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LESSONS FROM THE CAFE

THE THREE TRANSFERABLE SKILLS I LEARNED FROM WORKING AS A BARISTA

By NICHOLAS CHIN
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S
o, you just graduated and the gap year you took is finally up — it’s now time to put on your big boy pants and sell your soul to the corporate world as you so adamantly promised your parents you’d do.

As you’re about to put together your résumé, you can’t help but feel that you probably could have utilised that gap year you just had a little more wisely.

Instead of moonlighting at your favourite local café, you think of the bigger things you could have accomplished like say, building homes for victims of a natural disaster or working harder towards getting that internship at Google. Dang it. Dang it all.

Perhaps it wasn’t all that bad — maybe that short stint you had at the coffee shop did actually help with something bigger than just making some extra cash for a living back then.

But how could cleaning tables, dishing out orders, and washing dishes by the truckloads have anything to do with being a professional in the corporate world? See, many of us choose to repress that temporary job we had when we were teenagers when we fill out our résumés.

But the truth of the matter is, that part time job you took on undoubtedly helped you gain something more than just a couple of bucks — it helped you develop invaluable transferable skills.

Before signing off as barista extraordinaire and moving onto bigger things, here are some skills you probably subconsciously learnt along the way.

MULTITASKING

If there’s one thing that is accurately depicted on TV, it’s the pressure in the kitchen. Everything you watched on screen is true — the mental breakdowns, the colossal pressure, the explosive characters. They all happen.

Picture this — you jump in and out of the cash register, you check on the statues of those orders at the kitchen. You resolve complaints and more, all while sustaining that million-dollar smile. Yikes.

Being a barista is not for the faint of heart. Being a barista means being fast. An espresso shot “dies” after a good 10 seconds so multitasking is your saving grace in order to finish your shift unscathed.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The biggest lesson you probably won’t ever forget will be the delicate art of dealing with people. You learn that being sensitive to others is a prerequisite to anything hospitality.

From managing effective diplomacy with your regulars to handling the raging outbursts of your co-workers, all of whom are probably just as diverse as your clientele — you do it all with agonising but ceaseless patience.

Many a time you’ve dealt with individuals whose lights you’d be delighted to put out. It’s true that the customer is always right, and no one knows this better than those in the hospitality industry.

This industry is all about people and it takes a special kind of superhuman to be able to maintain courtesy and professionalism when dealing with difficult customers.

Taking the initiative to refill that customer’s glass before it’s even empty is a sign of empathy and vigilance. All of which are invaluable assets to not just a servant of the establishment but also the organisation you’re applying to right now.

TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION

Remember that tiny bar space that you have to share between four to five people to make everything work seamlessly for the highest output possible? Yeah. The jarring intensity of what goes on behind the bar is simply not visible to the impatient customer.

From the cash register to the bar and the cleaning crew, knowing where everyone should be at any given point in time during rush hour requires exceptional teamwork. You never let the 9am line get any longer.

Making someone’s coffee can be considered something very personal. Their efficiency for the day really depends on how well you make the beverage.

Over time, you learn your regulars’ obvious orders (read: quad shot, soy no-foam latte) and chances are, you’ve met people from all walks of life. From that freelancer who’s there all day for the Wi-Fi and gets the cheapest thing on the menu (a.k.a water) to expats who tip huge amounts, it’s the best part of the job.

Your horizons expand and you’re no longer confined to your little island of familiar faces. You build confidence from having regular contact with new people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse ways of expressing their needs, wants and instructions.

This means constantly adapting your communication style — a skill that will come in handy in and out of the workforce.

CONCLUSION

It’s important to internalise that your time at the cafe is not just for the side cash to get by. Remember that any job or occupation can teach you something you’ll be able to use at a certain point. We are in the business of lifelong learning and making the effort to expand your transferable skills is something you’ll thank yourself for in the years to come.

So as you fill out that résumé right now, fellow graduate — make an inventory of everything you know and everything you are capable of. And I mean, literally, everything.
I wanted to share some of my thoughts on an inspiring woman leader who made a difference to many throughout the world, as well as share some leadership insights I gained from researching her life and work.

While few will recognise the name Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, almost everybody will know the name by which she became known: Mother Teresa. Teresa – named after St. Therese of Lisieux – was passionate about helping others from an early age, later travelling to Ireland to begin her life as a nun. It was from here that she was sent to India, where she first became known as Mother Teresa.

THE CALLING AND COMMITMENT

In September 1946, during a train ride from Calcutta to Darjeeling, Mother Teresa was said to have received a calling from God to be of service to those unable to take care of themselves. She expressed that this calling compelled her towards “labouring at the salvation and sanctification of the poorest of the poor”. In October 1950, Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity were finally established, and so began the institution that would become known across the world for its commitment to alleviating the suffering of society’s excluded needy and poor.

“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”

Over the next three decades, Mother Teresa’s foundations were established in several countries throughout the world. By the time she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, there were 158 Missionaries of Charity foundations. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, Mother Teresa continued to travel the world, bringing her work to those who were in desperate need of love and care. By 1997, her almost 600 foundations in more than 100 countries played host to around 4,000 “sisters”.

LET YOUR WORKS DO THE TALKING

What has always struck me about Mother Teresa is how this diminutive lady with a big heart and powerful spirit was able to effect so much positive change with a big heart and powerful spirit was Mother Teresa is how this diminutive lady “labouring at the salvation and sanctification of the poorest of the poor”. In October 1950, Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity were finally established, and so began the institution that would become known across the world for its commitment to alleviating the suffering of society’s excluded needy and poor.

“God doesn’t require us to succeed, He only requires that you try.”

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

Mother Teresa wasn’t lacking in critics, but carried on anyway to lay the foundations for the work she considered important as a servant leader, for both God and others. Often, we can get so downtrodden when people criticise us and, while we should think about valid criticisms and how we can improve ourselves, we shouldn’t allow our critics to take the reins and steer our motivations in their preferred direction.

One key insight that has served me well is that, from Buddha to Jesus to Prophet Muhammad to Mother Teresa to the Dalai Lama and everyone else, we all have our critics – it is an inescapable part of life.

Mother Teresa had her critics, but carried on with her work. Pic: Mother Teresa Foundation.

It is important to note here that we, as people, are also often critics of others, so we really shouldn’t expect a free ride ourselves.

With this realisation, I could see there was a choice – we can either yield under the pressure of criticism, or we can rise above it and succeed in spite of it. Mother Teresa chose the latter. Thanks to her choice, she ensured a powerful and positive legacy that is sure to live on for generations and inspire many people to push towards their unique greatness, and to share their gifts with the world.

“A living legacy

Since then, there has been much written about the life and legacy of Mother Teresa, but I think her example offers up one powerful, yet simple message to anyone who truly seeks to make an impact on the world – you can do it! You can create the change you want to see in the world, and it begins with the decision to go ahead and get it done. You don’t need anyone’s permission to reach inside yourself and bring forth the greatness that’s within you to do amazing things. All that is required is for you to get out there and just do it.

Roshan Thiran is the CEO of Leaderonomics – a social enterprise working to transform lives through leadership development and nurturing potential. Connect with Roshan on Facebook for more insights into business, personal development, and leadership.
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ALL you ever struggled with really awful experiences and wished they would quickly pass? Or cursed your string of bad luck and wondered when it would ever end?

What about an experience on the opposite side of the spectrum—have you ever let a great victory get to your head and caused you to be trapped in a negative spiral of thought and you may lose heart, but only if you let them?

Two great pieces of advice that many of us would do well to live by.

For more info and to register, email diode@leaderonomics.com or whatsapp 0172299288.
IS TRAINING SUFFICIENT FOR GROWTH?

IS GRADUATE EDUCATION THE WAY TO GO?

By PRETHIBA ESVARY
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THE fourth industrial revolution has disrupted the world of work. The World Economic Forum’s 2016 Future of Jobs report says that “35% of core skills will change between 2025 and 2030.” The consequence of this can already be felt in the Malaysian corporate landscape today.

According to Hays recruiting experts, 69% of Malaysian employers are “concerned they don’t have the right talent to achieve current business objectives.”

This is why it is imperative to upskill, reskill and upskill people in order to remain employable and relevant.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Government bodies and private companies are already taking the above steps to enhance the skills of their employees through training programmes, short-term courses like executive education, and online courses.

HELP University’s ELM Graduate School dean Datuk Dr Wendy Low says: “The executive education and professional development courses for instance, help to fill up skills gap brought about by changes and advancement in technology as well as the challenges of working in a globalised and Uber-connected world.”

Such short-term programmes are beneficial in providing up-to-date knowledge and access to new insights and frameworks in order to boost one’s capability at work, especially in an area where data analytics is the new currency.

But are these sufficient to equip everyone from different professions and industries with professional growth?

MORE THAN SELF-LEARNING

According to a poll conducted by Hays earlier this year, “69% of Malaysian respondents take responsibility for developing their skills using a combination of self-learning and leveraging on work experience.”

This is commendable as it shows that a lot of our working professionals are already aware of the need for skill and stay updated. This also means that they are, in fact, taking control of their personal and professional development, rather than relying purely on learning and development opportunities provided by their employers.

However, certain industries and lines of work require more than just self-learning and training programmes. If you intend to thrive in your career and climb the corporate ladder.

Hays Malaysia regional director Tom Osborne says: “My one note of warning about relying on informal learning would be for career-minded candidates to keep up with the formal qualifications trendings in their sector. For some job roles, employers require specific tertiary qualifications and even postgraduate qualifications, so they won’t accept anything less.”

Yes, it does require more investment in terms of your time and money. But what if it is a requirement for the position or profession you are aiming for?

A degree serves as an entry ticket to become an accountant, banker, consultant, but if you are eyeing a more senior role, a masters would be recommended. According to Dr Low, “a master’s degree is the new bachelor’s” and having a master’s degree is important as it provides more specialisation to meet the growing demands for new skills.

Here’s another example. Guidance counsellor Emma R. Wilson who pursued her Masters in Education at the University of New Hampshire says: “I think, especially if you’re a psychology major undergrad, you can’t really do anything without a master’s degree.

“The number of people we see who go on to get [entry-level jobs without a master’s degree] in psychology is startlingly low.”

INVESTING IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

Graduate education is expected to grow much faster than any other education level.

HELP University’s ELM Graduate School (ELM stands for Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Management) is an example. They understood this trend and took the position that post-grad education will be a pivotal force in the growth of universities.

Thus, HELP University has evolved its graduate school to focus on the entrepreneurial, leadership and management curricula to encourage an interdisciplinary interest among its students and allow them to stand out in any industry.

Dr Low shares that “it is important for a graduate school like ours to illuminate the potential benefits associated with the teaching and development of business leaders who understand the interdependencies of various disciplines.”

“The ELM framework guides our syllabi and delivery to impart entrepreneurial foresight and resourcefulness, and the leadership and management capabilities, to actualise and create value, opportunities and growth for the individuals and the organisations in which they work.”

THE ROLE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

Is it to train students for career development only?

“My first response is definitely to say ‘YES!’ Unfortunately, the answer is often much more complex. I think that graduate education has a much bigger role,” Dr Low adds.

“In HELP, we believe that our role goes beyond providing them the skills to be more employable; we also cultivate a growth mindset in our students to drive change and create value in their organisations.”

“Some regard a graduate education programme as a commodity. Unlike cars or houses, the return of investment on education depends on how much effort the student puts into the programme, and not the programme per se.

She says: “In a sense, I feel strongly that students will get better returns if they regard education as an investment for the future, a way to help them to weather recessionary pressure.

‘Over the years, I have seen average students do exceedingly well in their lives because they regard education as a transformative opportunity for growth and not just to get a better job,’” she says.

As the dean of the school, she says often questions and challenges herself on “What is it that the ELM Graduate School can offer or do better than all the other colleges out there?"

“For one, HELP Graduate School offers a very wide range of industry-oriented and specialised master’s degrees in fields such as Economic Crime, the first and only one in Asia, Project Management, the first and only one in Southeast Asia to be accredited by the Global Accreditation Centre for Project Management Education Program in the US; Accounting and Finance, with important exemptions from CPA professional exams, Managerial Psychology, Entrepreneurship and many more on top of its popular MBA and DBA programmes.

“It also offers two research-based degrees (MPhil/PhD) to students who are looking to develop their skills in independent research, critical thinking and problem solving for specific business-related topics.”

Professor Geoffrey Williams, the MPhil/PhD Programme Director says the approach towards research degrees at ELM has been transformed to create what they call, “industry-ready researchers.”

“I am working with a fantastic research-oriented team as well as local and international research partners to equip more research students for the world of active, industry-focused work.

“We particularly like to support people who want to conduct their research degrees while they work and we help them to use their research in their careers as they are studying. This ensures that our research projects are topical, relevant and have real impact,” he says.

The introduction of the new Master of HR Development at ELM, says Dr Low, focuses on helping managers to go beyond their functional core expertise and become strategic business partners.

“We see a need to equip practitioners to build strategic leadership capabilities to meet the changing demands of their industry and companies,” says Low, who spent more than a decade in senior HR leadership positions in various Fortune 500 companies.

She adds: “Beyond knowledge and skills, perspectives are important. The ability to learn and grow from mistakes, the humility of having the sense of being a player in a bigger fabric of life, and learning to ask why – all these are values we want our students to experience to enable them to contemplate, analyse, adapt, actualise and be business leaders of consequence.”

IN SUMMARY

Everyone has a different way of learning in order to grow themselves.

While online learning, training programmes and certification courses do provide you with new, up-to-date knowledge and upskilling/reskilling/multi-skilling opportunities, you must carefully study the field or industry you are in and know the requirements needed to progress to a particular role.

In order to stand out from the rest of your peers, investing in graduate education could be an option for you to consider.

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What does it take to become an effective and successful CEO in today’s business world? How do you rally people around your vision and build award-winning teams to propel your business forward?

To find out, sign up for a free CEO Masterclass with Viden Lakhiani, CEO of Mindvalley, happening on November 1, 2017 at the AmBank BizCONFERENCE, Plenary Hall, KL Convention Centre.

For more information, and to register, go to ambankbizclub.com.

For further information on the HELP University ELM Graduate School, visit elm.help.edu.my
TO BE OR NOT TO BE?

BE THE TYPE OF CEO WHO ENRICHES, NOT THE ONE WHO JUST EXTRACTS

By JOSEPH TAN
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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

While the CEO is the chief executive officer of the company, this position is also the most important role in the organisation. The CEO is responsible for the strategic leadership of the company, setting the direction for its growth and ensuring its long-term success. CEOs are often considered the face of the company and are often seen as role models for their employees.

CEO’s are not just about making decisions. They are also about setting the tone and culture of the organisation. The CEO must be able to inspire their team and create a work environment that is positive and productive. They must also be able to create a vision for the company that will motivate and engage employees.

The CEO must also be able to balance the needs of the business with the needs of the employees. This can be a difficult task, but it is essential for the success of the company. The CEO must be able to create a work environment that is fair and just, and where employees feel valued and respected.

The CEO must also be able to set the tone for the organisation. They must be able to create a culture of innovation and creativity, and to encourage their team to think outside the box. They must also be able to create a culture of accountability, and to ensure that their team is held accountable for their actions.

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Changing people's minds: It's a tricky business. Here's how to make it happen

BY OZAN VAROL
editor@leaderonomics.com

I n your quest to change people's minds, have you ever given up and thought, “Why bother? It's never going to happen”? You aren't alone. Many experts agree that changing someone's mind is a nearly impossible task. However, there are strategies you can use to influence people's beliefs and behaviors, and in this article, we will explore some of them.

The key is to trick the mind by giving it an excuse. Convince your own mind (or your friend) that your prior decision or prior belief was the right one given what you knew, but now that the underlying facts have changed, so should the mind. But instead of giving the mind an out, we often go for a punch to the gut. We belittle the other person (“I told you so”). We ostracize (“Basket of deplorables”). We ridicule (“What an idiot”).

Schadenfreude might be your favourite pastime, but it has the counterproductive effect of activating the other person’s defences and solidifying their positions. The moment you belittle the mind for believing in something, you've lost the battle.

At that point, the mind will dig in rather than give in. Once you’ve equated someone’s beliefs with idiocy, changing that person’s mind will require nothing short of an admission that they are unintelligent. And that’s an admission that most minds aren’t willing to make.

Democrats in the United States are already falling into this trap. They’re not going to give up the 2020 presidential elections by convincing Donald Trump supporters that they were wrong to vote for him last November or that they’re responsible for his failures in office. Instead, as author and psychology professor Robert Galdini explains, Democrats must support Trump supporters a way to get out of their prior commitment while saving face. “Well, of course you were in a position to make that decision in November because no one knew about X.”

Colombians adopted a similar strategy in the 1950s when the Rojas dictatorship collapsed. As I explain in my forthcoming book, although the Colombian military was complicit in the abuses of the Rojas regime, civilians defiantly avoided pointing any fingers at the military.

Instead, they managed to march the military back to the barracks with its dignity intact. They recognised that they would need the military’s cooperation both during the transition process and in its aftermath.

So they offered an alternative narrative for public consumption that uncoupled the armed forces from the Rojas regime. In this narrative, which the military leaders found much easier to swallow, it was the “presidential family” and a few corrupt civilians close to Rojas – not military officers – who were responsible for the regime’s excesses.

Had they taken a different approach, a military dictatorship – not democracy – may have resulted.

“Moments like this are when you believe in something, you’ve lost the battle.”

YOUR BELIEFS ARE NOT YOU

In my early years in academia, I would tend to get defensive when someone challenged one of my arguments during a presentation. My heart rate would skyrocket, I would tense up, and my answer would reflect the disdain with which I viewed the antagonistic question (and the questioner).

I know I’m not alone here. We all tend to identify with our beliefs and arguments. This is my business. This is my article. This is my idea.

But here’s the problem. When your beliefs are entwined with your identity, changing your mind means changing your identity. That’s a really hard sell.

A possible solution, and one that I’ve adopted in my own life, is to put a healthy separation between you and the products of you.

I changed my vocabulary to reflect this mental shift. At conferences, instead of saying, “In this paper, I argue,” I began saying, “This paper argues.”...” I began to say “This paper argues...”

This subtle verbal tweak tricked my mind into thinking that my arguments and I were not one and the same. Obviously, I was the one who came up with these arguments but, once they were out of my body, they took a life of their own.

They became separate, abstract objects that I could view with some objectivity. It was no longer personal. It was simply a hypothesis proven wrong.

Wait, there’s more! To read the rest of Ozan’s piece, head on over to bit.ly/changethemind

Trust is the glue of life. It is the foundational principle that holds all relationships.

– Stephen Covey

Influence is the ultimate sustainable competitive advantage in business. Let us help you managers build trust and gain effective influencing skills through experiential learning. Leveraging the power of technology, our Trust and Influencing Change digital simulations immerse the learner in a gamified environment for a transformative learning experience.
5 TIPS FOR ONLINE LEARNING

By SHEERA HUSSIN

HAVY you ever found yourself signing up for an online course and then procrastinating? Sometimes, you might even give the excuse of being ‘busy’ to justify why you are not able to learn more actively. Even worse, you think to yourself that the time you spend learning online is such a waste because it stops you from doing your actual job. Eventually, you say no to online learning without giving it a proper try.

When asked about this attitude by your boss or when it is evaluated against your KPI, you log in and finish the course reluctantly, in turn, affecting the whole purpose of self-growth and career development. Just like hitting the gym, online learning takes a certain discipline and initiative to embark on. Let’s take a look at some tips that might help you get started.

1 IDENTIFY YOUR GOAL

Do you have anything specific you want to learn? If you do, look for the online library that offers the course. If your current Learning Management System (LMS) does not offer what you need, sign up for other learning platforms.

If your objective is to learn one new skill a day, start with content related to your hobbies and interests. Don’t give up so easily if you can’t find what you want the first time.

When you finally settle on an attainable learning goal, consider allocating some budget to learning tools such as apps or other assistive technology.

2 FIND A LEARNING PARTNER

Get yourself a learning partner to motivate and help you track your progress, preferably someone you are comfortable working with. Just like your gym buddy who will constantly remind and push you out of your comfort zone, your learning partner should do the same.

3 MAKE A SCHEDULE

Set aside an hour each day or one day a week for this activity. In your schedule, plan ahead on the timing and topic to allow ample time for course browsing.

Make your schedule more interesting by including some incentives upon completing several modules or online exercises.

4 LEARN IN BITE-SIZED CHUNKS

Explore ways to retain information better through micro-learning. This is a type of learning that involves the comprehension of the learning content in small, digestible bites.

You can listen to a podcast while going for your morning run or watch learning videos while waiting for the bus. With advancements in technology, many systems even allow downloadable offline content on smartphones so that you can read them while having breakfast. Thus, there is no excuse for having no time because micro learning is manageable.

5 PERSEVERE

Sometimes, it may feel like your progress is slow. But without unflagging perseverance, you are sure to make more progress than you think.

Don’t give up easily when your learning is interrupted with ad-hoc errands or inconsistent habits. Persevere by taking the small steps that eventually result in big achievements.

Do not get trapped by the thought of “I’m just taking a break and will get back to it when I have time”. Make time! Knowing this, are you ready to keep the momentum going? Once you get started, not only do you get to expand your knowledge on professional courses, you also get to enhance your computer savvy too.

After all, what do you have to lose?

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Sheera Hussin is working on developing penetrative content for Leaderonomics Digital Learning. She has a knack for different languages and aims to cultivate life-long learning in others. The Leaderonomics Digital Learning site is an interactive, cloud-based learning platform designed to foster limitless learning. What are your thoughts after reading this article? Contact learn@leaderonomics.com to find out how you can craft your online learning experience.

By SANDY CLARKE

EN high school, I was quite a lazy student. If a subject didn’t immediately inspire me, I would set my motivation levels to ‘bare minimum’ and hope that was enough to make the grade.

My maths teacher was particularly mystified as to how I could be performing so poorly and yet, when it came to studying physics, I was in the top class.

“Surely the two subjects are similar,” said my exasperated teacher. “How is it possible that you don’t perform well in my class?”

At the time, the answer was obvious. Maths class, to me, was as exciting as an unseasoned green leaf salad, whereas physics was a subject that came alive – physics explains how the world works!

Looking back, I realise I failed to see the value in education beyond the enjoyment of immersing myself in subjects that I found fascinating. Certainly, I lacked any awareness of the concept of lifelong learning and how important it would be in future with regard to helping people keep pace with social and technological trends and developments.

With the rising tide of competition and the ever-evolving, ever-demanding markets, the ability to keep learning and develop new skills is more important than ever before.

To my good fortune, by the time I left university, I had found a thirst for learning and was able to build up a necessary resilience to sticking with topics that didn’t quite capture my imagination.

As many of us know, in our professional lives, there will be certain aspects of our work that we enjoy less than others. Occasionally, this will include venturing outside our comfort zones and having to learn a new skill or subject, which can feel like the last thing we need on top of everything else we need to juggle.

When we’re in this mindset, we’re at a physiological disadvantage. Thinking about how much we don’t want to do something triggers the part of the brain that makes us feel pain, which is why the idea of doing chores we hate, for example, can actually be painful.

So how can we overcome the pain of learning? In his book, The Power of Habit, Charles Duhigg explains that our habitual behaviours exist because the brain is ‘constantly looking for ways to save effort’.

Therefore, we have to reframe the way we look at taking on the kinds of challenges we’d rather avoid. Here are some of the ways to reframe the pain of learning:

1. Find a reason – however small – why you’ll benefit from your experience

It might be that learning a new skill or subject will set you up for a promotion, or help you by simply enhancing your skillset in a particularly useful way. Maybe it can help pave the way for that career change you’ve been thinking about. Whatever the reason, looking for some way that you’ll benefit from the learning experience will provide you with the motivation you need to stick with it.

2. Bite the perfectionism

Especially as we get older, the notion of not immediately mastering a new concept or technique can be frustrating. In part, it might be because we don’t have a lot of time to waste, but it’s likely that we’ll also be self-conscious in our attempts to learn something new.

Few learning experiences “click” on the first, second or even third try. The key to aim is to progress rather than perfection, and be proud of the progress that is made.

Did You Know?

Researchers in France found, following a study conducted in 2009, that multitasking can half the brain’s working capacity. When we try to multitask, there’s no flow of concentration of focus, which means we take twice as long to complete a single task. As if that wasn’t bad enough, multitasking also increases our error rate by around 50 per cent!

To discover Sandy’s final two methods for building a love of learning, read the rest of this article at bit.ly/learningpain

Sandy Clarke is the former editor at Leaderonomics. To connect with Sandy, email editor@leaderonomics.com

DEVELOPING A THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE

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www.leaderonomics.com | Saturday 21 October 2017

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At the time, the answer was obvious. Maths class, to me, was as exciting as an unseasoned green leaf salad, whereas physics was a subject that came alive – physics explains how the world works!

Looking back, I realise I failed to see the value in education beyond the enjoyment of immersing myself in subjects that I found fascinating. Certainly, I lacked any awareness of the concept of lifelong learning and how important it would be in future with regard to helping people keep pace with social and technological trends and developments.

With the rising tide of competition and the ever-evolving, ever-demanding markets, the ability to keep learning and develop new skills is more important than ever before.

To my good fortune, by the time I left university, I had found a thirst for learning and was able to build up a necessary resilience to sticking with topics that didn’t quite capture my imagination.

As many of us know, in our professional lives, there will be certain aspects of our work that we enjoy less than others. Occasionally, this will include venturing outside our comfort zones and having to learn a new skill or subject, which can feel like the last thing we need on top of everything else we need to juggle.

When we’re in this mindset, we’re at a physiological disadvantage. Thinking about how much we don’t want to do something triggers the part of the brain that makes us feel pain, which is why the idea of doing chores we hate, for example, can actually be painful.

So how can we overcome the pain of learning? In his book, The Power of Habit, Charles Duhigg explains that our habitual behaviours exist because the brain is ‘constantly looking for ways to save effort’.

Therefore, we have to reframe the way we look at taking on the kinds of challenges we’d rather avoid. Here are some of the ways to reframe the pain of learning:

1. Find a reason – however small – why you’ll benefit from your experience

It might be that learning a new skill or subject will set you up for a promotion, or help you by simply enhancing your skillset in a particularly useful way. Maybe it can help pave the way for that career change you’ve been thinking about. Whatever the reason, looking for some way that you’ll benefit from the learning experience will provide you with the motivation you need to stick with it.

2. Bite the perfectionism

Especially as we get older, the notion of not immediately mastering a new concept or technique can be frustrating. In part, it might be because we don’t have a lot of time to waste, but it’s likely that we’ll also be self-conscious in our attempts to learn something new.

Few learning experiences “click” on the first, second or even third try. The key to aim is to progress rather than perfection, and be proud of the progress that is made.

Did You Know?

Researchers in France found, following a study conducted in 2009, that multitasking can half the brain’s working capacity. When we try to multitask, there’s no flow of concentration of focus, which means we take twice as long to complete a single task. As if that wasn’t bad enough, multitasking also increases our error rate by around 50 per cent!

To discover Sandy’s final two methods for building a love of learning, read the rest of this article at bit.ly/learningpain

Sandy Clarke is the former editor at Leaderonomics. To connect with Sandy, email editor@leaderonomics.com
BOOSTING PRODUCTIVITY

14 THINGS SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE DO EVERY DAY

By TRAVIS BRADBERRY
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In analysing their responses, Kruse coded the answers to yield some fascinating suggestions. What follows are some of my favourites from Kevin’s findings.

1. THEY FOCUS ON MINUTES, NOT HOURS

Most people default to one hour and half-hour blocks on their calendar; highly successful people know that there are 1,440 minutes in every day and that there is nothing more valuable than time.

Money can be lost and made again, but time spent can never be reclaimed. As legendary Olympic gymnast Shannon Miller told Kevin, “To this day, I keep a schedule that is almost minute by minute.” You must master your minutes to master your life.

2. THEY FOCUS ON ONLY ONE THING

Ultra-productive people know what their “Most Important Task” is and work on it for one to two hours each morning, without interruptions.

What task will have the biggest impact on reaching your goals? What accomplishment will get you promoted at work? That’s what you should dedicate your mornings to every day.

3. THEY DON’T USE TO-DO LISTS

Throw away your to-do list; instead schedule everything on your calendar. It turns out that only 41% of items on to-do lists ever get done.

All those undone items lead to stress and insomnia because of the-Ziegarnik effect, which, in essence, means that uncompleted tasks will stay on your mind until you finish them. Highly productive people put everything on their calendar and then work and live by it.

4. THEY BEAT PROCRASTINATION WITH TIME TRAVEL

Your future self isn’t trusted. That’s because we are time inconsistent. We buy veggies today because we think we’ll eat healthy salads all week; then we throw out green rotting mush in the future.

Successful people figure out what they can do now to make certain their future selves will do the right thing. Anticipate how you will self-sabotage in the future, and come up with a solution today to defeat your future self.

5. THEY MAKE IT HOME FOR DINNER

Kevin asked a friend of a friend, Andrew Groove, who said: “There is always more to be done, more that should be done.” Highly successful people know what they value in life. Yes, work, but also what else they value. There is no right answer, but for many, these other values include family time, exercise, and giving back. They consciously allocate their 1,440 minutes a day to each area they value (i.e., they put them on their calendar), and then they stick to that schedule.

6. THEY USE A NOTEBOOK

Richard Branson has said on more than one occasion that he wouldn’t have been able to build Virgin without a simple notebook, which he takes with him wherever he goes.

In one interview, Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis said, “Always carry a notebook. Write everything down. That is a million-dollar lesson they don’t teach you in business school!”

Ultra-productive people free their minds by writing everything down as the thoughts come to them.

7. THEY PROCESS E-MAILS ONLY A FEW TIMES A DAY

Ultra-productive people don’t “check” their e-mail throughout the day. They don’t respond to each vibration or ding to see who has intruded into their inbox.

Instead, like everything else, they schedule time to process their e-mails quickly and efficiently. For some, that’s only once a day; for others, it’s morning, noon, and night.

8. THEY AVOID MEETINGS AT ALL COSTS

When Kevin asked Mark Cuban to give his best productivity advice, he quickly responded: “Never take meetings unless someone is writing a check.”

Meetings are notorious time killers. They start late, have the wrong people in them, meander around their topics, and run long.

You should get out of meetings whenever you can and hold fewer of them yourself. If you do run a meeting, keep it short and to the point.

9. THEY SAY “NO” TO ALMOST EVERYTHING

Billionaire Warren Buffett once said: “The difference between successful people and very successful people is that very successful people say ‘no’ to almost everything.”

And James Altucher colourfully gave Kevin this tip: “If something is not a ‘Hell Yeah!’ then it’s a ‘no.’ Remember, you only have 1,440 minutes in a day. Don’t give them away easily.

10. THEY FOLLOW THE 80/20 RULE

Known as the Pareto Principle, in most cases, 80% of results come from only 20% of activities. Ultra-productive people know which activities drive the greatest results. Focus on those and ignore the rest.

11. THEY DELEGATE ALMOST EVERYTHING

Ultra-productive people don’t ask, “How can I do this task?” Instead, they ask, “How can this task get done?”

They take the 1 out of it as much as possible. Ultra-productive people don’t have control issues, and they are not micro-managers. In many cases, good enough is, well, good enough.

12. THEY TOUCH THINGS ONLY ONCE

How many times have you opened a piece of regular mail—a bill perhaps—and then put it down, only to deal with it again later? How often do you read an e-mail and then close it and leave it in your inbox to deal with later?

Highly successful people try to “touch it once”. If it takes less than five or ten minutes—whatever it is—they deal with it right then and there.

It reduces stress, since it won’t be in the back of their minds, and it is more efficient, since they won’t have to re-read or re-evaluate the item again in the future.

13. THEY PRACTICE A CONSISTENT MORNING ROUTINE

Kevin’s single greatest surprise while interviewing over 200 highly successful people was how many of them wanted to share their morning ritual with him. While he heard about a wide variety of habits, most nurtured their bodies in the morning with water, a healthy breakfast, and light exercise, and they nurtured their minds with meditation or prayer, inspirational reading, or journaling.

14. ENERGY IS EVERYTHING

You can’t make more minutes in the day, but you can increase your energy to increase your attention, focus, and productivity.

Highly successful people don’t skip meals, sleep, or breaks in the pursuit of more, more, more. Instead, they view food as fuel, sleep as recovery, and breaks as opportunities to recharge in order to get even more done.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

You might not be an entrepreneur, an Olympian, or a billionaire (or even want to be), but their secrets just might help you to get more done in less time and assist you to stop feeling so overworked and overwhelmed.
YOU attend the party of a long-time friend and run into a lot of people from high school that you haven’t seen in years. During chit-chat over appetisers and drinks, you can feel the friendly competition heating up.

While comparing career accomplishments, you are shocked to learn that the kid from school with the genius IQ, the one all the teachers thought would be spectacularly successful, has struggled with his career. How could this be, you wonder. This was the person everyone thought would invent something that would change the world.

It turns out that intelligence might not be the best indicator of future success. According to psychologist Angela Duckworth, the secret to outstanding achievement isn’t talent, instead, it’s a special blend of persistence and passion that she calls “grit.” Duckworth has spent years studying people, trying to understand what it is that makes high achievers special. “In a word, they had grit.”

Being gritty, according to Duckworth, is the ability to persevere. It’s about being unusually resilient and hardworking, so much so that you’re willing to continue on in the face of difficulties, obstacles and even failures. It’s about being constantly driven to improve. In addition to perseverance, being gritty is also about being passionate about something. For the highly successful, Duckworth found that the journey was just as important as the end result. “Even if some of the things they had to do were boring, or frustrating, or even painful, they wouldn’t dream of giving up. Their passion was enduring.”

What her research demonstrated is that it wasn’t natural talent that made the biggest difference in who was highly successful and who wasn’t—it was more about effort than IQ. Duckworth even came up with two equations she uses to explain this concept:

\[
\text{Talent \times effort} = \text{skill} \\
\text{Talent \times effort} = \text{achievement}
\]

“Talent is how quickly your skills improve when you invest effort. Achievement is what happens when you take your acquired skills and use them,” Duckworth explained.

As you can see from the equations, effort counts twice. That’s why IQ tests and exam results aren’t a good indicator of someone’s future success. It’s because those scores are missing the most important part of the equation—the person’s effort level.

What does that mean for you? It means that it’s okay if you aren’t the smartest person in the room or in the job. It means the effort you expend towards your goals (perseverance and your dedication throughout your career journey (passion)) are what matter most.

Why? Because grit will always trump talent. Or as Duckworth notes: “Our potential is one thing. What we do with it is quite another.”

“Grinding over IQ”

By LISA QUAST

If you want to feel secure, do what you already know how to do. But if you want to grow, go to the cutting edge of your competence, which means a temporary loss of security. So, whenever you don’t quite know what you are doing, know that you are growing.”

― David Viscot
The AmBank BizCONFERENCE

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