

OUT-LEARN YOUR COMPETITION

Successful people are obsessed with learning. They out-learn everyone around them.

They're voracious readers. Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, Mahatma Gandhi, and Disney CEO Bob Iger – they've invested vast amounts of time reading and learning.

Buffet, Gates, and Iger devour newspapers, books, audio books, journals, and magazines such as Harvard Business Review, Inc, and Forbes – while their less-committed peers waste time on worthless entertainments.

I've always been a vigorous promoter of reading and learning. Learning about your industry, learning about yourself, learning about new products, learning about your employees, and most important, learning about your customers – it should be your passion, as it has been mine for some 40 years. All the books I've written, all of the seminars I give, all of the coaching I do, are based on learning.

- Be relentless in learning. If it has anything to do with your industry, be on top of it – buy manuals, read every available book and magazine, and get involved with industry conferences. Put yourself out there – if you have expertise that your colleagues could benefit from, share it! Send them emails with info they can use.

Jack Canfield, author of *The Success Principles*, says, "People who have more information have a tremendous advantage over people who don't." And though you may think it takes years to acquire the knowledge you would need to become super successful, the truth is that simple behaviors such as reading for an hour a day, turning television time into learning time, and attending classes and training programs can make it surprisingly easy to increase your knowledge – and substantially increase your level of success.

- Become a people watcher. Watch people. Analyze what they're doing and why. Spend time with the people who are right now where you want to be in your life, and get on their schedule. If they've written books, read them. If they give seminars, make sure to attend. Ask them questions and pay deep attention to what they tell you.

Howard Schultz tells young people who want to be the next Howard Schultz: "Everyone who grows up, no matter where they are in their lives, has had dreams, and the question is, have you let other people convince you that your dreams cannot come true? As a result, perhaps you've given up too early. Define what your dream is, and dream bigger. Don't let anyone tell you that you aren't good enough or that your dream can't come true. Don't settle, because

you are going to find yourself at 30, 40, or 50 saying 'I could have done that...' And you probably could have."

- Reading pays off. Since I was age 22 I've read two books a month besides all the magazines, newspapers, and periodicals I receive. Mostly they are books on customer service or biographies and autobiographies of great people.

I'm committed to lifelong self-improvement and learning because it helps me discover new ways of thinking and behaving. It helps me pass on what I've learned to the people closest to me, including family, friends and business associates. It pushes me to work harder to help my seminar attendees and coaching clients expand their own thought processes. And while I'm teaching, I'm learning from them, too.

Some books I've read and recommend to gain insights into the rituals of highly successful people are: *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius, *Losing My Virginity* by Richard Branson, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* by Mahatma Gandhi, *As a Man Thinketh* by James Allen, *Eat That Frog* by Brian Tracy, *Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela, *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* by Robin Sharma, and *On the Shortness of Life* by Seneca.

Mark Cuban (net worth: \$4.1 billion) says he was stunned some years ago when he read that the average American college graduate reads only one book a year. To him, reading spells opportunity – and he is not alone. Warren Buffet speaks about how he builds a proactive "information advantage" with his aggressive learning habits and routines.

My take is that if you want to be valued, you should invest time learning to make yourself valuable. Out-learn your competition, out-learn your boss, out-learn yourself...invest in you.

Only good things can happen when you invest in knowledge. **RO**

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