

LEARNING

118. Making the Grade: Lifelong Learning Is a Mission Statement Must. In our rapidly gyrating world, learning-for-life is no longer an option; it's a professional life (or death) necessity—as more and more are beginning to realize. This is true of you age 16 or 26 or 46 or 66—and God knows it's true of my great pal, *The Little BIG Things'* dedicatee, Warren Bennis, voracious in the depth and breadth of his quest for knowledge at 85!

I'll go so far as to say that an explicit focus on "life-long learning" for everyone on board could well be the most sustainable advantage an organization of any flavor can have. Hence, I hereby strongly suggest that ... "*An unstinting commitment by every one of us to accelerated lifelong learning*" ... or some close kin be made a formal part of your mission-values statement. It deserves to be right up there in the stratosphere with the likes of superior quality and profitability.

119. Out-Study 'Em! I loved this line from *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman: "*When I was growing up, my parents used to say to me: 'Finish your dinner—people in China are starving.' I, by contrast, find myself wanting to say to my daughters: 'Finish your homework—people in China and India are starving for your job.'*" Tennis or finance or engineering or bartending ... this "simple" lesson bears repeating.

Age 26: Study!

Age 46: Study!

Age 66 (me): Study!

120. Out-Read 'Em!

Read!

Read Wide!

Surprise Yourself With Your Reading Picks!

Read Deep!

Read Often!

Out-READ the "Competition"!

Take Notes!

Summarize!

Share With Others What You Read!

Read!

Read!

Read!

121. Out-Write 'Em! Ulysses S. Grant was likely America's most effective general. He had many skills—and lucid writing, interestingly, ranked near the top. His orders to his generals before battles were masterpieces of clarity and brevity. Writing matters ... on the battlefield at Vicksburg as well as in the boardroom.

So: *Work your ass off* ... on your writing, from Tweets to emails to Blog Posts to letters to your Mum—each is an opportunity. (Re Tweets, I'm amazed at how much you can learn to pack in, with some clarity++, in 140 characters.)

122. Now Enrolling: "The People's MBA." I have long been a vociferous critic of the MBA—such criticism was the *de facto* point of *In Search of Excellence*. Bob Waterman and I,

though both engineers (Waterman in Mining, me in Civil) and both Stanford MBAs and both McKinsey consultants (the latter a Mecca of cold-blooded business analysis), lamented business's abiding emphasis on the numbers and its accompanying de facto and de jure de-emphasis of the so-called "soft" "people stuff." Now, with tongue only slightly in cheek, I hereby offer the core courses in my prospective MBA curriculum, without comment:

- *Managing People I, II, III
- *Servant Leadership I, II
- *Execution I, II, III
- *Creating a "Try it now" environment/Celebrating Failure
- *Maximizing R.O.I.R. (Return On Investment in Relationships)
- *Value-added through XFX/Cross-functional EXCELLENCE/"Sucking down,"
the Art of "Lower"-level Networking
- *Value-added by converting *all* "Departments" into PSFs/Professional Service
Firms/Centers of Excellence with Astounding Value-Added
- *Sales I, II
- *Service EXCELLENCE
- *Creating INCREDIBLE Customer Experiences
- *Accounting I, II (Yes, the numbers *are* important.)
- *Accountability I, II
- *Calendar Mastery/Time Management
- *MBWA I, II [Managing By Wandering Around]
- *Nurturing and Harvesting Curiosity
- *Design-as-Strategy
- *Giving Great Presentations I, II
- *Active Strategic Listening I, II (III?)
- *Civility/"Thank you"-Recognition/Thoughtfulness/Decency/Respect/
Apology-as-Strategy
- *Knowing Oneself
- *EXCELLENCE as Aspiration/EXCELLENCE as Standard for Behavioral
Evaluation/EXCELLENCE Everywhere/EXCELLENCE All the Time.

And, enumerated in *The Little BIG Things*, are a ton of contrarian electives as well. While I admit that the tongue *is* within range of cheek, the spirit encompassed by the above is deadly serious. As to practicalities, at least consider these *sensibilities* when you are designing your training curriculum.