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What's Your Tech Type?

THE HAMSTER REVOLUTION

FOR

TECH QUOTIENT



**How to Thrive in the Post-Covid,
Virtual World of Work**

Mike Song

Bestselling author of *The Hamster Revolution for Email*

Praise for The Hamster Revolution Series

A dynamic, high-impact strategy.

- Tony Robbins, Author, *Unleash the Giant Within*

It works!

- Ken Blanchard, Co-Author, *The One Minute Manager*

A fun read, but even better, a straightforward solution.

- Marcus Buckingham, author, *Now, Discover Your Strengths*

It takes guts to teach Microsoft leaders new ways to use our own technology! The Hamster Revolution exceeded expectations.

- Chuck Metzger, Sr. Program Mgr. Office 365 Team, Microsoft

A must-read business book!

- Keith Ferrazzi, author, *Never Eat Alone*

Double your productivity!

- Marshal Goldsmith, Alliant University

These practices will change the way you work. They did for us!

- Matt Koch, Dir. Of Knowledge Management, Capital One

Zip! Tips helped our busy salespeople soar!

- Brenda Davis, Worldwide Training, United Airlines

It's no stretch to say that this is life-changing material.

- Chris Granger, VP, Team Business Development, NBA

Powerful stuff!

- Brian P. Jennings, EVP of Marketing, NHL

I picked it up and couldn't put it down. You'll love it!

- Richard L. Andersen, Former CFE, EVP, San Diego Padres

Our staff is tough to impress; they gave this training rave reviews.

- Rob Howe, Former News Editor, People Magazine

Work better, smarter, and faster.

- Elaine Hetu, Dir. Six Sigma Training, McKesson

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- Paul Ruane, Former Dir. of L&D, Schering Plough

A powerful new strategy.

- Lamonte Thomas, VP of Sales, Cigna

Chock full of ideas to address the most significant issues facing knowledge workers today.

- Cindy Domanowski, VP Sales Training and L&D, ADP

The Hamster Revolution will free you from 'e grip.'

- Garry Ridge, President, and CEO, WD-40 Company

As a CEO, I value programs like "The Hamster Revolution" that provide practical solutions to workplace challenges.

- Steve Stone, CEO, Infoflows

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The Hamster Revolution for TQ

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*for kris
forever*

Personal

I dedicate this book to my family, friends, and community who helped me survive an unimaginable personal tragedy. Thank you all for raising me up and helping me find a positive path and mission for the rest of my life.

Professional

I would also like to recognize my business partner Jeff Burress who never stopped believing in TQ or me. Our twenty-year partnership has been incredibly productive and rewarding. Jeff's great ideas, energy, and passion for excellence helped bring this book to life.

INTRODUCTION

This book is your bridge to the future of work.

We are standing at the edge of a deep, dark canyon with a river racing through it. Experts call this chasm, **The Digital Skills Gap**.

On the other side is the **Future of Work**. In that world, digital skills determine who gets hired, promoted, and fired. If you think you're immersed in Office 365 or Google Docs now, just wait. In ten years, the time you spend on technology will increase by 60%ⁱ. To hold your job, you'll need to master countless new apps, devices, and web tools.

Here's the scary part. Workers, organizations, and countries keep launching themselves off the ledge, falling short, and plunging into the cold, harsh waters of obsolescence.

Why do they fail? For starters, employers have no system for measuring tech proficiency. As a result, employees have no idea where they stand. Leaders are often reluctant to lead because they doubt their own digital skills. Tech-savvy colleagues exist, but no one inspires them to share the magic. As a result, attempts at **Digital Transformation** stall mid-leap – and down they go.

Sadly, Covid-19 – only made matters worse.

As the clock ticks, you find yourself stuck in the past, running in place like an exhausted hamster on a never-ending wheel of work. Without a strategic plan – how will you ever bridge the gap?

THE CAMELBACK CAFÉ

Our story begins in a resort hotel in Arizona just as things return to normal following a global health pandemic.

Outside the coffee shop in the lobby, a smartly dressed young woman called out in a crisp British accent, "Any chance of a tea?"

Inside, a guy who was removing chairs upended on tables motioned to his watch in the universal gesture for "Sorry, but it's not time yet."

The woman glanced at me and said apologetically. "It's terrible, isn't it? I can't survive without a splash of tea in the morning."

"I'm the same with coffee," I replied.

"Oh, well, I suppose I'll just have to wait." She turned to look out of the window. "It's certainly a stunning view."

I followed her gaze. The sun was rising over Camelback mountain.

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"Now that's spectacular," I agreed.

"Too bad, I can't enjoy it."

"Why not?"

"You know, work problems. You here for business as well?"

"Yeah."

"It's a huge hotel, isn't it? And there are so many conferences going on."

"Business conferences are back with a vengeance," I joked.

"Well, I'm not looking forward to mine."

"No?"

"My company's in big trouble. We're here to sort things out."

"Sounds like serious stuff."

She pulled out her smartphone, tapped the screen, and held it out towards me.

"See that?"

The headline read: "DroneZone on Life Support!"

"Ouch," I winced. "So, what's the problem?"

"Oh, I'm not going to bore you with it all."

"Don't worry," I said. "Sometimes, it helps to talk to someone new."

The Camelback Café

She flashed me a smile. "Anyway, I'm Claire, and you are...?"

"Mike - but my friends call me Coach. So, what's up with DroneZone?"

She sighed. "I think you mean, *what's down* with DroneZone. That would be profits, productivity, and morale."

I raised my eyebrows. "Really? Why?"

"Tech challenges. Have you heard of the **Digital Skills Gap**?"

"Yeah, I've heard of that." This chat was getting more interesting by the minute.

"That's what the experts call it, but to me, it's more like the digital skills crisis. You see, to survive in this industry, you need tech-savvy employees."

"That's right."

"A lot of our people are slow to adopt new apps, devices, and digital tools. Then Covid-19 hit, and it's turned everything upside down. Suddenly, everyone's working from home and relying on technology."ⁱⁱ

"I see."

"The thing is, we're making so many tech-related mistakes. You know, losing digital documents, using the wrong app for the job, that kind of thing."

"I understand."

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“So, the competition’s getting ahead of us.”

“And this meeting’s your last chance to turn things around?”

“That’s about it. Last year, I drew the short straw. So now I’m in charge of the **Digital Transformation Task Force**. Our goal is to upskill our entire workforce. Now 10,000 colleagues, including our CEO, are anxiously awaiting a miracle that to be honest, I can’t deliver.”

“Drones are big now. Right? So, sales must be up.”

“Are you kidding? They’re way down! And that’s a great example: our sales team isn’t using the sales software we rolled out last year – sorry, am I boring you?”

“No, no, carry on.”

“Well, instead, they’re taking notes in random documents or post-its which they pop on the wall – I see them in Zoom meetings!”

“Come on; you’re not serious?”

“It’s true. Oh, and speaking of Zoom, we’re rubbish at virtual meetings! They’re dull, and people tune out, especially our clients.”

“What about your leaders?”

“To be honest, they’re part of the problem! They’re the last ones to adopt new technology.”

“Not a good situation.”

The Camelback Café

"We conducted a survey, and less than 20% of our people have mastered our most basic digital tools."

"Digital tools?"

"You know, the devices and apps that *everyone* uses: Office 365, Google search, smartphones, that sort of thing. For example, when they use email, they never create rules to manage their inboxes."

"That's basic stuff."

"Spot on. The bottom line is everyone's overloaded, overwhelmed, and overworked."

"Sounds like DroneZone has 10,000 employees, all running in place like harried hamsters on 10,000 wheels!"

She thought for a moment, "You know what?"

"Go on."

"It does feel like we're spinning our wheels. And it's exhausting."

"I can imagine. So, you're here to stage a Camelback comeback?"

"That's one way of putting it. This summit may be DroneZone's last chance -" - she mimicked an ER doctor using a defibrillator - " - to revive the patient. Code blue! CLEAR!"

I laughed. I've always admired people who keep their sense of humor in difficult times.

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"So, what have you tried so far?"

"Well, - Coach - two years ago, our task force asked a bunch of ivory tower gurus to show us the way. They told us to hire millennials, purchase a massive e-learning library, and convert our offices into an open floorplan."

"To boost collaboration?"

"Who knows. We also introduced a game room, sleep pods, and a *sushi bar*."

"I love sushi! Did the changes work?"

"Not one bit! And we spent a huge amount of money. And now, after COVID-19, almost everyone's working from home."

"So, lots of empty sleep pods?"

"And no queue for the sushi bar."

"Shame."

Claire shrugged, "It feels like my head is on the proverbial chopping block. And now we're bringing in another guru."

"You mean a consultant?"

"I call them vultures."

"Well, what's the next one serving up?"

"Probably another load of gibberish, I expect."

The Camelback Café

"You never know. Maybe this consultant is *the* one?"

DING-DING! Our smartwatches chimed to let us know it was finally 7 a.m. The barista appeared, flipped the café sign to open, and beckoned us to enter.

"Finally," Claire said. "Caffeine!"

"Our long-lost friend," I said. "I'm a mochaccino kind of guy."

"I'm an Earl Grey gal."

"Very English."

"Definitely - an English hamster, you might say."

After we paid for our drinks, Claire glanced at her watch and let out a gasp. "Oh, my Gosh! Is that the time? I have to run."

"Nice meeting you," I said.

"Yeah, same here. And thanks for listening."

As I watched her hurry off, I took a big sip of coffee and thought, *This is going to be interesting.*

2

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Harold, the COO at DroneZone, and an old friend greeted me with a broad smile when I arrived at the conference room entrance on the second floor.

"Hey, Coach! Good to see you again," he said warmly.

"Hi, Harold, it's been a long time."

"Everyone's excited to hear you speak."

But maybe not Claire, I thought.

"I'll need you to wait in the hall for a few minutes while our CEO Maria Zampa covers a few things."

"I saw her on *Business Update* a couple of years ago. As I recall, she was quite impressive."

"That year, she made the Forbes' Top 100 Innovative Leaders List."

"Wow!"

A Day in the Life

"Listen, your PC's plugged in, and the cover slide is up on the big screen."

"Great! Then I'm ready to roll."

"I'll send our new intern, Tameeka, out to get you."

He ducked back into the room, and through the door, I glimpsed Claire deep in conversation with another executive. *This will be fun*, I thought to myself.

It wasn't long before a cheerful young woman stuck her head out of the door.

"Hi! They're ready for you now."

"Thanks, Tameeka!"

As I entered the room, Claire did a double-take.

"Well, this takes the biscuit," she said in a low voice as I passed her.

I grinned and gestured *Hi again!*

Harold was standing at the front of the room beside a table, which, I was pleased to see, contained two bottles of water and a glass. In front of him sat about twenty execs, spread out over five tables with their laptops open. After introducing me to Maria, he cleared his throat and addressed the room. "OK, folks, as you know, DroneZone is suffering from a digital skills midlife crisis. All our attempts at upskilling our workforce have come up short. And that's why I've invited Mike - well, everyone calls him Coach - to our meeting. He's a tech turnaround expert. I met him

through my last job, at Foster and Schrubbs, and his ideas are, well, revolutionary."

Harold turned to me and said, "You've got thirty minutes, Coach."

"Thanks, Harold. Good morning, everyone! There's not much time, so I'm going to jump straight in. I've conducted over 100,000 surveys that examine the real world in which people work. So, let's see if I can describe a typical day-in-the-life for your average employee. It helps if I can use a real person's name."

"How about Dita from Sales," said Claire, pointing at a small woman in a beige pantsuit.

"Hey," said Dita. "Why's everyone always picking on Sales?"

"They shouldn't," said Maria. "Without you, we're all out of a job."

"Thank you for playing along, Dita," I said, and then in an announcer's voice, added, "A Day in the Life of a DroneZone Colleague - take one! Dita wakes up and starts her morning ritual. Almost every day, she has an unexpected personal challenge. Maybe she can't find her daughter's backpack - or the cat threw up on the sofa."

Dita smiled. "And sometimes the cat throws up on the backpack!"

"Yikes! She resolves these problems and gets to work. She opens her PC and finds a mountain of emails and chats. Slowly, she begins to process them, but at 10:13 a.m., a

A Day in the Life

surprise task pops into her life. Maybe it's an urgent text from a big client or an important email from a colleague. Suddenly, Dita's plan for a productive day starts to veer off course."

"Ouch," said an exec sitting at the back.

I paused. "Sound familiar?"

The executives issued a chorus of groans and nods. I was hitting the mark.

"At 10:45, Dita struggles to find an important PDF related to that surprise task. She loses track of time and arrives five minutes late to her 11 a.m. web meeting."

"That's early for us!" said another exec.

"She's on DroneZone time," someone else quipped.

"OK," I continued, "the web meeting begins late. There's a tech glitch or two, an awkward introduction, and a fuzzy agenda. Dita notices that some of her people do not turn on their webcams; others have such drab lighting that they seem to be broadcasting from a cave. She wonders, *Could this be hurting our sales?* The virtual meeting - no pun intended - drones on and on. Dita gets distracted and finds herself -"

"Scrolling through cat clips on Tik Tok!" chirped Claire.

The room broke into laughter.

"OK! Well, after her social media binge, Dita winds down the day in a losing battle with her ever-expanding task list. She works on projects, struggles to complete action items,

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and fields texts on her phone. She feels like she's getting nowhere fast, like an exhausted hamster running on a perpetual wheel at work."

I glanced at Claire, and she smiled back.

"Raise your hand if this sounds like a typical day at Dronezone," I said.

One by one, almost all the execs raised their hands.

"Have you been reading my diary?" asked Dita. The group chuckled nervously.

Maria said, "It's not so funny. We're spinning our wheels while our competition is pulling away."

The comment hung in the air.

"Funny you should say that, Maria," I said. I advanced my slide to reveal a cartoon of an exhausted looking businessman running on a hamster wheel. Soft music began playing in the background.

"Your people are spinning their wheels at work, like 10,000 exhausted hamsters on 10,000 hamster wheels. Round and round they go, day after day after day."

My voice and the music grew louder. The executives seemed both amused and bewildered.

"I know things look grim. DroneZone's on life support. And we all know that the digital skills crisis is only getting worse. Well, I say, enough! It's time to fight back. It's time to try something bold and new. Drastic times call for drastic

A Day in the Life

measures.”

“Yes, but can you please get to the point?” said Claire.

“I’ve got a plan that transforms hamsters into energetic, productive employees who – get this – love their jobs. They love those jobs because when you get more done, you have more fun.”

I cut the music and paused for effect.

“It’s time for – the Hamster Revolution!”

3

Z IS FOR ZIP

A few of the execs looked puzzled at my announcement.

I paused for a bit as several hotel staff quietly entered the room and placed cookies, coffee, and tea at the back.

Finally, Claire broke the suspense. “OK,” she said, “what exactly is the Hamster Revolution?”

“A strategic plan for achieving digital transformation. Before I walk you through the plan, I need you all to commit to one thing.”

“Which is?” said Maria.

“Zip.”

“Come again?”

“We must pack the initiative with zip tips.”

“What on earth are zip tips?” asked Claire.

“Zip tips are tech tips that make people say, *“Wow! That’s*

Z is for Zip

useful! Tell me more."

Several of the executives shifted uncomfortably in their seats.

"Go on," said Maria.

"Well, if you want to create a wave of digital change at DroneZone, you need to make people say, *Wow!*"

I walked to the back of the room and slowly turned around.
"And that is my favorite thing to do."

"Why are zip tips so important?" asked Maria.

"Most attempts to transform a workforce fail because there's no way to sustain interest and energy. People tune out. They return to their old habits. But a regular dose of zip delivers that *Wow!* moment that re-engages everyone."

"Like a buzzworthy post on social media," suggested Tameeka.

I gestured towards Tameeka. "She gets it. No zip, no buzz. No buzz, no change."

Maria looked skeptical. "Mm. Can you show us a zip tip?"

"Yes," said Dita. "After that awful day in my life, it's the least you could do."

Advanced Email Search

"OK, I'll make this quick. Everyone, please nod if you've searched and struggled to find an email in the past

twenty-four hours.”

All heads bobbed in agreement.

“Let’s zip to a better way to complete that task. Here’s my Outlook inbox? I believe that’s what you use?”

Harold nodded in recognition.

“OK! *Urgent Scenario*: I need to find a critical message from last month with an important attachment, sent by my boss, Jeff Brown. What do I do?”

“Type Jeff Brown and some keywords, I suppose,” shrugged Claire.

“There’s a much better way.”

I clicked my email search window.

“First, I’ll do it your way – I’ll use keywords. But let’s break it down into steps. I type Jeff’s last name and hit *Enter*. See? Bad news. Most of the results:

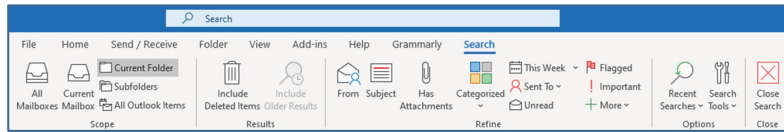
- Are not from Jeff
- Do not have an attachment and
- Are not from last month.

“So what?” said Claire. “Just keep typing keywords.”

“But I do that all day long,” said Dita wearily.

“Here’s a new way. This time, I click in the search box and notice that a new search ribbon has appeared.”

Z is for Zip



The execs looked surprised as they studied the screen.

"This time, I click the *From* button, I type *Brown* and hit *Enter*. See? Instantly, my inbox displays only emails from Jeff Brown, highlighted in yellow."

Maria arched her eyebrows. "Do any of us do that?" she asked, looking around.

Most of her team shook their heads.

"Now," I continued, "let's click on *Has Attachments* and *Last Month* and...Boom! With just two clicks, I've instantly narrowed the results to three messages."

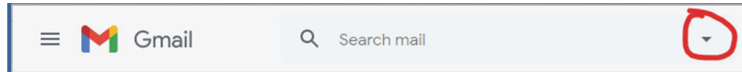
I heard quiet gasps in the room.

"You see? I zipped to that message in just three extra clicks. And guess what? You can do the same thing with Gmail."

"I'll be using Gmail during my senior year," said Tameeka.

"We use it at home," said Harold.

"Just look for a downward pointing arrow on the right side of the Gmail search window," I said, quickly opening my Gmail account and circling it with my red laser pointer.



“See?”

“I’ve never seen that Outlook search ribbon,” said Dita, looking bemused. “How long has it been there?”

“Over ten years.”

“Coach taught me this zip tip at Foster and Schrubb,” said Harold. “I showed it to my team – and now everyone uses it.”

“That’s twice as fast as my typical search,” said Maria.

I said, “Raise your hand if that was a *Wow!* moment for you.”

Hands shot up, and I felt a familiar, warm sensation in my chest. I’d always gotten a kick out of helping people zip.

“If I’m lucky enough to work with DroneZone,” I said. “I have to insist that we build plenty of zips into the program.

Agreed?”

“I’m all for that,” said Maria. “What’s next?”

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ Jacques Bughin et al., Skill Shift, Automation and the Future of the Workforce, McKinsey Global Institute, May 2018.

ⁱⁱ Frankiewicz, [2020, May 6]. Digital Transformation Is About Talent, Not Technology
<https://hbr.org/2020/05/digital-transformation-is-about-talent-not-technology>