



UnBLOCK the Chain

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How to analyse past professional experience for future success

Reviewing performance for focused and effective learning

A New Year represents a time to focus, regroup and set new professional targets. Corporate trainer, Michael Virardi, provides tips on getting the most out of reflection time.



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As we head into 2019, I'd like to share with you three of the most vital lessons I learnt last year.

Don't be afraid to be vulnerable

I live on the small island of Cyprus where everyone knows almost everyone else and, because of this, I had come to believe that vulnerability was a sign of weakness and that what others might say about you was perhaps more important than the cry from within. Since reading *Rising Strong* by Professor Brené Brown, I have come to understand that concealing your feelings and presenting them as society dictates is certainly not a measure of courage but rather a yardstick of failure.

Being true to yourself and your inner feelings is not vulnerability but rather a philosophy for embracing situations, people and, above all, inner feelings.

Last year, I embraced vulnerability like never before. I stood in an auditorium, in front of 150 University College London business students and a dozen UK industry professionals and shared – for the first time ever since it happened – my decision to part ways with my wife-to-be just 23 hours before our wedding and with over 3,000 invitations sent out. I was emotionally exposed but it felt good to share a story that had been buried deep inside me for 12-years.

As Professor Brown says in her book, "Vulnerability is an act of courage because it helps us merge with

our authentic self instead of hiding behind a facade to appease others.”

My promise for 2019 is to be even more courageous as I have found vulnerability to be both liberating and the path to – and the birthplace of – connection.

Preparation eats experience for breakfast

Legend has it that Abraham Lincoln once said, “Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

‘Sharpen the axe’ has been my mantra ever since I can remember. From the long and arduous hours spent every weekend, preparing our in-house seminars when I worked full time in the family business, to my recent 50 hours of preparation time to present to a demanding, capable and knowledgeable audience in New York City last September, preparation has always been key.

“ THE MINOR DETAILS ARE WHAT MAY MAKE A MAJOR DIFFERENCE IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIFE ”

The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today by crosschecking information, triangulating and making sure that you are fully prepared for each and every detail. The minor details are what may make a major difference in your professional and personal life.

Do the one thing that matters most

I was browsing through the shelves of a bookstore at the airport when I came across a book entitled *The One Thing. The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results*. After devouring it, I can vouch for the fact that it really delivers on its promise to help you cut through the clutter and achieve better results in less time.

Author Gary Keller and contributor Jay Papasan argue that achievers always work with a clear sense of priority. They also state their view that ‘To-Do lists’ are just survival lists which get you through your day and your life and that ‘Success lists’ are what we need: lists that are purposefully created around extraordinary results.

Below are some of the highlights that profoundly resonated with me. They are simple, direct, honest and, above all, immediately actionable.

- Focusing question: What’s the ‘One Thing’ I can do, so that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?
- Extraordinary results are directly determined by how narrow you can make your focus
- The majority of what you want will come from the minority of what you do
- Success is actually a short race – a sprint fuelled by discipline just long enough for habit to kick in and take over
- It takes an average of 66 days to acquire a new habit (University College London research)
- Our purpose sets our priority and our priority determines the productivity our actions produce
- Who we are and where we want to go determine what we do and what we accomplish

Based on the ‘One Thing’ philosophy, my top professional success priority going into 2019 is to complete an online programme (which will also be turned into a book) on the topic of public speaking.

Live and learn

Every year I look back and see that, once again, I have lived and learned so many things. I have shared three with you that stand out for me as having been significant last year and, on the surface, they appear to be totally unconnected: discovering a positive side to vulnerability, recognising the incalculable value of preparation, and learning to prioritise. And yet, together, they have made me a better person and a better professional.

What did you learn in 2018? How do you intend to implement it in 2019? At the University of Life, in which we are all enrolled, learning never stops. ■

KEY POINTS



- ✓ Vulnerability is strength and fosters authenticity
- ✓ Preparation is king; make adequate space for it
- ✓ Identifying and doing the one thing that matters most can save precious time and energy