

## MY LIFE

# The importance of life-long learning



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I recently completed a career that spanned 46 years and am now in a period of transition. At 68, I feel my best years are still ahead, and I attribute this attitude to my belief that there is always more to master. I am a committed life-long learner.

Whatever your profession, if you aren't growing by continuing to learn, you are becoming irrelevant. In *Success Magazine* (November 14, 2018), Travis Bradberry wrote an article titled, "9 Bad Habits That Can Lead to Unhappiness." The eighth bad habit he identifies is not improving. Of this he writes, "Because unhappy people are pessimists and feel a lack of control over their lives, they tend to sit back and wait for life to happen to them. Instead of setting goals, learning and improving themselves, they just keep plodding along, and then they wonder why things never change. Don't let this be you."

As a sales professional, you do not want to become irrelevant – or unhappy – and life-long learning can ensure that does not happen. Here are its benefits as I see them:

**Finding Balance** – By practicing a continued learning process, I was able to identify when my life was out of

balance. I was a workaholic! To turn that situation around, I learned the necessary skills for getting family, faith, and work back into equilibrium. Don't let your environment control you, you control your environment. Know your priorities. Balance does not entail cramming in every activity possible.

**Stimulating Pivot Points** – Can you name the pivotal times in your life, moments that helped you define your talents and passions and get at the answer to, "What am I going to be when I grow up"? These turning points are stimulated when you invest energy in reading a good book, attending

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seminars, enrolling in a continuing education course, etc. David Allen, creator of the *Getting Things Done* seminar, found himself at one of these junctures, personally struggling to be better organized. He developed a passion for learning how to control the chaos in his life and was so enthralled with the subject matter that he started producing his own training materials. I highly recommend his seminar to anyone organizationally challenged.

**Staying Current** – We live in rapidly changing times. The US led the world in

the development of integrated circuits, which enabled the computing capabilities that ushered in the current information age. Today, we have access to computer enabled actions as never before – just ask "Alexa", or "Siri," or your television, or your phone! For those of us not raised with electronic devices and apps, mastering new technologies is a form of life-long learning. For a crash course in what's new and how to use it, seek out the Millennials in your office or at home. Ignore the adage of "with age comes wisdom" (generally very true) and seek someone young to explain all the features on your latest electronic device.

**Increasing Capacities** – Life-long learning opens your mind to new ideas. I never imagined early in my life that I would have a passion for attending Toastmasters and become a public speaker, start writing professionally, finish a master's degree in my 60s, and be working toward a doctorate now. Yet, at a young age I did recognize that learning whets the appetite for more of the same, so I really should not be surprised about where this path has taken me.

Education increases your capacity for reflection and creativity, skills that are essential to sales professionals. And knowledge is magnetic - learning new things makes you more interesting and leads to broadened social networks, a great benefit to a sales person. The experience of obtaining new information also can change your perception of the world and open new horizons.

With life-long learning you are constantly starting anew, and the older you are, the younger you will feel. Develop your legacy by becoming a life-long learner and watch how it improves your approach to your profession and to your life as whole. 

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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