

LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE YOU

A sustainability blueprint to the next level in your career

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To Learn or not to Learn?

Is NO LONGER the question!

The world we live and operate in today has been engulfed by such rapidly accelerating technological change that finding ways to become a lifelong learner is now obligatory for survival in our workforce. In fact, our current pain point is learning,

“How to stay sufficiently current and knowledgeable when our surrounding landscape is spinning incomprehensibly fast towards Singularity?”

To support you with this question, our eBook deep dives into your **Learning Strategy**, considers your career direction and related goals, and then affirms what it will take to become that **lifelong learner**.

As you ponder this situation, we can imagine some of the immediate questions that are coming to your mind are.

- Where to start - such uncertainty and so many options, both career and personal?
- Where to find the time for this learning as your days are so consumed already?
- Once you decide and get started, how do you make the process sustainable?
- How can you optimize this learning process?
- How do you monitor your progress so that you avoid getting overwhelmed?

We will be addressing these questions and more, however as we get started, let's recall the words of one of the greatest minds of our times.

“Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change.”

— Stephen Hawking



Your Career Development Strategy

As a starting point on this journey, we ask you to check-in with your HR colleagues to understand if there is already career mapping in place for your role.

If no career mapping, then perhaps their Learning and Development strategy can serve as a guideline for you.

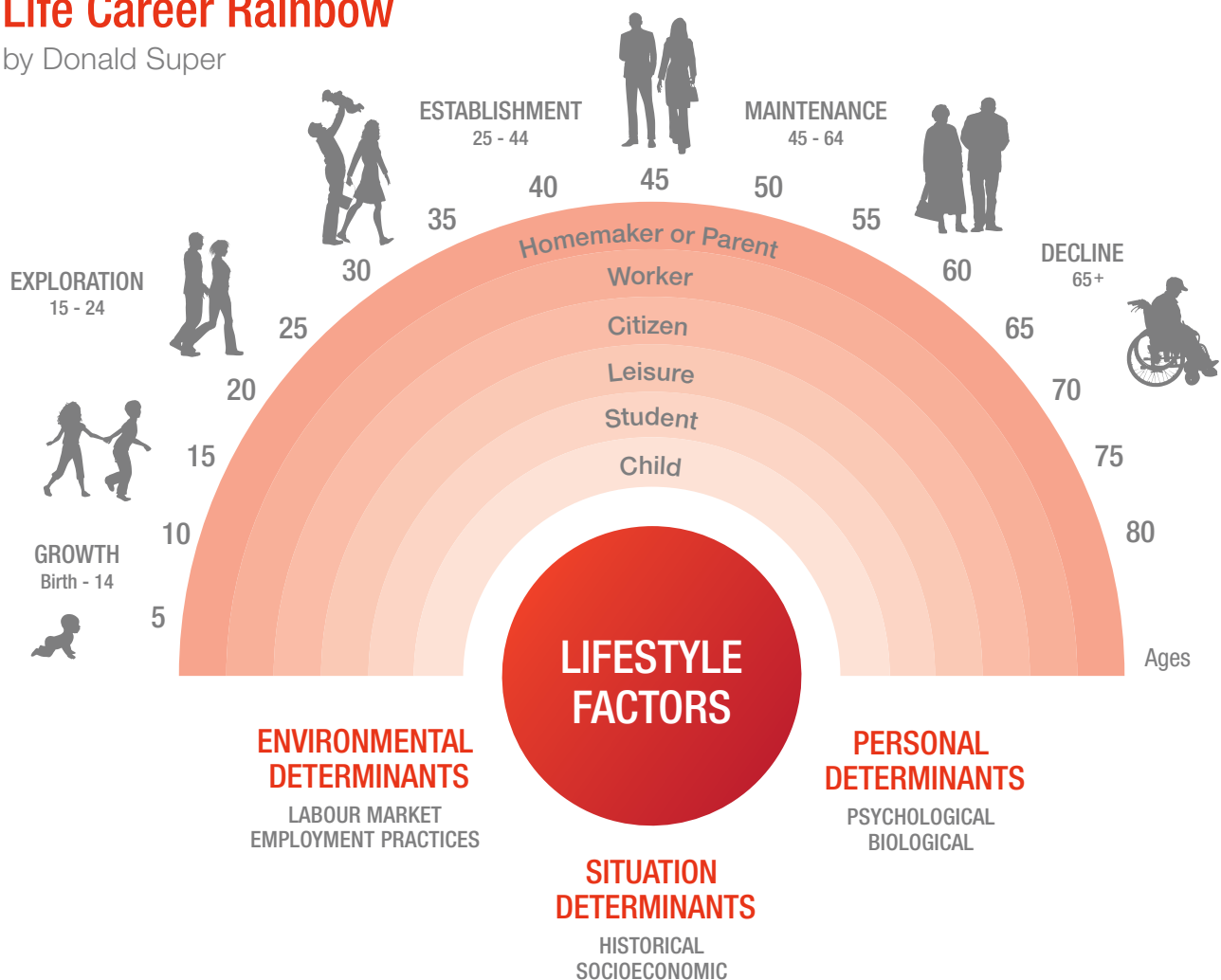
The aim is to seek alignment from the outset. If there is, then this will save you time and

effort in getting started. If not, then no issue we will start from scratch and build along the way.

We refer to your career strategy as a “journey” because as you may be starting to realize the process is lifelong. A continuum of learning where you traverse different stages in life. One famous model used in this field is the Life Career Rainbow as presented by Donald Super back in 1980.

Life Career Rainbow

by Donald Super



“Ideas without action aren’t ideas. They’re regrets.”

— Steve Jobs

Another equally popular career development theory is that proposed by John Holland. Holland introduced a structure where one of six personality types are mapped with one of six specific environments.

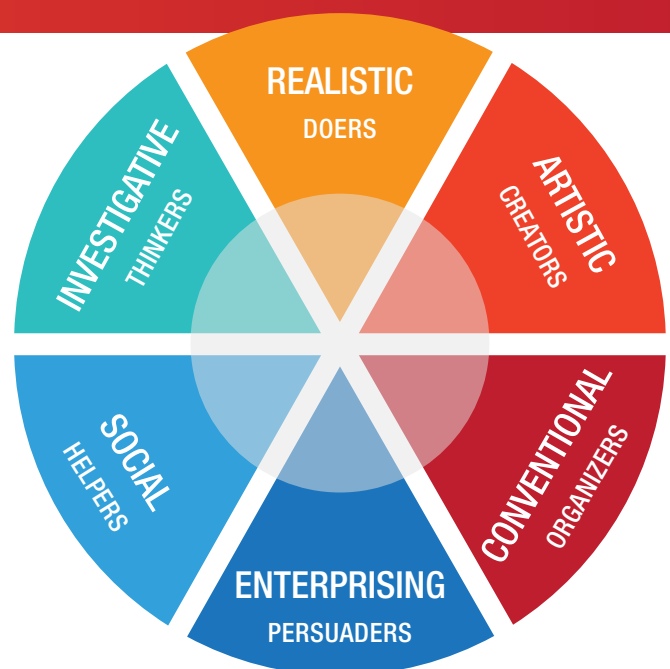
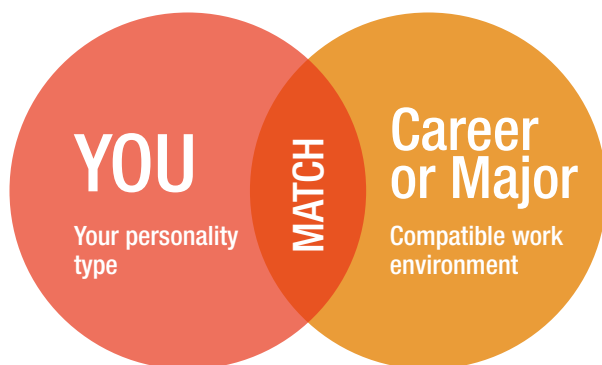
When the personality and the compatible environment match, this leads to a greater feeling of satisfaction and success. Holland also recognized that there would be instances where a direct match may not be possible.

Therefore, he created a scoring profile that would help people to identify their core personality type and what other congruent matches may be available.

The congruent matches are not as positive as a direct match, but they can still offer levels of satisfaction.

Hollands Code

or the RIASEC scoring profile



Ensuring you are aligned between career (and work environment) and who you are (identity and personality) at this stage is a great starting point for ensuring you begin this lifelong journey in the right direction.

If you are unsure about your current or future career direction, then this would be a “**HOLD POINT**” for you to explore deeper with a professional career advisor. Search *Career Advisory Services*.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT: the process of learning and improving your skills so that you can do your job better and progress to better jobs.

Source: Cambridge Dictionary

Exploring Your Learner Self-awareness

With your career development strategy and direction aligned — let's call it your **CAREER VISION**, it is time to look inwardly and ***understand the type of Learner that you are.***

Before moving too far however we have several questions for you to confirm.

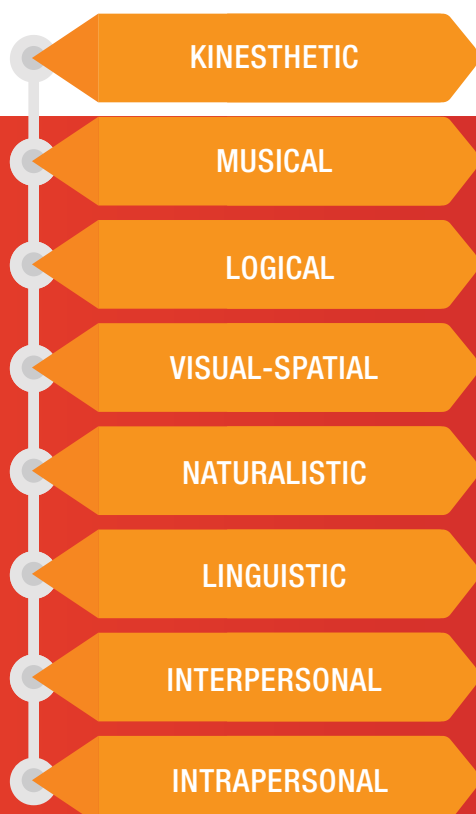
Personal Development



- Based on your career strategy do you require — RESKILLING OR UPSKILLING?
- And therefore, have you identified preferred programs? i.e. General and Leadership versus Specific focus topics?
- Are the learnings all formal or can some be informal and experiential?

Our point for asking at this moment is to ensure that you have a target and established specific goals. This will assist you in staying focused and provide a means for celebrating each milestone along the journey. This can be a very detailed exercise so please ensure you take the time to get it right.

Learning Styles



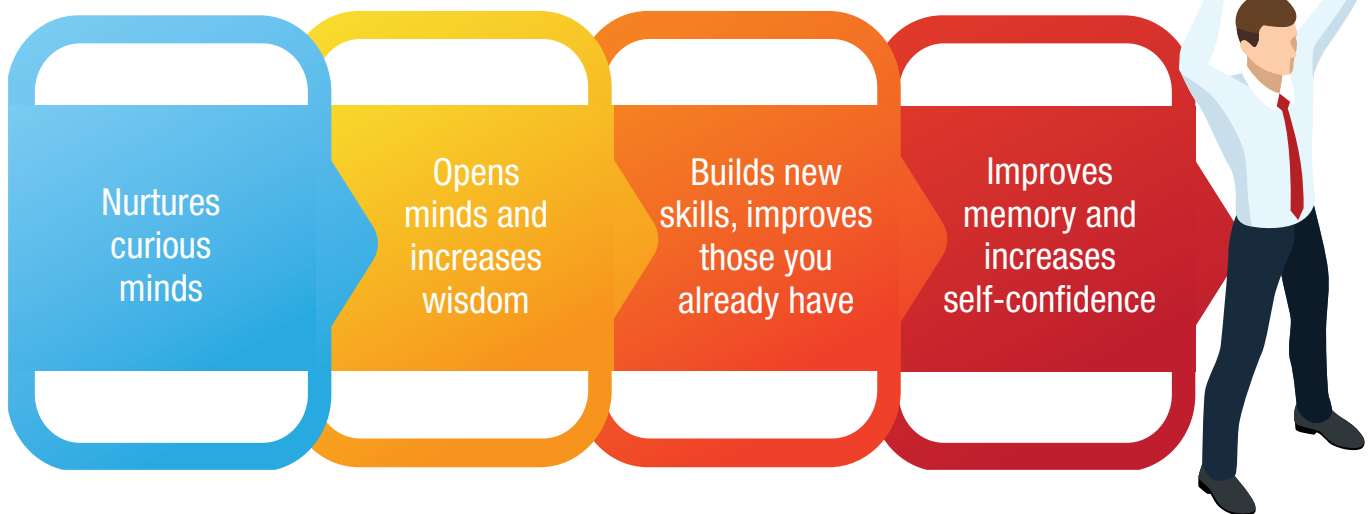
- And, what is your preferred method for learning?
- Do you learn best by reading, listening, or doing?
- Do you prefer to read a printed document or via a device?
- What speed do you listen at for the best absorption and retention?
- Do you learn well with others or better in isolation?

These are just a few of the questions you should ask yourself before going further.

Planning Your Lifelong Learning Journey

With clarity around your learner-self and awareness on how you learn best, we're ready to start work on planning the first wave of learning activities. And be prepared as there is plenty to do at this stage, but there are also many benefits that come from being a lifelong learner.

Benefits of Lifelong Learning



Here we introduce a term of “leveraging marginal gains” which essentially suggests that because this is a continual process with no end, you need not take enormous development strides, instead you can build on your learning and growth through repeated, small, and consistent steps.



*“What you think,
you become.
What you feel,
you attract.
What you imagine,
you create.”*

— Buddha



For this leg of the journey, you need to explore multiple aspects. Here are two to get you started.

Program type - Online versus classroom or a blended combination

If **blended or classroom** — short programs (multi-day) or semester based? Certified? University, college, or private institution?

If **online** — webinars, eLearnings, videos and perhaps a combination, over what sustained duration? Are the webinars live or recorded?

Similar question to the above classroom approach in terms of location and deliverables.

What do you need to change? We would like you to begin considering aspects of your routine which may not exist today and need to be built in as part of your solution.

- What is your mindset towards learning — open, curious, growth?
- Based on your career goals can you prioritize the subjects that you will tackle — 1st, 2nd, 3rd...?
- How much time will you allocate each day — including weekends, for study?
- Where and how will you study if not in the classroom?

How to be a Lifelong Learner

1

Foster a Growth Mindset

Neuroscience and psychology have shown that you can learn new things even if you're 80 years old

2

Change Your Idea of Learning

Learning doesn't have to be in a formal classroom setting

3

Establish Goals

Set goals for yourself on skills and knowledge you want to acquire

4

Find Your Sources

Create a list of places or individuals that could offer instructions regarding your establish learning goals

5

Ask Questions

Don't just passively consume information, while you're reading and talking to experts, ask questions.

6

Find a Group

Fellow learners can provide insights and resources that you never would have thought about

7

Practice

Don't just read or listen your way to knowledge but try to find a way to put that knowledge to work

8

Teach What You Learn

Teaching forces us to look at a concept, with a beginner's mind, which can provide the clarity and insight that we were lacking

9

Test Yourself

It's important to get feedback while you're learning, and testing is the best way to do it.

As a self-learner, you're likely not going to face formal tests, so you'll need to create your own.

What learning technology can you leverage?

Today as a learner you are spoiled for choice, when it comes to technology.

How can you leverage this to make the learning process more enjoyable and engaging? Consider your environment, the type of study you are about to embark on, then select and become intentional about your learning well-being.

The more you enjoy your equipment and surrounding the more enticing the whole process will be.

And it should not stop with cool equipment, there are also a wealth of software programs and apps available that can take your learning to new heights.



LEARN



ENGAGE



INTERACT



GROW



Optimizing Your Learning Retention

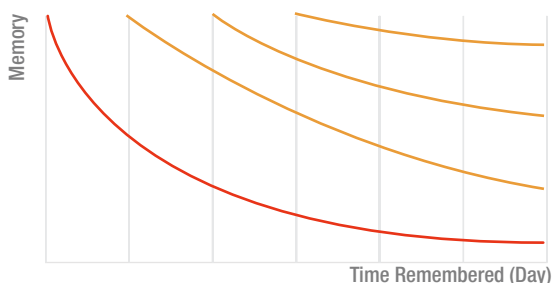
We humans are prone to forget what we have learned, and very quickly according to the studies. Why? Largely due to our working memories and storage method. Let's take a look.

Memory Retention and the Forgetting Curve

Our brain houses many, many memories, but why do we remember some things so strongly and have a difficult time recalling others? Consider the forgetting curve:

THE EXPONENTIAL NATURE OF FORGETTING

In the 19th century, psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus explored the exponential nature of forgetting. He came up with the following:



The following formula explains the curve:

$$R = e^{-\frac{t}{s}}$$

R = memory retention

s = strength of memory

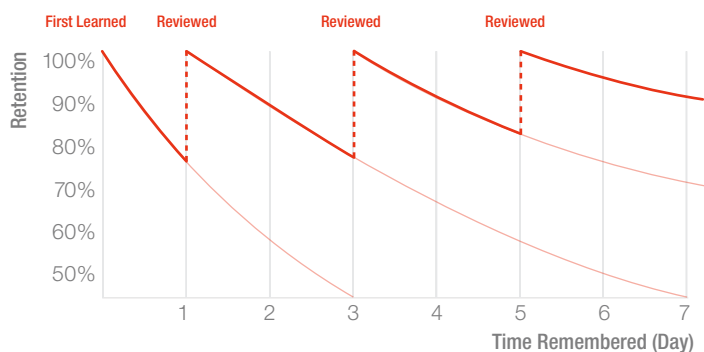
t = time

The curves hypothesize the decline of memory retention over time.

Forgetting happens most rapidly right after learning occurs; it then slows as time passes.

REVIEWING TO REMEMBER

A typical forgetting curve shows that our newly learned knowledge and made memories are halved in a matter of days or weeks unless the information is reviewed.



After learning something, our memory of it will decline over time unless we review it. The more we review it, the stronger we make the memory, the longer we can remember it.

When exposed to the same material repeatedly, it takes less time to pull the information from your long-term memory.



The difficulty of the material



How meaningful the material is to us



How the material was learned



If the material was frequently learned or remembered



Physiological factors like stress and sleep

Other memories, called flashbulb memories, are so vividly imprinted in our minds that we remember them easily, like the 9/11 attacks.

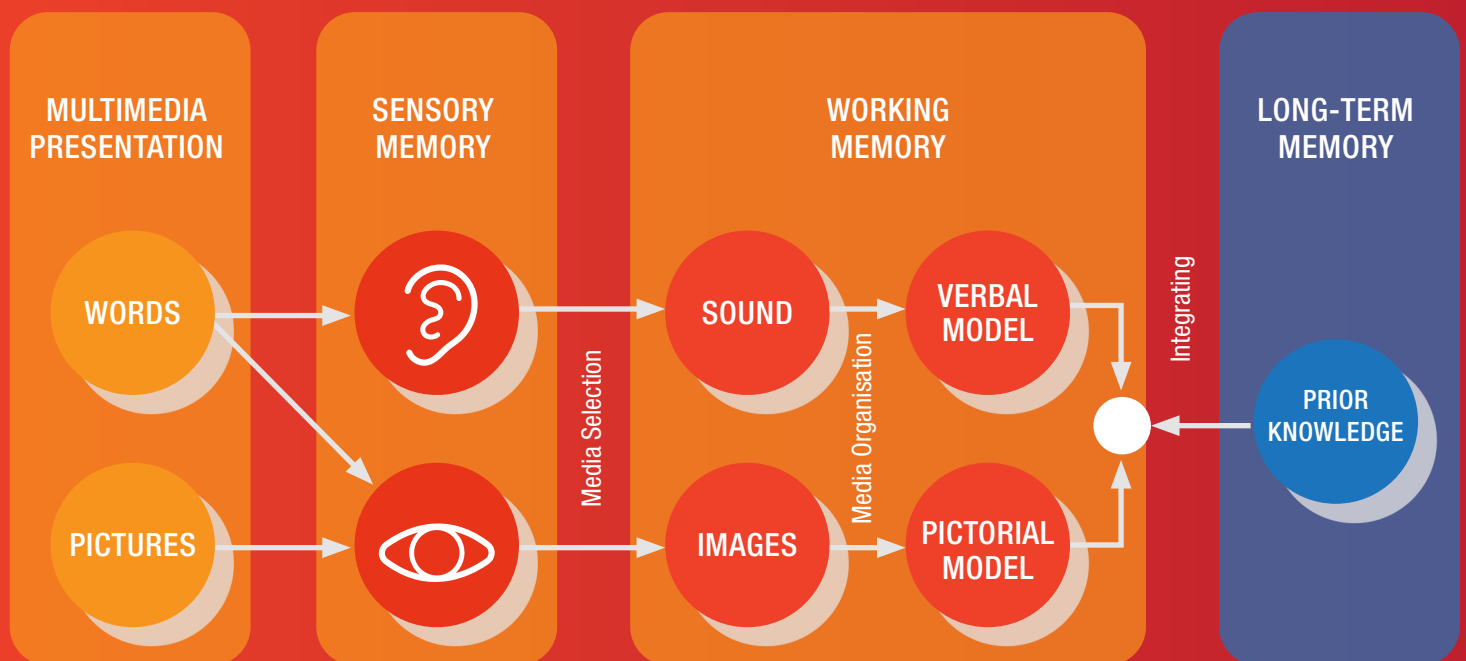
Source: OnlineColleges.net

It is a fascinating area and understanding it will benefit you enormously when studying and looking to pass your examinations or retain that presentation information ahead of an important meeting.

The Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve opened the door to really start exploring the ways in which our brain retains knowledge. This insight was followed by people such as Edgar Dale and his Cone of Learning, John Dewey, David Kolb, and a host of others that began diving deeper into ways that we understand and make learning stick. Check out this graphic illustration of how our brain internalizes and stores data.

Working Memory

This is how our brain process the information received.



*By three methods we may learn wisdom:
First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by
imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience,
which is the bitterest.*

— Confucius

AND as promised — **HOW TO OPTIMIZE.**

A modern-day Learning legend by the name of Mr. Bob Pike gave us several important tools and techniques for advancing our ability for internalizing and retaining the information once it has been transferred to us. He called it the “7 concepts of Memory” and the approach is steeped in considerable research and studies by notable academics and scientists. The seven concepts are:

PRIMACY	<i>We tend to recall the first and last things in a series</i>
REGENCY	<i>with the recent items being most vividly recalled.</i>
CHUNKING	<i>Information is more easily retained if chunked into smaller pieces</i>
RECORD 4 RECALL	<i>Writing in a workbook and taking notes by hand increases retention</i>
LINKING	<i>Connect with something learners experienced in the past</i>
OUTSTANDINGNESS	<i>The more outstanding the material the more likely it will be retained</i>
6X REVIEW	<i>Concepts most often repeated are best remembered</i>

Career Learning Solution #1: Development Strategy

And now to our solutions. The first forms your primary source of learning, development and growth. It involves consolidation of many areas we have covered on this journey so far.

1

Get your career development strategy in place

By doing this you will identify your career vision and associated career goals, while developing your learning self-awareness.

2

Clarify and prioritize the learning programs that address the reskilling or upskilling needs to achieve your career strategy.

Establish specific, detailed learning goals. Select your accountability partner/s who can help keep you focused and motivated. Set-up your communication strategy with those partners and become habitual with the contact.

3

Make sure you inform your HR and colleagues about the study you are doing

Keep them informed each time you achieve a milestone. i.e., provide copies of certificates or qualifications.

4

Review and re-evaluate every six months

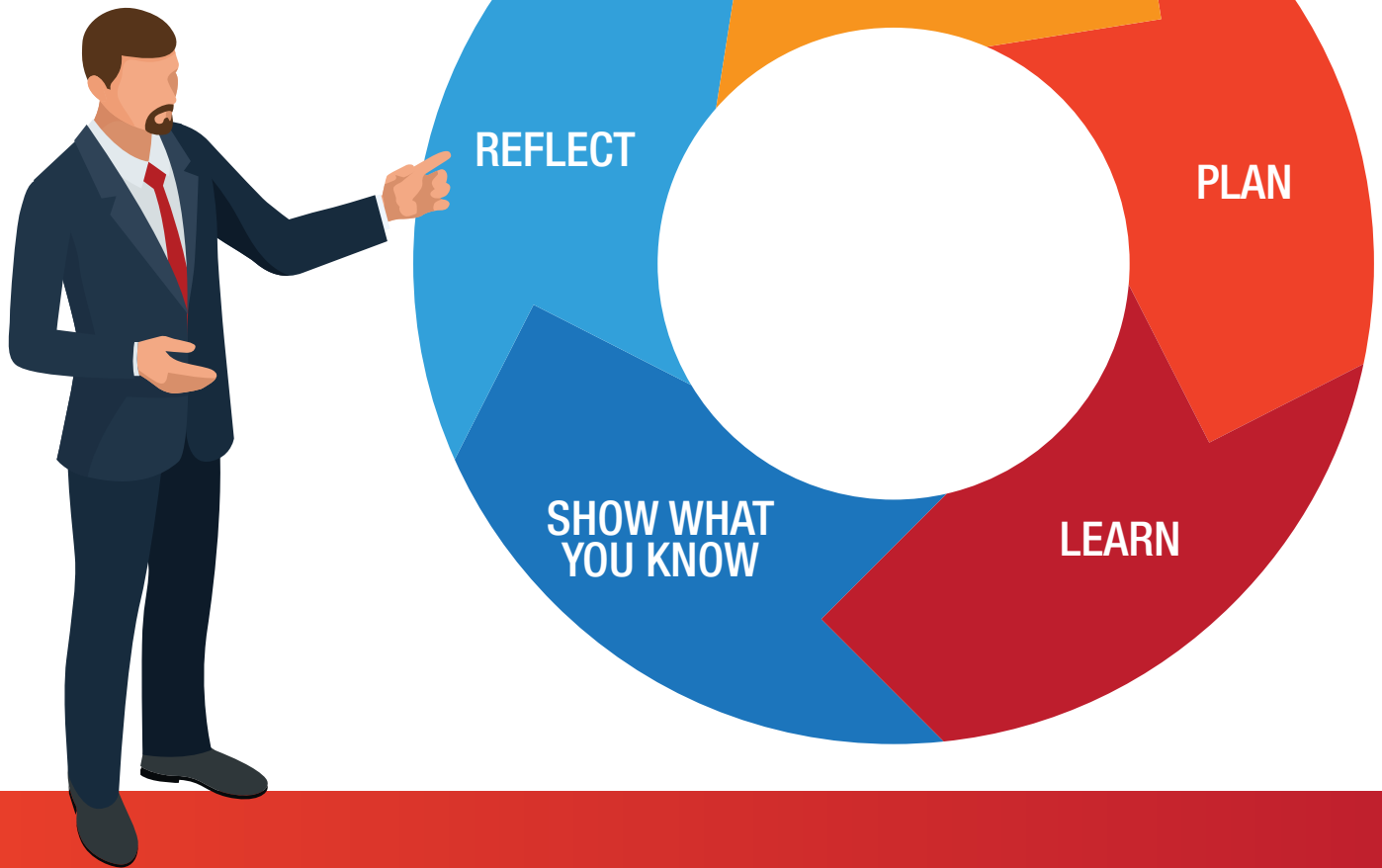
Monitor the progress and confirm that your direction is still aligned with the desired career vision. Keep an eye on industry and technological shifts that have the potential to impact your strategy.

5

Adjust your direction as needed and enroll in the next prioritized program

At the conclusion of each milestone be sure to celebrate with those closest to you.

Development Strategy



Career Learning Solution #2: Weekly Influencer Program

This strategy runs in parallel to your primary solution and is not meant as a replacement. It operates as a support to the Career Centric focus and strengthens your industry knowledge.

1

Connecting with Influencers

- Identify 2-3 career related Influencers that you like and follow them. This means you will listen to their podcast, follow, and engage with them on LinkedIn.
- Following them on other social media channels is optional. Checkout their website for potential access to programs and subscribe to any regular newsletters or blogs.
- Change Influencers once you feel they are no longer providing value for you

2

Reading - your target is to digest two books per week

Here is my own strategy for achieving this target: (no affiliation to sources mentioned).

- Use an app such as *getAbstract* to track new releases and read the book summary.
- From the summaries, download the books that interest me from Amazon Audible.
- If wanting to do further topic research on book, purchase book as a soft copy.



Career Learning Solution #3: The Bonus Program Mix

Once again, this strategy runs in parallel to your primary solution and the Weekly Influencer solution. This step deepens your knowledge and helps you in the direction of subject Mastery

1

Short duration fringe-support learning

Every six months choose 1-2 short duration topics of 10 to 20 hours average that will provide broader input to your Career Centric focus. Remember to stay aligned with your learning and career goals. In the early stages of your program avoid straying from the core area of focus.

There are many sources for this material — try your own company's digital library but look further afield to any of the online platforms available, such as *Udemy* and *LinkedIn Learning*.

2

Medium duration fringe-support learning

Every six months choose one, 3–4-month duration program that is a sister topic to your career centric focus. The purpose here is to continue helping you strengthen your core, while broadening your knowledge on related but different subjects. An example might be studying Communications as your primary area and in this fringe, learning about Marketing.

Again, there are multiple sources for this study — many universities offer these programs plus sites such as Coursera host courses produced by many of the Industry and Academic leaders.

Conclusion and Next Steps

We have covered a lot of territory in this short eBook and hopefully provided you with some valuable insights on how you can take another significant step forward towards controlling your career future.

As we stated at the beginning

“Not Learning, Not an Option.”

Lifelong Learning has to become part of your new normal, along with all the other changes we are currently experiencing. The secret to successful lifelong learning lies in finding alignment in what you desire from your career and ways that make the learning process enjoyable and sustainable.

Consider these two questions as you ponder your next move:

- If I continue in the direction I’m heading now, what is my future like in 5 years?
- If I become a lifelong learner from today, what is my future like in 5 years?

***That decision will
shape your destiny!***



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About the Author

Hi, I'm **Wayne Brown**.

I work with executives to help transform their careers by developing elite talent across four of the most critical needs for any professional today: communication, facilitation, education and coaching.

After 45 years in six companies, living on four continents and working in more than 85 cities, I've engaged with people from diverse cultures and groups, leading, facilitating and coaching thousands of executives on topics from leadership through to operational excellence.

In addition, I have experienced the rigors of starting and running businesses and companies, learning along the way through success and failure. My journey has been supported by mentors and coaches who have helped me to stay focused and dedicated to my purpose of helping others.

As a lifelong learner, I've studied through many of the world's leading institutions and have learned from incredible professors and leaders. Today, I continue to develop and grow alongside my clients as we co- create the future together. From my years of playing competitive sports, I learned early on that life is a team activity and that we cannot succeed alone. It takes encouragement, the perspective of more than one, and collective effort to reach our lofty goals.

To find out more about my personal story, visit our website, www.coaching4companies.com

