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The 5 Most Important Skills To Boost Your Productivity This Year

Stellar performance in any activity depends upon the skills you possess. But, how do you get to the point where you own those skills?

Truthfully, ***your skills will only be as good as the habits you keep.***

What good are habits and why should you bother adopting new ones?

The purpose of a habit is ***to develop a particular skill or ability -- automatically.***

"First we make our habits, then our habits make us."
-- Charles C. Noble

A habit is a regular tendency or practice you may engage in. The daily rituals that you perform without giving it a moment's thought reinforce a behavior, making it easier to do the next time.

The jobs you carry out, the patterns of action, the duties you have each and every day get done regularly because the tasks become routine.

But, are the habits that you own getting you the desired results you want?

A habit is a double-edged sword. Obviously, an unchecked habit can lead to all kinds of negative consequences.

Bad Habits are easily formed but tough to break...

- It wouldn't take long for your friends and co-workers to notice that you neglected to shower, brush your teeth or put on clean clothes
- If you habitually skip breakfast, your stomach, brain, and energy level would tell you about it quickly and in no uncertain terms
- Fast food choices can result in excess weight gain. Longer term, your nutritional habits will produce a result in the form of sickness and disease
- You realize your fitness level is poor and wish you were in better shape. After three sets of stairs you find yourself leaning heavily on the railing wondering why your legs and lungs are on fire
- A visit to the dentist tells you that you'll have more cavities or gingivitis if you don't start flossing and brushing more regularly
- You show up late for appointments and seldom give it a second thought. You wonder why everyone is in a foul mood at these meetings

There are all kinds of good habits you can adopt to improve your life.

- Starting an exercise program is good. Eating nutritional food and avoiding junk or processed foods is good...
- Maybe you want to work on **not** interrupting others, and let them finish speaking...
- Maybe you want to be more grateful and write “thank you” notes to people who have extended a helping hand...
- Maybe you want to get up earlier because you heard about productive people who are early risers...
- Maybe you want to become more disciplined during your working hours so that you produce more or better work...
- Or maybe you want to quit smoking, drinking, or binge eating, or any other disruptive and destructive behaviors...
- Perhaps you would like to start saving a percentage of your income regularly...

- Or avoid spending money on things like that morning \$5 latte...
- Maybe you'd like to be a better wife or a better husband...

All these things are excellent and you would do well to adopt some of these habits. And of course, drop others.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." -- Aristotle

A necessary **prerequisite to developing skills** and fostering good habits is to:

Be an Enthusiastic Learner

If you are not learning, you are not growing. It is as simple as that. **Acquiring** knowledge and **applying** that knowledge are the cornerstones you'll need to build your skill set.

Your education doesn't stop once you graduate high school or post-secondary. It's a lifelong process.

To stop learning once you're in the workplace is a sure recipe for mediocrity. You will quickly stagnate while your peers steadily advance.

Moving up the ladder requires stretching your limits and boundaries. Thinking is hard work. That's why so many

people avoid it and settle for a comfort zone that really becomes a self-imposed prison.

Take up a hobby or interest that requires learning new skills. Stretch and expand your mind by delving into new experiences.

Model building, martial arts, and musical instruction add to your life experiences and open your mind to new possibilities, personal enjoyment and fulfillment that are a reward in and of itself.

Strengthen your vocabulary by adding a new word and definition every day. The average speaker has a repertoire of about 2000 words. Learning new ways to say things adds richness and depth to conversation.

Besides being able to communicate better, having a more powerful vocabulary allows you to think clearer.

Learning to speak a different language broadens your horizon and opens you up to visiting and experiencing that particular country where they speak it fluently. Richness in cultures, architecture, and people add to life experience.

Perhaps you could benefit from learning about business, finance or investing. There are so many publications and periodicals that cater to almost any niche. You need only scan a local bookstore, Amazon.com or your local library

to see the volumes available on every conceivable subject.

There really is no limit to the scope of subjects to choose from. The choices are endless. **Be discerning about where you would like to put your focus.**

You can do or learn anything you want, but you don't have time for everything.

Align your interests so you are learning and moving in the direction of your important goals.

Learning is the key to improvement in any endeavor. Embrace it. Do something every day to increase your knowledge.

Read a book, listen to an instructional audio, or watch a DVD home-study program. Talk to people who are experts in the area you want to learn more about.

Seek out professionals who publish material in the niche you're interested in. Attend seminars and training to build your skills.

Keep adding layer upon layer of knowledge to keep your mind sharp.

"Our character is basically a composite of our habits. Because they are consistent, often unconscious patterns, they constantly, daily, express our character."
-- Stephen Covey

The 5 Most Important Skills to Develop

Let me give you my take on the 5 most important skills I believe will have a huge impact on your performance, productivity and income.

I'll list them in no particular order of importance but the habitual development of these skills can be incorporated into your daily routine.

They are:

Become a Voracious Reader

During my high school years I was a poor student. I had little incentive to finish assignments. I detested most of the subject matter and had as little to do with it as possible. A mistake I still regret.

Even though I didn't use my time as productively as I should have, the one thing I did enjoy was reading.

Entering the workforce and entrepreneurship, I noticed gaps in my understanding and the awareness that if I wanted to improve my chances of success I would have to study.

I chose subjects like selling, marketing, and entrepreneurship to read. I devoured book after book on any subject that I felt would help.

The daily reading habit allows you to quickly capture the main ideas the author has spent a lifetime amassing.

Think about it for a moment...

Let's say you want to learn how to train your dog.

Well, you can try to work it out on your own through trial and error. You and your pooch can sign up for obedience training with a good instructor. Alternatively, you can find a book written on the topic by searching Amazon.com.

Whenever you want to learn about a particular subject, just find a qualified expert author and purchase their book. It's an inexpensive way to gain expertise and you don't have to sweat and labor to acquire it.

And *here's the big benefit...*

The author put years of experience into words, you can get the benefit of that knowledge in a couple hours of reading. That has to appeal to even the laziest of us!

In a matter of hours I gain and cut down the learning curve by an enormous margin.

I can further multiply the effect if I read one book a week on the same subject. It is possible to become expert and become proficient on any subject within a six-month period.

Think about the possibility that comes just from reading about the experiences someone else has endured. You don't have to repeat their mistakes.

Reading is an activity that can be done pretty much anywhere. Use it to fill downtime between appointments. You can catch up on the latest headlines and stay abreast of current events. Personally, I have a pdf library on my Smartphone with a variety of different subjects to suit whatever mood I'm in.

Make it a part of your day. Start with small steps if you haven't done a lot of it. Choose a topic you have always wanted to know more about and collect a couple books about it. Keep one handy to fill those moments in between activities.

You (and your friends) will notice great results if you diligently pursue this habit.

Become a Better Writer

Writing is a form of self-expression and a medium of communication. Some might even say cathartic. Personally, I have found that I can **think clearer** if I can get the thought out of my head and on to the page.

If we compare the mind to a computer, why tie up our mental RAM? Don't bind up resources when you can throw it down on paper and look at it objectively. Writing it down allows you to look at your thoughts and better decide what action to take on it.

I wanted to write clearly and concisely because writing effective marketing messages is a **financially valued skill**. The Internet is a medium of communication and writing is fast becoming an essential skill for any businessperson to own.

Journaling is another way to get practice every day. I really wanted to improve quickly, so I started a daily journal tracking my daily work and life.

The great thing about journaling is it's like a brain dump. The words that come out don't necessarily have to be in order or grammatically correct. Your thoughts are personal. No one else has to read it so you can be free about what you put into it. (I'd recommend password

protecting it to avoid any embarrassment should someone read it accidentally...)

I happened across an online course that taught copywriting. **Copywriting is defined simply as "selling in print"**. Being a small business operator the idea immediately appealed to me because much of what we do now requires that we communicate as well in print as we do verbally.

If you practice a martial art you're probably familiar with the concept of rote exercise. You simply copy the instructor's movements and repeat the form until it becomes natural and automatic.

In the copywriting course we were taught to apply the "exercise" principle to writing. Write out excerpts of your favorite passages or powerful prose. Beginning copywriters are advised to copy, in longhand, winning sales letters, word for word, to gain the feel and flow of well-written letters.

Some might say this kind of exercise is a waste of time. I would too except for this fact: **It works!**

Writing in Blogs, emails, and social media requires superior skills in written communication... **And, the best way to learn how to write better is to simply... write.**

Become a Master Communicator

“Seek first to understand; then seek to be understood...”

I forget where I heard that statement, but I think it is the truest saying about communication that I have ever heard.

Good communication is about listening with the intention of hearing exactly what is being said-- without prejudice or bias. Hear the words clearly, processing not only the syllables but also the inflection.

Pay attention to body and facial clues too. The brain will process, organize and interpret the elements to derive the message. Make this job easier by paying attention and add nothing extra to the message.

Once the speaker has finished, pause for a moment and collect your thoughts, then respond.

The formula isn't difficult to understand but my tendency is to make the leap to the end of their sentences and guess the outcome (not a great way to have a conversation).

Good communication is a two-way street with lots of give and take. Show the other person respect by letting them finish their thoughts.

Because of the speed at which messages move it's become

even more important to receive and send clear and concise meaning. Listening skills can be improved with conscious and consistent practice.

Don't waste words. Choose words that clearly state your intention. Avoid words that are esoteric or not in common use unless it precisely captures the meaning you want to convey.

If you want to be more persuasive when you present your ideas you might want to rehearse your points beforehand.

Work on your vocabulary by adding new words and meanings. Use flashcards to drill them into your memory. Don't laugh. It's how most of us learned our math multiplication tables.

The best way to improve on a skill is by **repetition**.

Become a Public Speaker

Public speaking is an area of personal development that many would rather avoid. The fellow who was asked if he would rather be the one giving the eulogy or the one in the casket is an old joke but appropriate.

Many folks would still agree that it's still the number one fear.

Yet many would also agree that it's the one skill that would propel their career and income to the next level. Funny how that is.

If you have this problem I would recommend taking a course like Toastmasters or Dale Carnegie public speaking.

If that's too much of a stretch, engage people in a group or one on one. Tell stories at family gatherings if you're shy. Speak anywhere to get experience. Use that experience to build confidence.

Being tongue-tied and inarticulate usually happens when you're concentrating your attention on yourself. Take your ego out of the equation. Just focus on the message you want to get across. Don't worry about how you look or sound. Just relax and say what you want to say.

I was worried about sounding weird when I spoke to

people because certain words were hard for me to pronounce. I had a lazy way of forming syllables and slurred a bit.

The solution I stumbled upon for fixing that was simple.

I chose a book, and **read out loud**.

Yep, I felt stupid. Like I was back in elementary school. But a funny thing happened after a while...

I slowed down the pace until I could read without error. After a time, the tripping over my tongue subsided. I practiced speaking with expression and enunciation--clearly forming the proper facial movements. I slowly picked up the pace until I could speak with normal rhythm and tempo. Finally I could read any written passage without it sounding like I was reading a written passage. That was a huge confidence booster.

So what is the solution? **You learn and improve *by doing*.**

Become a proficient Salesperson

It doesn't matter if it's a product, service, or an idea. Every successful exchange involves features and benefits, persuasive presentation, and compensation.

Ok, don't look at me like I have crumbs on my shirt. I know the reputation of the stereotypical salesman with the loud plaid jacket and backslapping demeanor...

And, I know that most people feel an inherent disdain for salespeople and the sales profession in general. Typically, salespeople are considered bottom-feeders of society; sharks intent on devouring unsuspecting prey.

Don't believe that for a second. While there are some who are of that ilk, Selling is the root skill involved in any transaction and really, **I believe it is one of the most honorable endeavors you can engage in.**

The truth is any business that doesn't take selling seriously will not be in business very long.

Whether your applying for a job, asking for raise, or negotiating for time off, **you are selling!**

If you want your kids to do their homework to attain good grades, you have to sell them the idea of prosperous future only an education can ensure.

Charismatic leaders understand how to sell an ideal; lawyers sell the jury on guilt or innocence; teachers sell students principles of study; parents sell their children the merits of honesty, integrity, and purpose so they can take their place in society as contributors.

So what skills do you need to develop to sell effectively?

Of course there are many techniques to learn and master but the ability to listen, ask questions, and solve problems are at the core. You don't have to be loud and audacious... Some of the best salespeople I've met were introverted individuals yet possessed an engaging personality and were consultative in their approach.

There are great books written on each of the skills I've talked about here and I will review many on the website where you received this special report.

To improve your skills and adopt new habits visit:
PersonalProductivitySecrets.com often.

I'll make sure you always have access to the best resources available to help you reach your goals.

Thanks,
Joe Paul