, despite the hardship of their lives relative to yours.
- You spend a substantial amount of your ‘thinking time’ focused on your shortcomings.
- You are conscious that your life is out of balance, eg., spending too much time on your career, at the expense of your family.
- You feel physically lethargic, and your thinking is somewhat foggy.
- You can’t help but feel there is more to life than what you are currently experiencing.
- Your goals are constantly thwarted by reality.
- You are excited by the possibility of discovering your true potential.

If any of these apply to you, then I think you will find this book worthy of your attention. But if you haven’t given this much thought up until now, then here is a little exercise to focus your thinking. You are attending a funeral. The eulogy is being read by someone you know very well. This is not a surprise, as it is your funeral. What would you like them to say about you?

Many of us in the developed world are on a path where our eulogy will be littered with references to our attainments. “She was HR director of a Fortune 500 company”, “He was a first-class pub landlord”, “He was a very capable triathlete”, and so on.

But what about references to our character? Is this something that the eulogiser glosses over, because at the end of the day, your attainments came about through, for example, single-minded self-centredness?

Of course, there are people who attain great heights, and are great people too. They are life’s masters. But those people have simply worked on their character with the same dedication that they have pursued their career / sport / art.

I am all for pursuing genuine greatness. Watching talented people perform is to watch nature at the top of its game. As is engaging with those of great character.

In writing this book, I am encouraging you to live the best version of yourself, whether that leads you on a path to being a world class professional or to simply being one of life’s good guys. Or both.

Ultimately, this book provides you with a path to life mastery, as defined by you. One that is paved with good decisions, and not just good intentions.

Next up, I will briefly make the case for the importance of attention management as we enter the digital age.

1 The Age of Distraction

Overview

In this chapter, we take a brief look at how the world is changing, and its impact on our attention.

The shift

The digital era is not just the industrial age on ‘tech steroids’. There are some fundamental attitudinal shifts taking place. Those brought up in the industrial era were primarily focused on money. Money could buy you a lifestyle. Money would keep you out of poverty and thwart the threat of destitution. World wars have played their part in this preoccupation with money.

Those brought up in the digital age have noted the extreme actions taken by their parents to acquire money. Not least in the amount of time they spend on it. Often doing work they don’t like, to acquire goods they will never have time to enjoy. Young people today appear to be more time than money-focused. This is manifested in many ways. For example:

- A greater focus on acquiring experiences over material goods.
- Greater impatience. If the page does not download instantly, or the app doesn’t allow a transaction to take place in three or less taps, then it is abandoned with the callousness of an in-demand assassin rushing off to the next job.
- An almost pathological need to let others know how their time is being used, often through social networks.
- An overwhelming desire to consume experiences in parallel. Think multiple screens.

One might argue that this is a middle-class phenomenon, backed by the 'Bank of Mum and Dad'. Such young people can afford to choose time over money. Personally, regardless of class, I think this reassessment of money versus time is long overdue. We were never meant to 'live to work'. Many of us could improve how we make best use of our time. Or more specifically, where we place our attention.

Not all young people have an optimised 'work – life – money – experience' index, so to speak. Conversely, many older people do. But optimising our own lives is not enough. I am sure that a significant percentage of those who have chosen a career in the public or voluntary sectors recognise that there is more to work and life than making money and acquiring experiences.

Attention please

Before the digital age, there was a time when the detection of a slight movement, or an unfamiliar sound, would trigger a survival response. A lack of attention could have fatal consequences. Such events might happen a few times per day. Whilst this scenario might come from a prehistoric era, our brains remain wired for such scenarios.

Today, if the film you are watching isn't triggering a similar response every few seconds, you will likely change channel. Back then, it was the snapping of a twig. Today it is a super large comet, roaring in Dolby surround sound, hurtling towards millions of people, gathered around the world's most iconic human constructions, topped up with a blossoming young romance, which may / may not survive the impact.

Given the length of blockbuster films today, this equates to well over three thousand survival responses you put your body through, with only popcorn as your primary form of protection.

But, it's not just the impressive computer-generated imagery that is bombarding our nervous system. Every camera angle change, or scene change, has a similar effect.

But we crave more.

There was also a time when:

- You might have had one favorite TV programme, and each week, just after it had finished, you entered a mild depression, as you knew the next episode was a whole week away.
- The chances of keeping in touch with all but a handful of your school friends after the last day at school were very low.
- Your ability to listen to music on your commute to work would have involved hulking a gramophone with an extremely long lead.

Again, today is very different. We are living in wonderful times. The rate of technological innovation is growing exponentially. Access to friends, family and work colleagues is '24-7'. We can consume content when and where we want.

It would appear that everybody is vying for our attention. The content providers, the retail stores, and even teachers are having to raise their game in terms of attention-grabbing tricks.

The beauty of having so many people and organisations vying for our attention is that we can simply drift between 'attention magnets', with little mental effort.

The big downside of this existence is that you literally stop thinking for yourself, and spend your time 'thinking for others'. That said, you would be wise to pay attention to your boss, partner and children.

Whilst being constantly distracted can make for a stimulating life, it can also serve as a means of avoidance in respect of addressing important matters, such as, resolving relationship issues with people close to us, or addressing the problem of spending more than we earn. Such matters feel painful to address because we know their resolution will be cognitively and emotionally costly.

Be aware that many of these attention-seekers want your attention because they can exploit it, directly or indirectly.

Direct approaches include:

- Come into my store and buy something.
- Watch this film, for a fee.

Indirect approaches include:

- Gorge on our free online content, whilst we ‘sell your eyeballs’ to our advertisers.
- Subscribe to our free newsletter, and we will sell your email address to any spammer with a budget.

Of course, not all attention-seekers with an agenda should be considered our enemy. Context-relevant attention-grabbing, whether commercial in nature or not, is often valuable. If I am stuck up a mountain with a broken ski, I would be grateful to hear from an app that has detected my lack of motion in the last few hours. To hear they have an operative in the area who can help me get down the mountain is great news. In fact, in what could be a life or death situation, I might even be a little price-insensitive.

Focus?

But why attention and not, say, focus? Focus is a form of attention that is essential for many tasks. However, we need to pay attention to how we feel, and our environment, regardless of what we are doing. We could call this ‘soft focus’. But I prefer the term ‘attention’ as it embraces both the qualities of focus but also a preparedness for the unexpected.

Focus and attentiveness are both key to life mastery. Focus enables us to zoom in on what needs to be done at any given moment. Attention provides the ‘zoom out’ needed to ensure we focus on what is most important and / or most urgent. Focus enables us to withdraw money from a cash machine. Attention ensures that we keep it, if opportunistic criminals are loitering nearby. Most people ‘get’ focus from a conceptual viewpoint. I don’t think attention is so well understood. In what is often called the Attention economy, not understanding attention can have serious economic implications.

In summary

Young people are perhaps seeing their parents more as cautionary case studies than role models. Spending inordinate hours at the office, and being on 24-7 corporate stand-by when at home is not for them.

However, if having acquired more free-time, it is squandered because of poorly managed attention, then today's youth will be their children's cautionary tale.

My reason for writing this book is to alert you, the reader, that as we enter the digital age, there is a danger that we are losing the ability to manage our attention. The consequence of which is that we fail to think and act in our own best interests.

We already know that in today's world there is infinite choice as to where we place our attention. We will now narrow this down to eight areas.

2 The Life Stack

Overview

In this chapter, we look at the key elements of an attentive life. Inattention in any of these areas will lead to a suboptimal existence.

Please note, the elements that comprise an attentive life are not truly discrete. Your physical wellbeing impacts your emotional wellbeing. Your social wellbeing impacts your career fulfilment, and so on.

So, whilst I am providing distinct descriptions of the key elements of an attentive life, be aware of their interdependence. The interrelationships between these elements will be covered in the Solution section.

I have chosen these elements because they are the ones we are most likely to experience in life. You may feel that my approach has gaps, or has coalesced elements that should be treated separately. This is an evolving model. In any case, if tuning it makes it map better onto your life, then please do what is best for you.

Here are the key elements / layers:

- Physical.
- Psychological.
- Emotional.
- Social.
- Financial.
- Career.
- Lifestyle.
- Spiritual.



Figure 1 - The Life Stack

Think of each element as a layer in a stack. Like most stacks, the sturdiness of the lower layers will determine the sturdiness of the higher layers.

You might say that these are the martial arts belts in the path to life mastery. Novices (white belt holders) will be preoccupied with their physical circumstances. Those preparing for black belt (life mastery) will place much greater emphasis on their spiritual lives, as they have no need to be mentally preoccupied with acquiring the skills of the lower belts. Though, like serious martial artists, they should be maintaining and refining all the skills they have learnt.

How you match belt colours to each layer in the Life Stack is, of course, entirely up to you. Keep in mind, that even if you have gained great mastery in, say, your career, and financial matters, if you do not have mastery in the physical domain, you are still a white belt. There are no short cuts.

Let's look at each layer in turn:

Physical

This element covers all aspects of our own physicality, and the physical environment in which we live. If we are physically fit and can live our lives without being in a constant fearful state, then we have the basis for living an attentive life. NB. My definition of physical is a little stretched. Strictly speaking the term physical, in a biological sense, relates to the body. However, I am also including physiology, ie., the functioning of the body, along with the environment in which we live.

Broken down, the Physical layer embraces our need for:

- Air.
- Sleep.
- Water.
- Nutrition.
- Sex.
- Clothing.
- Home / shelter.
- A safe environment around where we live, work, and generally spend much of our time.

These are critical factors. The extent to which we have a robust Physical layer will be determined by the extent to which these needs are met.

I have placed them broadly in descending order of importance. Some fashion magazines might insist that clothing be ranked higher. The counter argument is that after a day or so without water and sleep, one's interest in tracking what's next on the Paris catwalk diminishes significantly.

An absence of shelter is the cause of great stress, particularly as we are vulnerable when we sleep in an insecure location. And even if we do have shelter, living with violent occupants / neighbours will keep us in 'survival' mode, where concerns over the late delivery of your jasmine pearl green tea order from the recently opened delicatessen is low down your priority list.

Military, social and emergency services are three notable categories where the personnel, through their career choice, expose themselves to physical harm. Living under a cloud of danger has a cognitive overhead, on top of the physical risks. However, as we will see, this cost can be offset by the knowledge that one is acting for the benefit of others. From a life mastery perspective, what we lose from the Physical layer, we gain in the Social and Spiritual layers.

As a species, we have developed complex social structures and produced great art. Some might say we are the most evolved species on the planet. Given the relatively short time we have been here, I would say that the jury is still out on whether we have made it past the feasibility stage of this particular biological experiment. Apparently, ninety-nine percent of species that have ever existed are extinct. So perhaps, we must consider our existence a privilege, rather than an entitlement.

In any case, like all the other 'less sophisticated' species we share the planet with, we fundamentally have the same drives and urges, including the desire to reproduce. It is important that when we reach sexual maturity, we channel this energy, otherwise it will play havoc with almost every other aspect of our wellbeing.

Psychological

Psychology is a broad church, covering many topics including brain function, the mind, emotional behaviour and personality, amongst other disciplines.

For the purposes of living an attentive life, we will limit the term psychology to matters concerning the mind. There have been great advances in this area, particularly in neuroscience. Old beliefs are being dismantled. Apparently, old dogs can be taught new tricks, thanks to neuroplasticity.

However, there is much we have yet to learn, and so much of what we know today can be considered a ‘work in progress’. Whilst we are not even clear whether the mind is even ‘contained’ in our body, we can still benefit from some of the current cognitive models.

The attentive life framework I propose later in this book, calls upon concepts such as cognitive control and working memory. Over time, these concepts may prove to be incorrect. However, like Newtonian physics after the discovery of relativity, these concepts are still useful for most day-to-day purposes.

In respect of my Life Stack model, I will subdivide the Psychology layer into three elements, namely:

- Perception.
- Thinking.
- Memory.

Looking at each in turn:

Perception

Making sense of what our senses tell us is critical to our existence. Understanding that what stands before us perceives us as lunch is critical to our survival. Our senses are inundated with data. Our ability to extract a signal from the noise is an important skill. Perception is a key driver of where we place our attention. As we will see, where we place our attention determines the quality of our lives.

Thinking

Thinking would appear to be a unique human characteristic. All animals have pre-programmed instinctual responses to certain stimuli. But we humans can reflect and consider our actions. Unfortunately, our thinking can get in the way of reality. We gather the flimsiest of evidence to make a mental case for why our partner doesn’t respect us, or why a work colleague got the promotion.

Whilst daydreaming has its uses, missing the signals that someone finds you very attractive, because your mind is elsewhere, makes thinking, if not properly managed, a barrier to an attentive life. Though in fairness to daydreaming, neuroscientists are starting to conclude that it is a useful tool for problem solving and creativity (ref. *The Organised Mind*).

Our own internal chatter can often create noise that fogs our perception of reality; again, causing us to misdirect our energies. The Chimp Paradox, by Professor Steven Peters, eloquently contextualises this chatter by referring to it as an undisciplined chimpanzee. More importantly, Peters' book guides us on how to 'manage our chimp'.

Thinking is a key element of decision making. As we will see, decision making has a cognitive overhead. Thus, we want to avoid making decisions unless it is necessary, unless we are happy to spend much of our waking hours with our willpower tank 'running on empty'. Whilst not all thinking leads to making a decision, there is some correlation between time spent thinking and cognitive expenditure. So, the message is, choose what you think about with great care. Keep in mind, that our brains are primarily designed for movement, rather than thinking. We need to reflect that in how we live our lives.

To be continued...

**** [Click here to buy Attention Dynamics](#) ****

4 Life-Enhancing Concepts

Overview

In the absence of attention-grabbing events, where we place our attention is a matter for our mind. Understanding the factors that influence the mind will enable us to harness them to steer our mind along a purposeful path.

Meet the key factors:

- Mastery.
- Attention.
- Willpower.
- Motivation.
- Habit.
- Energy.
- Values.
- Purpose.
- Goals.
- Positivity.
- Kindness.
- Confidence and courage.

Let's look at these in turn:

Mastery

The term mastery can be viewed in a negative light. It can suggest that we have control over others, a master-slave relationship. It can suggest an air of superiority; if I am a chess master, why would I want to play against a novice.

In the context of this book, mastery means self-mastery. In fact, if you bought this book with the specific intention of universal dominance, or simply to belittle people at social events, then you will find little of value in this book.

As mentioned, we see mastery being used as a term in pursuits such as chess and eastern martial arts. Sometimes the title of master is bestowed on an individual because they are exceptional in their field. Sometimes there is a set standard for being awarded mastery status.

In medieval Europe, associations known as guilds were formed around specific trades such as stone cutting, baking, brewing and carpentry. To become a recognised tradesman, you needed to initially serve an apprenticeship under a master craftsman. During this phase of your career, you learnt the trade. The next step was to become a journeyman, whereby you could charge a fee for your work. This usually entailed travelling around the country, gaining further experience from other masters. Eventually, the guild would elect you to become a master. At which point, you could set up your own workshop and employ others.

Becoming a master required the acquisition of skill and experience. It also required the approval of senior figures in your trade. This model is still in operation to varying degrees. We are seeing a resurgence in the notion of apprenticeships in the world of work. But there is little talk about mastery. Yet.

Author Robert Greene has written the definitive mastery book, conveniently entitled ‘Mastery’. As such, it is well worth reading, if you are serious about mastery in general. He recommends that the following steps are taken:

- Observe how the ‘game’ is played.
- Learn to play the ‘game’.
- Change the rules of the ‘game’.

This is not unlike the Guild model. The first two steps are essentially suggesting that you find a great teacher. Imagine trying to learn to play the piano or master karate without an instructor.

You will waste a lot of time discovering what doesn't work. You may even develop a degree of competence, but find that you hit a plateau from which you can never leave because, for example, 'seek and peck' one finger piano playing has its limitations. Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool in their excellent book, 'Peak – Secrets from the New Science of Expertise', are strong advocates of having an experienced and capable teacher. Only experienced teachers can design exercises that move the student from what might be called rote learning to what they describe as deliberate learning; an approach that fundamentally (neuronically) sculpts your brain.

Changing the rules of the game can be considered as weaving your character into the accepted standard for good work. In turn, it might mean that you have in fact raised the bar for what is considered great work in your field. You are now reshaping the domain in which you are a master. In fact, you are redefining what it means to be a master.

This might be considered extreme mastery. Such a level of influence would likely make you one of the best in the world. As, I have written in my book, 'Beyond Nine to Five', from a career perspective, this will increasingly be necessary in a highly connected global marketplace.

But Attention Dynamics is not about being the best in the world physically, mentally and so on. I am proposing that you operate at a performance level that gives you comfort, or a gentle stretch. A level that does not cause the undue expenditure of your cognitive capacity. Worrying about your weight, or searching the dustbin for remnants of chocolate, detract from endeavours that lead to a purposeful life.

I am not saying that you should not endeavour to be Ms Universe or be capable of memorising long strings of numbers. But these are more career / life style matters than peak performance at the physical / mental levels of the Life Stack.

By all means be a peak performer in one or more aspects of your life. Just keep in mind that becoming the best in the class, country or world only make sense in the Career and Lifestyle (ie., you have a hobby that you pursue competitively) layers.

Being world class in respect of the following sounds ludicrous:

- Physical: Your ability to stay healthy and secure.
- Psychological: Make better decisions.
- Emotional: Manage your emotions.
- Social: Have great friendships.
- Financial: Be financially secure.
- Spiritual: Live a spiritual life.

If you are uncertain, try this experiment. Occasionally drop into your conversations that you are considered by many to be world class emotionally / socially, and so on, and see whether your declaration is greeted with awe and respect, or sniggers and derision.

So again, for the majority, if not all the main aspects of our life, as defined by the Life Stack, mastery needs to be tempered. Think self-mastery, rather than global domination. Again, if you can happily go about your life without worrying about any of the Life Stack layers, you have indeed achieved life mastery.

Self-mastery can be achieved in each layer of the Life Stack. I might have mastered the Physical layer because I am healthy and feel physically secure, and have the skills to remain so. You might have mastery in the Social layer. You have good relationships with family and friends, and you are skilled enough to retain those relationships no matter how much they are tested.

The reality is that we each have our own unique profile, and goals, in respect of our degrees of mastery for each of the eight Life Stack layers. The aim of this book is to identify where improvements are needed, as defined by you, and in what order these improvements should be addressed.

There is no United Nations approved standard for life mastery, so we need to develop our own. You might decide that emotional mastery is being able to smile serenely, even though the shopping mall you are in is under terrorist attack. I might regard emotional mastery as the ability to walk past McDonalds without the uncontrollable urge to charge in and join the shortest queue.

Life mastery is thus to some degree subjective. If over time, you spend less time in your head, worrying about various aspects of your life, and more time engaged with the world living your life, then you are making great progress.

Attention

Attention is both a noun and a verb. As a noun, it can be considered as a resource. So, we possess a certain amount of attention capacity, and we can use it as we, or even others, see fit. As a verb, it is a mental act. For us to pay attention to something or someone, we need to commandeer our senses and redirect them towards the object of our attention.

To be continued...

**** [Click here to buy Attention Dynamics](#) ****

About the Author

Ade McCormack is focused on helping organisations thrive in the post-industrial world through the optimal engagement of people and judicious application of new technology.

Clients engage Ade when they need a ‘zoom out’ view of how the world is changing, followed by ‘zoom in’ guidance on how they can capitalise on these changes.

Ade has worked in over 30 countries, across many industries. Clients engage Ade in many ways including:

- Thought leader.
- Conference keynoter.
- Advisor and coach.

He is a former technologist, with a degree in Physics/Astrophysics.

Ade has written for several publications, including the Financial Times (circa 150 pieces). He has written several business books, including ‘Beyond Nine to Five: Your career guide for the digital age’. He has also lectured at MIT Sloan School of Management on digital leadership.

Ade is married with one son. He enjoys martial arts, dancing and running. Running being his most effective form of self defence, closely followed by dancing.

Connect

Twitter: [@ademccormack](https://twitter.com/ademccormack)

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ademccormack>

Website: www.ademccormack.com

**** Click here to buy Attention Dynamics ****