

CHAPTER 11

Upgrade Your Key Skills

"The only certain means of success is to render more and better service than is expected of you, no matter what your task may be."

Og Mandino

This is one of the most important personal productivity principles of all. Learn what you need to learn so that you can do your work in an excellent fashion. The *better* you become at eating a particular type of frog, the more likely you are to just plunge in and get it done.

A major reason for delay and procrastination is a feeling of inadequacy, lack of confidence or inability in a key area of the task. A single area where you feel weak or deficient is enough to discourage you from starting the job at all.

Continually upgrade your skills in your key result areas. Remember, however good you are today, your knowledge and skill is becoming obsolete at a rapid rate. As Pat Riley, the basketball coach said, "If you're not getting better, you're getting worse."

Never Stop Learning

One of the most helpful of all time management techniques is for you to get *better* at your key tasks. Personal and professional improvement is one of the best time savers there is. The better you are at a key task, the more motivated you are to launch into it. The

better you are, the more energy and enthusiasm you have. When you know that you can do a job well, you find it easier to overcome procrastination and get the job done faster and better than under any other circumstances.

One piece of information or one additional skill can make an enormous difference in your ability to do the job well. Identify the most important things you do and then make a plan to continually upgrade your skills in those areas.

Rule: “Continuous learning is the minimum requirement for success in any field.”

Refuse to allow a weakness or a lack of ability in any area to hold you back. Everything is learnable. And what others have learned, you can learn as well.

When I began to write my first book, I was discouraged because I could only use the “hunt and peck” method of typing. I soon realized that I had to learn to touch-type if I was ever going to write and rewrite a 300-page book. So I bought a touch-typing program for my computer and practiced for 20 to 30 minutes every day for three months. By the end of that time, I was typing 40-50 words per minute. With this additional skill, I have been able to write more than forty books that have now been published all over the world.

The best news is that you can learn whatever skills you need to be more productive and more effective. You can become a touch typist if necessary. You can become proficient expert with a computer. You can become a terrific negotiator or a super salesperson. You can learn to speak in public. You can learn to write effectively and well. These are all skills you can acquire, as soon as you decide to, and make them a priority.

Three Steps to Mastery

First, read in your field for at least one hour every day. Get up a little earlier in the morning and read for 30-60 minutes in a book or magazine that contains information that can help you to be more effective and productive at what you do.

Second, take every course and seminar available on key skills that can help you. Attend the conventions and business meetings of your profession or occupation. Go to the sessions and workshops. Sit up front and take notes. Purchase the audio recordings of the programs. Dedicate yourself to becoming one of the most knowledgeable and competent people in your field.

Third, listen to audio programs in your car. The average car owner sits behind the wheel 500-1000 hours each year while driving from place to place. Turn driving time into learning time. You can become one of the smartest, most capable and highest paid people in your field simply by listening to educational audio programs as you drive around.

The more you learn and know, the more confident and motivated you feel. You better you become, the more capable you will be of doing even more in your field.

The more you learn, the more you can learn. Just as you can build your physical muscles through physical exercise, you build your mental muscles with mental exercises. And there is no limit to how far or how fast you can advance except for the limits you place on your own imagination.

Eat That Frog!

1. Resolve today to become a “Do-It-To-Yourself” project. Become a lifelong student of your craft. School is never out for the professional.

2. Identify the key skills that can help you the most to achieve better and faster results. Determine the core competencies that you will need to have in the future to lead your field. Whatever they are, set a goal, make a plan and begin developing and increasing your ability in those areas. Decide to be the very best at what you do!