

If You Want to Learn, Teach!

The Secret to Effective Learning

Often it is said, “Those who can, do. Those who can’t, teach.” This always gets a laugh (unless the audience is teachers!). Well, this article seeks to dispel this idea. The saying should be,

Those who can, do, because they teach what they learn.

If you are reading this, chances are you are trying to improve yourself by learning tips and techniques that you hope, once implemented, will make the desired changes. In addition to reading articles like this one, you probably subscribe to a number of newsletters and websites; attend seminars, read books, and more. You often, I imagine, find excellent information that excites you and that you plan to put into practice. I would also guess that you find, more often than not, that within 2-3 days you have all but forgotten what you learned and have returned to your “normal” routines – if you ever changed your routines at all.

The problem is not you! This experience is common to most learners. They learn a tip, technique, or philosophy they like, they take notes (physical or mental) and decide to use their new knowledge. They go home or back to the office, put their notes in a file and...forget all about it. Days, weeks, maybe months later, they ask themselves, “What ever happened with my notes on xyz?”

What's the missing element?

They did not take immediate and massive *action*.

Research shows that if we don't put what we have learned into action within 24 hours, we forget 60% of what we learned. By 48 hours, we have lost 75% and within a week we only have vague feelings and a few facts as we've lost 80-90% of what we learned.

By taking action, you will retain what you learned and increase the chances of making it stick.

In my program *Passion For Action!* I teach that taking action is the secret to all success, change, wealth creation, and meaningful relationships. However, we know that as easy as that sounds, most people fail to take the actions necessary to achieve their goals. Today's article is about a critical technique you can easily use to make it much more likely that you *will* take action the next time you learn something you want to implement in your work or personal life.

Those who can, do, because they teach what they learn.

To make my point, I ask you to use your imagination skills. Think carefully about this example:

Imagine: You are attending a seminar on time management. This is a skill you know you lack and you are determined to learn some techniques you can implement at work to make you better able to effectively handle all your tasks and responsibilities. You also know that you have attended several time management seminars, read books and articles about time management, and yet made only one half-hearted attempt to try one of the “systems” you were taught. Your time management skills are only marginally improved since you started trying to improve. Why? Einstein once said, **“The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.”**

Let's stop the insanity and take a new approach.

Reality: Tomorrow you will be required to teach the seminar material to your work group. Don't do this casually. Really put yourself there mentally. You have to teach time management to your workgroup – tomorrow! How does this change your listening skills, your note taking, and your attention span? If you can keep yourself there mentally throughout the seminar, you will come away with strong retention, great notes, and a plan of action about how you will teach the material to your workgroup. If you really want to push yourself, imagine that you will be teaching the Board of Directors!

When you try this for the first time, a great tip is to arrange with a co-worker to let you actually teach him the material when you return to work. The best scenario is to arrange to really teach a class on the topic when you return to work. If you do this, not only will you be able to retain and take action on implementing what you learn, but your company will be much more likely to fund your seminar trips because they can leverage your learning to impact many people for the price of one. I know of people who have used this technique and found themselves the recipients of promotions and raises due to their added value to their organizations.

Those who can, do (and get promoted!), because they teach what they learn.

So next time you attend a seminar, read a self-improvement book, etc., plan to teach the material –in reality or just in your imagination–first. Your retention will dramatically improve as well as your ability to take immediate and massive *action*. Then watch your performance soar!

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