MEDMASTERY
PLAYBOOK

Why we do what we do. How we work and how that will change the world of medical education.

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Contents:

Welcome to Medmastery

Congratulations and welcome to the Medmastery family and to one of the most unique and rewarding professional experiences of your life.

Medmastery has a unique way of doing things: even though we were founded in 2014, we're still a startup and **we're all entrepreneurs**.

We're constantly growing and evolving to be the best we can be. Much of what we do has been battle-tested and formalized with checklists, templates, and stuff; however, we are well aware that nothing we do is set in stone and everything can be improved upon. That's why we need folks with an **entrepreneurial spirit**[1] who want to improve upon how we do things here.

This book was written by people who've been where you are now, and who want to make your first few months here as easy as possible.

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[1] enterprising (adj): having or showing initiative and resourcefulness.

#1 WHO WE ARE

Our Mantra—Everyone Is a Clinician!

Medmastery isn't just an e-learning company. And you aren't just an e-learning specialist, instructional designer, editor, web developer, media specialist, manager etc. We are all working in medicine; we are all clinicians at Medmastery!

Now you might not consider yourself a clinician just yet, but YOU WILL BE! Here's why…

What's a clinician?

Most people would say that a clinician is someone who's taking care of patients by helping them recover from a disease or condition.

But what about radiologists or pathologists? They are not directly taking care of patients. Radiologists spend all of their time sitting in dark rooms, looking at X-rays on a computer screen. Pathologists, on the other hand, analyze specimen, create reports, and help in their interpretation. They are not taking care of patients either.

Why in the world are these specialists considered "clinicians" then? Well, because they deliver services that help other clinicians do a better job. That's exactly what we do too!

So, everyone at Medmastery is a clinician?

We empower clinicians who are at the forefront of medicine so they can do a better job. We're part of the healthcare value-chain! So, everything you do at Medmastery—whether it's administrative, creative, logical, technical, instructional—helps improve the health of patients around the world.

That's why YOU ARE A CLINICIAN NOW!

The Golden Circle

As Simon Sinnek describes in his bestselling book, "Start With Why", every great company starts with WHY. WHY is the reason for a company's existence. A company's HOW explains how it will reach that WHY. And a company's WHAT are its products. The products are what successful companies put out in the world to achieve their WHY. If you want to learn more about the Golden Circle, watch Simon's inspiring TED talk.

Why?

HOW?
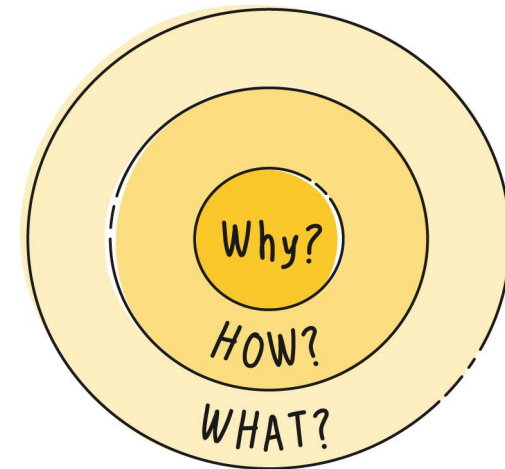
WHAT?

WHY do you do what you do?

HOW do you do what you do?

WHAT do you do?

Medmastery's WHY

As Simon Sinek puts it "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." We're a patient-centric company, we're clinicians – remember? Our WHY is clear:

We improve the health of millions.

This goal is very realistic. Think about it…

Our impact—scale

According to a 2013 survey by the American Academy of Family Physicians, an average family doctor—let's call her Anne—sees 93.2 patients per week. Assuming that she works 45 weeks per year, Anne will see 4,194 patients each year.
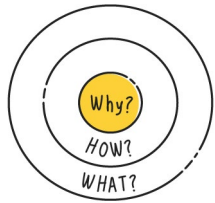
Let's consider a couple of scenarios…

SCENARIO #1:
Let's assume that Anne uses the skills she learns from Medmastery on all of her patients. We would only have to teach 250 clinicians like her to impact over one million patients per year!

SCENARIO #2:
Let's assume Anne and her 249 colleagues from SCENARIO #1 stayed with Medmastery for a year and kept on using the skills they learned from us for an average of five years. In this scenario, we would teach 250 clinicians in order to reach over five million patients!

SCENARIO #3:
Now let's paint a more conservative picture. If Anne was to use her Medmastery skills on only 10% of patients, we would have to teach 2,500 clinicians like her to impact over one million patients per year!

Of course these scenarios are somewhat simplistic. The true impact of our courses probably lies somewhere in between SCENARIOS #2 and #3. We just want to get your creative juices flowing so you can imagine the impact we can have together.

Our impact—skills

How can we make sure that Anne uses her Medmastery skills on as many patients as possible? Well, by teaching her the most **important** and **useful** clinical skills! And that's what we do.

At Medmastery we teach the MOST IMPORTANT clinical skills for doctors working in internal medicine. Things like ECG analysis, the assessment of electrolytes, interpreting thyroid lab values, or reading chest X-rays (to name just a few of our topics) are skills used to diagnose and treat practically every internal medicine patient. Anne can use the stuff she learns from us on every patient she encounters.

Together, we'll improve the lives and health of tens of millions of patients! **Whatever you do at Medmastery, you're a clinician now!**

Medmastery's HOW

How do we achieve our WHY?
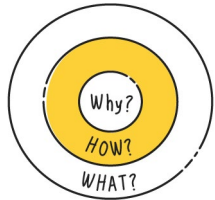
We empower clinicians.

We want to inspire them to be more than they thought they could be. There are two main empowerment strategies:

EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY #1:
We teach clinicians the most important clinical skills so they can solve over 90% of patient problems without the help of a more senior colleague. We teach them hands-on skills that they can immediately use on their patients.

EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY #2:
We help clinicians with a passion for teaching to become great educators so they can pass on their knowledge and skills to thousands of clinicians. We do this through courses like

Presentation Essentials for Clinicians, but perhaps even more so during the creation of a new course. Our faculty undergoes an intense one-on-one training when producing a course for us. This way we help them become better educators. These teachers are our multipliers.

In order to reach the maximum number of clinicians and patients, the content of our courses has to be world-class and our membership has to be affordable.

Medmastery's WHAT

Our WHAT is the product we create and sell in order to achieve our WHY. Here it is:
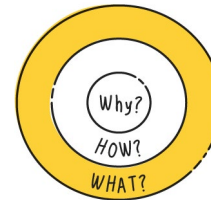
We produce online courses and case-based workshops on the most important clinical skills.

If we decide to create a certain course, we aim to produce the BEST FREAKIN' COURSE on that topic that can be found on the internet. Otherwise it's not worth doing.

Our Mission

People always talk about a company's mission. Just remember our Golden Circle and you'll know what our mission is:

To improve the health of millions by empowering clinicians through affordable, world-class, online education.
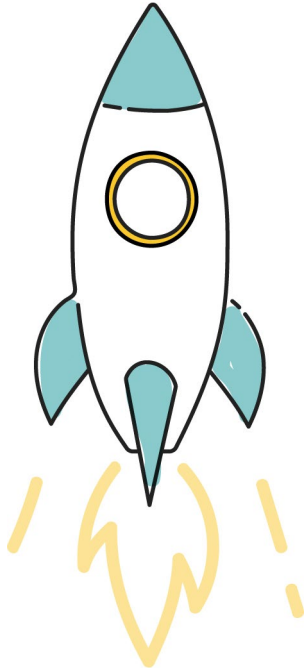
Our Vision

A company's vision is its ideal future. What does the future look like if we are all successful. In this ideal future, we want...

To create the best and most popular video teaching platform for doctors.

We are a video teaching platform. It is our top priority to become the top video teaching platform for doctors. Any activities that help us create better video or deliver a better video learning experienced has to be prioritized over other activities. Watever activity has a greater impact on this goal has to be prioritized over less impactful activities.

We are not so much interested in the short wins; we have a long-term focus with a 5- to 15-year perspective. We are strategic about where we want to go.

How will we know that we have achieved our goal?

In 10 years we want...
- Every US doctor to know Medmastery.
- The Medmastery membership to be something clinicians can't live without.
- Over 50% of US doctors to have a Medmastery membership.
- Medmastery to be the go-to resource for acquiring a new clinical skill.
- Our users would miss us if we were gone.

We'll reach this goal because:

TRUST
Medmastery becomes a trusted resource that's hard to live without for any clinician working in internal medicine.

FREQUENT ENGAGEMENT
Learners come back multiple times per week because they can find exactly what they need to learn on our platform (i.e., content strategy is done right). They attend courses and watch videos all the way to the end (i.e., product and design are done right).

MOTIVATING PLATFORM
These videos are presented on the most engaging online learning platform that can be found on the web.

GREAT TEACHING VIDEOS
These skills are explained in the best medical teaching videos that can be found on the web.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS
We teach the most important clinical skills. These skills are identified through user surveys and expert selection.

The Decisive Question

Whenever you have to prioritize tasks, make decisions about new features, courses or hires, ask yourself the Decisive Question:

"Will this decision [person, project, goal etc.] help us reach our vision to create the most popular and most engaging video teaching platform for clinicians faster?"

If the answer to that question is "yes", then you're on the right track. If the answer is "no", "not really" or "I don't really know", then maybe it's not the right decision or maybe you have to collect more evidence.

Our Values

Every company has a culture—built on values—that shapes how colleagues interact, behave, speak with each other, and make decisions.

At the heart of Medmastery's culture are six core values. They can be memorized by the mnemonic:

ELITE JOY

Core value #1   **EMPOWERMENT**

Core value #2   **LIFELONG LEARNING**

Core value #3   **INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY**

Core value #4   **TRUST**

Core value #5   **ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Core value #6   **JOY**

Core value #1: We EMPOWER people—we inspire them to be more than they thought they could be.

Our mission is to empower clinicians. We can only do so if we're a team of empowered individuals. It's your responsibility to empower yourself and your coworkers. If there's a problem, try to solve it. If your colleague is stuck, help her out. If a process is broken, repair it. Help your colleagues, users and everyone around you be more than they thought they could be!

Core value #2: We are LIFELONG LEARNERS.

Learning and teaching are the lifeblood of Medmastery. We're a group of avid learners who love to get better at what we do. If you love to learn too—great! If you also love to teach—even better! Lifelong learning also means that you don't have a problem with criticism. Instead, you see it as an opportunity to learn and improve. Criticism at Medmastery is always directed towards actions, never people.
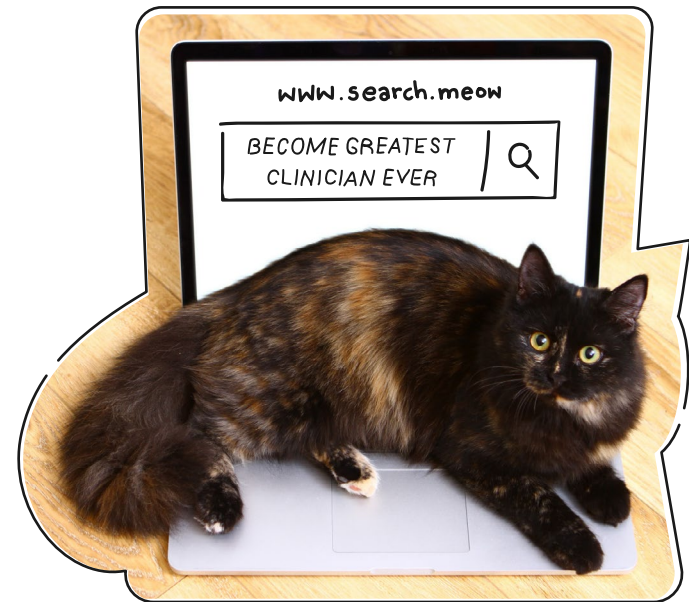
Core value #3: We value INNOVATION and CREATIVITY.

We are creators and innovators and we like to challenge the status-quo. Education can only be improved through creativity, innovation and playfulness so every day, we strive to innovate and improve how we do things at Medmastery.

Core value #4: We treasure TRUST

Trust is paramount for everything we do. As an effective team, we need to trust each other. Our teachers need to trust us so we can guide them and keep them motivated. And our users need to trust us if we want to become their mentors.

Ever wondered how trust is built? According to the literature, it can be summarized in three basic PRINCIPLES:

☺ Be competent at what you do and don't bulls*t!

☺ Deliver on your promises!

☺ Be a friend, not a selfish prick! Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Try to see the world through their eyes.

That's it, you have just learned the key ingredients to one of the most important goods in the history of mankind—TRUST. These principles are based on solid evidence. Here's the Trust Equation from the book "The Trusted Advisor" by David Maister, Charles Green, and Robert Galford:

THE TRUST EQUATION

$$T = \frac{Credibility + Reliability + Intimacy}{Self\text{-}Orientation}$$

According to the authors, trust equals credibility plus reliability plus intimacy divided by self-orientation. Here's what that means:

Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which we can be believed, and is dependent on expertise and competency. It's directly related to trust: the more credibility, the more trust. In a sentence we might say, "I can trust what she says about intellectual property; she's very credible (i.e., she's an expert) on the subject." *PRINCIPLE: Be competent at what you do and dont bulls*t!*

Reliability

Reliability (or dependability) is judged on our actions. It's directly related to trust: the more reliability, the more trust. We might say, "If he says he'll deliver the product tomorrow, I trust him, because he's dependable." *PRINCIPLE: Deliver on your promises!*

Intimacy

Intimacy refers to the safety or security that we feel when entrusting someone with something. It's directly related to trust: the more intimacy, the more trust. We might say, "I can trust her; we've been friends since high-school," or "I trust her; she's a dear colleague and a friend." So spend time together, work together, laugh together, and become friends with your colleagues and our users! *PRINCIPLE: Be a friend!*

Self-orientation

Self-orientation refers to the person's focus. In particular, whether the person's focus is primarily on him or herself, or on the other person. It's indirectly related to trust: the more self-orientation, the less trust. We might say, "I can't trust him on this — I don't think he cares enough about me; he's only focused on what he gets out of it." *PRINCIPLE: Don't be a selfish prick! Put yourself in the other person's shoes! Try to see the world through their eyes.*

Trust in distributed teams

It's way easier to develop trust in people you meet and hang out with every day. We're a fully distributed team, and the ingredients of the trust equation are harder to establish—and easier to break—if you don't get to hang out and spend quality time together (e.g., how are you supposed to develop intimacy with someone whom you've never met in real life?).

So hone and practice these PRINCIPLES. We have to be able to trust you and you have to be able to trust us! Once broken, trust is hard to repair.

Most problems occur because of a lack of (open) communication. Remote work lacks the in-person aspect of communication, which means that communication gets a lot harder. It's not something that is impossible to conquer, but definitely something
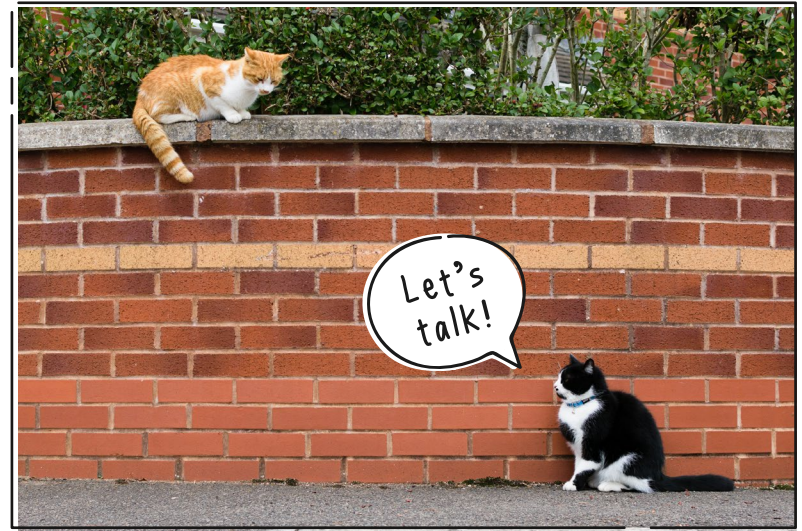
to keep in mind and constantly work on. This means that communication in a remote team needs to be dealt with as a separate issue, and discussed regularly within the team.

"The best way to overcome problems is to discuss them openly. Try to work towards a solution and avoid blaming others. In remote teams it's really important to even overshare information. Many misunderstandings are caused by mistaken assumptions, lack of information and insufficient communication."
—Alari Aho, CEO of Toggl

Core value #5: Everyone and ENTREPRENEUR

We are a group of entrepreneurs. We get stuff done. We work with a sense of urgency. We don't delay things because we know that speed of implementation is a crucial factor in the success of any new venture. We don't confuse busyness with productivity. Just because you're ticking off todos on your list doesn't mean that you are being productive. We are not afraid of making mistakes, we learn from them, and then move on.

Core value #6: We laugh and and enJOY life.

Medmastery embraces a culture of fun and joy. We love to laugh together, and we love to hang out together whenever possible (even if it is just for a quick chat on Gotomeeting or Skype). So share things about you and your life with us even if it's not work related. We want to get to know you better!

We take joy and satisfaction in the fact that what we do helps millions of patients. Enjoying what we do enhances our effectiveness, our creativity, our productivity, our empathy, and our overall happiness.

As Prof. ROBERT WALDINGER points out in his great TED talk on the findings of their 75-year Harvard Study of Adult Development:

> " The people in our 75-year study who were the happiest
> in retirement were the people who had actively worked to
> replace workmates with new playmates." [min 10:00]

So turn your workmates into playmates. It will certainly have a much more profound impact than you might think.

#2 HOW WE WORK

Who's in charge? You are!

You'll have a job to do—you were hired based on some particular skill-set—but that doesn't mean that over time you won't find yourself learning new skills and taking on different responsibilities. We're about growth, and we're hoping you are too!

Remember you're an entrepreneur now, so keep thinking about how you can help make Medmastery the best it can be: push the limits, solve problems, develop products and strategies, innovate, and create!

This company is yours to steer—toward opportunities and away from risk. You have the power to suggest improvements, new projects, and new products. There's no red tape stopping you from figuring out for yourself what our customers want, and then giving it to them.

Situational leadership

As circumstances change, leadership must change. A certain set of skills, instincts, and personality traits may be perfect today, but useless tomorrow. You might take the role of a leader in one instance and that of a follower in another instance. We call that "situational leadership". So don't assume that just because you were hired for a so called leadership position means you will always be THE leader.

Hiring

If you ever get to be a project lead or team leader, which we hope you will, you might have to hire new coworkers.

Hiring can be the single most important thing you'll ever do at Medmastery. When hiring, you need to ask yourself not only if the candidate is talented or collaborative but also if they are capable of actually running the company...because they will. And of course, they'll need to be a fit with our culture.

Ask questions!

One good question and one good answer are services to all. A sure sign of a troubled company is one where employees don't care enough to ask and, if that's the case, they'll never care enough to fully deploy their talent. Just as curiosity is an antidote to boredom and indifference, the informed are more likely to remain interested, engaged, and alive with purpose.

Everyone's in support of the customer

In order to get to know our most important stakeholders—our users—we expect every colleague to work in support full-time for at least one week. That way, you'll be able to put your finger on the pulse of our users, you'll see how they tick, what their fears and frustrations are as well as their hopes and aspirations. So if you didn't get your hands dirty yet, get in touch with customer support and help some customers!

You are Medmastery

Everyone working at Medmastery represents Medmastery. When you interact with a customer, you are Medmastery to them. In those situations, all the other stuff we do to cultivate our best image is secondary. What's right in front of someone in a time of need is what they'll remember.

That's what we mean when we say marketing is everyone's responsibility, and that it pays to spend the time to recognize that. This means avoiding the bullshit corporate language and bending our policies, not just lending your ears. It means taking the time to get the writing right and consider how you'd feel if you were on the other side of the interaction.

How to know what to do

Have you ever heard of Eisenhower's decision matrix. President Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Principle identifies which tasks and activities you should focus on and which you should delegate or ignore. Here it is:
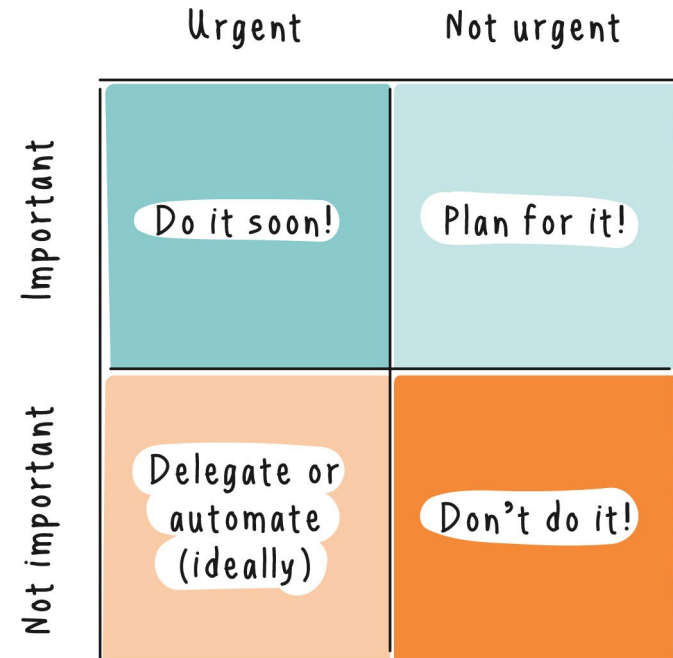
Ideally, you don't want to have any urgent things on your to-do list because urgent usually means unpleasant. Instead, they should have been planned for and taken care of at a time when they were not urgent yet.

Effective people live in the upper right corner for most of their working hours. They focus on the projects that are not urgent but very important. These are what we call "ONE Thing" projects.

Lot's of people have problems focussing on important, non-urgent projects because, well, they're not urgent. But this right upper quadrant is where every single major innovation or disruption was born.

So how can you identify these potentially disruptive projects? At Medmastery, you will often hear us talk about our The ONE Thing. The concept of The ONE Thing is borrowed from the book with the title "The One Thing: The surprisingly simple truth behind extraordinary results" by Gary Keller.

Keller describes a method of how to identify the highest-impact tasks or projects in your life and work. He suggests we ask ourselves the following question:

"What's the ONE Thing I can do such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?"

In other words, what domino can you throw over that will cause lots of other dominos to fall in place thereafter? You can make variations of this question and substitute "...the ONE Thing..." with "...the ONE Project...".

You'll likely not only have one ONE Thing. Sounds counterintuitive but it's true. You might have one ONE Thing per project. If you are currently working on three projects, you might have three ONE Things. You might have three ONE Things at Medmastery and another one for your fitness plans etc. I think you get the point.

Remember, ONE Things are usually the important not-urgent things on your todo list. Or maybe they're not even on your todo list yet? So what's the ONE Thing or project you can do today to make everything else easier or unnecessary tomorrow? Expect to be asked that question frequently at Medmastery.

How should I spend my working hours?

You should try to focus as much time as possible on your ONE Thing(s). You might also have to help other colleagues reach their ONE Thing(s) and that's great too—it will help Medmastery reach its most important goals and earn you some karma on the way. Of course you'll also have administrative things to do like communication via email and Basecamp, paper-work, and other general daily admin.
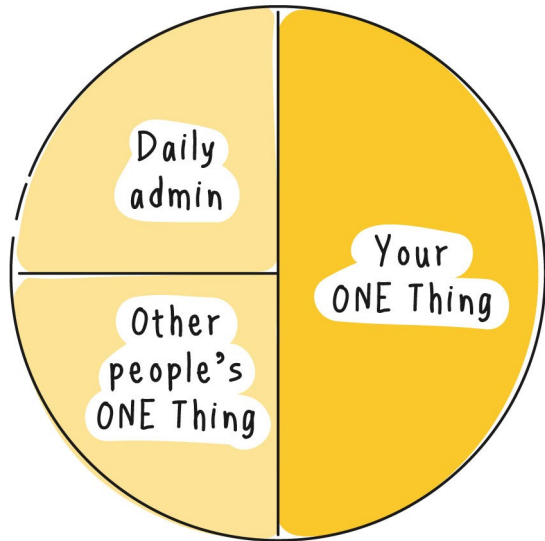

Example of how your time might be distributed.

Therefore, it's super-important that you know about the company's priorities and about the priorities of your teammates. Only then will you know where to focus your time. So next time you meet someone by Medmastery's virtual water-cooler (i.e., the Office Basecamp or Gotomeeting), ask them "What's your ONE Thing today? Any challenges with it?" They'll appreciate you interest. **You should always know what your ONE Thing for the week and your ONE Thing for the day are when asked that question!**

Can I be included the next time Medmastery is deciding X?

Yes! There's no secret decision-making group. No matter what project, you're already invited (if you want). All you have to do is either (1) Start contributing in project-related chats, or (2) Start talking to all the people who you think might be working on it already and find out how to best be valuable. You will be welcomed—there's no approval process or red tape involved. Quite the opposite—it's your job to insert yourself wherever you think you should be.
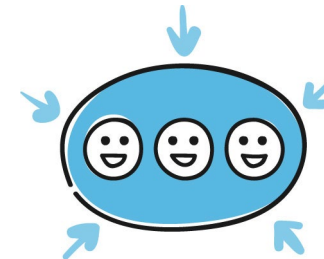
Work-life balance

It's also worth mentioning that joining Medmastery can be all-consuming. We've seen it happen. You dig Medmastery, so you feel pressure to contribute, maybe overwhelmingly so. The people who work here are some of the best and brightest in our industry, so the self-imposed burden to be exceptional is real. But here's the thing: stop it. Settle in. We're glad you love this job because we all do too, but at the end of the day it's a job. Do your best work, collaborate with your team, write, read, learn, and then turn off your computer and play with your dog/kid/buddy. We'll all be better for it.

While people occasionally choose to push themselves to work some extra hours at times when something big is going out the door, for the most part working overtime for extended periods indicates a fundamental failure in planning or communication.

If this happens at Medmastery, it's a sign that something needs to be reevaluated and corrected. If you're "looking around" wondering why people aren't in "crunch mode", the answer's pretty simple. The thing we work hardest at is hiring good people, so we want them to stick around and have a good balance between work and family and the rest of the important stuff in life.

If you find yourself working long hours, or just generally feel like that balance is out of whack, be sure to raise the issue with whomever you feel would help.

Working remotely

We have people working all sorts of different hours and from all sorts of different places at Medmastery. That alone makes it hard to enforce a lot of tightly-coupled workflows during the day, but that's a feature not a bug. Most of the work you do at Medmastery shouldn't require you to be in constant communication throughout the entire day with someone.

It's far better for everyone's concentration and sanity if you collaborate as though most things will get an answer eventually, but not necessarily right this second. Your first choice of action should be to post a message, a todo, or a document (on your team's or a project's Basecamp) about what you need to explain or need to know. Then others can read it on their schedule, when the natural lulls of the day allow it, rather than being interrupted right in their peak flow time.

Don't take that as gospel, though. Sometimes you really DO need to tightly collaborate with someone for an extended period of time, and

that's fine. We have Pings (i.e., direct messages), Gotomeeting with or without screensharing, or even in-person collaboration for when nothing else will do. (But most of the time something else will.)

All that being said, you should still ensure that there is ample overlap with the people you work with most of the time. While most roadblocks can just as well be cleared in 15, 30, or 60 minutes, they become really annoying if it's a one-day turn-around every time.

Making mistakes

Nobody has ever been fired at Medmastery for making a mistake. It wouldn't make sense for us to operate that way. Providing the freedom to fail is an important trait of the company – we couldn't expect so much of individuals if we also penalized people for errors.

Even expensive mistakes, or ones which result in a very public failure, are genuinely looked at as opportunities to learn. We can always repair the mistake or make up for it.

Screwing up is a way to find out that your assumptions were wrong or that your model of the world was a little bit off. As long as you update your model and move forward with a better plan, you're doing it right. Look for ways to test your beliefs. Never be afraid to run an experiment or to collect more data. Almost all of the breakthroughs we had happened because someone decided to experiment.

Improvements in startups don't happen like in large companies where everyone's trying to get a 10% improvement on each of their key performance indicators. In our world improvements happen because some experiment moved the needle (e.g., conversions skyrocketed, downloads were boosted, revenues spiked etc.). Once that happens, we just do more of what works and continue with all the other experiments. Don't become the 10% improvement guy, find the things that will move the needle!
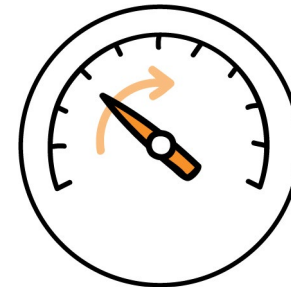
It helps to make predictions and anticipate nasty outcomes. Ask yourself "what would I expect to see if I'm right?" Ask yourself "what would I expect to see if I'm wrong?" Then ask yourself "what do I see?" If something totally unexpected happens, try to figure out why.

What would I expect to see if I'm right?
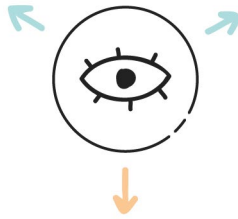
What would I expect to see if I'm wrong?

What do I see?

There are still some bad ways to fail. Repeating the same mistake over and over is one. Not listening to customers or peers before or after a failure is another. Never ignore the evidence; particularly when it says you are wrong.

How am I doing?

In order to be successful, we need to track how the company is doing and how we as team members are doing. Each member of the Medmastery team is ranked on the following metrics:

1. Skill level / Technical ability

How difficult and valuable are the kinds of problems you solve? This can be a design problem like how to depict a certain concept, an IT problem, or how well you can teach or write. How important / critical of a problem can you be given? Are you uniquely capable (in the company? industry?) of solving a certain class of problem, delivering a certain type of art asset, contributing to designing, writing, or video? Past accomplishments are less relevant here as what you achieve at Medmastery.

2. Productivity / Output

How much shippable (not necessarily shipped to outside customers), valuable, finished work did you get done? Working a lot of hours is generally not related to productivity and, after a certain point, indicates inefficiency. It is more valuable if you are able to maintain a sensible work/life balance and use your time in the (home) office efficiently, rather than working around the clock.

3. Group & company contribution

How much do you contribute to our processes, hiring, integrating people into the team, improving the workflow, amplifying your colleagues, helping them reach their ONE Thing, or creating tools used by others? Generally, being a group contributor means that you are making a tradeoff versus an individual contribution. Stepping up and acting in a leadership role can be good for your group contribution score, but being a leader does not impart or guarantee a higher rank in the team. It is just a role that people adopt from time to time. We like to think of the company as a product in and of itself. Anything you do to make the company better (e.g., by improving our processes, templates, help us in HR, refine our vision etc.) will increase your group & company contribution score.

4. Product & content contribution

How much do you contribute at a larger scope than your core skill? How much of your work matters to the product? How much did you influence correct prioritization of work or resource trade-offs by others? Are you good at predicting how customers are going to react to decisions we're making? Things like being a good feature tester, bug finder during production of a course or feature would fall in this category.

By choosing these categories and basing your evaluation on them, the company is explicitly stating "This is what is valuable." We think that these categories offer a broad range of ways you can contribute value to the company.
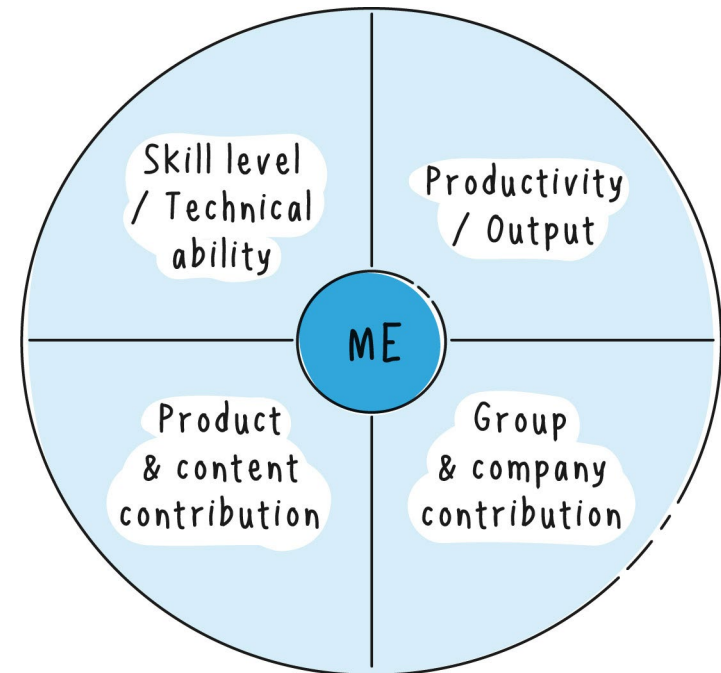
#3 WHAT ELSE IS IMPORTANT?

Some thoughts on hiring

If you're not sure how to contribute value above and beyond your current work, helping us find talent is always a very good place to start.

As mentioned above, hiring well and finding talent (both coworkers and teachers) is probably one of the most important things in the universe of Medmastery.

If you're unsure of what your ONE Thing could be, help us find talent! If you already have a clear ONE Thing, help us find talent anyway. We can only become the company we want to be if we have the best possible team.

Bring your friends

One of the most valuable things you can do as a new employee is tell us who else you think we should hire. Assuming that you agree with us that Medmastery is the best place to work on Earth, then tell us about who the best people are on Earth, so we can bring them here too. If you don't agree yet, then wait six months and ask yourself this question again.

If you connect us to a future employee and that employee becomes a success at Medmastery, that success reflects back on you—you were the one who helped us create a better team.

How to choose the right people to hire

Here's a list of questions we always ask ourselves when hiring new people:

- Would I want this person to be my boss?
- Would I learn a significant amount from him or her?
- What if this person went to work for our competition?

Adding a great person can create value across the whole company. Missing out on hiring that great person is likely the most expensive kind of mistake we can make.

Across the board, we value highly collaborative people That means people who are skilled in all the things that are integral to high-bandwidth collaboration – people who can deconstruct problems on the fly, and talk to others as they do so, simultaneously.

These things actually matter far more than deep domain-specific knowledge or highly developed skills in narrow areas. This is why we'll often pass on candidates who, narrowly defined, are the "best" at their chosen discipline.

Of course it's not quite enough to say that a candidate should collaborate well – we also refer to the same four metrics that we rely on when evaluating a coworker (see above).

We are looking for people stronger than ourselves

When unchecked, people have a tendency to hire others who are less capable than themselves. The questions above are designed to help ensure that we don't start hiring people who are useful but not as good as we are. We should hire more capable than ourselves, not less.

In some ways, hiring folks who are less capable than ourselves is a natural response to having so much work to get done. In these conditions, hiring someone who is at least capable seems (in the short term) to be smarter than not hiring anyone at all. But that's actually a huge mistake. We can always bring on temporary contract help to get us through tough spots, but we should never lower the hiring bar.

At most organizations, it's beneficial to have an army of people below you to work for you and do your bidding. At Medmastery, though, it's not. You'd damage the company and saddle yourself with a broken organization.

It's common wisdom in the self-improvement realm that you are the average of the people whom you surround yourself with. You

have the average of their IQs, average weight, average income. So surround yourself with folks who are smarter, fitter and better than you!

What's the catch of this hiring strategy

There is no catch really in our view. We want to surround yourself with a group of people who are getting better and better every day. At some point we might ask ourselves "Would I be hired today if I applied for my job?" Good question. The answer might be "No", but that's actually awesome because it means that we created a rockstar team together, that we should celebrate because we grew correctly. As long as you're continuing to be valuable and having fun, it's a moot point, really.

Why are we hiring this way?

Because we want to make the design of the company more important than any one short-term business goal. This requires a great deal of freedom from outside pressure—being self-funded helps.

Thoughts about our competition

At Medmastery we don't care too much about our competition. Anyone who's trying to improve healthcare is welcome. We don't compare their numbers to our numbers, their userbase to ours or their offerings to our offerings.

There are several companies that we follow closely. Many of them are not in the healthcare sector. We follow them for inspiration because they are doing many things right. We are looking at other companies in order to see if we can learn for them.

We are primarily competing against our old selves. Every day we want to get a bit better. Imagine, if you could improve by 1% each week, over the course of a year, you'd improve by 68%!

The companies who forget why they were founded, show up to the race every day to outdo someone else instead of to outdo themselves. The pursuit for those who forget the WHY is to "win the medal". We're not playing that game at Medmastery.

What if the next time someone asked you "Who's your competition?", you answered "No idea." What if the next time someone asks "Well, what makes you better than your competition?" you replied "We're not better than them in all cases."

What if the next time they asked you "And why should I do business with you then?" You answered with confidence "Because the work

we're doing now is better than the work we did six months ago and the work we will be doing in six months will be better than the work we're doing today. We wake up every day with a sense of why we come to work - we come to work to empower clinicians so they can save lots of lives. Are we better than our competition? If you believe in what we believe and you believe that the things we do can help you, then yes, we're better. If you don't believe what we believe and you don't believe the things we do can help you, then no, we're not better." (Borrowed from Start With Why by Simon Sinnek)

Our goal is to find customers who believe in what we believe and work together so that we can all succeed. We're looking for people to stand shoulder to shoulder with us in pursuit of the same goal. We are not interested in sitting across a table from each other in pursuit of a sweeter deal!

Thoughts about problem solving and project management

For a detailed description on how we run projects, please refer to the resources in our Office Basecamp.

We like to learn from the best companies out there. A company we find particularly worthy of being modelled is Basecamp. Basecamp has created two very important principles (i.e., expressions): "*to judo a problem*" and "*scope hammering*". Here's what they mean...

To judo a problem

Most problems can be solved in a thousand different ways. One way might take 100 hours, another might take ten. Judo is the art of problem restatement. Turning that massive, scary three-month looking problem into one that can be done in three weeks instead. It's often used when we get frustrated trying to solve something hard and we aren't making sufficient progress: "Let's figure out a way to judo this!".

Scope hammering

Sometimes a project, feature or task cannot be delivered on time or on budget. When that happens, our go-to tool for shipping is scope hammering. This basically just means shrinking the scope,

removing features or configuration or fidelity, until the work is doable within the time and budget that's left. It's the opposite tactic to working longer days or weekends or to postpone the project into another cycle. Almost every project can be scope hammered, especially if you invite someone in to assist with the analysis who isn't afraid to kill other people's darlings. You'll get better at doing that yourself after a few rounds too.

Working for others (outside of Medmastery)

We do understand that you might have other interests and commitments outside of Medmastery (especially if you are not full time). So here are our thoughts on working for other companies and individuals while you are with Medmastery.

There are one-time gigs, other pursuits, or opportunities that help you grow and make life interesting. We want to support that. But we want to make sure professional endeavors outside of Medmastery don't create conflicts of interest or affect your time, dedication, or performance at Medmastery. So it's a delicate balance.

With that in mind, here are some examples of what we'd consider OK and what we would consider a conflict of interest and not OK:

OK

✓ An occasional side gig, free or paid, for someone you know. For example, if you want to work on a friend's website, or a design or writing project for something you're involved in, that's fine.

✓ An occasional speaking gig, free or paid. Someone's going to pay you to give a talk somewhere? That's fine as long as it doesn't involve multiple days off for travel (unless you use your own personal vacation time against this travel time).

✓ A side business that's different from your day job, as long as the commitment is only a few hours a week. If you come to work exhausted because you're trying to start a full-time business on the side, it's going to impact your performance here.

✓ Serve as an advisor for another company, or be on a board, as long as there's no conflict of interest. The time commitment must be under a few hours a month. And if there's a scheduling conflict, Medmastery gets priority.

✓ Do volunteer or occasional pro-bono work for a cause you're actively involved with. A little work here and there is fine, but, for example, becoming an organization's full-time web designer and being on the hook to work during your standard work day, etc, would not be OK.

NOT OK

🚫 You can't work full time or part time for another company in our industry. If you're unclear about what our industry is, and you have a specific situation you'd like to talk about, ping Franz.

🚫 Go out on a regular speaking circuit tour which is going to require multiple days of travel multiple times a year. That's too disruptive to our own work schedule and to your fellow teammates.

🚫 Consult for other companies in our industry where there may be a conflict of interest (a competitor, a product tangentially related to Medmastery, etc).

🚫 Be aggressive in marketing your availability for side work. If something comes to you through a friend or some connection, fine, but aggressively promoting something on the side will ultimately result in a conflict of interest here at work.

🚫 Take on anything outside of work that'll pull attention from work. For example, if you wanted to launch an app, but the app requires providing timely customer support to people who use the app, that's going to eat into your day here at work. That would ultimately be a problem.

IN GENERAL

Here's a few guiding principles about whether something could be a problem:

• Is it competitive?
• Does it occupy a disproportionate amount of your time?
• Does it require you to be away during times when you're needed at work?
• Is it another paid gig that employs the same skills Medmastery is paying you for?

In general we'd like to be lenient within reason, but we're going to be strict if we see it impact your time, attention, or performance here at work.

It's hard to come up with one-size fits all rules. If you're in doubt, please reach out to Franz. He's always happy to spare a moment to give his thoughts on it before you make a commitment.

Epilogue

We created this playbook to help you find your way through the Medmastery jungle. It's not set in stone and we appreciate you input in it once you feel ready to make it better. You can find the Google Doc [here](#).

Sometimes the philosophy and methods outlined in this book don't match perfectly with how things are going day to day. That's where common sense and flexibility will be needed and appreciated.

As you see it, are there areas of the company in which the ideals in this book are realized more fully than others? What should we do about that? Are those differences a good thing? What would you change? This handbook describes the goals we believe in. If you find yourself in a group or project that you feel isn't meeting these goals, be an agent of change! Help bring the group around. Talk about these goals with the team and others.

You are in charge now!