



STORYDHARMA
WORKBOOKS

HACK#3

अभिलाष

ABHILĀṢA

AMBITION



For Individual
Contributors



White hat
Hack



Deals with how
you handle yourself

HOW TO CONSUME THIS WORKBOOK?

If you have downloaded the ppt version, we have provided boxes to fill in your answers. Our workbooks are simple but they are not easy. They require deep reflection. Find some 'Me time' and answer these workbooks. We have also provided tips for filling this up within the workbook. The book, the workbooks and curated Slokas were done after 1000s of hours of reading from Indian and Western sources to arrive at just the essence to get the impact.

This particular workbook is for [Hack #3: abhilāṣa](#). It covers the basic premise that success comes from doing stuff which is beyond your pay scale or in short ambition/aspiration to be great.

If you are into reading, we have also provided some books and articles which go into the concepts we discuss here.



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3.1 SELF-ASSESSMENT

What are my current responsibilities and strengths in my role?

In what areas do I feel underutilized at work?

What do I perceive as my unique value proposition in the workplace?



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3.2 OPPORTUNITIES

How often do I identify opportunities to take on tasks beyond my current role?

What are the signs that an opportunity to "punch above my weight" has emerged at work?

How do I assess whether the risk and rewards of a new responsibility are worth pursuing?



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3.3 CHALLENGES

What internal doubts or external obstacles have held me back from taking on bigger responsibilities?

How do I typically respond when faced with challenges beyond your skillset or comfort zone?

When has a fear of failure stopped me from stepping up? How can I reframe that fear in the future?



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3.4 SKILLS

What skills do I need to develop to handle more complex or higher-level tasks?

How can I create a plan to build those skills, either through formal training or on-the-job learning?

How do I balance learning new skills while ensuring my current responsibilities are met?



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3.5 ACTION

What immediate steps can I take this week to punch above my weight at work?

What is one project or task outside my typical responsibilities that I can volunteer for in the next month?

How can I prepare myself mentally and logistically before taking on a bigger challenge?



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3.6 EVALUATE SUCCESS

What would success look like for me in terms of punching above my weight?

How will I measure the impact of taking on additional responsibilities?

What have I learned from previous experiences when I exceeded expectations?



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3.7 LONG TERM THINKING

How do the challenges I am taking on now align with my long-term career goals?

What do I want to be known for in my organization, and how can punching above my weight contribute to that reputation?

How can I make punching above my weight a consistent habit rather than a one-time effort?

Congrats! You just got a Medal



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TIPS FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

Clarify Your Current Role

Review your job description and responsibilities to ensure you have a clear understanding of what is expected of you. This will help you identify areas where you can go beyond the basics.

Identify Your Strengths

Take stock of your key strengths—both technical and soft skills. These are areas where you can excel and leverage to take on additional responsibilities.

Seek Feedback from Peers and Managers

Ask for honest feedback from your colleagues and supervisors. They can often see things you may not, helping you identify blind spots or untapped potential.

Recognize Your Weaknesses

Be honest about your limitations or areas that need improvement. Understanding where you fall short helps you create a plan to bridge those gaps before taking on more.

Reflect on Past Successes and Challenges

Look back at projects or tasks where you performed exceptionally well and those where you struggled. What contributed to those outcomes? This insight will guide your future actions.

Assess Your Workload and Time Management

Evaluate how you're currently spending your time. Are you prioritizing effectively? Freeing up time from less impactful tasks can help you focus on higher-level opportunities.

Know Your Unique Value Proposition

Understand what sets you apart in your current role. Are there specific skills or experiences you have that can be leveraged to take on larger responsibilities?

Evaluate Your Professional Network

Consider the strength of your relationships within the organization. Are you connected with key influencers or decision-makers who can open doors for you to take on bigger challenges?

Understand Your Motivations

Ask yourself why you want to punch above your weight. Is it for career growth, personal satisfaction, recognition, or something else? Aligning your motivations with your actions is key to sustaining your efforts.

Set Clear Personal and Professional Goals

Define where you want to go in your career. Knowing your ultimate goals can help you identify how taking on more responsibilities fits into your broader career strategy.



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TIPS FOR FINDING OPPORTUNITIES

Pay Attention to Gaps in Your Team or Organization

- Look for areas where tasks are falling through the cracks or where there's a need for leadership or expertise that no one is currently addressing. Stepping in to fill these gaps can be a great opportunity to add value.

Be Proactive in Offering Solutions

- If you notice inefficiencies, recurring issues, or areas for improvement in your team or company, propose solutions. Taking the initiative to solve problems often opens doors to new responsibilities.

Volunteer for Cross-Functional Projects

- Join projects that involve collaboration with other departments or teams. These projects often provide visibility and a chance to develop new skills while contributing to a broader organizational goal.

Stay Informed About Company Initiatives

- Keep an eye on new projects, initiatives, or strategies that your company is pursuing. Position yourself as someone eager to contribute by showing interest and offering to help.

Leverage Internal Networks

- Cultivate relationships with key individuals across your organization. Networking with people in different departments can help you stay informed about upcoming opportunities and projects.

Seek Out Mentorship and Advice

- Find a mentor or senior colleague who can guide you in identifying opportunities to step up. They often have a broader view of the organization and can point you in the right direction.

Monitor Industry Trends

- Stay up to date on trends and changes in your industry. You can offer to spearhead initiatives that align with new industry directions, positioning yourself as a forward-thinking contributor.

Look for Temporary Leadership Gaps

- Pay attention to times when your manager or team leader is unavailable, whether due to vacations, transitions, or other reasons. Stepping up during these times shows initiative and readiness for larger responsibilities.

Observe Pain Points in Current Processes

- Identify areas where existing processes are inefficient, outdated, or could benefit from improvement. Proactively suggesting and implementing changes can lead to bigger roles.

Express Your Interest in Growth

- Let your manager know that you're interested in taking on more responsibility. Sometimes, simply expressing your desire to contribute more can lead to opportunities being offered to you directly.



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TIPS FOR FACING CHALLENGES

Shift Your Mindset from Fear to Growth

- When faced with a challenge, instead of focusing on potential failure, think of it as an opportunity for growth. Remind yourself that taking on new responsibilities will help you develop new skills and increase your value.

Break Challenges into Manageable Steps

- Large tasks can seem overwhelming, but breaking them down into smaller, actionable steps makes them more manageable. Tackle one part at a time, and gradually build momentum.

Seek Mentorship or Guidance

- When you're stepping into unfamiliar territory, reach out to someone more experienced for advice. A mentor can provide insights, share strategies, and help you navigate obstacles.

Develop a Problem-Solving Approach

- Focus on solutions rather than dwelling on the challenges. Identify the root causes of the issues you're facing, brainstorm potential solutions, and take proactive steps to implement them.

Build Resilience Through Learning

- Understand that setbacks are part of the learning process. Use them as learning experiences rather than signs of failure. Reflect on what went wrong, adjust your approach, and try again with improved strategies.

Stay Organized and Prioritize

- When taking on more responsibilities, it's crucial to stay organized. Use time management techniques like prioritizing tasks based on their urgency and importance to ensure you can handle increased workloads without feeling overwhelmed.

Leverage Your Support Network

- Don't hesitate to ask for help when necessary. Colleagues, peers, and even your team can provide support, collaborate on tasks, or offer different perspectives to overcome challenges.

Develop Emotional Intelligence

- Cultivate self-awareness and emotional control, especially when under pressure. Being able to manage stress, maintain composure, and communicate effectively can help you tackle challenging situations with confidence.

Prepare for Potential Setbacks

- Anticipate challenges and plan for how you'll address them. Have backup strategies in place in case things don't go as expected. This will allow you to respond quickly and adapt without being derailed.

Celebrate Small Wins

- Acknowledge and celebrate each milestone or success, no matter how small. This builds confidence and reinforces your ability to overcome barriers, keeping you motivated as you push forward.



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TIPS FOR BUILDING SKILLS

Identify Key Skills for Growth

- Review the skills that are essential for taking on bigger responsibilities or higher-level tasks. These may include leadership, project management, strategic thinking, or technical skills. Focus on areas that will add value to both your role and your organization.

Set Specific Learning Goals

- Create a plan with clear, measurable goals for developing the skills you need. Whether it's learning a new software tool or mastering public speaking, break it down into achievable steps with a timeline for completion.

Invest in Continuous Learning

- Leverage resources like online courses, workshops, books, and webinars to continuously improve your knowledge. Platforms like Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, or in-house training programs can help you build the necessary skills.

Practice Skills in Low-Risk Environments

- Look for opportunities to practice new skills in a less critical setting. For example, if you're developing leadership skills, you could volunteer to lead a small project or mentor a junior team member.

Seek Feedback for Improvement

- Regularly ask for feedback from peers, mentors, or supervisors. Constructive criticism will help you fine-tune your skills, identify blind spots, and gain insights into areas that need more focus.

Take on Stretch Assignments

- Volunteer for projects that push you out of your comfort zone. These stretch assignments will force you to apply new skills in real-world situations, accelerating your growth and building confidence.

Shadow Colleagues in Higher Roles

- Learn by observing others who are already excelling in roles you aspire to. Ask to shadow them during key meetings or projects to understand how they approach tasks, make decisions, and solve problems.

Improve Your Communication Skills

- Being able to clearly articulate your ideas, persuade others, and lead conversations is critical when taking on more responsibility. Join a public speaking group like Toastmasters or take a communication course to strengthen this skill.

Develop Strategic Thinking

- Train yourself to think beyond the day-to-day tasks and focus on the bigger picture. Learn how decisions at your level impact other departments and the organization as a whole. This will prepare you to contribute to larger strategic discussions.

Cultivate a Growth Mindset

- Embrace the idea that your abilities can be developed through effort, persistence, and learning. Approach every new challenge as an opportunity to grow, and view setbacks as learning experiences rather than failures.



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TIPS FOR ACTION

Be Proactive, Not Reactive

- Don't wait for opportunities to come to you. Actively seek out tasks, projects, or responsibilities that align with your growth goals. Take the initiative to step up when you see an opening.

Volunteer for High-Visibility Projects

- Offer to take on projects that are important to the team or organization, especially those that allow you to demonstrate leadership and problem-solving abilities. These projects often come with increased exposure and greater opportunities for recognition.

Act Quickly When Opportunities Arise

- Timing is critical. When you see a chance to contribute beyond your role, act swiftly. If you hesitate, the opportunity may pass, or someone else may step up in your place.

Leverage Your Strengths

- Choose tasks or responsibilities where you can showcase your existing strengths while stretching yourself in new ways. This will build confidence and demonstrate immediate value to your team.

Ask for Responsibility

- If no clear opportunities present themselves, have a conversation with your manager about your interest in taking on more responsibility. Clearly outline how you can add value to the team or company with specific actions or projects.

Be Prepared to Take Calculated Risks

- Stepping up often involves taking risks. Evaluate the potential benefits and downsides, but be willing to step out of your comfort zone. Taking calculated risks can lead to significant growth and recognition.

Focus on Results, Not Just Effort

- It's not just about doing more work—it's about delivering meaningful results. Set clear objectives and ensure your efforts lead to measurable outcomes that demonstrate your impact.

Communicate Your Achievements

- After taking on additional responsibilities, be sure to share your successes with your team or manager. Keep them informed about your progress and highlight the results you've achieved to ensure your contributions are noticed.

Stay Flexible and Adaptable

- Seizing the moment often involves adjusting to unexpected challenges or shifting priorities. Stay flexible and be willing to adapt your approach as circumstances evolve. Flexibility shows that you can handle dynamic environments.

Track Your Progress and Reflect

- As you take on new responsibilities, keep track of what you're learning and accomplishing. Regular reflection will help you evaluate what's working, what needs improvement, and how you can continue pushing beyond your current limits.



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TIPS FOR EVALUATING SUCCESS

Define Success Metrics Early

- Before taking on new responsibilities, set clear, measurable goals for success. This could include project outcomes, skills gained, or recognition from peers. Knowing what success looks like helps you evaluate your performance later.

Track Your Progress Regularly

- Keep a record of your achievements and milestones throughout the process. This can include key decisions, challenges overcome, and tangible results. Having a detailed record will make it easier to assess your success.

Solicit Feedback from Stakeholders

- After completing a project or task, ask for feedback from peers, team members, and supervisors. Understanding how others perceive your contributions will provide insights into your strengths and areas for improvement.

Analyze What Worked Well

- Reflect on the strategies and actions that led to success. Did certain skills or approaches help you achieve your goals? Identifying what worked can guide you in future efforts to punch above your weight.

Evaluate What Didn't Work

- Look at any obstacles or challenges you faced along the way. What didn't go as planned? Understanding why certain actions didn't yield the desired results will help you avoid similar mistakes in the future.

Consider the Broader Impact

- Reflect on the broader impact of your efforts beyond personal success. Did your actions benefit your team, department, or organization? Evaluating how your work contributed to overall goals will help you understand your role in the bigger picture.

Identify Skills You've Gained

- Take stock of the new skills or knowledge you acquired during the process. Whether it's improved leadership, communication, or technical skills, recognizing your growth is key to evaluating the success of your efforts.

Assess the Risks You Took

- Reflect on the risks you took and how they paid off. Did you push yourself out of your comfort zone? Were the risks worth the reward? Understanding your tolerance for risk and its outcomes will inform future decisions.

Celebrate Wins, Big and Small

- Acknowledge your achievements, no matter the size. Celebrating small wins can boost your confidence and motivate you to keep pushing boundaries in the future.

Apply Lessons to Future Opportunities

- Finally, think about how you can apply the lessons learned to future projects or challenges. Use the insights gained from this experience to continuously improve and take on even greater challenges down the road.



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TIPS FOR LONG TERM THINKING

Align Your Efforts with Career Goals

- Ensure that the opportunities you pursue are aligned with your long-term career ambitions. Whether you aspire to leadership, technical expertise, or another path, focus on tasks and responsibilities that bring you closer to those goals.

Create a Personal Development Plan

- Map out a long-term growth strategy with clear goals, timelines, and milestones. Regularly update your plan based on new opportunities and lessons learned. This roadmap will help you stay focused and intentional in your efforts.

Continuously Seek Learning and Development

- Prioritize continuous learning as a core part of your growth strategy. Stay curious and consistently seek out ways to improve your skills, whether through formal training, certifications, or self-learning.

Build a Strong Professional Network

- Cultivate relationships with mentors, peers, and industry professionals. A strong network can open doors to new opportunities, provide valuable guidance, and keep you informed about emerging trends that align with your growth.

Leverage Each Experience for Future Success

- After completing significant projects or tasks, evaluate how the skills, lessons, and feedback can be applied to future efforts. Build on each experience to improve your performance and readiness for bigger challenges.

Stay Adaptable to Change

- The workplace and industries evolve, so flexibility is key to long-term success. Stay open to change and ready to adapt your strategy as new technologies, processes, or organizational goals emerge.

Take Calculated Risks with Bigger Opportunities

- As you build confidence from smaller wins, start taking on more substantial risks. Seek out high-stakes projects or challenges that push your boundaries even further, while balancing the potential risks and rewards.

Develop Leadership Skills Early

- Leadership isn't reserved for management roles. Start developing leadership qualities now—such as decision-making, influencing others, and managing teams—so that you're prepared for larger responsibilities as they come.

Seek Out Cross-Functional Opportunities

- Take on roles or projects that involve working with different departments or teams. This broadens your skillset, enhances your understanding of the organization, and positions you as a well-rounded leader.

Think Long-Term, Act Short-Term

- Maintain a long-term vision, but break it down into actionable short-term steps. Focus on immediate tasks and challenges while keeping your eyes on the bigger picture. This balance will help you stay motivated and aligned with your goals.



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OTHER SOURCES TO CONSUME

<https://hbr.org/2013/05/how-to-lead-when-youre-not-in#:~:text=In%20order%20to%20engage%20in,then%20you're%20a%20leader.>

<https://www.roberthalf.com/au/en/insights/career-development/how-navigate-more-responsibility-work-same-pay>

<https://www.amazon.in/Power-Ambition-Awakening-Powerful-Within/dp/1640953558>

<https://hbr.org/2023/04/why-you-should-take-on-more-stretch-assignments> <https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-ambitious-should-you-be> <https://medium.com/the-ascent/the-dark-side-of-ambition-21f1fca7e0f0>

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/great-leaders-balance-ambition-with-humility/id1683948659?i=1000646242981> <https://chuckfrey.com/how-to-punch-above-your-weight/>

<https://www.grantherbert.com/blog/punching-above-your-weight-a-major-cause-of-chronic-stress>
<https://www.trstimson.com/punching-above-your-weight/>

Why use Western sources?

As much as we admire ancient Indian wisdom, we also see that the West is also catching up on few of these aspects. We cannot ignore that fact. Some readers would be more willing to apply these lessons if backed up by 'Evidence based research' from Western sources. Honestly, there is the large amount of content which is out there on the web from Western sources making it easy to share.

We have picked those articles and books which say the same things which ancient wisdom (based on human behavior) also advocates.