

Chapter 07: Follow the Canvas Strategy

Ego is the Enemy — Ryan Holiday • Executive Breakdown

EGO IS THE ENEMY

1 Clearing the Path for Others

- ✓ The canvas strategy means helping others succeed, clearing obstacles from their path, and letting them take the public credit.
- ✓ Benjamin Franklin practiced this method systematically, founding libraries, militias, and universities by crediting friends and patrons.
- ✓ By removing your own vanity from the transaction, you dismantle defenses, eliminate envy, and build massive latent influence.

2 The Roman Anteambulo Tradition

- ✓ In ancient Rome, young proteges served as 'anteambulos'—literally walking ahead of patrons to clear physical paths through crowded streets.
- ✓ In exchange for performing humble, unglamorous services, anteambulos gained unprecedented access to elite networks and high-level strategy.
- ✓ Subordinating your ego as an apprentice is not groveling subservience; it is the most lucrative and educational trade in existence.

3 Making Yourself Indispensable

- ✓ Look for friction, bottlenecks, and unassigned burdens in your organization, and quietly solve them without demanding instant credit.
- ✓ The person who clears the path ultimately controls the direction of the road, steering outcomes with invisible leverage.
- ✓ Trade immediate short-term recognition for compounding relationships, proprietary insight, and irreplaceable competence.

Chapter Summary

- ✓ The canvas strategy builds immense leverage by clearing paths for superiors and partners while letting them take the spotlight.
- ✓ Ancient Roman anteambulos traded humble groundwork for direct access to elite mentorship, wisdom, and strategic networks.
- ✓ Solving bottlenecks quietly without demanding instant praise disarms organizational jealousy and makes you completely indispensable.
- ✓ The individual who prepares the canvas and facilitates the painting wields greater lasting influence than those chasing superficial credit.