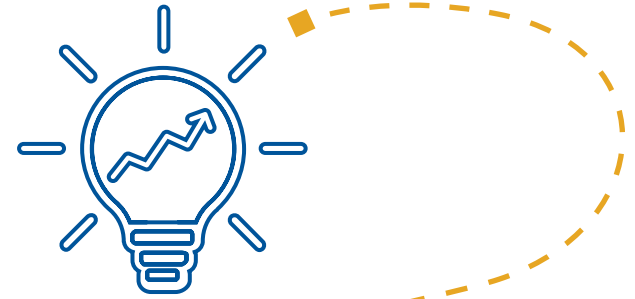


Five Secrets for Personal & Professional Growth



Following are five strategies that will not only improve your life, but also the lives of those with whom you associate personally and professionally.

1. Don't make half-hearted commitments

If you're like most people, it's a good bet that you have more things on your "to do" list than there is time to do them. Even so, when someone makes a request for your time or assistance, adding one more thing to the list is easy. Perhaps, too easy. A few keystrokes on your computer keyboard or smart phone keypad and voilà, it's added. No problem... unless the person making the request is counting on you to do more than simply add the request to your list—to give it your utmost and immediate attention.

Your willingness to help is noble. But, if your plate is already full, accepting the request creates the potential for two unproductive and undesirable situations:

1. you complete the requested activity...at the expense of not completing another task on your list or not fulfilling another commitment;
2. you complete the task in a less-than-exceptional manner, which is likely to damage your credibility and disappoint the person who asked for your help.

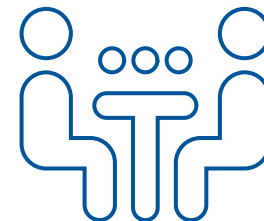
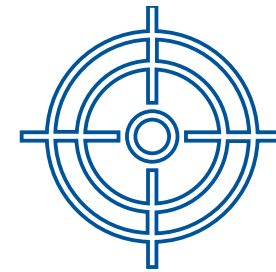
If the likelihood of honoring a request in a timely and exceptional manner is small, it's nobler to decline the request. Think twice before making commitments and only commit to that which your existing schedule will reasonably accommodate.



2. Focus on giving rather than getting

David Sandler was an avid advocate of the proposition put forth in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay on "compensation." Essentially, the essay dealt with the dualism of the nature and condition of man: there is no *effect* without *cause*; no *ends* without *means*, no *shadow* without *light*. Emerson also suggested that the universe is in balance. What you get out of life is equal, measure for measure, to what you put into it. In other words: no *getting* without *giving*. Unselfishly giving to others—friends, family, colleagues, customers—whether in words or deeds, creates a deficit in nature that must be filled.

There are numerous opportunities each day to *give*—a helping hand, words of encouragement, advice and counsel. When you contribute to others, others contribute to you. When you help them meet their needs, they help you meet yours.



3. Do your homework

How much do you know about your competitors? How much do you know about the marketplace in which you do business? How much do you know about the legislative, economic, technological, and environmental issues that affect your marketplace and the potential sales of your product or service? And perhaps most importantly, how much do you know about the prospects on which you plan to call?

How much *don't* you know?

There is a wealth of information available to anyone who is motivated and committed to learning. It only takes an internet connection and a few keystrokes. There is no excuse for “not knowing.”

Even if you are a leader in your company, you can improve your effectiveness and productivity by doing a little “homework.” Set aside 15 to 30 minutes a day to read and study any (or all) of the topics cited above. The more you know about your prospects, your competitors, and the influences in your marketplace, the better equipped you will be to position your product or service in the most favorable light.

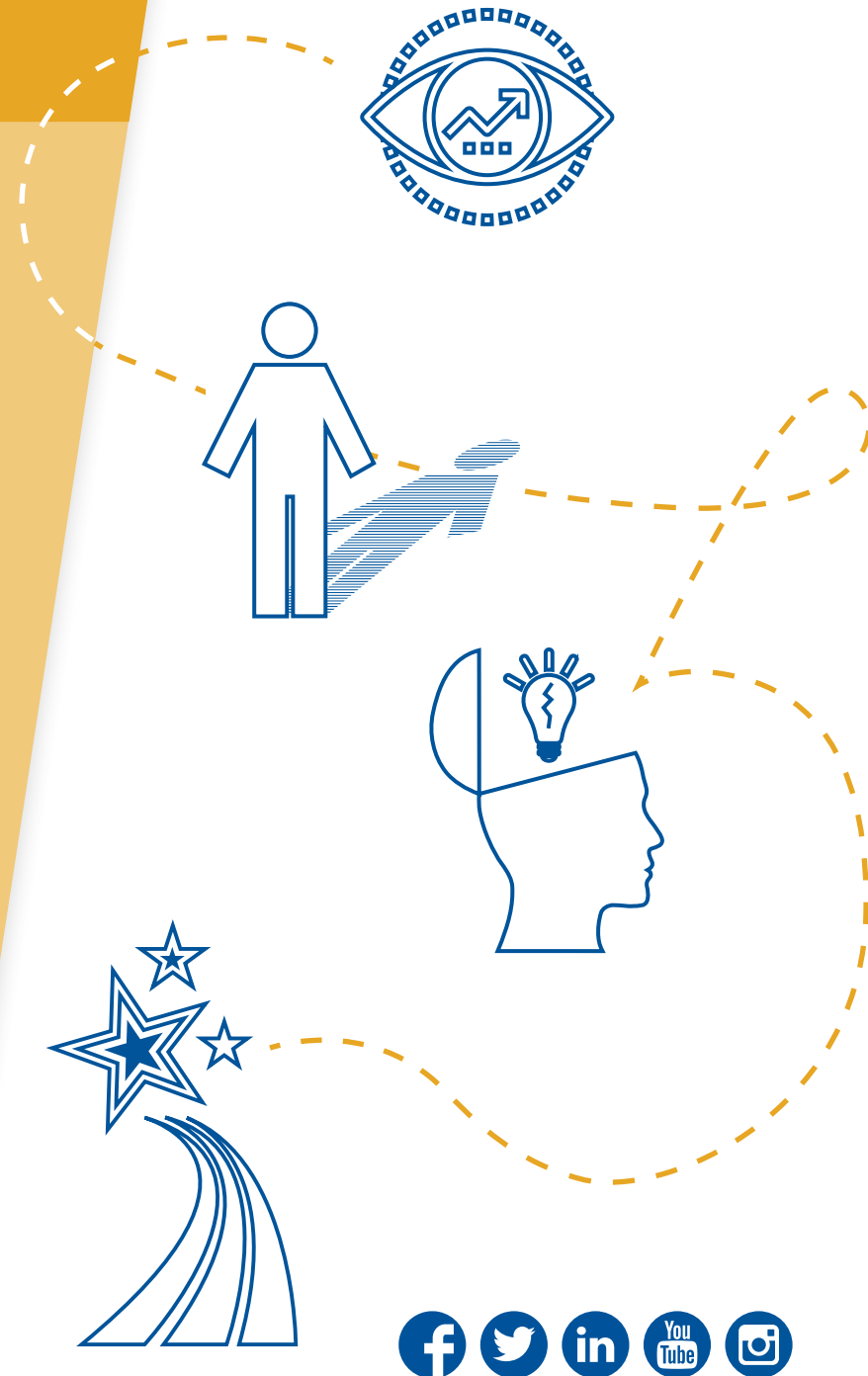


4. Look for possibility

Often, especially in a “tough” market, it’s easier to spot potential roadblocks to doing business than it is to recognize opportunities. However, as Emerson observed (refer to strategy #2), there is no shadow without light. If you only focus on roadblocks, you’ll only see shadows. If, on the other hand, you shift your focus and look for paths over, around, or through the roadblocks, quite often, and quite surprisingly, you’ll find ones that lead you into the light of new opportunities.

Changing your focus from limitations to possibilities will take some adjustment—especially to your belief system. While it’s unrealistic to expect you to convert all of your *limiting* beliefs to *possibility* beliefs in one fell swoop, it’s quite realistic for you to work on one belief at a time. And, you don’t have to abruptly abandon your limiting belief; you only have to temporarily suspend your disbelief about the possibility of a successful outcome and then, with a little faith mixed in for good measure, act accordingly.

If, by temporarily suspending your disbelief and taking action, you are able to realize only a portion of what you set out to accomplish, you’re still farther ahead than where you would have been if you remained stuck in the shadows. Each success won, big or small, will facilitate the development of new supportive beliefs that will propel you to higher levels of success.

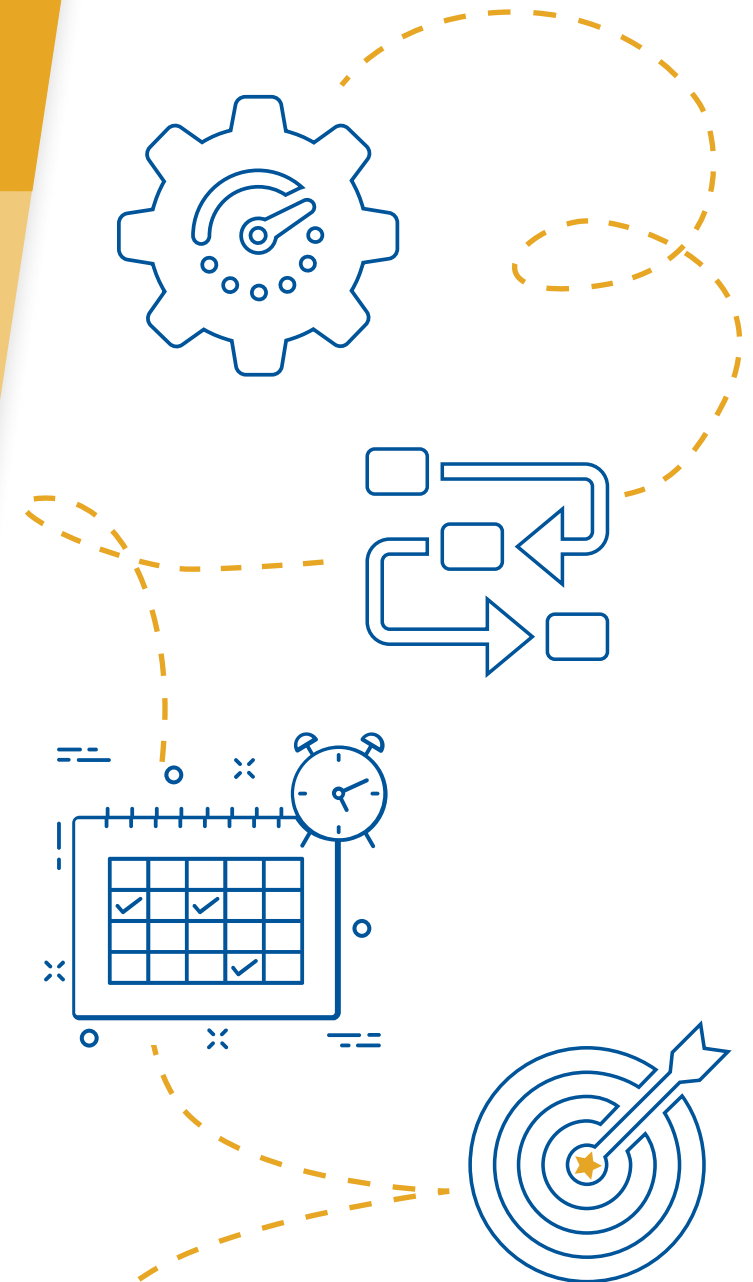
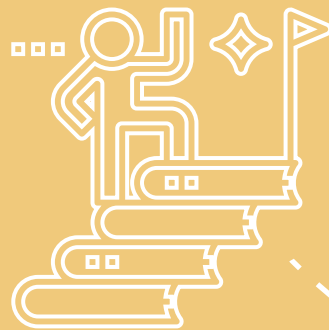


5. Develop a sense of urgency

While planning and preparation are often required steps before initiating an activity, at some point, the *planning* must stop and the *doing* must begin. It's much too easy to become immersed in the planning stage, perhaps striving for perfection. Seeking perfection may be laudable (if it isn't *procrastination* in disguise), but it only serves to delay the initiation of action. Until you actually do something, nothing is accomplished.

Get in the habit of assigning timelines and deadlines to your projects and activities. And then, make a firm commitment to stick to them. Make them realistic...so you don't put unnecessary pressure on yourself. But at the same time, don't pad them. Giving yourself more time than the tasks require is simply *strategic procrastination*.

Assigning timelines to your projects helps you develop a sense of urgency for completing tasks. Having a target date at which to aim helps keep you focused, on track, and moving forward.



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