

**Zen**  
**and the**  
**Art** of  
**Cubicle**  
**Freedom**

Nicholas Bate



**Do not be alarmed.** The cubicle which you currently inhabit for well over eight hours of each Earth day is not your life. It is merely a stepping stone, a place of reference, a place where handy things can be learned. How not to treat people. The essence of demotivation. Why natural light is important. How e-mail- apparently free- costs organisations billions every year in wasted time. And why you should never, ever leave your career to a CEO who does not understand your subsidiary. Learn the lessons. Learn them well and *be poised like the most elegant of Panthers to move on.*

Before you can be physically free you need to be mentally free. You will at some stage leave the cubicle and manage your own destiny. And in the meantime you can practice **Zen and the Art of Cubicle Freedom.**

- 1. I am not my cubicle.**
- 2. My cubicle may limit me physically but it cannot do so mentally.**
- 3. Every day I will work on my cubicle escape plan.**
- 4. My plan requires an idea. I can find one.**
- 5. My plan requires courage. I can build such courage.**
- 6. My plan requires action. I am committed to such.**
- 7. I am not my cubicle.**

## Zen and the Art of Cubicle Freedom

And how do we get that breakthrough idea (4)?

By believing in ourselves.  
By dreaming. But not by hallucinating.

By giving ourselves permission to take a break every day and think. To write like we have never written before until the hand aches or the typing fingers are blistered. To enhance clearer thinking by gulping fresh air, looking up and staring at a star studded sky and realising it all started out there somewhere. To reduce hallucination by reducing drastically corn syrup laden sodas, meetings which revolve around the choice of



Creativity Poised, © Nicholas Bate, Nov 2012

which donut/doughnut and bags of chips/ crisps on the passenger seat as we hurtle up the highway/motorway to a meeting. *By realising that the idea is within us struggling to get out like a creature in the first Alien film.* By realising we will either have no rest until we get on that quest or we will have to give up and become so dulled that we will be only able to create excitement in our life by waiting for Skyfall 2.

**By waking up. By getting real. By taking action.**

And how do we get courage (5)?

**By getting good at something.** *Really good.* Rock star good.

It doesn't really matter whether it is making bread, making music, parenting, football or archery. Or writing or drawing or thinking or sewing or knitting or cooking. Or leading. Or selling. But no longer playing. No longer amateur. No longer a kid. Growing up and excelling. Once we have that brilliance at something it gives us courage to step into an area where we know we need to learn. But with courage we can learn fast. Very fast indeed. **By waking up. By getting real. By taking action.**

**And how do we get action (6)?** By making it a habit. Like brushing your teeth. Or checking your stock price. Or walking the dog. By starting small. By starting easy. By reminding yourself why it is critical. By not expecting it to be easy. By not listening to the 'nay-sayers'. By getting up when you fall. By trying again. By trying another approach. By making it even smaller. By making it a habit.



## Zen and the Art of Cubicle Freedom

*I am not my cubicle...*

I am not my cubicle. I am not my e-mail address. I am certainly not my security badge encircling my neck like a small child on a school trip to the zoo. I am definitely not the photo on that badge. I am not my regular lasagne and salad in the staff canteen. I am not the back seat on the shuttle bus from the station to the offices. *I am not my medium latte, extra shot, dash of vanilla.* I am not the guy staring out the window from the eighth floor wondering where did a decade go? I am not the zombie sitting in the Tuesday 0930-1100 project meeting. I am not the guy who keeps missing his daughter's bath time and his son's junior football because of poor planning by the Head Office. I am not the guy who thought my health was an appropriate cost to pay for a fancy job title. I am not my job grade. I am not my 'look after it carefully' wrist-band to the staff party. I am not my rejected strategic plan. I am not the five billion unread slide-decks sitting on my lap-top. I am not even my limited edition corporate logo emblazoned Moleskine. I am not the feed-back given to me at the bell-curve adjusted quarterly review. I am not my 'adjusted-just-for-me' office chair. I am not my tea mug in the cupboard in the galley kitchen. I am not the 'handed down' values.

***I am a free person and I will start thinking for myself again.***

## Zen and the Art of Cubicle Freedom

Nicholas Bate is passionate about supporting people to ensure they **realise** and **release** their true and full potential. It is the simple purpose of his organisation, Strategic Edge.

After a career in sales and marketing in the IT industry, culminating in leading sector marketing for Research Machines, Oxford, UK Nicholas launched Strategic Edge. A small, premium consultancy, Strategic Edge specialises in creating long-term leadership competitive advantage for its clients including Microsoft, Marks and Spencer, The BBC, Royal Sun Alliance, Oxfam and Warwick University amongst others.

A pioneering 'thought leader', Nicholas has introduced and worked with his clients on a range of simple yet powerful concepts which help with the challenges such as ever-demanding productivity, work-life balance and new routes to innovation.

He has produced and teaches four pioneering courses: Personal Excellence; Brilliant at the Basics; Personal Presence and Leadership Excellence. His brand new course Instant MBA was launched in September 2011 to rave reviews.

Consistently rated as an inspirational yet highly pragmatic key-note speaker, Nicholas teaches around the world (UK and continental Europe; USA and Canada; Asia) and is particularly skilled at working in an experiential and engaging manner. He works as a coach to many senior people in the industry in areas such as presentation skills, work-life balance and creativity.

Nicholas has an active and inspirational yet highly practical blog with a world-wide following:

**[www.nicholasbate.typepad.com](http://www.nicholasbate.typepad.com)**