



Dear Friend,

Teaching the Teacher

August has become one of my favorite months.

The reasoning behind that statement may surprise you, though. You may think my August affection stems from the warm weather and sunshine; from vacation-time fun; from the family birthdays that greet me each year; or simply from the fact that, with many people still away, weekday commuting is pleasant. Admittedly, all of these are bonuses of this eighth month of the year, but there's another significant factor afoot.

Every August, I get to be fed!

While I'm on the lookout for meaningful professional development offerings throughout the year, every August I know I will get the chance to join leaders around the globe at a conference that builds into me like few others. It's my opportunity to pause from being at the front of the room pouring out; instead, it's my chance to be in the seats soaking up! I get to listen, learn, laugh, and sometimes even lament as presenters share in this 2-day simulcast event. And then I, in turn, share...with fellow conference-goers during breaks, with family and friends at home, and ultimately with clients back at work. Yes, my friends, the teacher can (and must) be taught.

Every one of us, especially those of us who are leaders, benefit from adopting a learning mindset. That's our topic for this month's **EA Insights**. A learning leader is a tremendous asset to everyone. Join me as I examine why.

Wouldn't it be great if we could carry a little bit of August into each month?

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Want to Improve Your Team? Keep Learning!

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

When a leader gets better, everyone benefits. That's the sentiment of Bill Hybels, Founding and Senior Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois. And, I agree whole-heartedly.

As one who daily is in and out of organizations consulting and investing time with leaders at all levels for coaching appointments, I can attest to the benefits of, and to, learning leaders. I also can corroborate the pitfalls associated with a failure to prioritize continued development. Ongoing learning really does matter...to the person as well as to the group s/he leads.

Why does a learning-leader mindset matter?

-- **It betters you.** This is the no-brainer reason. When you learn something, you improve you. You expand your knowledge. You attain a new skill. You increase awareness. You add to your value because now you know, can do, or appreciate in ways you previously did not.

Many people wonder why they are not progressing at all or at the speed they had anticipated; they wonder why they have been passed over for opportunities; they wonder why others seem to have ideas and understanding that they lack. I find that often these are the folks who have become complacent and have not taken an active interest in continued self-development.

-- **It sends the message that learning is important for everyone.** As I routinely remind the leaders with whom I work, folks are watching you. You relay as much, if not more, through your actions as with your words. Yet, many leaders talk a good game when it comes to the importance of continued learning but do a

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"Quotes"

"Learning is not attained by chance; it must be sought for with ardor and diligence."

~Abigail Adams

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

~John Quincy Adams

"Success in management requires learning as fast as the world is changing."

~Warren Bennis

"Leadership is unlocking people's potential to become better."

~Bill Bradley

"Change is the end result of all true learning."

~Leo Buscaglia

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young."

~Henry Ford

"I have never met a man so ignorant that I couldn't learn something from him."

~Galileo Galilei

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."

~Mahatma Gandhi

"Leadership is practiced not so much in words as in attitude and in actions."

~Harold S. Geneen

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."

~John F. Kennedy

"No matter how good you think you are as a leader, my goodness, the people



terrible job of walking the talk.

Encouraging team members to get out there and gain continual education to better themselves and the organization is great. The problem is that, if they see you ducking out on that training session, sitting in the room texting rather than actively engaging, or not having a strategic personal development plan...that you are excited about...for yourself, then the message you send with your lips is in direct contradiction to the one you send with your life. No, when people see, as well as hear, you embrace the importance of learning for everyone on the team, including...no, starting with...you, then you begin to change the culture about learning in your environment.

-- It reinforces a learning-to-teach atmosphere. One of my greatest memories of this learning-to-teach model was the pastor of the church in which I grew up. Each time he read a book, attended a conference, or experienced something new that would be relevant to members, he came back and taught it or shared it with the congregation in a church service or at the appropriate team meeting. He, in turn, made this an expectation of others who were dispatched to an event or afforded a learning opportunity; they were to come back and share so that others, through them, could grow as well.

The learn-to-teach model is based in the notion that learning experiences should be viewed more as a through street than a cul-de-sac. Learning is not intended to be a meal that you gorge yourself on, filling you and you alone (cul-de-sac). Instead, you are to take in to pass on (through street). However, for this model to be effective, for it to filter throughout the team and not just become the practice of a few, and for it to become ingrained in the mindset of how people approach learning...routinely, it starts with the leader. The leader must practice it, and the leader must expect it.

-- It brings new ideas and skills to the org. So, are we learning just for the heck of it? Well, sometimes that may be appropriate. But, hey, I'm in business too! I know that there needs to be a method to the madness. (Translation: We need to invest both our professional development dollars and our very limited time wisely...into offerings that strategically position us to meet current and foreseeable future demands.)

Nonetheless, just look at what is happening around you today -- the leadership challenges and opportunities related to developing, implementing, measuring, adjusting, and reporting strategy; to fine-tuning and managing the functions involved in your business; and to eliciting the best from your team. This list may prompt a smile followed by spinning brain wheels with questions and ideas of how you can get even better. On the other hand, it may cause you to groan because there's so much ground to cover in one or more of these areas if your organization even is to survive, much less be competitive. Whether you find yourself clearly on one of these sides, or somewhere in the middle, when you, as a leader, become receptive to learning, you also open your organization to the new ideas and skills that give you the tools to carry out your work in increasingly better ways.

How, in the midst of the usual craziness, do you pull this off?

Trust me, I neither live nor work in an ivory tower. I know life can get crazy. So, how do you realistically keep learning? Let me offer five quick tips.

-- Create a personal growth plan. Again, resources -- both time and money -- are not limitless. So, it makes sense each year to assess where your efforts are best placed for the upcoming period. Then, match the results to learning opportunities that fit your needs, budget, learning style, and schedule. Determine the growth you want to see, and plan strategically how you will move in that direction.

-- Carve out time daily. Commit to investing 15 minutes every day or at least a few times each week. Block the time on your calendar, and set your clock if necessary. But, carve out time to read a book or an article (like this one!), listen to a podcast, watch a video, or do something to build into you. (And, while subject-matter learning is essential, do not neglect the ongoing development of the leadership side of you!)

-- Participate with the team. No doubt, people on your team get "sent off" to training (I hope!) throughout the year. Check your calendar, and make it your business to learn along with them periodically. Besides the information you gain, the message you send is invaluable.

-- Press pause one a year. If funds allow, invest at least once annually in a special learning opportunity that targets a priority area in your personal growth plan. Sometimes the perspective gained by being out of the office, around others who are focusing in as well, and hearing from experts in the field can make all the difference.

-- Get a coach. Leadership often is lonely. Leaders often don't have someone who can serve as a neutral sounding board -- someone who's not involved in your business, someone who has a different perspective, and someone who is trusted to tell you the truth and then help you figure out constructively what to do with it. Learning about self and about how to navigate in your environment, given your strengths and your struggles, also is vital to continued growth and to leading with increasing effectiveness. The investment is definitely worth it.

Continued learning really is more than a nice-to-do; it's a must-do, if you are going to lead well. Personal and organizational benefits abound. So, will you accept the challenge? If you're game and want a partner, call [Executive Advantage](#). We're ready to help you explore *you* and create a targeted development approach. And, we can work with you as you take concrete steps to become a learning leader who also fosters a learning environment around you. [Contact us today](#).

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around you will have all kinds of ideas for how you can get better. So for me, the most fundamental thing about leadership is to have the humility to continue to get feedback and to try to get better -- because your job is to try to help everybody else get better."
~Jim Yong Kim

"The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves."
~Ray Kroc

"I think leadership is service and there is power in that giving: to help people, to inspire and motivate them to reach their fullest potential."
~Denise Morrison

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do."
~Pele

"Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow."
~William Pollard

"An organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage."
~Jack Welch

"I think to be a great quarterback, you have to have a great leadership, great attention to detail, and a relentless competitive nature. And that's what I try to bring to the table, and I have a long way to go. I'm still learning, and I'm still on a constant quest for knowledge."
~Russell Wilson