

SECRET #11 - EDUCATION AND TRAINING

*“Education is what survives when
what has been learned has been forgotten.”*

B.F. Skinner

*“I hated every minute of training, but I said, don’t quit.
Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion”*

Muhammad Ali

It is amazing how much in life I used to assume. My parents, especially my father had great expectations of himself and his children. Quite literally there was seemingly nothing that Dad would not attempt. Maybe this was caused by his growing up in the remote countryside, or surviving the war, or coming to a new country to start life anew.

Whatever the reasons it left within me this belief that I really should be able to do just about anything. I assumed that everyone knew everything and that likewise I should too. In one sense this is a good thing, in another it was not. This lesson is about the not so good thing of thinking that you should automatically know everything.

This type of thinking lead me to take on things that a) I was not ready for and b) I was not educated or trained to do. So when I failed at something I would constantly be saying, “how could I fail at that I should have known that this or that was going to happen”, or “I should have know better”. The reality is that without proper education or training you do not know the, this or that which could occur.

So what does education and training look like? I believe it looks like having the basics and then working from there. The basics are the ability to read and write. Someone close to me was illiterate. I was saddened and frustrated watching this person go through life not being able to read. This person was a mechanical genius around cars long before he was old enough to drive. He would work on cars and drive them around the lot. He was an excellent driver. When it came the time to obtain his drivers licence he knew everything about driving and the rules of the road through experience. However, it took him six tries of being tested on the written test that was completed before the road test before he obtained his license.

Can you imagine the feelings of frustration, anxiety and lack of self worth that must come with this constant failure because you cannot read the text that is in front of you? In many ways this is how some of us operate our lives. We believe that the person next to us who is so successful because they have that perfect job, or that great movie role, or have such musical talent must have acquired this talent or skill through some magic not realising that it was education and training that got them to where they are today.

Even in the simplest of things it takes someone to show you how to do it the first time for you to see how it is done. It takes repetition and practice for you to become good at what you are trying to do or become.

Education is the process of learning. Learning is the process of study. There are two roots to study. Grade schools, high schools, and college represent the formal education process. The non-formal education process can include private educational facilities, learning on the job, self-study and the school of hard knocks.

The secret here is to know that no matter what you set out to do you require some sort of educational process. The type of education or practice that you require is dependent on the goal or position you are trying to achieve.

Some occupations require a formal education in order to become licensed. If you choose to become a doctor or dentist this is the reality for this occupation. In others, a basic education and an apprenticeship will be what are required.

Realise that no matter what you aspire to that it will take practice and learning for you to become good at what you want to become or do. Before embarking on your journey it is wise to check into what educational requirements are needed, how much it will cost, and how long it will take to complete the schooling or practice. Upon getting these facts you may wish to re-evaluate your desire to become involved with this endeavour.

One of the most frustrating things for me was going to school. Part of it, I am sure, was being born in a different country and learning to speak English as a second language. Years later I found something that explained to me why I might have had difficulties beyond this and it was very enlightening.

This golden nugget has to do with learning styles. You see each of us has a unique way of learning. The way one person learns is different than the way another person does. As such the way the teacher or trainer teaches must reflect these different learning styles. It is for this reason that some of us may not have been the best students and been labelled as slow learners. The fact is that if you are not being taught taking advantage of your particular learning style you may not be progressing or learning as quickly as someone who is being taught with a style that suits them.

Below is a brief description and synopsis of what learning styles are and how each of the major learning styles operates. This is a vast area of study and there are many variations to the styles of learning. If you feel that you have somehow been labelled a 'bad' student or never quite got the essence of learning I would highly recommend that you do further research into this topic and get a sense if this may have been an impediment to becoming the best you can be.

What are learning styles?

Learning styles are simply different approaches or ways of learning.

What are the types of learning styles?

- **VISUAL LEARNERS:**

Learn through seeing....

These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions (e.g. people's heads). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated textbooks, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and handouts. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.

- **AUDITORY LEARNERS:**

Learn through listening...

These learners learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

- **TACTILE/KINESTHETIC LEARNERS:**

Learn through moving, doing and touching...

Tactile/kinesthetic persons learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

After reading this description of learning styles ask yourself which style best describes the way you learn? Is there one style or is it a combination of two or more of these? Which of the learning styles is best suited to you and how can you use this information in the future to your benefit? Knowing your learning style will assist you in how you want to learn and be taught in the future. Be aware and conscious of this as you sign up for courses or training.

As an example, if a course was offered through correspondence or through classroom training which would be your choice. Someone who is visual would choose the correspondence course however someone who is auditory or kinesthetic may be better learning in the classroom where they can hear the teacher and have a hands-on approach to the training.

So what learning style are you. In the exercise for this secret you delve further into this topic. If you think this could be a major impediment to where you are going consider this topic very carefully.

It is very important to get the right education and training. An illustration of this is the “do it your self” syndrome. This is where you feel you need to do every thing by yourself and never ask for assistance from others.

A good example of this is the current phase of television shows on the topic of home renovation. It looks so easy on TV; a crew assists a couple or couples to renovate their homes and after they finish it looks absolutely incredible. We would all want to live there.

However these shows are not realistic. First of all the helpers are typically designers who have years of training and practice in their trade. They have learned how to be creative and know what resources are out there. They seem to have all the tools. Their toolbox is probably worth thousands of dollars. They have a dedicated time frame in which to complete the project. They are not trying to do this as a series of weekend projects after a full workweek. The point here is that it is not realistic for the average person to complete the home renovation in the same fashion as a professional with the education, training and tools these individuals have.

It is important to balance expectation versus results. In the example above, would it be reasonable to expect that you could do the same job, with the same results. So then what should you expect the outcome to look like? Maybe it looks like; the job takes longer, you need to acquire more tools and the time to research and purchase the items you need. As well, the finished job does not look like what is on television but is acceptable to you. You may obtain the help of someone or hire a professional.

Expectation versus realistic results is a litmus test for a lot of things in life. Our world is so dominated by television, videos and movies that it is easy to get caught up in believing that we can do 'it' too. Whatever 'it' is. In a majority of the cases you could, however you would have to dedicate yourself to the time, effort, education and training that it would take to develop these skills. Ask yourself is that realistic right now for where you are in life and with your other commitments.

If on the other hand you wish to get that same education and training because this is what you really want to do as a vocation or hobby this is a different situation. Do your research and then proceed.

EXERCISE: I

Create an educational outline of what learning you will require. As an example say you wanted to learn how to start and operate a successful business. Seek out what business courses are available at local high schools, colleges etc. Most communities now have business centres that offer courses or programs that run in the evening. Talk to people that are currently running a business like the one you would like to start and see where they received their training and background. In addition, there are usually associations with memberships who provide education or training. What are their requirements to join or become a member. Find out the cost of this education and or training. It may not be as expensive, time consuming, or onerous as you may think. Get the facts and base your decision to proceed on those facts.

EXERCISE: II

So what learning style are you. In the exercise for this secret you look further into this topic.

What learning style are you? Play with this concept. Get more information on learning styles and see how they apply to you. There are a myriad of aptitude tests in the world, some are readily available online through the World Wide Web. Take some of these aptitude tests and see how you do. In addition to testing you in different arenas they may also be helpful in finding a career path or field of endeavour you may wish to follow.