

HITTING YOUR STRIDE

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

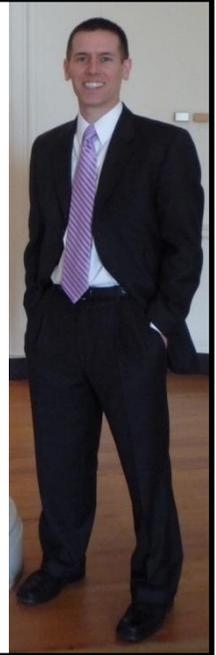
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When I was a high school teacher, I kept the following question posted above the chalkboard in my classroom: “What have you done today to prepare yourself for college?” I stressed to my students that they soon would compete against students in other states and countries for spots in good colleges.

Fast forward 12 years. While reading the book, *That Used to Be Us*, I came across this passage: “The merger of globalization and the IT revolution...has raised the level of skill a person needs to obtain and retain any good job, while at the same time increasing the global competition for every one of those jobs” (p. 54). This reminded me of my 2009 job search, when an interviewer told me I was one of the final four candidates out of 85 applicants. I was shocked that I had to beat out so many people just to get in the room for an interview.

So to you I pose these questions: What have you done today to make yourself more competitive so you can obtain or retain a good job? Are you ready to surf the wave caused by the merger of globalization and IT?

Stride On,
Michael



STAYING IN FRONT

“In reality, knowledge is a very dynamic universe—and what is most valuable is not the body of knowledge, but the leading edge of it.”

- Bill James, baseball historian & statistician

Books to Read This Quarter

[*The Up Side of Down: Why Failing Well is the Key to Success*](#)

- Megan McArdle

[*Making Habits, Breaking Habits: Why We Do Things, Why We Don't, and How to Make Any Change Stick*](#)

- Jeremy Dean

Articles to Read This Quarter

[Amazon Turned a Flaw into Gold with Advanced Problem-Solving](#)

- Michael Skok (*Harvard Business Review*)

[Shaking off a Shy Reputation at Work](#)

- Sue Shellenbarger (*Wall Street Journal*)

[24 Invaluable Skills to Learn for Free Online This Year](#)

- Summer Anne Burton (*BuzzFeed*)

Hitting Your Stride is written and distributed by Michael Salmonowicz

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CATCHING UP

Being on the leading edge of knowledge is important, but it is vital to be familiar with thinkers and ideas from past years as well. This will help you to be more innovative when creating and problem-solving, and also can prevent older colleagues from patronizing you about your age or inexperience.

Books to Read This Quarter

[Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge](#)

- Warren Bennis & Burt Nanus

[That Used to Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back](#)

- Thomas Friedman & Michael Mandelbaum

Videos to Watch This Quarter

[The Beauty of Data Visualization](#) (18 min)

- David McCandless

[Did You Know 3.0](#) (5 min)

- Karl Fisch & Scott McLeod

REFLECTING

“The single biggest danger in business and life, other than outright failure, is to be successful without being resolutely clear about why you are successful in the first place.”
- Robert Burgelman, Stanford University business professor

In the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch says to Scout, “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” Taking into account the perspectives of others is especially important when it comes to professional interactions, as failing to consider how colleagues and contacts perceive your words and actions can lead to miscommunication, resentment, and conflict. The following activity can help you reflect on how others see you, and determine what you are doing well and whether you need to change anything about your actions or how you communicate.

1. Think of a situation you were involved in at work—a meeting you ran, a conversation you had, a group project you were a part of, etc.—in which you believe you performed well. In 1-2 paragraphs, describe the situation from your point of view.
2. Choose 2-3 other people who were involved in the situation and write 1-2 paragraphs for each, using their voices, in which “they” describe the situation and your performance in it.
3. Repeat steps 1 & 2 with a work situation in which you believe you did not perform well.

WEBSITE TO KNOW

Workouts By O’Brien (<http://obriensworld.wordpress.com>)

About: Wellness site focused on physical health and personal improvement, with 4 new workouts and thoughts on goal-setting & reflecting posted every Sunday.

Usefulness: O’Brien’s posts only take 1-2 minutes to read, and provide motivation and tips to help you push to another level—professionally, physically, and in day-to-day life.

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PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the best ways to engage in continuous personal professional development is to assist other people with their development. Serving as a mentor brings with it many benefits:

- The conversations you have with and advice you give to your mentee can uncover past lessons you may have forgotten—but that are as valuable for you as for your mentee.
- Reviewing another person’s resume/cover letter or helping him/her prepare for an interview can sharpen your own resume/cover letter writing and interviewing skills.
- Mentoring someone younger can keep you up to date with trends in college courses/majors, the competitiveness of the entry-level/mid-level job market, and the latest technologies.
- Helping your mentee climb the ladder and become successful means you’ll have another professional contact who you can depend on and trust.

Whether you mentor a colleague or intern at work, a college student through your alma mater’s alumni association, or a high school student [through a city or state program](#), this act of giving back will pay a large dividend to both you and your mentee.

BEING (AND STAYING) INTERESTING

“I...never could make a good impromptu speech without several hours to prepare it.” Mark Twain’s words are instructive when it comes to making a lasting impression in a public setting. You cannot assume that your intelligence, recall, or wit will come through at exactly the right moment; it is a good idea to have a backup plan. Below is an example.

In my 20s, I would walk into wine & cheese receptions or work dinners armed with the [clockwise foot-counterclockwise finger](#) trick, the [“Why do some rats not drown right away?”](#) question/factoid, and the [three switches-one lightbulb](#) brain teaser. If a discussion ended and there was a pause, I could unleash one of these non-sequiturs. They were quick enough to not hijack the conversation, obscure enough that most people had never heard them, simple enough that people could grasp the concepts and participate, and intriguing enough that they (and I) would be remembered.

DID YOU KNOW...

A 10-week study of 30 professional recruiters used eye-tracking technology to determine how candidates’ applications were reviewed. The big finding: On average, [recruiters spent just 6 seconds reviewing applicants’ resumes](#). Check out the report to learn where they were looking.

WORDS ON WHICH TO RUMINATE

“I don’t think people fully understand the value of observing. I came to see observation as a critical part of my management skills. The ability to see things is key—or, more specifically, the ability to see things you don’t expect to see.”

- Alex Ferguson, manager of the Manchester United Football Club