

Education is the great dividing line between who you are today and who you can be tomorrow. Most people want to look at education only in terms of the skills and lessons we learn in organized settings as we walk the path from high school to university and sometimes even on to graduate and post graduate degrees.

My question for each of you reading this article is, “How is your education going to affect your life from today forward?” Starting today let’s look five years into the future and ask, “What aspects of my commitment to increasing my personal knowledge and education will be key contributors to making my dreams a reality?”

This may sound like a daunting task when you think about where you are and where you want to be. But there are real things you can do, starting today, to make the changes and commit to a lifetime of learning. The following ideas are intended to help you think about the outcome of how continual education impacts your life.

1. **Reading.** According to the American Booksellers Association, 58% of Americans will never read another book in their lifetime after they graduate from high school. One of the simplest decisions people can make is to choose to become a reader. Readers are leaders.
2. **Books.** In order to expand your education, you can consider adding an “education budget” to your current spending plan – which allows you to buy and own the books that you want to keep for a lifetime. Books are like treasures, each book you decide to read has the potential to expand and increase your competence level. But books can be expensive, so you may prefer to go to your nearest public library and begin to check out books on a regular basis.
3. **Listen and learn.** Your local public library also has a diverse number of books on tape that you can check out and listen to in your car or at home. You can learn as you commute, you can learn as you exercise, you can learn as you clean your home. In addition, you may want to visit an amazing website, www.audacity.com. Audacity.com has over 25,000 books in their online library. For a fee, you can become a member and download books to your iPod or any compatible MP3 device. The books are permanently yours, they are held in “Your Library” on their site where you can listen as often as you like. An iPod can hold more than 100 books.
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5. **Seminars and workshops.** Choose to attend at least one quality training workshop in your field every year. The world is a changing place and everyday not only are the questions changing, but so are the answers. What was true two years ago; may not be true today. By regularly attending seminars and workshops you will help assure you are staying current in your industry.
6. **Mastermind groups.** One of the most interactive ways to learn is to learn from one another. You can set up a mastermind group of 3 or 4 people who share an interest in a certain area of learning and you can learn from each others successes and failures. Real life is an excellent teacher, but we don't all have to make the same mistakes. A mastermind group can fill you with ideas and suggestions for doing something right the first time. And, equally important your mastermind group can hold you accountable for doing what you say you will do.
7. **Why not go back to school?** Regardless of your current level of education, why not go back to school and finish your dream. If you have yearned for a high school diploma, don't waste another day-register to take the GED. If you have known for a long time that the only real way for you to be different tomorrow than you are today is for you to go back to college, then go back to college. If you have sensed that a Master's degree could help you reach your goals, then why not apply for the Masters program at your local university.

Education is the dividing line. Ask yourself who do I really want to be in five years and then map out your plan for "continual education." Increasing knowledge, improving your personal key competencies and having a willingness to share what you are learning are all vital tools for reaching your future goals.

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