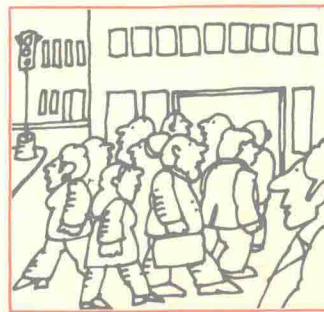
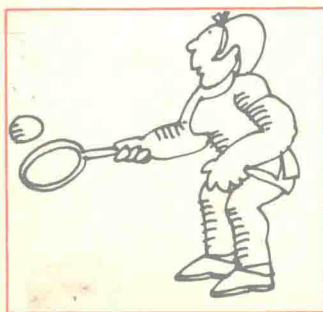
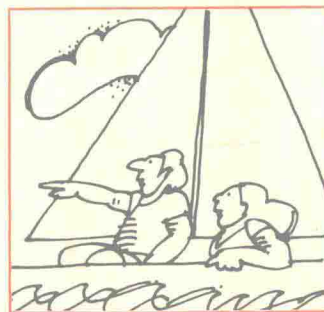
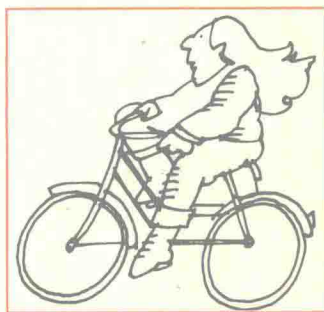


DONALD B. MILLER

# PERSONAL VITALITY

- ☐ A Life Goal
- ☐ A Life and Career Strategy
- ☐ A New Work Ethic
- ☐ An Organization Strategy



# Personal Vitality

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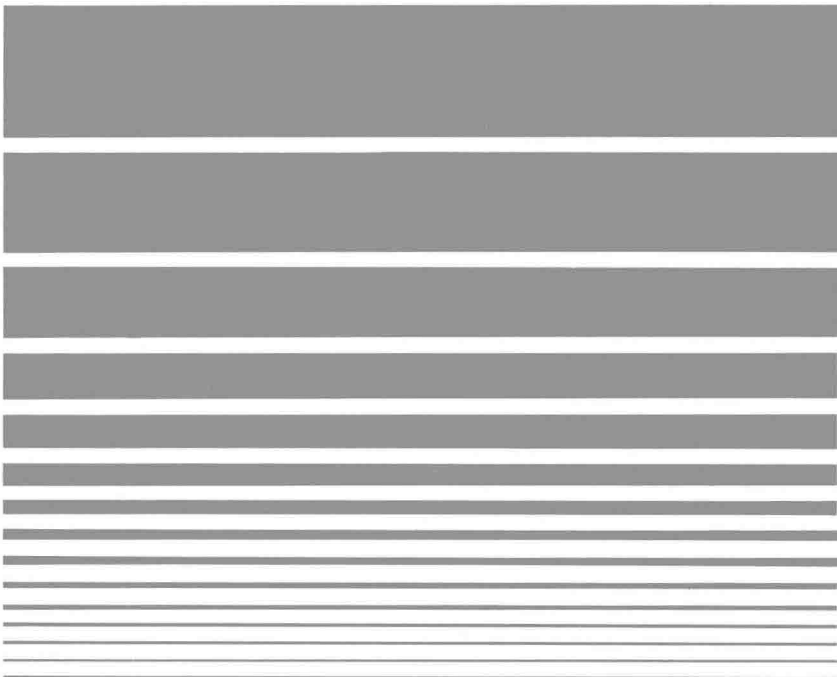
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*To: Avis, my mother;  
Alice, my wife;  
and Chris and James, our sons*



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# Preface

## Introduction

This book is about human resources. It is about changes in goals, about managing careers, about work. Most of all it is about personal vitality, about what George Bernard Shaw called the “life force.”

Vitality is the opposite of dying on the vine. It is growing physically, mentally, psychologically, spiritually. It is the ability to adapt to new conditions, new information, new outlooks. It is growth in awareness, understanding, forgiveness. It is the transcendent, evident quality of an alive and growing organism. The thesis of the book is that personal vitality is an integrating life purpose, an emerging work ethic, a viable personal, managerial, and governmental strategy for survival, improved meaningfulness, and quality of life.\*

We are living in exciting times of rapid change. Change puts a high priority on continued learning, adaptation, and growth for each of us if we are to gain satisfactions from using our capabilities and contribute to improved life quality. Adult change is part of life management. Adult change includes shifts of values both in response to our inner needs and in response to the world around us. Adult change may mean change in life-style, change in career or job, change in the purpose and central theme. Change is necessary for enhancement and extension of personal vitality, and so this book is about managing change.

Both as individuals and as a nation we are becoming increasingly aware of the price we must pay for quality in our lives. Much of our progress has been accomplished without assessing possible

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\* For a definition and discussion of vitality see Chapter 1.

costs in the loss of quality. Now we are stepping up to tough decisions about air and water quality, about living conditions, about the balance between individual rights and the necessity for government. In a way this book is about "human ecology" ways of assessing the price we are paying to live our lives as we are living them. It is about making improved choices and thus emphasizes another aspect of quality. This quality should be an output from all our activities, our work, our families, our special interests, and even our private or unshared time. This quality is directly related to human development.

Human development takes place in several areas. It takes place in the context of the community. Here we learn what it means to be a citizen, to gain from our membership and to contribute to the whole. It takes place in a private or individual sense. It is here we learn of our strengths and weaknesses, how to grow our skills and knowledge, and gain a sense of who we are and what we are worth. It takes place in the context of the organization of which we are part. In our work or employment, for example, we learn the rules of the game, the values and goals of the organization, and what is success in that special world. Human development also takes place in the context of the group. It is here we learn the meaning of team, of loyalty, of support, and of the fact that a group in synchronism is more than the sum of its parts. This book is about human development and is designed to provide the reader with ways to improve personal growth and development.

My awareness of these issues facing adults and my sense of need for this book comes from several sources. First, it comes from my own life. I have learned that a life strategy is essential and that the pursuit of vitality should be part of it. Second, it comes from my experiences in trying to help organizations build environments which capture the interest and commitment of their members and contribute positively to the growth and development of their members. Third, it comes from my attempts to counsel and help others improve their lives, make tough value choices, decide what to study and how to enrich their careers and their work experiences. Fourth, it comes from my experiences as a manager where I have discovered the need to try to match individual needs and capabilities with organizational needs and capabilities. I've seen the improvement in productivity for the company and satisfaction for the individual when there is a good match. And lastly, it comes from my experi-

ence in design of continuing education and in teaching about the issues in this book in an industrial and work environment. These teaching experiences have both shaped the content and convinced me of the desire people have for the suggestions and ideas expressed here.

## Acknowledgments

Certainly many of the thoughts expressed in this book have grown in the positive work environment of IBM. I owe much to my experience at IBM for it has shown me the value of respect for the individual in the organization and high humanistic goals. The views expressed are my own, however, and should in no way be construed as representing IBM policy or position. I take full responsibility for the book as a personal statement. The statements and thoughts—both good and bad—are my statements. If there are flaws in the logic, errors of commission or omission, they are my errors.

I'm deeply indebted to many who have shared research, experimentation, dreams, and thoughts with me. Some have done this through their writings or speeches and some have exchanged ideas with me face to face. The list is long, but a few include James Kip Finch, my boss at Columbia and former Dean of Engineering; H. Tyler Marcy, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, who taught me many things as my manager at IBM; Albert B. Cherns, a leading British social scientist, friend and searcher for improved quality of work life; Alan Watts, philosopher; Carl Rogers, psychologist; Arthur G. Anderson, one of my IBM managers, executive and philosopher; Lou Mischkind, IBM San Jose psychologist and coworker; W.A. Goddard, IBM engineer, friend and coworker; Jack Downing, M.D., friend and searcher; Sidney M. Jourard, psychologist; Richard W. Schmelzer, retired, formerly of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, teacher and writer; and Peter Drucker, management author.

Several people have read the manuscript and made detailed comments and suggestions. They are William A. Weimer of IBM, Albert B. Cherns, and Richard Schmelzer. Lou Mischkind and Bill Goddard, both of IBM, have read and commented on parts. For their time, interest, and helpful suggestions I'm deeply grateful.

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Special thanks go to my wife, Alice, whose love and skills as a wife, critic, editor, and typist have made this book possible. In addition, my secretary, June Fujii, my former secretary, Madeline Pin-sent, and the IBM administrative center have all assisted with typing of early drafts and a few of the final chapters. I'm indebted to each of them for their assistance.

*Saratoga, California*  
*January 1977*

D.B.M.

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# Introduction

## Vitality and work

Why should I write and why should you read a book on personal vitality? Because the priority for maintaining and enhancing vitality has skyrocketed. Vitality has become critical to both personal and organizational survival. At the same time, however, enhancement of human effectiveness, growth, and a sense of accomplishment, all part of vitality, are becoming more difficult for the individual and the organization. We are caught in a convergence of changes in values, which intensifies our concerns about the purposes and nature of life. A central life purpose is necessary for vitality. A central purpose is necessary for extending and enhancing life. Yet we are at odds with our purposes.

One of these changes in values has to do with work. Alienation from work has become pervasive: the daily news refers to this attitude as the “blue collar blues,” caused, in part, by jobs which require individuals to act like machines. Many feel there is a broad general decline in positive attitudes about work. Headlines feature executive dropouts. People are returning to craft activities in which they experience a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction they have lost or are denied in the tasks of the business world. Unions have begun to raise questions about work content and nonfinancial satisfactions as major elements in future planning. Leading business organizations like Mead Paper, General Foods, and Volvo are experimenting with major changes in the nature of work as a way of regaining individual commitment and improving the psychological income from work. It is *absolutely necessary* for each individual and each organization to reestablish a sense of purpose and meaningfulness for life as well as to create new ways to learn and grow. Good work can provide such a purpose.

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The impact of changes in cultural values about work is becoming evident in many groups. It first appeared with the phenomenon of "dropouts" in the younger generation. Next there was a significant shift away from career-related studies in the universities. Students failing to see the connection between study and life began turning away from preparation for work. Why indeed should they study engineering and business when the probability of obtaining a job using their training had dropped significantly?\*

More recently this trend away from a study/work relationship has been heightened by the economic crunch which made it tough just to find a job. This leads to a lack of fulfillment for the new seriousness expressed on campus. Recent graduates are increasingly demanding that their work be meaningful and fulfilling. This will heighten their problems in relating to work as they fail to find realization of their expectations for utilization of their educational preparation. They are demanding their work have social purpose and provide for their personal growth. This establishes their need for the insights and understandings expressed in this book. Expectations about satisfaction from work grow as our educational level grows. But economic pressure for a job, any job, forces us down the Maslow need hierarchy toward survival need.

Not only is there a shortage of jobs and careers for people trained to be "knowledge workers," but there is concern as well about utilization of those knowledge workers who do have jobs. In the highly developed nations there are questions about the proper utilization of highly talented people. Underutilization means lost vitality and lost potential for growth and development of individuals and the country. With the great increase in the numbers of university graduates there is a real shortage of opportunities for them to apply their training, interests, and talents in ways they believe they should. This problem was highlighted in a United Nations Office of Economic Cooperation and Development Conference in Venice in October 1971.† It is in the most advanced countries that there seems to be the greatest increasing need for challenge. How to

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\* For further discussion, see James O'Toole, "The Reserve Army of the Underemployed, I—World of Work," *Change Magazine*, May 1975, pp. 26-33, 63.

† For a more complete discussion, see "Intergovernmental Conference on the Utilization of Highly Qualified Personnel," Education Committee Document #7 OECD, Venice, October 25-27, 1971.

generate new levels of challenging work in fields not previously considered important seems to be a key issue. On a short-term basis, the problem was exemplified in the United States in the early seventies by the layoffs of aerospace engineers. Many attempts to apply the skills of these specialized and highly trained people to urban or environmental problems or other activities of increased social importance have ended in failure or frustration. The unsolved problem seems to lie more in the definition of work assignments and the reassignment of monetary resources and facilities than in any real shortage of work to be done. Lack of challenging activity turns people off in regard to work, careers, and life itself. At the very least, this lack creates conditions which intensify the personal struggle to maintain vitality.

Beginning in the fifties and intensifying in the late sixties, scientific-based industries recognized a problem of technical obsolescence in people. Early solutions focused on the need for continuing education, and many new graduate programs were established. More recently it has become evident that problems of obsolescence are intensifying despite opportunities for continued education. Now the emphasis has shifted to lifelong learning rather than just continuing engineering education. Obsolescence results in part from the continued onrush of technological change. It is complicated by an increase in the average age of practicing engineers and scientists which is the result of a decrease in the rate of growth of numbers of persons being educated in and entering the field. Increased age brings about a shift in the dominant personal motivation pattern, and thus industry faces the prospect of declining professional and technical vitality. Loss of vitality for professionals leads to lessened organizational vitality; for professionals, as the creators of new products and systems, have great leverage on the organization. This loss leads, in turn, to potential loss of work satisfactions for all in the organization, to potential inroads from competition, and perhaps to the death of the enterprise.

While continuing education programs can help maintain personal vitality, problems show up even in organizations where continued study has become a way of life. Knowledge and skill are only part of being vital. Organizations are, therefore, recognizing the need for a better understanding of work and how, through improved design, work can stimulate personal growth and development. Survival of industrial enterprise and continued scientific and technical advance for the world will depend in large part on dis-

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covering how to build learning into work. This means learning which contributes to growth in the sense of increased capability, not just growth as represented by promotion. Ways of continued stimulation and introduction of change are necessary to assure the vitality of professional personnel.

This does not mean that vitality is important only for professionals. The vitality of all employees is important. In fact, the vitality of all humans is important—employed or not. “Knowledge workers” (a term coined by Peter Drucker) in all enterprises create concepts and ideas; they must push on the frontiers; they must lead and spawn work for others—so their vitality is most critical. Knowledge workers in this role include legislators, professors, doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers, programmers, and all those who add to or apply knowledge.

Those commenting on and studying work have talked of the death of the Protestant work ethic.\* The thesis of this book is that personal vitality and growth are emerging as the new work ethic. This is happening not so much because of a growth of new humanitarian values but, instead, from a recognition that finding a new ethic is the only way to attract and motivate people to work and the only way to continue progress toward a better life. Of course, this is not just a managerial problem. Each of us as an individual is facing increasing questions about the importance of work, its value to us, and how we can gain more satisfaction from it. Questions about work are part of our quest for meaning in life.

Whatever your perspective—professional or nonprofessional, manager or employee, government leader or citizen—and regardless of which of these issues about work excites your interest, the concept of vitality is intended to excite you, to stimulate questioning and personal experiment. It should help you arrive at answers which lead to the ability to manage an improved life. A primary aim is to see if together we can find a way to improve the relationship between the job and personal growth and satisfactions. This means we must design work which does not turn us off but, rather, turns us on. The job, if properly designed, can provide a focus for interest and a stimulus for activities which contribute to our vitality. This does not mean we should live for the job alone but, neither, by

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\* This is discussed in detail in Jerome M. Rosow, ed., *The Worker and the Job: Coping with Change* (The American Assembly, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Spectrum Books, 1974).

contrast, should the job be just a means to support a separate outside life.

There is no one right work/life balance. Each of us must find our own particular balance; it is personal and changing. This book is intended to help you find out what you need from work and how to achieve it. Regardless of our separate priorities and needs, I believe personal vitality is a deep, pervasive, and useful rallying theme.

## **Vitality and life**

While work is a central theme of life and a prime vehicle for growth, we do not gain vitality and growth from work alone. Early growth occurs in the context of the family. The newborn infant grows in muscle control and ability to communicate. Vitality is evidenced by learning and growth. The adolescent does a lot of growing at school and through social contacts with contemporaries. The adult grows through social contacts, hobbies, work, family responsibilities, and continued learning. Growth can result from any experience which the individual integrates and makes a part of his or her knowledge or skills in a way which makes it usable. If in the process of using capabilities the individual gains satisfactions, it is probable that this reinforcement adds to the motivation for more doing, learning, and growth. The sequence of experience leading to learning, which leads to use, which leads to payoff, which contributes to desire, is the central process for maintaining and extending vitality. This cycle should be a product of all our activities.

Being able to utilize experience and manage change and growth while maintaining some sense of personal centrality and stability are primary life challenges. One of the factors that makes this difficult today is rapid and pervasive change. Our "future shock" experiences make managing change a necessary skill. Failure to manage change successfully leads to withdrawal, reduced openness, and a loss of vitality and potential for growth. Finding out how to make growth and change less threatening, and more pleasantly stimulating, is necessary for vitality.

Another way of looking at vitality is in terms of maintenance of health. Vitality may be the theme which finally brings together all of the preventive and curative arts for the "well person." If we can find techniques for maintaining psychological and physical health it is possible we will be establishing the precondition for learning and

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growth. At the very least, good health will ensure that we have energy available to spend on positive pursuits rather than trying to overcome illness. The balance, or homeostasis, good mental and physical health, is probably an element of the security and safety one needs to take on the risks of personal growth and change.

Coming to the fore in Western culture at this time are the teachings of the East as represented in Chinese and Indian philosophies or practices. These philosophies and teachings, exemplified by meditation and exercises such as Tai Chi, emphasize the need to find the “natural way” as a key to succeeding in life. They teach the importance of finding and transcending self and of learning to become at once more conscious, more awake, and more relaxed as keys to growth. The search for the meaning of these trends, new to Western culture, is part of the challenge of finding the inner self and the internal controls or programs which extend and enhance personal growth and vitality.

Also emerging as applicable techniques are the outputs of the growth movement and scientific advances. These take the forms, for example, of encounter, organization development, team building, and biofeedback; and all highlight the importance of experiential learning as opposed to book or cognitive learning. Biofeedback, for example, holds the promise of extending personal learning by providing a mirror for feedback, permitting correction and control of aspects of our lives we did not previously control. While not endorsing all these activities, this book will attempt to help you analyze their meaning. This should set the stage for you to draw from them anything which appears to help in the maintenance and extension of your vitality.

### **Decision points and change**

One of the requirements for vitality is understanding careers, career planning, and career management. There was a time when a career was believed to be lifelong. For some years we've recognized that life is increasingly made up of a sequence of careers. The first view was that there were definite breaks between careers. We thought that career change meant dramatic shifts. Now it is becoming evident that most careers overlap and that one carries skills and interests from one to another. Each career is built on new knowledge and skills, but also utilizes some skills and knowledge from prior careers. Historically, career counsel was designed to help

high-school and college students make their lifelong career decision. With this new understanding of careers, it is obvious career management is a continuing process. We are just beginning to develop concepts and ideas about career counsel for the mature adult. These are explored in this book.

An important part of navigating through life is learning how to deal with the explosion of opportunity. Career decisions and counsel are difficult because we are no longer able to stereotype relative to existent models. Talking about an engineer, a lawyer, or a doctor will not reveal the fact that each of these professionals may participate in activities with similar skill needs and personal payouts. Learning how to communicate about the “multiplexity” of opportunities is necessary to extend our ability to manage our careers.

One of the decision points in life is the so-called mid-career crisis. It occurs not at any specific age, but rather at that point where the life perspective of the individual undergoes a major shift. This change in perspective results from reassessment of goals, the recognition that retirement is real or within your planning cycle, and with the early signs of declining physical health and energy level. Knowing how to negotiate this fork in the road of life is important in extending growth and insuring a continuing productive life.

Developing a holistic view of life at work and outside of work and establishing the proper dynamic balance between the two is also a challenge to our vitality. Throughout the course of life the desirable balance changes. The balancing process depends on learning ways of managing success by finding satisfactions in one part of life when another part fails to provide satisfactions. Also central to achieving balance is the need for achieving the right personal balance between “living for today” and “living for tomorrow”! The chapter on life balance discusses these issues.

Two decision points particularly concern women. Today's women can now more freely decide between a career outside the home and homemaking and decide whether or not to embark on other activities once their children are grown. Late entry or re-entry into the working world means that one has missed the period when reputations are established and that one has to maintain vitality through a period of nonuse of special capabilities. These adjustments probably call for special kinds of life-management techniques, transition training, and re-education.

Retirement as a concept is firmly embedded in our culture. The social-security system and most retirement plans set arbitrary ages, like 62 or 65. It is probable that the radical change from being