

HITTING YOUR STRIDE

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

ISSUE 1, JULY 2013

Welcome to the first issue of *Hitting Your Stride*, a newsletter for young professionals who are in the process of “climbing the ladder” for something more—more options, more fulfillment, more stability, more money, more success.

Whereas other professional/career resources might aim to help you secure a job or develop within a specific field, the goal of *Hitting Your Stride* is to help you become a more polished professional: someone who is interesting, who gets the details right, who can discuss recent and past ideas from leading thinkers, who is abreast of the latest resources and trends, who knows how to develop oneself outside of the office, and who uses self-reflection to build skills and display confidence.

Whether you’re in the private sector, the public sector, or the non-profit world, or just entering the job market, this tool can help you hit your stride as a professional and advance in your career. I hope you enjoy 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

[*Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*](#)

- Sheryl Sandberg

[*Thinking, Fast and Slow*](#)

- Daniel Kahneman

[*The Defining Decade: Why Your Twenties Matter—And How to Make the Most of Them Now*](#)

- Meg Jay

Articles to Read This Quarter

[*It’s a 401\(k\) World*](#)

- Thomas Friedman (*New York Times*)

[*Warren Buffett is Bullish...on Women*](#)

- Warren Buffett (*Fortune Magazine*)

[*How to Give a Killer Presentation*](#)

- Chris Anderson (*Harvard Business Review*)

[*19 Successful People Who Barely Sleep*](#)

- C. Cutrone & M. Nisen (*Business Insider*)

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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

[Good to Great](#)

- Jim Collins

(If you're in a non-business field, you also should read Collins's 35-page monograph, [Good to Great and the Social Sectors](#))

[The Tipping Point](#)

- Malcolm Gladwell

Articles to Read This Quarter

[Digital Devices Deprive Brain of Needed Downtime](#)

- Matt Richtel (*New York Times*)

[How Do We Hire When We Can't Tell Who's Right for the Job?](#)

- Malcolm Gladwell (*The New Yorker*)

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

After being hired at a prominent university, one of my good friends was told by his new colleagues that he was chosen because he "can see things that other people can't." My friend realized this was due, in part, to work experiences that had exposed him to places and people many professors do not have contact with. Since receiving this feedback, he makes it a point to undertake projects and activities that allow him to keep making the connections and insights valued by his university.

His is just one example of why it is important to continuously reflect on what makes you valuable to your employer, and to hone the skills which create that value. I recommend taking an "intentional pause" once per year—this might take an hour, or an entire weekend—to reflect on and record the various ways you can add value to an organization. Therefore, even if your value-add is in a specific area at your current job, you are aware of other areas where you might add value at your next job.

WEBSITE TO KNOW

TheLadders (www.theladders.com)

About: Job-search website focused on professional positions (until 2011 the site only posted positions with salaries of \$100K+)

Usefulness: Weekly e-mails include recent job openings, as well as tips on networking, writing resumes & cover letters, interviewing, and negotiating for pay & benefits

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PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Through their jobs, most people have experienced some type of staff development (general training provided to everyone in a department/organization) or professional development (training tailored for a specific person). But it is crucial for young professionals to create a personal professional development (PPD) plan in support of short- and long-term career goals—thinking beyond their current positions about how to be competitive in the 21st century economy, or how to transition to a new position/field. My annual PPD plan includes goals in the following areas, among others:

- technology I want to gain exposure to or improve in (e.g., Prezi, Instagram, Excel)
- communication skills I want to polish (e.g., delivering engaging presentations)
- books I want to read (this list includes both fiction and non-fiction, with most non-fiction books related to leadership, organizational performance, or social science concepts)
- professional targets I want to reach (e.g., be promoted to X position, get a raise to X salary)

Your professional career likely will span many jobs and many decades, which means the most consistent and impactful professional development you will experience may in fact come from you.

BEING (AND STAYING) INTERESTING

As a consultant and board member in my mid-20s, many of my interactions with colleagues and clients took place during wine & cheese receptions or at formal dinners. Here I saw relationships develop as work anecdotes, stories about overseas travels, and ideas from recent books were exchanged. There was no theme to what was talked about...except that everything was interesting.

Each quarter, this section will provide tips on how to be interesting in work situations, especially when you are one of the youngest people in the room. Step one is to realize the importance of being interesting, so consider this: If you attend a work cocktail party and end up speaking with two senior managers and their spouses, what unique contribution could you make to the conversation?

DID YOU KNOW...

Business cards from [Vistaprint](#) are 3.43” x 1.93” which is slightly smaller than the traditional size of 3.5” x 2”. If you’re in the market for business cards and want them to measure up (literally) to the competition, try [48HourPrint.com](#), [UPrinting](#), or [MOO](#).

WORDS ON WHICH TO RUMINATE

“Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned; and, however early a man’s training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly.”

- Thomas Huxley, British biologist, from his 1877 essay, “Technical Education”