

**THE  
POWER  
OF  
PREEMINENCE**

**High performance  
principles to accelerate  
your business and career**

**Paul W. P. Rulkens**

## Dedication

*To my*

*father and mother,*

*Wim and Riet Rulkens,*

*and my sister*

*Anneriëtte.*

## Acknowledgments

My gratitude to Josefine van Zanten, Thierry Muller and Vineeta Yadav, professionals extraordinaire. We have shown that a single pebble thrown in the ocean can change the shore line.

Thank you Richard Habets, Jan Scheele and Jan-Willem Sanders, for inspiring me to always think big.

My thanks to Dorseda de Block, who, as my editor, used her profound language skills to make an invaluable contribution to this book.

Thank you Ron Roman: designing a book is an art and you have shown how it is done.

And mostly for my wife Francesca, and Matteo and Elisabetta, my children. You constantly remind me that life is about family and bringing value to others. All else is just commentary.

The Power of Preeminence

Camelopardalis Research Press  
 Agrippa Consulting International  
 Brandenburgerweg 16  
 6214 AK Maastricht  
 The Netherlands

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Book and cover design by Ron Roman

Editing by Dorseda de Block

ISBN-13: 978-1514273722

ISBN-10: 1514273721

Manufactured in the United States of America

First Printing, 2015

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## Introduction

When I finished my education as Chemical Engineer, I was young, ambitious and broke. So I quickly accepted a job as a plant engineer in a big chemical plant. I felt like a kid in a candy store because I could do what many engineers are trained to do: solve problems that do not talk back. I was convinced I was on the right track for corporate success.

However, after a few years it slowly dawned on me that my peers were moving through the corporate ranks much more quickly than I was. I was flabbergasted: how is this even possible? I thought that none of them were smarter than I was. What was going on?

This was the moment I became fascinated by a single idea: what is it that the most successful people, teams and organizations do differently when they want to achieve business and personal success in the easiest, fastest and most elegant way possible? This search for answers became a magnificent obsession for me. I studied successful people and organizations, became a voracious reader of books about personal and professional development, developed the habit of audio learning while driving in my car and attended every course and seminar I could get my hands on.

As a pragmatic engineer, I immediately applied what I learned. Based on the information gathered, I adopted the best ideas and, with simple focused actions, often got results that were staggering. I also realized that the best way to internalize an idea is to teach it to other people. I reinvented myself.

Since that time, I have been speaking, training, coaching and consulting. My subject is high performance; in other words, making

successful people, teams and organizations even more successful. I have worked with hundreds of professionals, executives and business owners in more than 10 countries around the world. I have helped them accelerate their careers, while coaching them to adopt a few simple changes to move their teams and organizations to high performance and dramatically grow their businesses. I call this “Pre-eminence in business.”

### **Who should read this book?**

My best clients have one thing in common: they know you don’t have to be sick in order to get better. They are pragmatic and always willing to test new approaches. They also know that if they do what everyone else is doing, they are not distinguishing themselves and are probably stuck. When it comes to high performance, the majority is always wrong.

This book captures the best ideas I have found to help successful people, teams and organizations become even more successful. All of these ideas have been tested at the front lines of modern business and professional life. All of these ideas have proven to work.

This book is written for two groups of people who realize that doing more is no longer the answer to having too much to do:

- The successful corporate executive and business leader looking for practical ways to raise the business bar even further, while avoiding working even more hours and taking the fun out of playing the game of business. This book provides not only a wealth of practical ideas for business leaders, but can also be the perfect gift for their high-performing employees. They understand that their business life will become vastly better when their teams become better.

- Ambitious professionals who understand that the enemy of success is perfection. They realize that the best way to grow their business career is no longer to become even more proficient at what they already do very well. Instead, learning certain new business skills will accelerate their careers and turn them into unstoppable goal achievers.

### **About this book**

You will find 10 ideas in this book. I call them “big ideas,” because they have changed my life and the lives of many others, and they have the power to change yours as well.

Each big idea sometimes looks like common sense, can actually be contrary to prevailing wisdom and may simply provide a new angle to an existing idea. Yet, each big idea is profound by itself.

### **Big idea 1: The razor’s edge**

If you want to double your results, you do not have to become twice as good. You only need to become a bit better in a few crucial areas that really matter. This is the strangest business secret and it is called the “razor’s edge.” It is the key to dramatically accelerate your success in business and in life.

### **Big idea 2: Stepping out of the hamster wheel**

In order to make use of the razor’s edge, you need to step out of the hamster wheel and start working on yourself and on your business. You do so by focusing on the only three activities with unlimited leverage: strategy, marketing and innovation.

**Big idea 3: Strategy: how to achieve Preeminence**

Certain business and leadership concepts will move you much more rapidly toward high performance and Preeminence than others. These strategic concepts are universal and can be applied by anyone, anywhere under any circumstances.

**Big idea 4: Marketing made simple**

Whatever your product or professional service, clarity about the value you can deliver to the marketplace is essential for your success. I call this concept Preeminent marketing, a set of simple ideas that have the power to deliver magnificent results.

**Big idea 5: Innovation: the majority is always wrong**

If you do what everyone else is doing, you are not distinguishing yourself and are probably stuck. There are many ways to do things differently. This is the core of innovation. What I have found is that innovation doesn't require big budgets, long lead times and uncontrolled risks. It requires a relentless focus on breaking the standards in your industry or professional field instead.

**Big idea 6: The power of strategic quitting**

Doing more is no longer the answer to having too much to do. You have to let go first in order to reach out for new and better things. Your ability to succeed equals your ability to quit.

**Big idea 7: Focus on performance, not potential**

All big accomplishments start small: Small improvements, systematically applied in specific areas, will help you to rapidly get everything you can out of everything you have.

**Big idea 8: Communicate anything to anyone**

Success is never achieved in isolation. The ability to rally people to your cause starts with the quality of your communication. The quality of your communication starts with some powerful ideas to communicate anything to anyone.

**Big idea 9: The incredible time machine**

Time is the great equalizer. Your results three months from now are determined by how well you use your time today. Therefore, we all need to become excellent in the highest and best use of our time. You can build your own time machine with a set of practical, proven and powerful ideas to get twice the results in half of the time.

**Big idea 10: Why smart people still do stupid things**

In spite of everything, even high-performance people, teams and organizations sometimes show low performance behaviors. These behaviors are caused by a few very distinct thinking flaws. Low-performance thinking carries certain warning signs. Once you recognize these red flags, you will avoid getting stuck in the low-performance trap.

Each big idea chapter contains a set of practical ideas. The best way to use this book is, therefore, to read it entirely first and then

pick the one or two ideas that have the biggest potential to help you most. After you have applied these ideas in your own world, come back for more.

The reason people often get stuck is not that they are doing ineffective things. Their actions are ineffective because they aren't the most effective use of their time and energy. It is the difference between doing things well versus doing things in an excellent way. It is the difference between the proper use of time versus the best use of time. It is the difference between applying reasonable ideas versus implementing brilliant ideas.

My goal is that, after applying some ideas from this book, you will be able to move to high performance, achieve Preeminence and stand apart like a tall giraffe, surrounded by tiny field mice.

Are you ready?

– Paul Rulkens  
Maastricht, The Netherlands

## **The Power of Preeminence**