



## *sample* CHAPTER

The following is a sample chapter  
from the book  
'How to Lose Friends and Infuriate People'  
by Jonar Nader

# HOW TO LOSE FRIENDS AND INFURIATE PEOPLE

FOURTH EDITION

Jonar Nader is an author, journalist, lecturer, philosopher, futurist, consultant, and a corporate and social warrior. He is dedicated to teaching others how to live a zestful and enchanting life. He urges people to say what needs to be said, to fight for what needs to be won, and to do what must be done, even if they have to lose friends and infuriate people. ★ Apart from his work in the areas of marketing, technology, and leadership, Jonar is an international commentator on the subjects of politics, war, religion, and civil unrest. ★ As the world's only Post-Tentative Virtual Surrealist, Jonar is a Digital-Age Philosopher and educator who has worked and consulted for some of the world's largest organisations, including Compaq/HP and IBM. ★ He was the co-founder of the *Information Technology Society* and the *New Leaders Foundation*. ★ He is also the author of *How to Lose Friends and Infuriate Your Boss*, *How to Lose Friends and Infuriate Thinkers*, *How to Lose Friends and Infuriate Lovers*, and 'Z', the novel. He is the author of *Prentice Hall's Illustrated Dictionary of Computing*, and the technology writer for *Butterworths's Legal Dictionary* and the *Concise Legal Dictionary*. ★ Jonar is highly sought-after as a lecturer, corporate presenter, and consultant in the areas of technology, leadership, management, thinking skills, teamwork, marketing, advertising, terrorism, and politics in all its forms. ★ Jonar can be contacted via:

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a sign of maturity to choose what is right,*

*A sign of character to voice what you like  
a sign of integrity to voice what is right,*

*A sign of bravery to do what you like  
a sign of heroism to do what is right.*

POEM WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR AT AGE 16



THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE *heroes*  
WHO KNOW THAT *nothing* IS EVER FINAL,  
THAT POSSIBILITIES *are* ENDLESS,  
THAT LIFE IS *never* SIMPLE,  
THAT A ROLLING STONE *can* GATHER MOSS,  
THAT A WATCHED KETTLE *does* BOIL,  
AND THAT THOSE WHO CRY *last*,  
CRY *the* MOST.

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**START HERE**

**SETTING *the* SCENE**

IN A NUTSHELL,  
WHAT THIS BOOK IS ALL ABOUT

LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND self-development principles are taught at hundreds of colleges to thousands of students who read millions of books. Yet companies collapse, businesses blunder, and friendships fail, while individuals and organisations are enslaved to inefficiency, inaccuracy, and instability.

Why is it that so many popular techniques have a higher propensity to fail than to succeed? All this, despite the groundwork set by 'gurus' who urged us to: go on a quest in search of excellence; win friends and influence people; engage in serious creativity; capture moments of truth; and develop the seven habits of highly effective people.

Beyond the hype, the real issues have been too controversial to communicate, too tough to tackle, and too risky to raise because:

1. *It is likely that motivated individuals willing to modify or change their habits would feel isolated and overwhelmed by the enormity of the tasks that lie ahead.*
2. *It is a tendency among colleagues and opponents to thwart anything that threatens the comfort of the status quo.*
3. *It is difficult to tackle well-entrenched and politically moulded standards of behaviour.*
4. *It is culturally accepted to follow the path of least resistance.*
5. *It is a mammoth task to single-handedly challenge the establishment.*
6. *It is a fact that social and cultural forces that accommodate mediocrity bond together to obstruct, frustrate, and dismantle any opponent through conflict or combat.*

*You wouldn't believe the number of people whom you can't please when writing a book*

Despite the efforts of commercialised gurus, it appears that individuals have not been properly guided in their pursuits. Misguided enthusiasts can be as menacing as non-believers. This results in a multitude of irritating graduates from ‘The Textbook School Of Bluffers’.

#### STAND FIRM

The title, *How to Lose Friends and Infuriate People*, points to the fact that anyone who applies what is endorsed in this book is likely to do just that. It is envisaged that this book (and its supporters) will be ripped to shreds by supposed experts who among them think that they possess the collective wisdom of the universe.

Critics of this book will start to raise all manner of irrelevant and superfluous questions that will do nothing more than unequivocally prove the need for such a book. These critics are called *hindsight experts*. They are the kind of folk who would have naively: gaoled Galileo for suggesting that the world was not flat; banned Pythagoras from enlisting mathematics enthusiasts into his club; ridiculed Alexander Graham Bell for his ‘contraption’; and told Henry Ford that his invention would never sell, except to ‘the rich and idle’.

If you find truth in this book, do not let the critics intimidate you. Critics are those whose rich and condemning vocabulary largely consists of words like: never; impossible; not done; can’t be achieved; unreasonable; unrealistic; will never happen. They have the audacity to place limits on the future. They encourage censorship and promote the ‘banning’ of all sorts of things. They prize legislation and love thought-control, promoting themselves as mind-guards. Furthermore, they hide behind empty meaningless words which they do not understand — like morals, social

standards, ethics, social behaviour, and political correctness. They have the gall to intimidate women, Jews, Christians, Moslems, socialists, communists, capitalists, those of differing lifestyles, and those of atypical sexual desires.

Righteousness. It is a timeless word that belongs to everyone. It is too bad it does not unite with ‘tolerance’ and dance with ‘individuality’ and blend with ‘acceptability’ and stay away from ‘justice’ — an obscure word that has legitimacy to the one who *applies* it, and no useful function to the one to whom it is *being* applied.

*Justice is an obscure word that has legitimacy to the one who applies it, and no useful function to the one to whom it is being applied*

#### MAJORITY VERSUS MINORITY

The *majority-rule* society has produced nothing more than heartache and intolerance. Throughout the *majority-rule* period, members of the *minority* have made an impact. For better or for worse, it is the daring few who have shaped this so-called majority-rule society.

Inventors, pioneers, radicals, and visionaries have ventured from the lonely and costly camp of ‘minority’ only to be obstructed by majority-rule concepts that tolerate inferiority, hinder progress, harbour injustice, and pose limits within the decaying status quo.

What is sad and insulting is that the majority basks in the benefits and riches that were originally afforded by individuals who sacrificed their sanity, their freedom, and their life. When you start your journey of leadership in the modern world, you too might have to make some sacrifices.

## IS THIS BOOK FOR YOU?

There are hundreds of books on offer, and collectively they explore every possible aspect of leadership, management, and self-development. Together they broach every conceivable topic, but they seem to lack one crucial ingredient — *truth*. Not that they endorse ‘untruth’, but they fail to tackle the very roots of important issues about leadership, management, and self-development in the modern world.

*How to Lose Friends and Infuriate People* is for those who can, for example, study cosmology and then do three things *simultaneously*. First, marvel at the grandeur of the universe. Second,

recognise the majesty of the infinitely small. And, third, doubt that we possess more than a nano-parcel of information about either subject.

This book is for those who are fed up with, and frustrated by, inefficiency, inaccuracy, inconsistency, and untruths. It is a tool for those who know that they have the potential to stretch the boundaries, have the creativity to break new ground, have the vision to shape new futures, have the determination to realise their dreams, and have the courage to break out of the social cast, even if it means that they’ll have to bid farewell to friends and, along

the way, infuriate the establishment.

If you acknowledge that nothing is ever final, that possibilities are endless, that life is never simple, that a rolling stone *can* gather moss, that a watched kettle *does* boil, and that those who cry last, cry the most, this book is for you.

*If you acknowledge that nothing is ever final, that possibilities are endless, that life is never simple, that a rolling stone can gather moss, that a watched kettle does boil . . . this book is for you*

I slam diplomacy as a waste of time. I blow the whistle on the corporate and political games. I discredit the rules that have done nothing more than nourish the lethargic, imprison new talent, and suppress freedom. I expose protocol as a brick wall that protects the insecure and keeps at bay the bold. I call on those who *are* in a position of power to lift their game. I plead for action from those who have new ideas.

## RUBBING SHOULDERS IN THE DARK

During the eight years of research, investigation, observation, and testing, not a single interviewee was aware of the making of this book. Not a single letter alluded to my authorship.

My research for this book has been authentic and comprehensive — encompassing a broad range of successful and unsuccessful artists, scientists, business managers, military leaders, political and government heads, ethical entrepreneurs, and shady ones, as well as students, the general public, and academics. Not one is named. The sound information gathered would not have been given if the subject being studied had known that the material or exchange was for a book.

Some books are written like a brochure and are full of praise for the author’s clients or people whom the author would *like* as clients. This is a serious book, so unfortunately, there will be no profit from bulk sales to companies mentioned and praised here because *none* are mentioned or praised.

Authors of many popular books focus more on telling us *who* they know, than *what* they know. They want us to believe that they lead celebrity lifestyles, constantly bumping into the most successful people in the world. They expect us to believe that almost every aeroplane ticket that they have ever booked happened to seat them next to the founder of ‘Hero Corporation’,

and that the only blind person they have ever met went on to win a Nobel Prize.

Egotistical authors seem to bolster their own image. Their enthusiasm echoes a sense of ease rarely attained by struggling individuals.

Name-dropping and telling readers about dignitaries they met, what was said, and of the exalted circles they move in, dominate some books. (Just for the record, I have dined with the privileged and spent time with the outcast, poor, and addicted, including the homeless and the titled. Their spirits hover over each of the chapters in this book.)

#### . . . AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

When I joined a large corporation as a manager of one of its divisions I read several books about the company. During my first week on the job I mentioned this to my manager who laughed and said, ‘Don’t believe any of them.’ I was puzzled. Could it have been that my manager, a thirty-year veteran of the company, was embarrassed about what the books revealed? Well, despite the fact that some of the books were speaking about the company in disastrous terms, most were sycophantic. I often wondered about his comment. Exactly two years, ten months, and fifteen days later the penny dropped. I realised what he meant, and why the contents of the books could not be believed. In due course I realised that *nothing* I read was true because the critical books could not be critical enough for fear of legal action while the sycophantic books were inaccurate because they were just sucking-up to the giant for reasons known only to each respective author.

*How to Lose Friends and Infuriate People* is not written so as to damage any company, nor to promote my friends, supporters,

or worthy clients. It is written for readers who are committed to improving their situations and their environments.

#### SPEAKING OUT

As a long-time journalist, my first regular column was called ‘Controversials’. Since then, most of the things I have said and done have been controversial. In the mid-1990s a respected publisher approached a small number of industry leaders for what were their predictions. I was chosen by the publisher to contribute my views which, needless to say, were controversial, so much so that when the publication was released, my then boss summoned me into his office and expressed his displeasure at my speaking out. He said, ‘Jonar, no matter what you think, you must not speak out.’ I asked him if he had agreed with what I had written. ‘Yes, you are right. I agree with you, but I would never tell anyone,’ he said. Well, so much for courage. He made me sign an official letter of reprimand. I now look upon that letter fondly and thank him for being one of the many people who drove me to speak out even louder.

Through the years my radio segments (although ethical and discreet) have had public relations departments scurrying with all sorts of unpleasant repercussions. They were tough days (as they still are), yet I have weathered the storms.

The big question will be how I am likely to be reprimanded for writing *this* book. I know that the more resistance I receive, the more that would prove that I have hit a nerve. Still, I will brace myself once more because I am not looking forward to the wrath of political, corporate, and academic establishments that might feel threatened by this book.

Although I could have included many more chapters in this book, the existing collection sets down a foundation. In due



course, I will write more books about leadership, management, and personal achievement. I will also write about a wider range of subjects, so that more readers can lose more friends and infuriate more people.

## PART ONE

### DEVELOPING *your* SKILLS

HAVE THE COURAGE  
TO LIVE  
AS IF *you* OWN  
YOUR LIFE

P.S. You are encouraged to review the Table of Contents and read the chapters that you find of immediate relevance or interest.

## CHAPTER 1

# WHAT CAN *you* SEE FROM THE BALCONY OF LIFE?

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

*The most annoying thing about hindsight  
is that for some of us, it was foresight,  
but no-one would listen*

IMAGINE, WAY UP IN THE sky, a balcony that resembles a viewing platform where you and others stand looking down on Earth. You are but a spirit. From the balcony you can see the marvellous and wondrous things on Earth — spectacular surf, exotic fruit, delicious vegetables, tantalising ice-cream, mouth-watering pasta, remarkable flowers, awesome gardens, stunning animals, breathtaking mountains, splendid rivers, people in love, exquisite fashion, fast cars, exhilarating snow skiing, and romantic sunsets.

The one in charge, Spirit-Superior, approaches you with a clipboard in hand and says that the next tour to Earth is about to depart. The problem is, only 10 percent of those on the balcony can be granted permission to go to Earth for a period not exceeding eighty years. Would you put your hand up? Would

*Who is stealing  
your chance to  
walk barefoot  
in the sand?*

you ask to be considered? Are you enthusiastic enough? Do you really want to wear a human body and experience the beauty of life on that planet below?

According to Spirit-Superior, all candidates promise to make the most of their time on Earth. They are eager to start their journey. They cannot wait to take their first swim, to enjoy a juicy orange, to bite into a scrumptious cake, to walk in the park, and to make love with a beautiful companion in symphony with the cool breeze. You push to the front of the queue and plead, 'Please pick *me*. I promise to make the most of life on Earth.'

Well, here you are *on* Earth. Not long to go before you have to return to the balcony. Not long when you compare eighty-odd years to eternity. What are you doing about it? Did you bite into a delicious apple today? Did you take a swim? Did your heart skip a beat as the stars came out to bid the sunset a fond farewell?

*You should not neglect yourself to such a degree  
that your body is left with no choice  
but to reprimand you*

Or did you waste the day and insult Spirit-Superior by allowing anger, that elusive intangible, to take hold of your body and spoil your moment? You are not guaranteed the full eighty years. Only 'now' is your guarantee. Tomorrow is not in the contract. You have no way of knowing when your tour will be terminated.

Every night, as you put your head to sleep, Spirit-Superior visits you and asks, 'Would you like to go back from whence you came — back to the balcony of life where you will never again have the opportunity to come back to Earth? Or would you like one more day to give it another go?' What would you say? Most people say, 'Oh please, give me one more day. Tomorrow I will live. Today I messed up, but tomorrow I will go to the beach and grab an ice-cream, and feed the birds, and make my friends laugh.'

Doubtless, some do choose to terminate their stay. They cannot see what all the fuss is about. They want life no more. So, Spirit-Superior grants their wish and takes them back to the balcony. Tragically, others tamper with the process and take their own life when they can no longer believe that tomorrow will bring relief. Some of my dear friends have decided to leave me behind by terminating their contracts.

*Yesterday is gone,  
tomorrow is  
not yours,  
and today is  
already packed  
with drama*

One young man of nineteen asked his mother for some money. As loving mothers do, she obliged and asked no questions. He bought a rifle, went back home, and did the deed. He used to love life, but a door shut in his face. He was convinced that the door would never re-open. Faced with that prospect, he bowed out.

Where are you at in life? Are you battling with time thieves? Are you being robbed of *your* moment? Who is stealing your chance to walk barefoot in the sand?

## FLIGHT 101 NEVER RETURNS

In the airline business, everyone knows that once an aircraft departs, any empty seats on that flight cannot be filled again. The opportunity to recoup that lost fare has gone. This is why many airline companies overbook their flights. They do not mind inconveniencing their travellers, so long as they can be sure to pack the aircraft.

For undersubscribed flights, and since the advent of the networked world, airlines are trying to sell the last remaining seats via Internet auctions, hoping to fill every seat, even if at cost. It is better to cover costs than to fly with an empty seat, because empty seats cost money.

Your life can be likened to this challenge. Every day that you

*Do you divide your day  
into work, rest, and play?  
Is work something you do  
out of obligation?  
Is rest something you do  
because you are exhausted?  
Is play something you do to  
forget about work? This is  
not a pleasant cycle.*

allow to slip through your hands is irretrievable. You cannot decide to return to yesterday or 'turn back time' to mend the broken dreams. You cannot return to last Monday. So, yesterday is gone, tomorrow is not yours, and today is already packed with drama. Is this what you planned when you were standing on the balcony of life? If not, stand up and do something about it.

You know what needs to be done. You do not need 'motivational' speakers to pep you up. This is *your* life.

No-one is authorised to upset you. This is *your* turn. No matter how generous you might be, you cannot pass it on to someone else. If you choose to skip a turn, you will not be doing anyone a favour. The one thing you will be doing is ringing the alarm bells

in the control room, and Spirit-Superior will have to take a closer look at your files. (For more about motivation, see Chapter 3, ‘The secret destroyer’.)

#### EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY DAY

Have you considered that the Olympic Games would not have progressed if it were not for technologists’ ability to slice time into tiny bits we call a second, a tenth of a second, a hundredth of a second, and so on?

Electricity and the entire power grid, including street lighting and traffic controls, rely on disciplined and regimented pulses that must beat to time. The loss of one beat could stop a city. Traffic would grind to a halt, and the city could very well become grid-locked, meaning that no-one could move because no-one can move.

Computers operate to time. Not only for calendar and date-stamping purposes, but for internal microchip operation. One tiny beat out of rhythm and the computer fails.

Time, at its smallest, is precious. Even the big chunks we call day and night are great punctuation marks that herald a new week, a new month, a new season.

How well do we manage time? As a society, we manage it well. Things tend to work more often than not.

How well do *you* manage time? Do you divide your day into work, rest, and play? Is *work* something you do out of obligation? Is *rest* something you do because you are exhausted? Is *play* something you do to forget about work? This is not a pleasant cycle.

Life is life. To allow manipulating hounds to steal your life at the office through bureaucratic and politically poisoned meetings is theft of the highest order. Life is now, not after work. Life is

shopping, not when you get home. Life is every minute of every day. So, how well are you managing your life? How well are you managing your time?

Time management is not about a list of things in order of priority that must be completed by a deadline. (How apt that we call it a deadline.) Time management is about life management. The issue is not what you do, but where your soul is at.

Do you put your pleasures on hold when you clean the house? Do you accept misery and boredom as unavoidable traits of your work domain? Do you accept domestic unrest as your lot in life?

#### UPS AND DOWNS

Life management is not about a delirious state of affairs. You own your life, so only *you* can live your life. Take charge of it. This does not mean that you must seek to be happy at all times. This is impossible. Not because it is too difficult in this day and age, but because *happiness* can only mean something to you after you have experienced *sadness*. From a young age we are taught

*Time represents seconds. The seconds measure the division between the sun and the moon and these, in turn, ultimately measure the distance between life and death.*

that if one achieves happiness, one has achieved something worthwhile. However, although sadness, pain, and sorrow are not mentioned, or are undervalued or avoided, they are *vital* for the attainment of more happiness.

After one of my presentations, a young man approached me to thank me. He had the brightest disposition. He told me that although his colleagues were looking to build their careers in medicine, business, and the like, he just wanted to be ‘happy’, so it did not matter to him what

profession he chose. He looked happy, but I knew that he did not know what he was saying. ‘How happy do you want to be?’ I asked. ‘Very happy,’ he replied. We sat for a while as I explained to him that if he wished to attain ten lots of happiness, he would have to endure ten lots of sadness. He finally grasped the concept and became scared. He specifically does not want to be *unhappy*. So he froze. I felt sorry for him, but such is life. Eventually he began to understand and assured me that he would brace himself. He valued happiness because he had experienced much sadness. However, he was unaware that more happiness could only be appreciated in the wake of more sadness. Even then, the process is not automatic, and much building is required. The trick is to use the sadness to build for yourself tools that can help you to get back on your feet again. You need to be ready to attain additional wisdom, to build shields that protect you, to enhance your attitude to cope with the situation. This is important because sadness knocks you down, and it is much easier to stay down than to lift yourself against the inertia.

Life management is not about being happy through ignoring society, or shedding one’s responsibilities, or resigning from corporate life to take up subsistence farming, or filing for divorce. These things in themselves do not make you happy. They might be important steps that you choose to take, but on their own, they do not lead to happiness. Life management is about being *well adjusted*. This means taking the good and the bad, and being able to stand against the wind of disappointment. It is the realisation that solutions do not come from escaping. Running away from unhappiness does not build

*We are taught  
to be eternally  
tolerant, yet  
intolerance is just  
as important  
when you can use  
it to protect your  
life against time  
thieves*

happiness. A well-adjusted person responds well to what life dishes out, and builds new shields. In responding well to what life dishes out to you, be sure to arrest those who steal time — the essence of life.

Time is not really the important element. It is what time represents that matters. Time represents seconds. The seconds measure the division between the sun and the moon and these, in turn, ultimately measure the distance between life and death.

#### LIVE BY HALVES

Although life is not so easy to measure, time *can* be measured. Assess your time and how you expend it. Do you really need to watch so much television? Is it important that you spend so many hours surfing the Internet? How about halving all of the things that do not add value to your life?

If you watch twenty hours of television per week, why not cut it back to ten? If the loss of your precious ring causes you to become angry for two days, try to get over it in one day. If the loss of your pet causes you to cry for six weeks, try to overcome your grief within three weeks.

By halving the things that you know are unproductive or soul-destroying, you are starting to manage your time. Continue to live by halves until you can take better control of the impact of your environment upon you. This does not mean that you ought not to spend your time any way you like. In fact, that is the point of the exercise. By ridding yourself of time-consuming life-wasters, you will have the time to do the things you really *want* to do, not the things that *force* themselves upon you, or command your attention without your permission, or that you do out of habit.

Some habits cannot be halved. They can only be amputated. The diseases of gambling, alcoholism, drug abuse, and the like, need to be obliterated without negotiation. Only the life-owner can choose to do that. If people's enjoyment of such things is greater than the value they place on their life, they are not ready to do anything about their addictions. In those cases, it is better that they do not try because the emotions and turmoil adversely affect the life of those around them as well.

In truth, time-wasters are life-wasters. Anyone who wastes your time is wasting your life. Do not stand for it. Typical time-wasters include: the way in which a meeting is managed; people's inability to stick to their word; not meeting deadlines; and being tolerant of people.

#### TOLERANCE VERSUS INTOLERANCE

If you consider tolerance a virtue, beware you do not fall victim to virtues. Patience, tolerance, and empathy are all noble, important qualities in life. However, you need to learn how to set your boundaries. Supposing that you agree to meet a friend but that person does not turn up at the agreed time. How long are you prepared to wait? Ten minutes? One hour? Seven hours? Most people would not consider waiting seven hours. Well, why is ten minutes acceptable? Why not five? If you think that five minutes is a little harsh, then pray tell, would you leave at precisely ten minutes, or would you give your friend just a couple of minutes more?

The point to time management in such cases is to reduce the guesswork. You and your friend ought to have made an agreement that says if one of you is late by more than ten minutes the meeting will be cancelled. This has nothing to do with being nasty. It is all about setting expectations and understanding the boundaries.

Meetings at work should start on time. Do you start on time, or do you wait for the stragglers? I live a fair distance from the main city, so when people invite me to an early morning meeting in the city, I need to be up at 5:00 am to get ready and leave home before 6:00 am so that I can get there at 7:00 am. I need to do this even if the meeting is scheduled to start at 9:00 am because if I were to leave home at 8:00 am, I would not get through the unbearable traffic until 10:00 am. This is a tricky juggling act. So I arrive early, wait two hours until 9:00 am, and have to put up with life-wasters who say, 'Oh, let's wait a few minutes for those who might be caught in traffic.' Then they say, 'Oh look, it's 9:30, why don't we have an early morning coffee break while we're waiting?' By 10:00 am, when the meeting starts, I would have been up for five hours!

At first, I give some people the benefit of the doubt, but I later become nonchalant, or do not arrive on time, or choose not to go. When will people learn that adults are just like children? If a child gets the chocolate after ranting and raving, that child is being conditioned. If chairpeople wait for late-comers, I would rather a few extra hours in bed, and they can wait for *me*.

Needless to say that most meetings are life-wasting rituals, devoid of content, lacking direction, and ultimately useless. The same is so for any meeting where the guest speaker reads a speech at me. If I have to get up early, iron my clothes, shave, shower, endure the heavy traffic, pay for petrol and parking, only to have some slow, uninteresting presenter read at me, I would prefer the speech be sent to me via fax or e-mail so that I can read it in the bath when I awake at a godly hour.

We are taught to be eternally tolerant, yet *intolerance* is just as important when you can use it to protect your life against time thieves.

**WHEN TIME IS MONEY**

Organisations measure the productivity of each employee. When they hire hundreds of people, they are effectively buying time. More people working on a project ought to result in greater output within the financial year. Productivity per head is one of the vital measures of success. If you are a chief executive officer (CEO), ask your financial analyst to estimate your corporation's profitability if your workforce were to double its output. What would become of your share price if you were twice as productive?

Sure, many organisations understand the need for more productivity. That is why they maintain the pressure and make everyone miserable while, at the same time, trying to improve productivity. Employees are having to work intolerable hours amid job insecurity and unfulfilling environments.

I long for the day when a senior manager congratulates the staff for a job well done without spoiling the whole ceremony with a plea for everyone to 'work harder'. And I cringe when I hear calls for employees to also 'work smarter'. How depressing. How ungrateful. Forget about working harder. Never mind about working smarter. If, as CEO, you want to improve productivity, start doing things by halves. Navigate your way through your spaghetti-like systems and policies and chop the time-wasters. Remove anything or anyone who steals time through bureaucracy, through stupidity, and through strangling red tape cast upon the masses by the almighty headquarters. Even if you cannot eliminate them, just halve them! What difference would that make? You do the numbers and work it out. If what you see does not make your blood boil, then you are sailing smoothly, and you have a well-adjusted organisation.

If you could double the productivity of your organisation,

would such a project not be worthy of your attention? If so, get on with it. By the way, once you, as CEO, have removed the time-wasters, you need to search your soul and come clean with your conscience and check to see if you are the chief time-thief. Have you created an environment in which your actions create a domino effect?

It is laughable to see how many CEOs increase the revenue targets as a small buffer, so that their people strive harder for the bigger number, knowing that if they miss a little, the original target will be met, and the CEO will look like a hero in front of the board. I have seen numbers eventually doubled after they have gone through a buffering process from headquarters, to regional headquarters, to country, to division, to department, to individual. What a joke. At the end of the line the individual has to strive for a number that is twice as big as the original without the same level of growth in operating expense and headcount. This unrealistic target-setting is demoralising.

I have seen the aftermath of this wicked accounting process. The individual would have battled in spite of having unco-operative colleagues who are also stretched to unreasonable limits. The individual would have tried hard, increased the revenue by 70 percent on the previous year's figure, but still be declared a failure because the ridiculous target was missed by a few dollars. How ungrateful of an organisation to make the employee work a miserable year with no time for life, no time for a decent lunch, and at the end of all that hard work, a slap in the face. Then, the chiefs of the land, who exceeded their revenue targets in real terms, end up scoring healthy bonuses. Every way you look at it, this is theft — and it starts at the top. Oh, the burdens at the top!