

## CHAPTER 1 DRAFT BLUEPRINT: TRAIN BRAIN (LEFT & RIGHT)

The brain may be mysterious, but it's a mental muscle - one that can, and should be, stretched often.

### QUICK SELF-ASSESSMENT: WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Most people have a combination of both analytical and creative thinking abilities.

Given the questions below, mark where you believe you land on the spectrum and tag it with today's date. As you explore this aspect of your work, career, and life, it may be worth returning to this space in the future to see what, if anything, has changed.

#### INTERNAL GUIDES

- Do you think you lean more toward analytical perspective or creative vision?
- What do you feel most comfortable with at this point in time: the detail, big picture, or a balance of both?



#### EXTERNAL FEEDBACK

Have you taken personality tests? What did they tell you about your natural bent of mind?

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What do you think your coworkers, friends, and/or family would say about your mindset? Would they describe you as more creative or more analytical?

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### Cue the Qs

- *Are you typically more comfortable with structure and an organized approach to problem-solving, or do you prefer to work on somewhat ambiguous, open-ended challenges?*
- *Are you more comfortable handling data and statistics, or are you drawn toward pursuits such as compiling and presenting?*
- *Are objective reasoning and critical thinking some of your strengths, or do you think imagination and envisioning possibilities are more of your forte?*

## PRACTICE

The exercises below can help to move past the brain dominance paradigm:

### STRENGTHEN THE IMAGINATION

If you've identified that there are areas of opportunity to improve your imagination, and we all benefit from this to some degree, I encourage you to practice the possibilities by training your mind to be curious. Create, visualize, and communicate new ways to solve problems.

Play is a vital aspect of personal and professional development, so give yourself space to explore play in low-stakes environments, like when we were kids. I enjoy continually developing imagination by practicing with something outside of work.

#### HERE ARE SOME PROMPTS TO WORK THROUGH:

- Think about your favorite book or movie.
  - How else could it have ended?  
(Feel free to be as wild as you wish while imagining this alternate ending.)
  - What other decisions could the characters have made?

**Bonus:** *Share the alternate ending with someone! Write it down or speak it into being.*

If you find this challenging, one source of inspiration may be to read a work of

fan fiction. Search your favorite book or series title online with the phrase “fan fiction” to see what others have created.

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Consider a recipe you really enjoy making.

- What ingredients could you envision adding to it?  
(It could be a fusion of ingredients from different cultures or cuisines.)
- Imagine how the new combination of flavors and textures would taste.

***Bonus:** Try some of them and share with a friend.*

If you don't cook, think instead about your favorite foods and search videos of them being made by a chef. Imagine how you would move through a kitchen to combine ingredients and layer flavors.

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## TRANSLATE THE SKILLS

Once you've warmed up with this exercise, you can try to translate the skills. Think about the everyday challenges you experience in your daily life and imagine how they can be improved.

One thing I would like to explore in my day to day:

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- How could it be different?
- What changes would be required for it to be different?
- Push yourself to imagine different scenarios. Can any of them be put into

action?

- What would it take?

## DEEPEN YOUR APPRECIATION OF THE DETAIL

Deliberate the practicalities by engaging in tasks that provide opportunity for strategic planning and goal-setting with an eye toward detail. Learning to appreciate the details will give you a newfound appreciation for analytical pursuits.

Actively engaging your senses to observe and notice things around you can help in training the brain to notice the detail.

- Take a walk outside, in nature if you can. Examine an individual leaf and observe the patterns. Run your fingers on it. Consider other senses such as smell and sound. Focus on each sense individually.
  - What does the color look like? Does it have multiple colors and shades? Notice the things you see now that you are looking at it up close.
  - What does the texture feel like? Do you notice something that surprises you?

***Bonus:** If anything about the color, texture, or smell inspires curiosity – look online to understand why the individual leaves are the way they are and how that helps that plant or tree.*

- Pick up your favorite sweater and examine the weave of the fabric.
  - Run your hand on the sweater one way and then the other. Does it feel the same or different?
  - Pull at the fabric and see how the weave shifts when individual strands shift in different directions. What do you see happening?

***Bonus:** Draw the pattern you see on paper where the wool goes over and under the different strands. Look up what the pattern is called and why.*

The details are what constitute the bigger picture, and it is important to go into those details from time to time to understand what comprises the overarching piece. To develop this practice, use the lines below to jot down a few notes, connecting with what it is that you see.

*Observations*

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### **TRANSLATE THE SKILLS**

Consider a project of yours that would benefit from detail orientation.

One thing, or area in which, I would like to explore more detail in my day to day:

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- What specific details might be good to know?
- What details would help me better understand the overall picture?
- Who can I talk to, what can I read, or where can I find more information?

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### **BROADEN YOUR KNOWLEDGE BASE AND WIDEN YOUR NETWORK**

It is important to foster uncommon connections, as creative inspiration can come from a variety of sources which are often unrelated. Get yourself out of your comfort zone and seek motivation from new sources.

Many activities can help stimulate imagination by exposing you to new ideas, experiences, and environments. These can allow you to appreciate the subtle nuances and complexities as well as the deeper details that create our world. Proactive steps to learn and connect with others can expand your horizons.

- Think about all the people you interact with frequently. What interests have

they expressed that you've considered being involved in but haven't explored yet?

- What is an experience, event, or area you'd like to try or learn more about? (An art class? An improv show? A yoga session? A forest hike?)
- How can you learn more about the topic? Who can you approach to ask more about the experience?

Create a short list of who and what you've identified and reach out to connect with them about the topic of interest.

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***Bonus:** Generate a list of what you think you will observe and feel if you do end up participating in the event.*

- Make a list of the songs you have been listening to lately.
  - Do they all belong to the same genre?
  - When was the last time you heard a song from a different genre?
  - Is there a new genre you can read about and try?

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***Bonus:** Listen to music from the kind of genre you like but in a different language.*

### TRANSLATE THE SKILLS

Consider a project of yours that would benefit from broadening your knowledge through a wider network.

One thing I would like to explore in my day to day:

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- Who can I meet with to establish a connection while learning about different aspects of the project?
    - Someone in marketing? In manufacturing? In product development? In sales? In business? Maybe a customer or consumer interaction? A different department?
  - What could be learned from such an interaction?
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As the brain muscle is trained to imagine, to dive deep, and to think broadly, it becomes more curious, more creative, and more intuitive.

The skills you gain by adding this practice to your natural inclination and innate strengths create fertile ground for new, improved, and innovative ideas that can be driven to completion, logically and creatively.