



Peter Taylor

The **lazy** winner

How to do more with less effort and succeed in your work and personal life without rushing around like a headless chicken or putting in 100 hour weeks

The lazy
winner

To my mum and dad, who have discovered the joys of international travel late in life; hopefully this book will help compensate for the loss of my inheritance through these frivolous expenditures.

And to my brother, Justin, who isn't helping matters at all by living in South Africa.

Love you all.

Peter Taylor

The lazy winner

How to do more with less effort and succeed in your work and personal life without rushing around like a headless chicken or putting in 100 hour weeks



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Acknowledgements

There seem to be a lot of people out there who like the idea of being 'lazy' but in a 'productive' way, so I want to thank everyone who has supported me and encouraged me so far. That said, you can only blame yourselves that there is now a whole new book on the subject in the marketplace.

As usual when such a book is born there will be a long list of people that I should thank but applying my own principles of 'laziness' I will just say that 'you know who you are' and that I am 'enthusiastically grateful' to all of you. And as this is not an Oscar speech I don't even have to mention the enormous contribution my goldfish made.

There, easily done and without running the risk of missing someone off the list.

I hope that you enjoy the book and I do really appreciate everyone who has had the slightest influence or impact on me over the years; without you who knows what success I might have actually enjoyed.

Thanks to all of you and be 'lazy'.

Peter

Foreword

We all need a little help in our lives, I know I do, and sometimes you just reach out and grab on to a lifeline when the opportunity arrives.

For me, it arrived one lunch time when I was out and about attempting to enjoy some downtime and yet stressed by what was waiting for me back at the office.

I happened upon *The lazy winner* and, despite my reservations about self-help books in general, I was drawn by the fact that the book seemed honest and easy to read. Indeed it starts by giving the would-be reader the opportunity to reconsider the potential purchase and suggests that they should understand exactly what it can and can't do for them.

For me it led to a series of small changes that have resulted in a big change in my life.

For me becoming a lazy winner has become a reality.

I am sure it can do the same for you.

Nigel (You'll hear more about him later on.)

Decision

'Ambition is a poor
excuse for not having
sense enough to be lazy.'

Charlie McCarthy (Edgar Bergen)

Are you sure you want to read this book?

Stop reading this book now!

Well actually I mean stop reading this book at the end of this chapter and then follow the instructions explicitly before you continue. Trust me on this one, I'm an author, and it really is in your best interests. Clear? Good!

So let's start with a simple summary of what lies ahead of you in this book and then take a quick test to see if it is worth your while investing your time (and money) further.

What is it all about?

The lazy winner is for anyone who simply wants to do more with less effort and succeed in their work and personal life without rushing around like a headless chicken or putting in 100 hour weeks. We are all too good to put our personal life and careers and work-life balance at risk by working too hard! Equally we can't head off in the opposite direction and ignore the 'work' part of the equation while focusing our time and effort solely on the 'life' part. That is not a work-life balance at all and, unless you are already wealthy enough to go for just a life-life balance¹ then you do need to come up with a real 'balance' that applies to you.

1. If this is the case and you are just idly reading this book on your private yacht while waiting for the caviar to be served please send all donations through my website www.thelazywinner.com – thank you – all major credit cards accepted, naturally.

You are just too good to fail at what you do and I want to help you get even better at succeeding in what you do in the future.

The lazy winner builds on the concept of ‘productive laziness’ which encourages people to apply more thought before leaping into action and throwing effort at a problem or task. There are much better ways to progress in work and in life. I mean, what is the point in rushing around like busy bees all of the time and yet looking back at the end of the day and wondering what it was all about and what you actually achieved.

With a different approach to planning you can ensure that you are one of the lazy winners and achieve success in what you do at work and in life – achieving more impressive results with the minimum of effort.

What is it not about?

I want you to make the right decision here about this book and the outline of what it aims to do will, hopefully, put you on the right path. Equally I should be clear about what this book isn’t about and what it won’t give you.

There are hundreds of self-help books out there that will promise to help you ‘get paid more, laid more and live a longer happier life’. This isn’t one of them (I may have just lost out on a million sales with that statement but I have to be honest²).

What I do believe is that by adopting a few simple rules in your life you can make changes that can be quite significant, depending upon your starting point of course, and what your expectations are of such change.

2. The publishers would like to point out that it may well be possible to achieve everything that other self-help books offer so you might like to buy the book anyway on the off chance that this happens – but no guarantee is provided. (A search on Amazon.com for ‘self-help’ books currently shows a staggering 129,325 books with ‘self-help’ in the title or as the contents tag. It is also said that the self-help market in 2010 was valued at just under \$12 billion.) Note: Perhaps the next book in the series will be *The happy lazy book of getting laid and paid more*.

What this book is then is a roadmap, a route planner, a step-by-step progress plan, to guide you on your way to achieving some level of ‘productive laziness’. And that is an important thing to understand. You don’t have to go for the ‘big bang’³ approach and you don’t have to do 100% of what I suggest to achieve some benefits. I believe that you will achieve some advantage at each stage – small incremental gains as each lesson is learned and applied.

Again, many self-help books only work if you entirely immerse yourself in what they have to say and then adopt all the advice to the maximum. And when you fail to make any significant changes it will be your fault for not doing it all properly and thoroughly enough.

This book is not like that.

So, should you read this book?

You need to ask yourself some questions before you make up your mind.

What happens when you get involved in something? Do you get carried along in the excitement of it all, caught up in the rush, or just accept everything that heads your way with a spirit of fatalism? Or do you ever hold back and ask yourself:

- Do I want to do this piece of work, job or task? Even if I do want to do it, do I need to do it?
- Is the potential result or outcome worth my effort?
- Do I have to do it myself?
- If you have to do to it then what is the shortest path to the point of success?
- What exactly is that point of success and at what stage will you just be wasting your time?

3. The ‘big bang’ relates to the cosmological theory that the start of the cosmos happened at one moment in time. This is also the case with the big bang adoption type where a new system is adopted on one date (often applicable in software implementations).

If you get a clean run of ‘Yes I do that’ across all five questions then put your purse or wallet away and go buy something else.⁴ You are most likely ‘winning’ already.

If you lost your way at some point in the short questionnaire, and that is going to apply to the majority of you I am sure, then you either just enjoy being a headless chicken and working 100 hours a week or you seriously want some help.

If the ‘100 hour per week chicken’ profile is your key to happiness then again, you don’t need this book. You can just carry on as you are and good luck to you. Contentment is a blessed thing and it is good that you have found yours.

But, if this has made you consider in any way that there might be some changes that you could make – if only you had some sort of guide and reference point – then you need to learn the art of productive laziness and, surprise, surprise, *The lazy winner* is a great place to start.

Try the questions again in the context of this book:

- Do I want to read *The lazy winner*? Do I need to read *The lazy winner*? Well you should have a clear view by now based on what you have read so far and on the answers to the questions above.
- Will the outcome of reading *The lazy winner* be worth the effort? Trust me, I will make it as painless as possible to get the most out of this book – working smarter not harder, I practice what I preach – you will gain in proportion to what you put into the process.
- Do I have to read *The lazy winner* myself? Ideally yes, but actually I can be hired at a ridiculous fee to come and read it to you – your choice, but why not give the book a go yourself first?
- If I have to read *The lazy winner* then what is the shortest path to the point of success? The book offers a flexible path to learning

4. You could invest in a ‘get paid more/laid more’ self-help book perhaps?

the art of productive laziness and I aim, as a smart but lazy author, to offer up multiple points of success along the way, chapter by chapter.

- What exactly is that point of success and at what stage will I just be wasting my time? When your chicken is no longer headless and you have reduced your working hours then you may well be reaching a point of return on your investment.

So, do you want to be a lazy winner or carry on being a busy loser?⁵

Hopefully I have demonstrated my integrity by being honest and upfront about what the book is and isn't. Out of that massive number of self-help books I noted earlier how many are actually read completely? How many are really used as they were intended? How many now sit on a shelf collecting dust or are destined for the next charity sale? We are all human, I know – we want to change but it is so hard sometimes and so much easier to just carry on with things as they are. I have twenty or so cookery books, beautifully produced with wonderful pictures and stimulating recipes, but I still, mostly, end up eating the same meals that I always have done. Strange.

OK, enough of me talking here, it time for you to make your mind up.

Decision time

So what is it going to be? You need to answer all of my questions but I know what you're thinking. 'Did he ask six questions or only five?'

Well, to tell you the truth, in all the excitement I kind of lost track myself, but being as this is a book about productive laziness,

5. OK so you are not a loser – what I meant by that phrase is that you could perhaps be losing out by not working in a more intelligent way.

the most powerful way of working in the world, and could blow your head clean off, you've got to ask yourself one question: Do I feel lucky? Well, do ya?

Go ahead reader, make my day...⁶ Or to be more precise, go ahead and make your day by learning to work in a better way, the winning way of productive laziness.

Just remember:

'Progress isn't made by early risers. It's made by lazy men trying to find easier ways to do something.'⁷

6. 'Go ahead, make my day' is the catchphrase, written by Joseph C. Stinson and spoken by the character Harry Callahan, played by Clint Eastwood, in the 1983 film *Sudden Impact*. Note for Clint aficionados: the author has declined to address his audience as 'punk' in this instance. The previous quote (or misquote) is from the earlier *Dirty Harry*, a 1971 American crime thriller produced and directed by Don Siegel, the first in the Dirty Harry series.

7. From *Time Enough For Love*, Robert Heinlein, US science fiction author (1907–1988). Note: This is the quote that triggered the 'productively lazy' concept for me. Having trained many people over time in various jobs and roles I was constantly trying to explain how it was that I, and others, seemed to be so much more relaxed, organised, less stressed than others and yet delivered similar or better results. Reading Robert Heinlein's quote made it all seem so much clearer and simpler – I was 'lazy' and this was a good thing. A very good thing indeed I believe.

‘Never be afraid to try something new.

Remember:

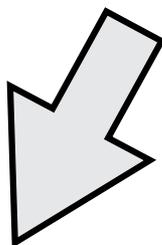
It was a lone amateur that built the Ark – and a large group of professionals who built the Titanic.’

Dave Barry

Laziness

You are here

In order to help you navigate this book easily there will be regular tips to allow you to assess your progress on the path to productive laziness.¹ Think of it as a ‘sat nav’² for productive laziness – it will guide you to your destination but won’t get annoyed if you deviate in any way along the route or simply decide to go somewhere else if that seems a lot more interesting.



You are here

OK not particularly helpful at this point in time I know but we haven’t really started yet have we? It will get more useful later on. But you are already not where you started: you have considered productive laziness and, presumably, decided that this is the path you wish to tread. So, you are already changing in a small but significant way.

-
1. It will also let you cheat if you want to – in a productively lazy way. After all, why should I (the self-proclaimed lazy master) expect you to read 30,000 words when I can make it easier and quicker for you?
 2. ‘Sat nav’ is an abbreviation for the ‘satellite navigation systems’ designed for use in automobiles. They typically use a GPS (Global Positioning System) navigation device to acquire position data to locate the user on a road in the unit’s map database. Using the road database, the unit can give directions to other locations along roads also in its database.

You just experienced productive laziness by the way.

As an added comfort to having parted with your hard-earned money (part of the reward for that 100-hour week being a headless chicken, perhaps), as if by magic, you have just experienced the productive laziness approach in the very decision making process that you went through.

By investing a small amount of time upfront you either just saved yourself the time and effort of reading another 29,000 words (plus a few pounds, dollars, yen, etc., depending on where you might have purchased this book), and gaining nothing from the experience, or you have prepared your mind to focus and learn to be generally more productive in the future. Both of these are good things.

Now we will begin in earnest.

Introducing Nigel

In which we meet the hero of our story, appreciate what it is that he feels about life and understand that he has a challenging and particular sense of humour – and keeps signs on his desk at work which present his insights about the world and where his mind is at right now.

This book could have been called *Making Plans for Nigel*.³

Nigel, our story's hero, is just this guy you know (for an alternative feel free to use Nigella).

3. If you would like to listen to Nigel(la)'s theme tune try 'Making plans for Nigel' by XTC. *Drums and Wires* is an XTC album released on 17 August 1979. It reached No. 34 on the UK album chart, and No. 176 on the US Billboard album charts. It contained the successful single 'Making Plans for Nigel', which was released on 14 September 1979, and reached No. 17 on the UK singles chart. Note: Using the masculine and feminine of Nigel has also allowed the author, in a moment of self-indulgence, to include the name of his favourite TV chef – Nigella Lawson – thereby winning a bet of some small financial but significant personal importance.

So this book could have been called *Making plans for Nigella*.

He (she) is pretty happy with his (her) life and could just keep on doing what he (she) has been doing for some time now but there is just a little something inside him (her) – OK I am going to stop this now. You get my meaning, I am trying to be completely sexually non-biased, therefore, from this point onwards can we take it as read that when I say him I also mean her and vice versa? Thank you.

Nigel is just like a lot of us. Life is what happens to Nigel while he was busy making other plans. Nigel likes a particular story about the meaning of life; he tells this one quite a lot.

On the first day God created the cow.

God said, 'You must go to the field with the farmer all day long and suffer under the sun, have calves and give milk to support the farmer. I will give you a life span of sixty years.' The cow said, 'That's kind of a tough life you want me to live for sixty years. Let me do it for twenty years and I'll give back the other forty.'

And God agreed.

On the second day God created the monkey.

God said, 'Entertain people, do monkey tricks, make them laugh. I'll give you a twenty year life span.' Monkey said, 'How boring, monkey tricks for twenty years? I don't think so. Cow gave you back forty, but I'll give back ten okay?'

Once again, God agreed.

On the third day, God created the dog.

God said, 'Sit all day by the door of your house and bark at anyone who comes in or walks past. I will give you a life span of twenty years.' The dog said, 'That's too long to be barking. Give me ten years and I'll give back the other ten.'

So God agreed.

On the fourth day God created man.

God said, 'Eat, sleep, play, have sex, enjoy. Do nothing, just enjoy life. I'll give you twenty years.' Man said, 'What? Only twenty years? No way. Tell you what: I'll take my twenty, and the forty cow gave back plus the ten monkey gave back, add that to the ten dog gave back and it makes eighty, okay?'

'Okay,' said God. 'You've got a deal.'

So that is why for the first twenty years we eat, sleep, play, have sex, enjoy, and do nothing; for the next forty years we slave in the sun to support our family; for the next ten years we do monkey tricks to entertain our grandchildren; and for the last ten years we sit in front of the house and bark at everybody!

Nigel isn't a bad man, despite the sense of humour, but he does feel that things could be somewhat better and in the back of his mind he senses that he could make some changes that would be good for him and for his family.

But what should he do? Why is he working so hard and for such long hours? Why is he so tired all of the time? And why does he never feel that he is up to date with anything or actually making some sort of progress? Why is his inbox and his 'to do' list so full? Life seems to be all about treading water. And why is that there are other people who seem to float around without a care in the world and yet achieve success in an effortless way? What is it that they do, or don't do, that Nigel doesn't, or does?

And why does he have a sign on his desk that reads 'Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.'

What does ‘winning’ mean to you?

In which we understand what it means to be a ‘winner’ from a personal point of view, get scientific to a degree, and realise that there is an awful lot that we don’t know we don’t know – but all in a good way.

In order to track your progress you really need two points of reference. You need to know where you are now and you need to know where you would like to end up, eventually. It will be obvious to you, with perhaps some level of honest self-evaluation, where you are right now. But what about where you want to be, what does ‘winning’ mean to you in this context.

win (w n)

1. To achieve victory or finish first in a competition.
2. To achieve success in an effort or venture.

In this book I am not talking about the first definition, it is not about victory or coming first, and it isn’t

‘Winning is a personal journey. It’s about reaching a destination you choose. At its most fundamental, winning is about achievement.’

‘Jack’ Welch¹

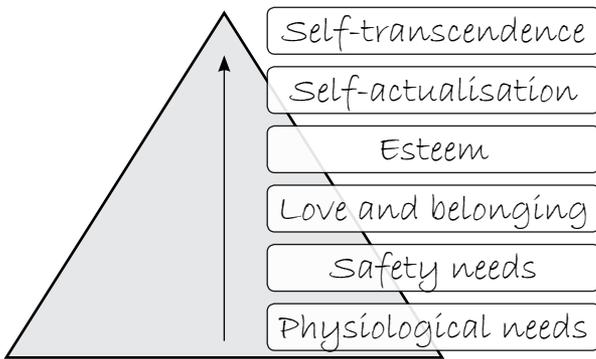
1. John Francis ‘Jack’ Welch, Jr (born 19 November 1935) is an American chemical engineer, businessman and author. He was Chairman and CEO of General Electric between 1981 and 2001.

about others losing at your expense. It is all about the second definition, achieving your defined level of success in your work, your life, your effort.

So what is it that you would consider a ‘win’ in your life?

Warning, here comes the ‘science’ bit.

One way of looking at this is through the hierarchy of needs as laid out by Maslow.²



You can check out the appendix for more information about this but simply put, we are all motivated by our needs. Our most basic needs are inborn, having evolved over thousands of years. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs helps to explain how these needs motivate us all.

2. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological theory proposed in his 1943 paper 'A Theory of Human Motivation'. Maslow subsequently extended the idea to include his observations of humans' innate curiosity. His theories parallel many other theories of human developmental psychology, all of which focus on describing the stages of growth in humans. Maslow studied what he called exemplary people such as Albert Einstein, Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt and Frederick Douglass rather than mentally ill or neurotic people, writing that 'the study of crippled, stunted, immature, and unhealthy specimens can yield only a cripple psychology and a cripple philosophy.' Maslow studied the healthiest one per cent of the college student population and his theory was fully expressed in his 1954 book *Motivation and Personality*.

It states that we must satisfy each need in turn, starting with the first, which deals with the most obvious needs for survival itself: air, food, water and the ability to reproduce, clothing and shelter. Only when the lower order needs of physical and emotional well-being are satisfied are we concerned with the higher order needs of influence and personal development. Conversely, if the things that satisfy our lower order needs are swept away, we are no longer concerned about the maintenance of our higher order needs.

I am guessing that anyone reading this book is either not particularly focused on their current physiological needs or they have their priorities wildly out of balance.³ Beyond that level of need if you ask most people what they want in life, and therefore, what they would like to move towards they will probably answer in the following terms:

- I would like peace of mind. Well, any definition of winning, and therefore success, will presumably have an element of this.
- I want to be healthy. Naturally, and any other form of success will pretty much be negated by a state of ill health.
- I want to be loved. This can be fulfilled by family or friends, a wife, a husband or a partner, through children or even animals.
- I want to be financially secure. This is often the freedom from thinking about money all of the time and not necessarily being 'rich'. Just having enough money to pay the bills, feed those in your care, and deal with basic necessities.
- I want to achieve something in life. We all desperately want to improve either ourselves, or someone, or something else. It is just human nature I guess.

3. If you are focused on your current physiological needs then perhaps you really should have invested in that 'get paid more/laid more' book instead of *The lazy winner*. Oh well, I am sure you can get a reasonable price for this book on eBay if you haven't bent the pages too much.

- I want to feel fulfilled. If you have dealt with the first five ‘desires’ but feel unfulfilled, then you aren’t enjoying the full measure of your own success.

Defining your personal success can be done at two levels. You could go for the big ‘where do I want to be in life in say five or ten years’ time’ approach and the ‘what are my goals in life’ approach. Answering those questions will give you a long-term plan for your personal destination of choice. Or you can answer at a lower level with the ‘what things do I do that I could easily change that might make a real difference’ and ‘what is it that I do now that I know I shouldn’t do’ approach. This will at least point you in the right direction of the changes that would bring about a significant difference over time and an immediate difference quickly.

Personally I am always a fan of the ‘quick win’ approach. It delivers fast and it fuels the feeling of success and the momentum of achievement.⁴

We all want to succeed in more than just one area in our lives, so you do need to set multiple goals. For example, one goal may relate to your career and work while other goals may relate to your relationship, children, or hobbies. You need to ask yourself ‘What kind of balance do I need in my life?’ And you must find a balance between all these areas of your life in order for you to feel fulfilled.

Where are you?

So where are you now? What is your starting point for change?

The greater clarity you have in defining your ‘journey’ the more likely you are to succeed, or to put it another way – the less chance

4. It is here that *The lazy winner* will no doubt differ from the traditional self-help book that often demands big changes for a big reward. I am with Confucius when he said ‘A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.’ And I like to make those first steps very small ones if I can.

What does 'winning' mean to you?

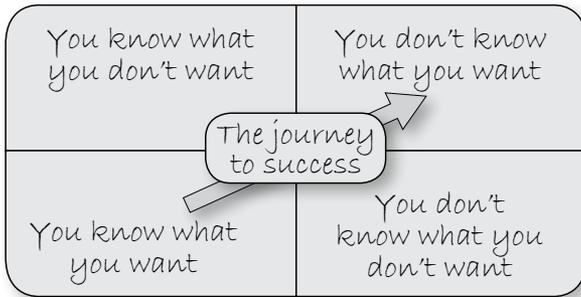
you have of getting lost on the way. The other great benefit of seeing the full journey is that you can plot your simple steps and not be put off by a belief that any change is just way too enormous and far too difficult to achieve (so why bother trying).

The easiest thing to do is to start with what you know.

- Do you know what you want?
- Do you know what you don't want?

For example you might think 'I want to spend more time with my family but I don't want to do a bad job at work and not have a career'. This is perfectly acceptable and aligns itself to the guidance of having balance in what you do.

It is possible that you don't know what you want, or even worse, you don't know what you don't want.



The journey to success can only be plotted once you have a clear route mapped out.

Part of this, in the interest of not wasting time and effort, is in avoiding the things that you don't want and focusing on the things that you do want. It is a little like going for a walk. There are two types of walk: the 'A' to 'B' type where the purpose is to get to 'B' from a starting point of 'A'. And there is the second type where you have plenty of time and the pleasure in the walk is to take your

time and discover interesting places on the way. For a ‘productive but lazy’ person the ‘A’ to ‘B’ journey is the one to go for – in fact a truly ‘productively lazy’ approach would look at whether you could in fact miss ‘B’ out altogether and go straight to ‘C’, if ‘C’ is your next destination.

Let’s start with your journey now.

Can you now list everything that you believe you do want and would like to change? Honesty is really important here – just put it down on paper or electronically, your choice, but put it down somewhere.

What about the things that you know you don’t want? Can you list these as well?

Take some time now to do this.

1. What do you want?
2. What don’t you want?

Yes, I know that first list is going to be a whole lot easier to put together than the second one, but the more you understand about yourself and what you want the better.

Great, now we move on to the other part of the journey.

Now, can you think about how you would find out about the things that you might well want if only you knew what they were? Talking to other people often helps here – widening your scope of knowledge and experience through others (we will look at your network of influence later on).

What about the things that you don’t know that you don’t want? Well perhaps all you can do here is anticipate that, as you progress along your path to change, you will probably stray into this area once or twice so be ready. If it doesn’t feel right then challenge it.

This is not a one-time only self assessment – you will need to re-test yourself with the questions of need and desire several times over as your journey progresses.

'Efficiency is intelligent
laziness.'

David Dunham

Do you want this and do you need this? Remember these key questions and that it is the combination of answers to them that should inform you of your final decision, not one of them alone. Just because you want to do something doesn't mean you should do it.

This is not a 'one time' assessment

Keep checking back to make sure you are progressing in the right direction.

Nigel has a plan

Nigel was wandering through the shops near his office during a rare lunch break. Pretty much everyone he needed to talk to or who needed to talk to him was otherwise occupied and so he took advantage of the lull by actually going out of the building for something to eat. And now he was heading back along the 'scenic' route through the shops. His eye caught a book promotion in the window of the book store – *The lazy winner: How to do more with less effort and succeed in your work and personal life without rushing around like a headless chicken or putting in 100-hour weeks.* Intriguing, maybe he needed some of that.

Nigel had his fair share of shelf-fill (as he called those many books that filled his bookshelves but that he had never actually read all the way through, and even in some cases, never started). He thought that if someone could come up with a book that incorporated the seven ways of this and the nine ideals of that with a hint of who moved my one day working week, dusted off with a topping of just eat that gerbil then they would clean up. In a big way.

It reminded Nigel of a joke.

A man goes in to the local bookstore and asks the assistant for the self-help section. The assistant replied 'If I tell you that then you will gain nothing from the experience of finding it yourself.'

But Nigel lingered and stared at the book. He sure needed some help so why not splash out a small amount and give it a go. If the worst came to the worst he was pretty sure there was a small gap on the bookshelf that was still exposing some wood.

At home that evening Nigel sat down and opened the pages of his new purchase. The euphoria of buying and then owning the book had worn off long ago – that heady moment when he actually felt more productive just by owning the creation – but he had spent the money so why not check it out.

To be fair it wasn't just a rash purchase as he had read the first chapter which had openly given him the opportunity to put the book back down and walk out of the store without handing any money over to the assistant. In fact it had actively encouraged him to think about buying a completely different book that promised to improve his sex life, among other benefits.

But he hadn't been tempted. He was now the proud owner of *The lazy winner*, or at least he was the owner of *The lazy winner*.

He took a sip of his coffee, opened the book, and began to read ...