

< HOW TO BE > BRILLIANT

- 1: **Decide.** Decide to be so. To be kick-ass, stadium-rocking good at what you do. Be it fishing, presenting, parenting or fixing cars. **Decide.** *You'll never look back.*
- 2: **Do it better.** For no other reason than you can. Answer the phone more promptly and with an even friendlier manner. Craft an even better report. Give them even more value in your training module. Make an even more perfect doppio espresso. Whatever. **Do it better**, simply because you can. You will get noticed.
- 3: **Discover and work to your strengths.** They come 'easily' and hence you can become really, really good at them. Nurture your nature. But along the way, fix the potential critical weaknesses. You may be a cool designer, but you need to turn up on time. Sure you are a wonderful band but you need to be able to price your gigs. And you are a wonderful presenter but can you follow-up on actions after the pitch? **Discover.**
- 4: **Look after yourself.** To be the best version of you, to be brilliant, it's (literally) vital. Do less and achieve more. Take quality breaks. Take a retreat. Spend time re-charging. Get enough sleep. Read for inspiration. Spend more time with those who encourage and support and less time with those who are negative and criticise. Allow yourself to get it wrong. Look after yourself.
- 5: **Be curious.** Fanatically, absolutely curious. About your subject, about the periphery of your subject and of stuff outside your subject. The future belongs to The New Renaissance Man. Over-specialisation got us into this mess: *so hunkered down in a silo, we didn't notice the impact elsewhere.* Get out of the silo. Get out on the street. Read widely, discuss broadly. **Be curious.**
- 6: **Invest in yourself.** Always have a book on the go. An audio version in the car, a pod-cast on your iPhone. Immerse yourself in that new skill until you have got it. Discounted cash-flow, unplugged presenting, copy-writing. Invest, invest, invest. Once you have got that skill nobody can take it away from you. You are constantly becoming more valuable. **Invest in yourself.**
- 7: **Help others.** Why not help others? It's fun. You learn a lot about yourself. And some, in return will help you. *And in a tough, turbulent world everyone of us needs all the help we can get.* **Help others.**
- 8: **Walk regularly.** Sure it's good for your heart and lungs. But it's remarkably good for your brain, too. Get out of the office, leave ALL technology behind. Walk to the deli a couple of blocks away and as you do: enjoy the weather (rain or shine) and think. When you come back you will be better. Refreshed, thoughtful and a couple of problems in perspective. **Walk regularly.**
- 9: **Focus.** Once you have decided, focus. Give it time. Swimming will be hard the first few times, nobody will want to speak to you about your new initiative initially. But hang on in there. Others will want to 'do something new'. Not yet: give it the proper amount of time. **Focus.**
- 10: **Take breaks.** Working long and hard causes the body to seek refuge in reptilian or fight/flight behaviour as it suspects the worst. All well and good but our greatest asset is then lost: our human ability to think and make choices. Take regular, real (no technology) breaks during the day. Get into the fresh air, leave the phone, walk and stretch. Notice true productivity (being effective) soar. **Take breaks.**
- 11: **Rest.** Sometimes, just let it go. **Rest.**
- 12: **Consolidate.** Every so often: stop and think. How's it going? Where am I making progress? What needs a re-think? What can I build upon, what do I need to change? **Consolidate.**
- 13: **Have a Plan.** The plan may or not be fulfilled. It may or may not execute as you would wish. But there is absolutely no doubt about it, if you have a plan for your presentation, interview, meeting, product launch, journey, book ...you are so much more likely to be successful. **Have a Plan.**
- 14: **Be different.** Not weird: that alarms people. But a coffee shop that opens in time for the first commuter train, a book-shop which understands books, an insurance company which has your interests at heart, a doctor who believes lifestyle does come into it... be different and people will come to you. **Be different.**

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- 15: **Prioritise.** Yes: there is too much to potentially do. That's because you have a great Life and you have imagination. Don't solve 'too much to do' by working longer hours: you are simply pinching that time from another part of your Life, typically home/personal or health or all of those. No, be tough: what are the essentials in this part of my Life? **Prioritise.**
- 16: **Be polite.** It makes doing business so much more pleasant; it enables full and rounded communication; it creates trust rapidly. And of those who are rude and don't 'deserve' your politeness? Be polite anyway: you may well shock them into a whole new way of interacting with the world. **Be polite and have fun.**
- 17: **Be enthusiastic.** It's infectious. It's good for your health. It gets stuff done. Nothing to feel enthusiastic about? Huh? You ended up on one of the very few habitable chunks of rock in the known universe. It has a breathable atmosphere, water and great music. You, too, can be **enthusiastic.**
- 18: **Stay hungry.** The first album, the first consultancy job, the first novel, the first sale and installation: they're often your greatest work. You really, really wanted that work. Don't let success and/or busyness dilute your efforts and distract you from your vision. Wake up every morning darn hungry to do a great job. Rain or shine. Stack of dollars on the bed-side table or not. **Stay hungry: learn from the greatest who lost that passion.**
- 19: **Stay Lean.** Get rid of the baggage, physical and mental. Think cowboy: horse, saddle-bags and blanket roll. Think Anne Frank: a diary and her faith. Think Roger Bannister and the number 4. Don't get slowed down. Don't make it complicated. **Stay Lean.**
- 20: **Laugh.** laugh, chuckle, guffaw, smile... It puts it all in proportion. It releases feel good chemicals. It bonds people. It flattens big egos. There's always time for a smile, a chuckle and downright laugh-out-loud fun in the brilliant Life. **Laugh.**
- 21: **1%:** that's all it takes. Say your helpfulness was upped by 1%. Or your creativity? Or your ability to pitch or close deals? Or if you had 1% more energy? And how easy is it to get just 1% more? Pretty easy. And if you multiplied a few of those '1%'s together e.g. 1% more enthusiasm times 1% better closing etc. what would happen? Well, you'd be brilliant. **1%:** that's all it takes.
- 22: **Love The Numbers.** Numbers are sexy. Forget the jokes about accountants. Get a grip on both *talking numbers* (cash-flow, P&L, the ratios...) and *knowing what they are.* In many situations numbers are power. Without them the gut, intuitive feeling which is in itself very powerful loses its qualifying and/or supporting edge. We do need to know how many, how much, what it cost. We can always decide to ignore it, but at least we ignored it intelligently. **Love The Numbers.**
- 23: **Copy.** Copy the best in your field. Golfers, copy-writers, tele-sales people. Who are the best in your chosen field and what do they specifically do to be so good at what they do? Get close to them. What exactly do they do-not necessarily what they say they do. E.g. top salespeople will say they close. They do, but in fact they are usually successful because of the questions they ask earlier in the sale. Top copy-writers say it's their use of descriptive language. True but in fact it's more than that: it's sensory rich language which engages. Find the best, build rapport with them and notice what they do. And copy it. You can build on that platform later. **Copy.**
- 24: **Lead.** When nobody is saying anything in the meeting rapidly going off track: say something and get it back on track. When the last thing you feel like on a wet November morning is motivating your team: motivate them. When nobody is willing to squash the negative conversation in the canteen: squash it. When lead is in your job title: lead. When lead is not in your job title: lead. Leadership is a mindset, not a grade nor a permission nor a badge. **Lead.**
- 25: **Breathe.** Nice and easy. Steady and deep. Get the oxygen to your brain it so much desires. Sit comfortably up-right at your desk. Stretch regularly. Go for a walk mid-day. Notice how much easier everything is when you are really breathing. Breathe fully and properly to be brilliant... **Breathe.**
- 26: **Be Patient.** Life does not use a simple linear equation: **effort in=results out.** Sometimes, a LOT of effort is needed to get the results you desire (a book deal). Sometimes, the results you desire take a year or so (getting back to health). Sometimes the results you want come in a mysterious way (despite doing on-line dating and some speed dating, you bump into the guy of your dreams buying vegetables down at the Farmer's Market). It's worth hanging on in there. You will get what you want. **Be patient.**

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- 27: **Study.** In a world where almost anything can be Googled/ Binged, what's the point of really knowing and learning things? Answer: it's the platform for your own breakthroughs, innovation and thought leadership. Study hard in your chosen field. Leak those studies into peripheral areas and study at the interfaces to other fields, too. Know stuff (learn it), Knead stuff (use it, apply it) and then Knit stuff (create your own ideas and concepts). **Study.**
- 28: **Note-book.** Paper or electronic, it's no big deal. Start jotting stuff down. Quotes, references. Things to follow up. Ideas. Authors to read. A person to try and contact. Have it with you most of the time which is the possible advantage of a small paper note-book+pencil. Regularly review and consolidate. Musings and quotations, not just actions. Private to you. More scrap-book, less text-book. This is the book you are writing. This is the book which is the basis of identifying your unique brilliance. Get one. Write one. Daily. **Note-book.**
- 29: **Scale.** Get good at scale. When do you need to be a big picture visionary? Thinking ahead, dreaming and plotting: hot-air balloon view. And when do you need to come down to Earth, change the scale and think detail, detail and yet more detail. One aspect of 'being brilliant' is about choosing the right sense of scale at the right time. **Scale.**
- 30: **Chemistry.** A great meeting needs chemistry between the players. A presentation needs chemistry between you and the audience. You and your future business partner need a certain chemistry. Chemistry is the soft stuff, the intangible that turns 'pretty good' into 'brilliant'. A great gig into an awesome one. An OK pasta place into an excellent one. Think about the molecules you are generating: **open, abundant, encouraging and receptive?** Or hostile, cynical, closed? It's not a cologne nor after-shave; it's a choice. **Chemistry.**
- 31: **Use Your Head.** You have the most marvellous brain. But on a daily basis we mis-treat it. Distract it with crazy multi-tasking, poison it with corn syrup over-load, fatigue it by taking no breaks, torture it with lack of sleep, cause it deep anxiety by dwelling on what's not going to happen, deprive it of fresh information by not reading... Don't do it. Just don't do it. Love your brain and it will amply return the care and attention lavished upon it. Start now: *you really don't need that third cola.* Really. **Use Your Head.**
- 32: **Act on Feed-back.** Get regular feed-back and act upon it. Sure, some people are rude. Some overly critical. Some are too nice. But if you ask enough people you will identify themes ('*you don't listen*', '*you are really creative*', '*you're brilliant at pitching*', '*you really need to address your time-keeping*'...) and that's what you need to address. **Act on feed-back.**
- 33: Establish your **rhythm and rituals.** Create a certain rhythm to your day: your highly productive writing/ creating/thinking parts. Your sheer doing, labouring parts. Your chill out/relax parts. Punctuate that with certain rituals. The walk, the conversation, the reflective ristretto coffee, preparing a meal. Simple brilliance can appear from simple **rhythm and ritual.**
- 34: **Forget Perfect.** Brilliant isn't about being perfect. In fact trying to be perfect is what so often stifles releasing the best version of ourselves which is the key to our route to brilliance. No: raise your standards, sure. Don't walk by a quality issue, true. But don't get hung up about 100% perfection. Presentations which are too slick don't engage. Timetabled vacations for the kids are not so much fun for those on the receiving end. And perfect marketing plans so often lack bite. A bit of *wabi sabi*, a bit of imperfection is an important key to brilliance. **Forget Perfect.**
- 35: **Do.** Don't just talk. Don't just read. Don't just study. Brilliant is a verb. Brilliant is an activity. Get out there and knock their socks off. Today. With your pitch, the meals you serve, the cars you service, the constituents you speak to, the children you teach, the clients you consult with, the book you write. Do it brilliantly. **Do.**

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- 36: **Balance.** Brilliant isn't making it on the stock exchange if you never see your kids. Brilliant isn't winning the company Porsche two quarters in a row if the third quarter you were in hospital with chest pains. Brilliant isn't doing it just to impress the neighbours. Brilliant is achieving balance across what is important to you: only you can decide what that is. It isn't easy. That's why it's a characteristic of brilliance. **Balance.**
- 37: **Have courage.** Too many people won't speak out in meetings. Or do hang around to be last out of the car-park. Or do respond to e-mail from their boss on a Sunday afternoon. Not you. You know that isn't brilliant. That's keep your head down. No: have the courage to work from a deeper place than just the immediate issue and not walk by a quality issue: a poorly run meeting, a customer being poorly treated or a badly managed 're-org'. **Have courage.**
- 38: **Be on time, every time.** Have your notes with you. Polish your shoes. In one sense it's harder and harder to pull ahead of the competition. But in another, it's easier: the basics are increasingly poorly addressed. Do an agenda for your meeting and your professionalism will be noted. Remember and use your host's name at the conference. Do the basics, brilliantly. Consistently. **Be on time, every time.**
- 39: **No excuses.** No, he wasn't late because of the traffic. He got up late. No, the essay wasn't of poor quality because of too many deadlines. She didn't have a plan. Global Conglomerates isn't doing badly because of the recession. It doesn't have a 'hard times' strategy. It's pretty easy to find an excuse. And a lot of the time you can get away with it. But it causes your standards to degrade so quickly and it sure isn't brilliant. Keep an excuse for when it isn't really an excuse. **No excuses.**
- 40: **Be There. When you are at home: be there; stop worrying about work. When you are at work: be there; stop wishing the day away. When you are playing Lego with your daughter: be there; at your son's football match: be there; when she's low and writes to you: be there. Be There.**
- 41: **Today. Today is a great day to be brilliant. Go for it. Today.**
- 42: **Get Clear on You. Get clear on who you are and what you offer the planet. You've got to become you. Parents, school, books, music, politicians have all done their fair share to shape you, for good and for bad. But it's now time to start releasing your brilliance. What are you about? What's your philosophy? What's your contribution to this spinning rock hurtling through space? Get a handle on that and your brilliance will shine. Get Clear on You.**
- 43: **Manage Your Own Career.** Nobody: your manager, your CEO, your HR specialist has your career truly, really in mind. You must take that action. Every month take 15 minutes to look at your CV. Does this represent your brilliance? If so: how will you maintain it? If not: what needs to be done? Don't delegate nor out-source the management of your career. Take it 100% on board and get it back on track. **Manage Your Own Career.**
- 44: **Be consistent.** The croissants need to be *melt-in-your-mouth buttery* every day. The high-wire act needs to be *consistently terrifying*. Your team's customer service needs to be truly *remarkable*. Brilliance isn't about one-offs. Nor is it about 100% perfection. Does it rule out spontaneity? No way! But it is about consistency. Turn up on time, every time, day after day. Easy? No. Brilliant? Yes. **Be consistent.**
- 45: **Systems.** You don't want to waste your energy trying to find that document, be it paper or electronic. Nor wondering which clients you should chase for actions. Nor money. And your big ideas need to be front of mind not lost at the bottom of a drawer or back of a notebook. Systems automate, make things easy, save your energy and ensure what needs to be done gets done. So you can really concentrate on being brilliant. Whether it's a brought-forward file, a white-board, both or something totally different, sort a system soon. **Systems.**
- 46: **Pause.** Just slow down. The adrenaline is building: too much, too fast. You're running, not thinking. Clearing e-mail not creating. Talking hurriedly in corridors not making business breakthroughs. Pause; take a breath; re-connect; be here now. Re-engage brilliance. Cool. **Pause.**

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- 47: **Physics.** Newton's Third Law of Motion says '*to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction*'. The commercial world is much the same. To get the results out, you need to put the work in. The only thing is that unlike your experiments in the lab at school, the reaction to your stimulus can be delayed. Marketing activity may take months to yield robust sales. Your reputation may take years to build. But it will. Perhaps it's easier to think of it in terms of karma. Whatever. **Physics.**
- 48: **Tomorrow.** Have a plan. With a plan you save a lot of energy and you are more likely to get what you want. Sure, things will crop up. Yep, things will go off plan. But overall you achieve a lot, lot more: you stay effective. Draw a vertical time line for the day and allocate actions against that time line also allowing time for meetings (planning and recovery), breaks and a bit of 'managing crises' time. Most importantly make use of your peak productive times by matching tough tasks to maximum productivity. Have a plan. **Tomorrow.**
- 49: **Don't Worry.** Well, do worry about some things. Have you got a plan B for your pitch to Global? Have you got some cash for taxis? Has your daughter done enough revision? But don't worry about everything: it's debilitating, it's distracting and most importantly most of your worrying doesn't change things one iota. It will probably still rain. He may well not turn up. The flight could be delayed. Whatever: be resourceful, be brilliant. **Don't Worry.**
- 50: **Start.** Brilliance isn't a 'done and dusted' destination. The client gets more demanding, there are more exam hurdles for your children to leap and things in general become slowly but surely more uncertain. Brilliance is a path, a journey, a clearly defined arrow's flight. Choose it and you'll get what you want; whatever that might be. But you have got to start. **Start.**

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Nicholas Bate CV

Nicholas Bate is passionate about supporting people to ensure they realise and release their true and full potential.

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: Barclays, IBM, Marks & Spencer, Microsoft and Warwick University amongst others.

Nicholas earned a degree in Chemistry and carried out research in the field of Molecular Biophysics at Magdalen College, Oxford University and is an NLP Master Practitioner, MBTI (levels 1 and 2) accredited and a qualified (PGCE) teacher. As well as instigating the Strategic Edge research programme, he has spent time studying with many of the recognised practitioners in the fields of business and personal development. A pioneering 'thought leader', Nicholas has introduced and worked with his clients on a range of vital concepts. He was one of the 'first to field' with such important concepts as work-life balance; think global, act local and in his book of January 2008 was one of the first to call and recognise the severity of the 2008/9/10 recession.

Consistently rated as an inspirational yet highly pragmatic 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.

He is the author of nine acclaimed books:

Being The Best: how to realise and release your true potential

Get A Life: how to achieve the work-life balance you are seeking

JfDI: Just Do It: the definitive guide to enabling your vision

Unplugged: the time for personal re-invention is now

Beat the Recession: a blueprint for success in tough times

Have it your way: how to influence

Instant MBA: MBA thinking, quickly.

Blackberry Fool: how to use the clever device with intelligence

How to Sell and Market your Way out of this Recession

He has an active and inspirational yet highly practical blog with a world-wide following.

Nicholas is a visiting lecturer at Warwick University Business School, teaching on the full-time, part-time and IBM specific MBA programmes. His specialist areas are leadership and entrepreneurial thinking.

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