

HITTING YOUR STRIDE

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

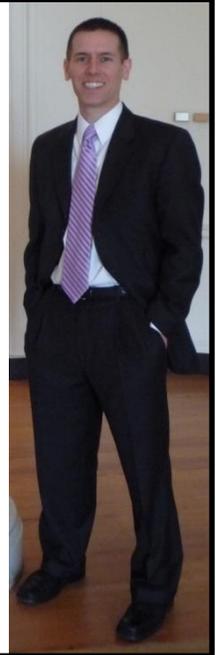
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There's a saying, "Average stops when it hurts." Most people probably read this and think of the hurt as being caused by pushing harder. But it's not always from adding to your plate or working more; sometimes the hurt comes from pulling back and doing less. I'll use myself as an example.

In recent years, I have given up or cut back on a number of activities I enjoy, including: reading *The Onion*, skimming through 8 newspapers each day, watching *The Daily Show*, going to the gym regularly, and getting together with friends. Pulling back in these areas, while difficult, allowed me to put more focus on my job, graduate school, my recent book, and this newsletter.

Many professionals are willing to work harder, and smarter, to advance in their careers. Even for the hardest-working, most efficient of us, though, there comes a point when we simply can't keep doing what we used to do in some areas while adding to what we're doing in others. So ask yourself, what might you need to give up in your life to move beyond average?

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 Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload*](#)

- Daniel Levitin

[*Smartcuts: How Hackers, Innovators, and Icons Accelerate Success*](#)

- Shane Snow

[*The Firm: The Story of McKinsey and Its Secret Influence on American Business*](#)

- Duff McDonald

Articles to Read This Quarter

[How to Spend the First 10 Minutes of Your Day](#)

- Ron Friedman (*Harvard Business Review*)

[Is It Unusual to Keep Work Life and Personal Life Totally Separate?](#)

- Karla Miller (*Washington Post*)

[How to Turn Small Talk into Smart Conversation](#)

- Chris Colin & Rob Baedeker (*TED*)

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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

[*The World is Flat 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*](#)

- Thomas Friedman

[*Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*](#)

- Malcolm Gladwell

Articles to Read This Quarter

[2018 Beloit Mindset List](#)

Read the list above to understand the cultural touchstones of this year's college freshmen. [Click here](#) to see past lists, which may help you better understand where younger colleagues are coming from.

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*

At a recent social event, people were talking about the fact that retired city workers in Detroit would get reduced pensions due to the city's financial crisis. One man believed it was necessary, and that citizens should not complain because at least they were getting something. I agreed it was necessary, but added that I could see why folks were upset: They planned their lives around a certain retirement amount, and now would receive half that. He became agitated and patronizing, accusing me of being too young and too liberal to understand the situation. However, I never disagreed with his point that pensions needed to be reduced; I just acknowledged how tough it must be for those impacted by the reduction. We both understood the situation; he simply was unable or unwilling to be empathetic. This resulted in him misinterpreting my words, and me walking away with a poor opinion of him.

Empathy is a key ingredient to professional, as well as personal, communication. It can help you improve relationships with supervisors & co-workers and understand the needs of clients. Reflect on some positive and not-so-positive interactions you've had recently at work. Was the presence or absence of empathy a factor in the outcome of those interactions? My guess is that it was.

WEBSITE TO KNOW

VidCruiter (www.vidcruiter.com/video-interviewing)

About: Video interview site that allows organizations to interview you without a live person.

Usefulness: Organizations save time and money during the hiring process, while you gain the flexibility to be interviewed at the time and place of your choosing.

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PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This quarter's focus is on creating a networking plan (continued from the "Reflection" section of the summer 2014 issue). Once you have met someone you want to stay in touch with, you need to build the relationship deliberately. For example, if you meet Tom at a conference on May 15:

- e-mail him on May 30 to recap your shared interests and suggest a meeting in mid-June
- a month after your June meeting, connect with Tom on LinkedIn
- in August, e-mail him a resource or contact relating to his work or professional interests
- reach out via e-mail in September to see if he is attending X conference in the spring or Y charity event next month (if so, make sure you plan to get some face time with him)

The goal is to spread out your communication over time so (a) Tom is reminded periodically of your name, title, and skills, and (b) the two of you occasionally have face-to-face interactions. If all goes well, you eventually will enter his circle of contacts. As you can see, this is not an overwhelming task that requires you to be an extrovert; it just takes a little bit of planning and a few e-mails.

BEING (AND STAYING) INTERESTING

As a younger colleague prepared to depart for grad school a few years ago, I asked what her work in the organization had led her to want to read or to learn about. She replied that she had a good grasp on the field and didn't feel the need to explore any related books or topics. Upon hearing this, she became completely uninteresting to me. One hallmark of interesting people is intellectual curiosity—a desire to learn about the world. As these people become more educated, they become aware of and acknowledge the extent of their ignorance, and as a result ask even more questions and attempt to learn even more. Telling someone what you're curious about or want to learn is much more interesting than acting as if you know it all (especially since you probably don't).

DID YOU KNOW...

In many cases, nonprofit [board membership requires a substantial financial commitment](#). While you may not be ready for that type of commitment early in your career, joining a junior board (also known as an associate board) is a great way to contribute to your community, connect with other young professionals, and prepare for a future seat on an organization's board of directors.

WORDS ON WHICH TO RUMINATE

“Often people discuss empathy in terms of ‘putting yourself in the other person’s shoes.’ But such a simple shift in position without an equal shift in personal perspective merely elicits a sympathetic response. From such a view, we know how we would feel in the situation, but not how the other person feels. To achieve an empathic response, we must not only step into the other person’s shoes, but we must imaginatively participate in the other’s worldview. We must not only shift our position but also our perspective on the event.”

- Janet Bennett (from p. 221 of the book, *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication*)