

DEVELOPING A TALENT FOR SCIENCE*

In the last couple of years, several “how to” books pertaining to a successful career in science have landed on my desk. I set out to read some of them to evaluate if they might be useful to my daughter-in-law who is contemplating graduate studies in biology.

I was pleasantly surprised by *Developing a Talent for Science*. Written by Ritsert C. Jansen, a professor of bioinformatics at the University of Groningen, this slim book packs a lot into its 178 pages. It was written for students of science, postdocs, and young researchers, and for “anyone interested about developing their talent or others’ talents.” The mixture of short chapters, real-life stories, questionnaires, and exercises for self-reflection makes it entertaining to read, and it can be read for a quick overview in one sitting of a couple of hours. But to get the most out of it, one would need to go back and do the exercises in each chapter. In fact if you had only one book to recommend to a student, I would suggest this one. It is all there: the tips that, if applied, will make you a good presenter, an inspiring communicator, a sought-after collaborator, and more. I would also suggest that anyone nurturing students should read it—there are many tips on how to inspire and support students.

Each section presents techniques you need—to develop your talent (section 1), use other people’s talent (section 2), develop other people’s talent (section 3), and make it happen (section 4). For each section, six habits to gain are introduced, and the reader is asked to rate intuitively and with the help of a questionnaire how he or she fares for



each of these habits. Plotting the result on a web-like graph gives an interesting visual presentation that highlights strengths and weaknesses. Going through the exercises will help the reader develop concrete objectives for the short, middle, and long terms. After going through all sections, the reader is ready to develop a SMARTI action plan (specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic, time-dependent, and inspiring). All graphs and forms can be downloaded from the website <http://talent4science.wordpress.com>.

The author encourages students to dream their greatest future. He recommends that they prepare a sales pitch about their research under 5 minutes in length so that they are prepared to seize any opportunity that presents itself.

And yes, the book passed the test: it has been sent to my daughter-in-law with my love.

Pierrette Tremblay, Executive Editor, *Elements*

* Jansen RC (2013) *Developing a Talent for Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, ISBN 9780521149617, 180 pp, \$29.95

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