

A FREE PREVIEW FROM THE UPCOMING BOOK

15 Myths Quietly Running Your Career

From *My Client is the Devil*, revised edition, by Mark McKinney and Steve Fedorko

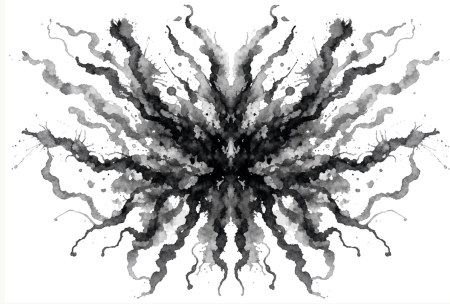
Every account you manage, every client relationship you carry, and every hard Monday you push through gets shaped by beliefs you probably never chose on purpose. Most of them formed years ago, got reinforced by one bad boss or one good compliment, and now run quietly in the background of how you work.

We pulled 15 of these beliefs directly from the book. Each one comes with the myth as it actually sounds in your head, and the reality that replaces it once you notice it. Some will feel obvious. A few might sting a little. Read them in order, or skip to the one that sounds the most like your Tuesday.

This is a preview. The full book goes deeper into where these beliefs come from and how to actually shift them.

The Multitasking Myth

“Doing several things at once makes me faster and more effective.”



Some Account Leads wear their juggling act like a badge, twelve browser tabs, three conversations at once, a meeting humming in the background while they answer Slack. It looks like mastery. Underneath, it is about identity: holding all of this proves you can handle anything. Constant notifications train your attention to expect novelty every few seconds, so focus starts to feel uncomfortable, and skimming across ten things slowly erodes your craftsmanship.

THE REALITY IS

Single task focus increases quality and velocity.

Your best work comes from one meaningful task at a time. Protecting your focus is not indulgent, it is how you honor your commitments. If you want to be seen as a professional, ship clear and complete work instead of scattered fragments. Multitasking is not a badge of honor, it is an old habit worth outgrowing.

The Perfect Myth

“I must be perfect every time.”



This belief usually comes from heavy judgment somewhere along the way, from people who treated mistakes as personal flaws instead of lessons. If you find yourself avoiding decisions because they might turn out wrong, or scrambling to dodge blame the moment something slips, this myth is likely running quietly in your head.

THE REALITY IS

Mistakes are a part of life.

We are all human, and we will all make mistakes. If you are not making any, you are probably not trying hard enough. Take responsibility for your mistakes and work to correct them, and you will find that almost everyone respects the correction far more than they ever judged the original slip.

The Failure Myth

“If I am criticized, it means I’m a failure.”



This one runs deeper than fear of judgment. It carries a belief that your value is best determined by someone else. People who hold it will argue to the death the moment they are criticized, and that kind of defensiveness does not build a stronger relationship with a client, it just wears everyone down.

THE REALITY IS

Honest criticism has real value.

Authentic criticism is relevant, personal information that is genuinely hard to come by. If you are lucky enough to have people who will tell you the truth, your dominant feeling should be gratitude. Norman Vincent Peale put it well: never react emotionally to criticism, analyze whether it is justified, correct yourself if it is, and move on.

The Truth Myth

“My way is the right way.”



Hidden inside this belief is a bigger claim: there is only one right way, and you happen to already know it. You may have found something that works for you right now, but life and the people in it are far too complicated for absolute rules. The moment you decide you have found the one true method, you stop looking for a better one.

THE REALITY IS

There are many right ways to do things.

One of the most useful traits we have ever seen in a professional is unrelenting curiosity. How does that work? Why is she doing it that way? Curious people are lifelong learners, and learning is how we adapt. The people who stay curious are the ones who adjust easily to any environment instead of burning out.

The Martyr Myth

“My suffering proves my commitment.”



There is a particular kind of Account Lead who treats exhaustion like a currency. Work all weekend and people notice. Carry a three person project alone and complain about it. It feels like proof of dedication, but it quietly trains everyone around you to see you as fragile, and eventually managers stop handing you more, not because you failed, but because watching you barely survive what you already have is too stressful to repeat.

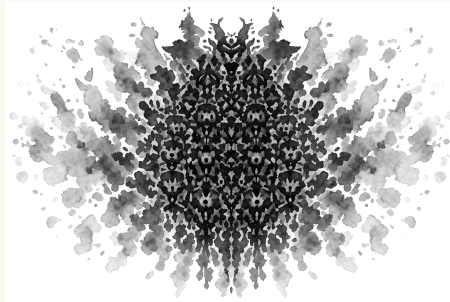
THE REALITY IS

Your capacity is not your character.

Working yourself to the bone is not noble, it is unsustainable. Exhaustion is not proof of commitment, results are. The Account Leads who last the longest are not the ones who suffered the most, they are the ones who delivered the most, consistently, over years, without ever making their team watch them bleed.

The Productivity Myth

“My value as a person is determined by what I get done.”



For some Account Leads, the scorecard never really turns off. Did I do enough today? There is no audience and no performance, yet the internal audit runs every evening anyway, quietly measuring output against worth. The moment work slows down, for any reason at all, the doubt shows up right on schedule.

THE REALITY IS

Everyone has inherent worth.

We are called human beings, not human doings. You were not hired to be a scoreboard. You were hired to think, to connect, and to bring judgment to hard problems, and that is worth far more than any daily output log, even on the slow Tuesday that makes you feel like you are falling behind.

The Obsolescence Myth

“My value as a person is determined by whether I can keep up with the machines.”



Researchers studying what they now call AI Replacement Dysfunction are finding an old pattern wearing a new name: capable professionals who read every new AI capability as proof that their value is shrinking. Tools can draft, summarize, and analyze faster than ever, but your value has never lived only in the keystrokes. It lives in your judgment, your ethics, and your willingness to take responsibility when it counts.

THE REALITY IS

Your job is to think. AI's job is to help you think better.

When a tool handles the routine tasks, it frees more of your time for judgment, relationships, and creativity. You do not have to know every new feature. You have to stay in charge of the questions, the standards, and the final call, because AI has no skin in the game and never will.

The Visibility Myth

“I must be seen working to prove I'm worthy.”



Remote work turbocharged this one. We watched an Account Lead schedule emails to send at nine at night that she had actually written at three in the afternoon, and keep her Slack status green long past dinner. She was not dishonest, she genuinely believed that if people could not see the effort, the effort did not count. The problem was that she was performing instead of delivering.

THE REALITY IS

Visible results are meaningful. Everything else is noise.

Your manager hired you to take action and deliver outcomes, not to prove you are in the building. An email that closes a decision is worth ten that just keep a thread going. After thirty years of watching Account Leads come and go, the ones who last are never the ones who performed the hardest. Their results simply spoke for them.

The Approval Myth

"I need everyone to like me."



We all know a people pleaser, and honestly, sometimes we like having them around. But being around someone who agrees to everything also makes us lazy, because we stop growing without people who authentically challenge us. Rabbi Hillel the Elder asked it best: if I am not for myself, then who will be? Only you are in charge of making yourself happy, and that is enough.

THE REALITY IS

Everyone won't like me all the time.

If you act the way you believe is best, you can always respect yourself. Some people will like you and some will not, and that is entirely their privilege. Can anyone like you more than you like yourself? When you know and trust who you are, the right people will be drawn to you anyway.

The Selfless Myth

“Taking care of myself is selfish.”



This one sounds virtuous on the surface. Putting others first feels generous, and in many ways it is. The problem is that it is unsustainable generosity, the kind that quietly empties the giver. Professionals who hold this belief say yes to the Sunday deliverable, not because it is urgent, but because no feels like abandonment, then by Wednesday they are missing errors they would have caught rested.

THE REALITY IS

You cannot pour from an empty vessel.

Your capacity is a resource, not a character flaw, and protecting it is professionalism, not selfishness. The most sustainable leaders we have ever worked with sleep, they exercise, they actually take the vacation, and they leave the phone in the other room for dinner. They say no to the impossible request because they are protecting the asset, and the asset is themselves.

The Power Myth

“My client is always right.”



There are Account Leads who never stand up to an irrational demand, and instead quietly ask their team for one more heroic push. A client might praise this, you really get things done for me, but respect is a different currency than praise. The truth is that the odds a client respects you after you give in every single time are much closer to zero than fifty-fifty.

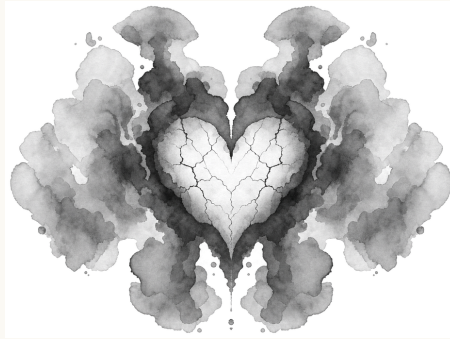
THE REALITY IS

Everyone has something to offer.

If you disagree with a client, you have a right, in fact an obligation, to say what you think. Even if nothing changes, you have added a point of view, and you can respect yourself for it. As Edmund Burke said, all it takes for a bad outcome to succeed is for good people to do nothing, and that applies just as much to a stalled project as anything else.

The Vulnerability Myth

“If I am honest with people, I am vulnerable.”



This belief quietly shuts out real connection. How will anyone know what would actually help you if you never tell them? There is no mind reading in business. If something bothers you, the people around you need to hear it from you directly, not guess at it. That does not mean becoming a drama instigator, it just means reacting honestly instead of performing composure.

THE REALITY IS

Authentic people are willing to be vulnerable.

Letting people know your thoughts and feelings means acknowledging your right to have them. It also means taking responsibility for your own reactions instead of blaming circumstances or other people. Being genuine builds trust, and when a client trusts you, they become far more willing to work with you to make the project better for everyone involved.

The Fair Myth

“I always get what I deserve.”



A lot of people hold this one tightly: good things happen to good people, bad things happen to bad people, and if something bad happens to you, well, you must have deserved it somehow. It simply is not true. Life is fairly random, and bad things happen to good people constantly. The healthiest, most well adjusted people are the ones who accept that everybody faces big challenges eventually.

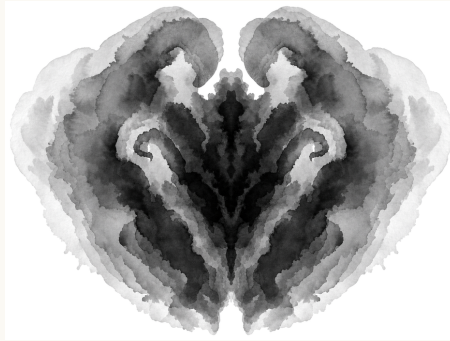
THE REALITY IS

Life is not always fair.

Life is not picking on you personally. You will be forced to deal with challenges, and the one thing you always get to choose is how you respond to them. Sometimes you will have to shoulder more than your fair share, the same way everyone eventually does, and sometimes things will genuinely go your way. As Oscar Wilde put it, life is never fair, and perhaps that is a good thing for most of us.

The Helpless Myth

“I can't change the way I am.”



This might sound like it contradicts the Approval Myth, where we told you to simply be yourself. It does not. You are free to always choose how you want to feel and act. That is the whole point: you can choose. You are not the victim of other people's expectations, and you are not the prisoner of your own past behavior either. At any given moment, you get to decide again.

THE REALITY IS

Change is how we survive.

If you keep doing things the way you have always done them, you will keep getting the same results you have always gotten. That is fine if everything has been working. If it has not, you can learn new ways to act and feel starting right now. As you show openness to change, the people around you, including your clients, will develop real respect for you.

The Hopeless Myth

“I can't make a difference.”



Wrong. Things will change. Whether it is a new client, a shift in project scope, or a change in company ownership, change is guaranteed (the average C-suite executive only stays in a role about 4.9 years). Too often an Account Lead gets quietly transferred off a difficult account, not because the client was impossible, but because they never used the moments of change to reset the relationship.

THE REALITY IS

Each action has an impact.

You can do what is right and watch how that helps, even when the impact is not immediate or obvious. Your actions may ripple further than you imagine, including the impact they have on you. In *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, a young senator argues that the only causes worth fighting for are the ones that look lost. It is often hard to see the impact of your actions in the moment, but the sum of many small ones eventually tips the whole system.

Want the rest?

You are on the list, so you will be first to know when preorders open and when the launch date is locked.

If one of these fifteen hit closer to home than you expected, reply and tell us which one. We read every reply.

Mark McKinney & Steve Fedorko, with Paul Drew