

# 'Edgers' have impeccable manners and polished shoes. So what holds me back?



## GEORGE HEPBURN

**M**ICHAEL Heppell has done it again. His new book, *The Edge*, looks set to become another best seller.

A copy arrived on my desk last week with Michael's trademark exhortation to "Be Brilliant" inscribed on the inside cover.

We were once colleagues running neighbouring community foundations until Michael walked into my office one day in 1996 to announce he was off for a new job in psychological education and warned me of the dangers of "remaining too long in my comfort zone". His career never looked back.

Michael's previous self-help guides, 5

Star Service and Flip It, topped the business best sellers and were translated into 22 languages.

I still find them in airport bookshops. Not bad for a boy from Consett whose final school report said that he would "never do anything with the English language".

If I am honest, I struggle some days to "Be Brilliant". You know the kind of days I mean: the wife's away, nobody at work listens to a word I say and the gout has kicked in. But I get the general drift. Look on the positive side and be the best you can.

And there is no doubt that Michael has become a brilliant trainer and motivational speaker. To research what gives

some people 'the edge', Michael interviewed leading lights in the business, sporting and television worlds and distilled their advice for all to follow.

The interviewees are anonymous though one or two names, like Sir Richard Branson, Davina McCall and John Elliott, from County Durham, are mentioned.

I won't give all the secrets away. You will have to buy the book but I am struck that the many useful tips from these megastars just seem to require hard work and application. People with 'the edge' get up earlier, prepare thoroughly for meetings and keep up with the news. Michael found that without exception 'edgers' had impeccable manners and polished shoes. I could do that too - so what holds me back?

Does this mean that I could also have 'The Edge' with better preparation and more self discipline? Doesn't ability, intellect and genius come into the equation somewhere? And can we all be edgers? No, if you think about it, most of us must be somewhere in the middle of the park.

Edgers also have some special qualities that I can only aspire to. They are good listeners, ask searching questions and don't bear a grudge. They trust their intuition and are prepared to act upon it. Intuition comes from understanding yourself and picking up the minute clues from what is going on around you.

Michael gives the example of the racing car driver who made a split second decision to slow down based on the faces of the crowd who could see a pile up hidden from him around the next corner.

Edgers lead a balanced lifestyle, eat well and take daily exercise. In short, they sound like well adjusted people.

I suspect that even those with the sharpest edge don't tick all these boxes. Surely, I reflect, some of them must have the gout as well? But Michael's point is that not all the ideas in his book will work for everyone but that you develop your own edge through small changes and application.

The other book on my desk this

week is about time management. Stephen Cherry sold me a copy of his new book, *Beyond Busyness*, whilst leading a parish weekend at Shepherds Dene. He has an impressive back list too, including a book on humility, *Barefoot Disciple*, which was the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book last year.

Stephen is writing to help clergy manage conflicting pressures and over-full dairies, but nearly everything he says can be applied more widely. He too distils some useful disciplines and techniques for managing time more efficiently and I will particularly take away his injunction to talk more sparingly in meetings and finish them on time.

It is a well known saying that "if you want anything done, ask a busy person". They deliver. But Stephen suggests that 'busyness' is a disease that makes us feel important and can stop us from tackling the more important and difficult questions.

We should banish the kind of behaviour that the White Rabbit shows in Alice in Wonderland. He was always rushing around afraid of being late. It is, Stephen suggests, an attitude of mind that can be tackled by small changes in the daily routine.

I also liked the idea that giving someone five minutes of complete attention is much more valuable than a 30-minute conversation with your mind wandering all over the place.

I still remember giving a talk to a small group of people that included Cardinal Hume. His attention was so focused on what I was saying that I forgot there was anyone else in your room. Michael would have despaired of my presentation style that day.

Stephen argues there is a difference between time management, which is about fitting more work into less time, and time wisdom, which is about deciding what is really important to do. It is as much about what you don't do as what you do, what can be delegated and what can be left undone.

There is also wisdom in picking the right moment to put in a word in and deciding when to overrule your schedule for the unexpected.

For clergy, this will often mean making time for pastoral ministry. Theodore Roosevelt said that "nine tenths of wisdom is being wise in time".

I have read enough self-help books for one week. I have discovered lots of good tactics to improve my performance but have a nagging fear that trusting my intuition and developing my wisdom will take a little longer.

**George Hepburn is**  
Warden of Shepherds  
Dene [www.shepherdsdene.co.uk](http://www.shepherdsdene.co.uk)

**BE BRILLIANT**  
Motivational author  
Michael Heppell

## THEY SAID

"Ed Miliband wants to turn us into one nation. Unfortunately, it's Greece" - Comedian Frankie Boyle.

"Is that Ann Widdecombe? She looks like she's lost a bit of weight" - A



passer-by's reaction when shown a picture of Harriet Harman, the Labour Party deputy leader

## ON THIS DAY

1891: The first street collection for charity in Britain took place in Manchester and Salford, for Lifeboat Day.

1905: Charles Nessler first used a permanent waving machine on a woman's hair. It lasted seven hours and cost 10 guineas.

1967: The first breathalyser test in Britain was administered to a motorist in Somerset.

## IN NUMBERS

MPs to start an account on Twitter.

David Cameron is the latest

370

6 percentage of people who saw their relationship ended in an in-car conversation, according to a survey. 5% have been proposed to

percentage of British holidaymakers who recognised Stonehenge, according to a new poll. 100% recognised the Eiffel Tower

77

## IN THE NEWS

RIHANNA has scooped top spot in the UK singles chart with her new track *Diamonds*.

She knocked last week's number one, *Gangnam Style* by rapper Psy, to number two. One Direction's song *Live While We're Young* entered in third place.

Muse chalked up their fourth number one album with *The 2nd Law*.



## BIRTHDAYS

(Baroness) Betty Boothroyd, former speaker of the House of Commons, 83; Ray Reardon, former snooker world champion, 80; Albert Roux, chef, 77; Rev Jesse Jackson, politician, 71; Chevy Chase, actor, 69; Sigourney Weaver, actress, 63; Ardal O'Hanlon, actor and comedian, 47; Matt Damon, actor, 42.

Deal of the day

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