

advancing women in business

every
woman
NETWORK



WORKBOOK

EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

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AN INTRODUCTION TO EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

FOUNDED in 1999, everywoman recognised there was a shortage of resources for women who wanted to elevate their careers and professional status.

Today, we deliver a range of innovative products and resources that realise the potential and talent of women in business globally. We also uncover success stories and elevate role models to inspire others across a diverse range of business sectors.

‘Executive presence’ is a term that has become heightened in awareness and focus, and consequently, in importance. Through our conversations with thousands of women over the years, we know that female leaders often struggle with the notion of ‘presence’ and how they display this status within their leadership roles.

Your ‘executive presence’ is the perception others have of your leadership capability, which itself is judged on a whole spectrum of verbal and visual factors. It can be just as important to your professional success as your experience and academic background.

Recent research by the Center For Talent Innovation in New York concluded that being perceived as leadership material is essential to being promoted into senior positions. In fact the senior executives surveyed said that executive presence

accounts for 26% of what it takes to get promoted.

In essence it is the ability to create a strong personal brand – to project gravitas and confidence in how you speak and how you behave.

In this workbook we aim to help you better understand the key components of making a strong personal impact; facilitate your understanding of you at your best; develop your awareness of rapport building and ability to use language to enhance your influence; and help you reflect on physiology, voice and emotional state to create the most appropriate impression.

Our webinars will support the key learning points in this workbook and provide the opportunity to ask our experts any questions you may have.

We look forward to hearing about your experiences and successes.

SECTION 1. AWARENESS AND CONFIDENCE



Awareness and confidence

WE ARE PROGRAMMED TO MAKE very quick impressions about people in order to judge their intention and be able to react accordingly. Initially we can only do that from their outward behaviour and expression. Seek feedback regularly from people about the characteristics they attribute to you and ask 'what specifically gives you that impression?' so that you can reinforce and strengthen different aspects, thinking about the qualities you would like to portray.

Who am I?

How do I aspire to be perceived? e.g. calm, motivated, inspiring

Now select two people you work with and reflect on how they may perceive you. Then seek feedback from them to capture your key insights – these may be reinforcements of what you already believe, surprises and/or gaps with how you aspire to be.

Person one

How I think you perceive me:

Person two

How I think you perceive me:

How I am being perceived:

Including key insights into my impact (reinforcements, surprises, gaps with how I aspire to be) e.g. I thought I was displaying a calm nature, but some misinterpret this as not caring.

The best of who I am

WHEN WE BEHAVE IN LINE with our authentic selves, we are more confident and fulfilled, and more likely to be perceived as genuine and distinctive by others. As you continue to develop and learn, check that you are remaining true to yourself.

When something or someone cuts across our values, we are more likely to feel unfulfilled, frustrated and volatile. When you feel any of these emotions, check which of your values is not being met and decide what you will do to close that gap.

Our 'winning formula' is our recipe for success: how we need to respond to ensure we stay true to ourselves and our core values are not compromised.

Three words that capture the essence of who I am at my best (drawing on my winning formula and the perceptions of who I am).

"Remember that you are unique, and if that is not fulfilled then something is lost."

MARTHA GRAHAM,
AMERICAN MODERN DANCER,
1894 - 1991

The concept and/or feeling that supports me being at my best.

My story (present, past, future or values, talents, behaviours). Are there any events or interactions that shape the way I behave now?

Feedback and modification e.g. I still want to be calm in stressful situations but I need a way of conveying I care.

Taking challenging interactions

OUR 'GREMLIN' IS THE VOICE INSIDE OUR HEADS that can give us doubts, tends to tease and torment us, and often limits our ability to be our best selves.

Become friends with this apparent 'enemy' by understanding what it's trying to achieve, also by noticing the language it uses and encouraging more affirming 'self' talk.

Our gremlin can at times seem more powerful than us, making us feel that we have little choice in how we are in certain circumstances. Reverse that power imbalance by playing mentally with the image, size and sound of your gremlin so that its potential grip recedes.

What does my gremlin often say?

What limiting behaviours do I adopt as a result?

What positive purpose is my gremlin trying to serve?

What other, more enabling, strategies could I adopt to serve that purpose?

What will my behaviours look like with these strategies?

What will I coach my gremlin to say/do in order to support me?

A challenging interaction ahead of me

REHEARSING OUR WINNING FORMULA strengthens the related neural network in our pre-frontal cortex which makes it easier to behave in that way when we are in the real situation. Get into the habit of rehearsing and reviewing challenging situations, to make your winning formula become natural in a wider range of contexts.

Being able to imagine experiencing a situation from another's perspective gives us new information that helps us modify our approach. Take a moment to 'try something on' from the receiver's perspective, and seek feedback about what they might think and feel.

Step one:

From your chair, initiate the interaction.

Step two:

From the other's chair, receive the communication through their eyes and ears, and reflect on how it makes you feel and think as the other person.

Step three:

From an objective standpoint, what do you need to add in from your winning formula or taming your gremlin to make yourself more effective?

Step four:

From your chair, initiate the interaction again, this time adding in those elements of your winning formula.

SECTION 2. CONNECTIVITY



Listening with intent

FROM THE MOMENT WE ARE BORN our brains are busy coping with finding meaning in the world. This is often referred to as ‘building a brain map’.

This map is formed by observing events, and these events rapidly enter our brains at a rate of as many as two million bits of information per second. Our conscious minds, however, are only capable of processing approximately 134 bits of information per second.

The incoming information passes through a number of filters to reduce the amount of information down to a digestible amount. A lot of this ‘processing’ happens unconsciously, making us habitual and often rendering us unaware of how we are arriving at conclusions.

Become more aware of how you tend to view situations and people, and try to bring more conscious fact-based decision making into challenging situations, so that you are more open-minded, objective and accurate.

Making assumptions

We have to make assumptions, otherwise we would need to start from zero in all the situations we need to deal with. However, some of the assumptions we make are the product of very strong filtering and are not based on the world as it really is. These are likely to impact how we behave in a specific situation and therefore get in the way of our effectiveness. If your representation of an individual is adversely impacting the way you engage with them then try to identify the assumptions you are making and, even if some of those assumptions are valid, experiment with choosing to believe different ones.

Stakeholder challenge

A stakeholder I find difficult to engage with:

What listening lenses (assumptions that get in the way of the reality of a situation) am I using (i.e. what am I listening out for)?

What assumptions would I need to make in order to engage with them more effectively?

What listening lenses may be more helpful (i.e. what might be more constructive to listen for?)

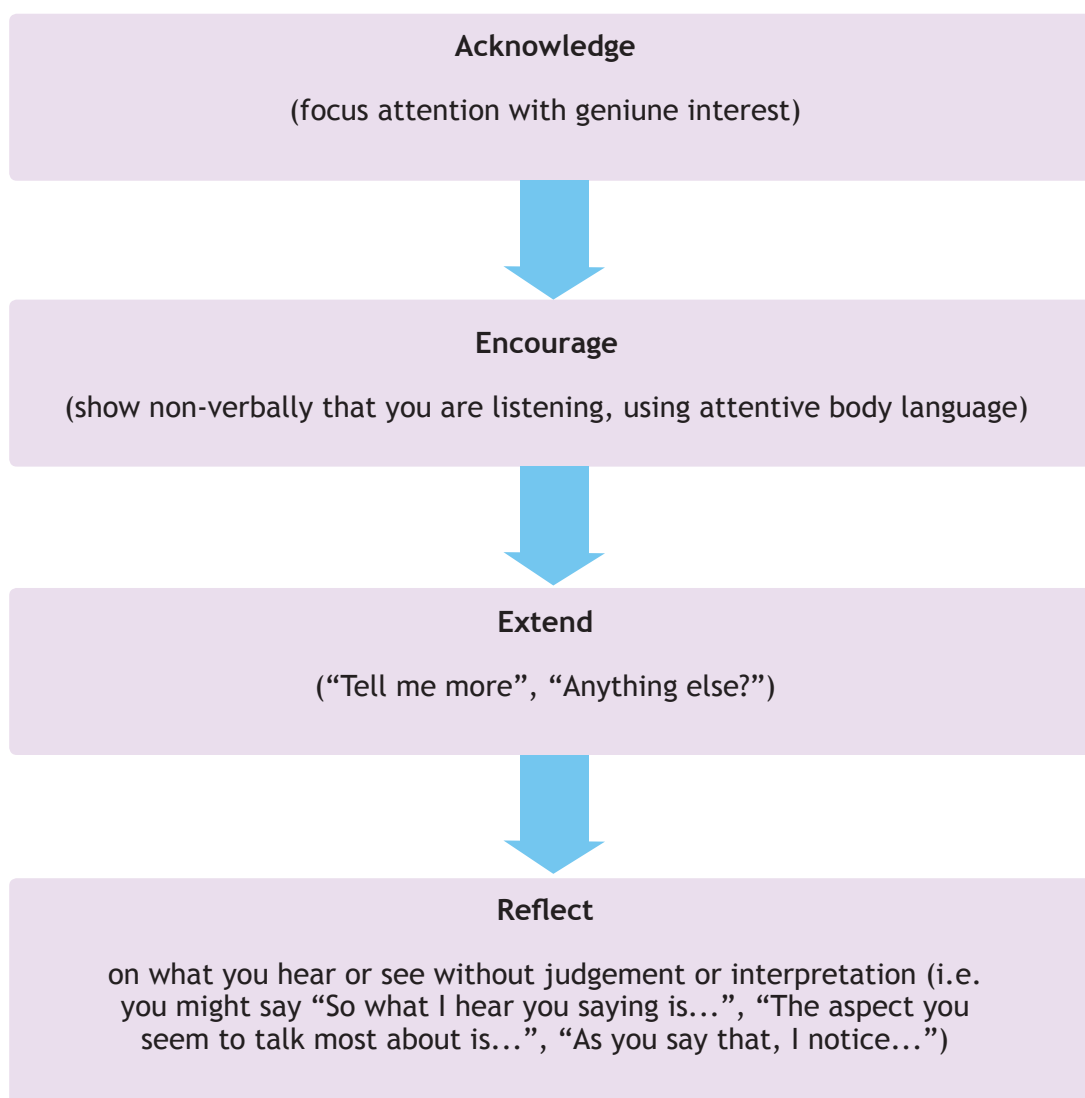
How would I behave differently with the latter set of assumptions and listening lenses?

Listening at different levels

THIS IS THE FOUNDATION for good rapport and understanding.

The ability to actively listen demonstrates sincerity, and that nothing is being assumed or taken for granted – it is proactive, accountable and professional. Listen with intent to accelerate trust, deepen insight, improve personal relationships, reduce misunderstanding and conflicts, strengthen cooperation, and foster mutual respect.

We often 'get in the way' of our own listening by interrupting, assuming we know what someone is going to say, focusing on what we are going to say next (or do afterwards) or losing interest. Decide which level of listening you are going to enhance and practise it until it becomes more natural.



Matching and leading

All about rapport

- Rapport is like a dance
- Rapport builds trust and understanding
- With rapport, it is easier to influence and lead
- In rapport, you enter another person's model of the world
- Build rapport, through 'matching' (becoming like the person you are building a rapport with)
- Wait 15/20 seconds before matching someone you are meeting for the first time; any quicker and you run the risk of being perceived as mimicking, which limits rapport

Build rapport with body language

When matching you should first focus on physiology (body language), then voice, then words. It is commonly recognised that around 55% of our communication to others is non-verbal. Body language includes posture, facial expressions, hand gestures, breathing and eye contact.

- Focus on matching the position of their head and back
- Match movement and gestures
- Match breathing (rate and location)

Build rapport with voice

- Match voice tonality (pitch, speed, quality, volume, content chunks, rhythm)
- Match language and words (key words and phrases, common experiences)

Build rapport with common values and experiences

As the saying goes, "people like people who are like them". So a sure way of building rapport with others is to find common ground; you can build relationships with a variety of people by becoming consciously aware of what you do when you are in rapport.

When you are in rapport, the other person is more likely to be willing to 'follow', at which point you can move to taking the lead, and experiment with effective ways to begin leading.

"Seek first to understand before being understood"

STEPHEN COVEY, AUTHOR

SECTION 3. CREATION



Speaking to hearts and minds

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT EVERYTHING WE'VE DISCUSSED, you're now going to prepare for an upcoming meeting or situation in which you can exercise more presence and impact through a 'sticky message' (the key points you want your audience to take away and remember).

If there isn't a particular situation or project in mind, you can think more broadly about how you can project yourself and what you're all about in order to demonstrate your executive presence, i.e. what is your leading message about you?

In either case, think about the structure of your message. How can you make it simple and easy to understand, yet memorable and impactful? If possible, connect your message to emotions which may drive a change in the other person's actions or feelings. Next, ensure the language of your message is clear, accountable and outcome-focused.

"A sticky message is one that people understand when they hear it, that they remember later on and that changes something about the way they think or act"

PROFESSOR CHIP HEATH,
STANFORD GRAD SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS

My leading message:

Sticky messages have a number of traits that make them effective: you can use these as a checklist for your messaging.

- Simplicity - short yet profound
- Unexpectedness - 'uncommon sense'
- Concreteness - no abstract language or acronyms
- Credibility - will the audience 'buy'
- Emotions - examples involving people can move people to feel emotions
- Stories - memorable and helps the audience relate to the message

Persuasive language

OUR MEANING can be transformed and strengthened with the help of using persuasive language.

Your accountability

"Can you make a commitment?" BECOMES "What commitment will you make (and when)?"

"I hope the session has had an impact on you." BECOMES "As you reflect about this session on your way home, write down the one thing that you are going to research further this week."

My accountability

"It will probably get better if we really want it to" BECOMES "Imagine how great you will feel in two months once you've overcome x"

"I'm kind of thinking we might want to look at this again, or at least think about what we haven't covered or whether anyone wants to add anything, I don't know if it will help or not."

BECOMES "I suggest that we all review it now and spend 10 minutes after lunch agreeing what changes, if any, we are going to make. Is that OK?"

"You know Fred hasn't done what he said he'd do, he's lazy, everyone's going to be really fed up with him." BECOMES "I'm disappointed that Fred hasn't done what he'd said, because we need his input, so I'll speak to him before the meeting."

Persuasive language is outcome-focused, clear and accountable. Plan and rehearse what you are going to say at key events and ask yourself: "What do I want them to see/feel/do differently? What can I leave out that confuses/dilutes/doesn't add value? Am I owning my view/feeling?"

The body never lies

VOICES VARY HUGELY in terms of pace, modulation, volume, emphasis, diction, accent, pitch and tone, and play a big role in creating an impression.

The quality of our voices is simply a product of how the air we breathe moves over our vocal cords. Practise standing/sitting so that your chest and diaphragm are able to fill up fully; relaxing your upper body/throat so that the air is not restricted; and letting your ribcage and diaphragm expand/fall so that you inhale/exhale more slowly and deeply.

Silence is a golden opportunity to gather your thoughts — it also conveys consideration and rarely feels as long to the receiver as it does to the speaker. Take a moment during a conversation to check the intention behind what you are going say and how you can say it with the impact you want.

“Breath powers your body, your voice, your mind, your heart and your spirit. It is the first act you perform and it is the last”

PATSY RODENBURG,
VOICE COACH

Managing emotional state

OUR EMOTIONS AND OUR PHYSIOLOGY were designed to be linked so that we can react appropriately to opportunities and threats.

They exist for a reason and give us information about what may be healthy or unhealthy for us. Fear, for example, causes a momentary freezing to give us a moment to apply our full attention and decide quickly whether to attack or withdraw — and a rush of blood to our limbs to allow that action. Peace, on the other hand, is accompanied by relaxed muscles, which allow us to conserve and renew our energy.

One of the greatest challenges we face is managing our own internal emotional state in difficult circumstances. We can approach what may be challenging situations finding ourselves almost drawn into a negative and non-resourceful state. We may begin to feel anxious, irritated, frustrated and so on, knowing instinctively that such emotions do nothing for our ability to manage a situation successfully, yet feeling that we have little or no control.

The results of this are often a growing sense of failure, with emotions escalating while the situation deteriorates, along with our sense of being able to achieve the positive outcomes we want for ourselves and others. So the ability to be aware of our emotions and take responsibility for controlling them can help us to be more effective, productive and successful in keeping our goals in sight.

The opportunities and threats we perceive today are not just in relation to extreme life-enhancing or life-threatening situations, but in relation to our self-concept and aspirations, whether mild or major. For example, for someone whose self-esteem is conditional on getting top marks for performing in a given area, any situation which is perceived as a possible threat to that may trigger a degree of fight or flight response. Ironically, the fear can often be self-fulfilling. Recognising what we are feeling — and why — is key to helping us take appropriate action.

In the same way that an emotion triggers changes in our physiology, creating changes in our physiology can affect our emotion. For example by slowing our breathing and relaxing our muscles, we are telling our brains that there is nothing to fear, and the fear, if excessive for the situation, is likely to subside. Being attuned to our physiology helps us make small modifications, that can make a big difference to how we feel and how we are perceived.

EXERCISE

Try this... Sit the way you would be sitting if you felt at the top of your game, you are achieving all of your goals and feel highly successful. Put the look and smile on your face that you would have if you felt totally happy and excited. Breathe the way you would breathe when you feel strong, proud and full of energy. Look up, hold your back straight, push your shoulders back and your chest up. Now, without changing any part of your physiology, try to get sad or depressed. It is difficult because when you hold the physiology of a winner your body is sending that message to your brain.

Our emotions are powerful sources of information. Notice the changes in our physiology (body language, breathing, posture, voice) in specific situations and ask yourself: "What is the emotion I am feeling and what is it telling me?"

Managing our physiology helps us to manage our emotional state. When you want to be in a more enabling emotional state try breathing more deeply / slowly, relaxing different muscles, keeping feet firmly on the ground between head and shoulder width apart, imagining a beam of light securing you to the floor, letting your own energy expand within and beyond you and allowing your attention to be fully present in the moment.

Strengthening body language

WHEN OUR BODY LANGUAGE is not aligned with our words, it is the body language that people will believe most. Make sure you really believe and own what you are saying so that you come across as authentic and, if you don't believe it, check it out or change what you're saying.

Your emotions will leak through your body language no matter how much you try to control your physiology. There may be up to 10,000 body language cues packed into every minute of interaction. Before you interact with others, take a moment to consider your emotional state as it will influence the way that you address other people in terms of your non-verbals.

- Posture - straight, tall, balanced
- Eye contact - strong, focus on irises, no wandering!
- Smile - quickest way to build rapport; often elicits a smile in return
- Handshake - firm, relaxed, minimal 'pumping'
- Gestures - to support your words, minimising distractors
- Facial expression - understand your 'screen saver' (the image you project through your facial expressions) and ensure it is what you want to project
- Personal space - use the space around you appropriately to create impact and mood (e.g. using larger hand gestures and movement in a large room or being more still in a sensitive one-to-one discussion)

Body language affects how others see us, but it may also change how we see ourselves. 'Power posing' or standing in a posture of confidence even when we don't feel confident, can affect testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain and might even have an impact on our chances for success.

Amy Cuddy, social psychologist, delivered a TED talk in June 2012 on your body language expanding on this theme. This is well worth watching when you have 20 minutes - please see the link below.

www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are

Summary

EXECUTIVE PRESENCE is the perception that others have of your leadership capability that is judged on a whole spectrum of verbal and visual factors. Research tells us that being perceived as leadership material is essential to being promoted into senior positions. It's the ability to create a strong personal brand to project presence and confidence in how you look, speak and behave.

We began this workbook exploring who we are as individuals and at our best how we come across to others; how we want to be perceived versus how we are perceived. Being clear on who we are at our best and where the gap is versus others' perception of us gives us valuable insights into what we might work on. This could be how well we listen, verbally communicate or our body language as examples.

We examined our 'gremlin', describing it as the voice inside our heads that can give us doubts, tends to tease and torment us and often limits our ability to be our best selves. Explore your own 'gremlin', understanding what it's trying to achieve on your behalf and the limiting behaviours it encourages. Importantly notice the language it uses and encourage more affirming 'self' talk.

Some interactions we face can feel daunting, and so we encouraged you to prepare these conversations in advance. Try changing seats to receive the messages you communicate as if you were the other party through their eyes, reflecting on what it's like to receive your communication and how this feels. This can help us to improve the impact of our communication.

We discovered how we listen at different levels, how as humans we filter information and make assumptions to make sense of the information we receive. Being aware of this is important in how we can come across to others positively and with impact. We encouraged you to reflect on stakeholders you find it difficult to engage with and explore these relationships, capturing your insights and actions.

Building rapport with people is key to developing our impact and relationships. Being in rapport with people helps us to build trust and understanding and in rapport we enter another person's model of the world. We reminded ourselves that around 55% of our communication to others is non-verbal. Our body language therefore is a very big part of our communication and this includes posture, facial expressions, hand gestures, breathing and eye contact. We explored how you can match to build rapport, and take the lead when you are in rapport.

Choosing language that resonates with different styles and preferences can improve your impact we explored how to create 'sticky messages, those that have real impact and that people remember. Using persuasive language and building accountability messages into your communication will give it more impact.

One of the greatest challenges we face is managing our own internal emotional state in difficult circumstances. We can approach what may be challenging situations finding ourselves almost drawn into a negative non-resourceful state. So the ability to be aware of our emotions and take responsibility for controlling them can help us to be more effective, productive and successful in keeping our goals in sight.

Our emotions leak through our body language no matter how much we try to control our physiology. Body language affects how others see us, but it may also change how we see ourselves. “Power posing” or standing in a posture of confidence, even when we don’t feel confident can affect testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain and might even have an impact on our chances for success.

We’ve covered many aspects that make up our communication and our presence to others. Now it’s time for you to consolidate your own reflections and turn them into clear actions for yourself. Make yourself accountable to develop these against some timescales.

SECTION 4. MY PERSONAL SHIFT



My personal shift

FINALLY, YOU'RE GOING TO CREATE a set of personal commitments and actions, which should be a summary of the key tips and insights you've gleaned as you've gone through this workbook. Review your notes and thoughts from previous chapters, and then try to include at least one point under each headline that captures something you will do differently in order to grow your presence and impact.

Personal log of key insights:

1. Awareness and confidence

'Me at my best' –

e.g. – When I'm at my best I'm confident, strong and positive and find influencing others and achieving goals satisfying and relatively simple. I notice that when I put the idea of 'me at my best' at the forefront of my mind I find it easier to act/ behave like this more consistently.

e.g. There's a gap between how I am perceived and how I want to be perceived. I'm not seen as being very confident in how I project myself and my messages. At times I am sometimes seen as under pressure, not interested and not having enough time for others. This has a negative effect on my presence and impact.

2.Connectivity

e.g. When I'm honest with myself, I often enter conversations with challenging stakeholders with a pre-determined set of assumptions and filters about what they are saying to me and why. I find our interactions frustrating and we don't seem to make progress. I've also had feedback and regularly sense that they don't think I am really listening to their point of view.

e.g. I could improve my listening skills by playing back the key words I've heard more to the other person. This will signal to them at key points in the conversation that I have listened and really heard their message.

3.Creation

e.g. I could use more outcome-focused and accountable language in my communication. This would give me greater impact and increase my level of influence.

e.g. When I have previously stood up in meetings I haven't thought about my posture and breathing, and being nervous too my voice is sometimes squeaky and pitchy. Therefore I find it difficult to be heard and don't find it easy to influence others.

My commitments and actions	Date
e.g. Me at my best - capture this and look at it at the start of the day for five minutes	From tomorrow
e.g. Capture my key messages and how I will communicate for key presentations and meetings. Prep for management meeting	Experience
e.g. Watch Amy Cuddy TED talk and practise 'power posing' to improve my confidence and delivery	By the end of next week

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This workbook has been produced and edited by everywoman, with content commissioned from associate expert Kate Fletcher. It is part of the everywoman portfolio of resources that have been specially created to support and develop women as they advance their careers and businesses.

everywoman Expert



Kate Fletcher is an experienced board level executive, with 20+ years general management and sales and marketing leadership experience in some of the world's leading consumer goods businesses. Kate's last corporate role was on the GB Board of Britvic Soft Drinks PLC as Commercial Director.

Further reading

- *MPresence: How To Use Positive Energy For Success In Every Situation; Patsy Rodenburg (Penguin, 2009)*
- *People Styles at Work; Bolton & Bolton (Amacom, 2009)*
- *Brilliant NLP Workbook; Molden & Hutchinson (Pearson Business, 2010)*
- *Made to Stick; Chip Heath & Dan Heath (Arrow, 2008)*

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