

## One thing you can't hide

I'm sure you've heard the phrase "knowledge is power". And it is. We learn how to live successfully through knowledge. And knowledge is available to everyone. We all start life ignorant: we're born without knowledge. The extent to which a person remains ignorant will determine his or her place in the world. Anyone who stays ignorant only has themselves to blame. Remember the idea from *lesson 7* of our society as a pyramid. An ignorant person is more likely to be at the lowest levels of that pyramid. The majority of people are in the bottom, larger layers of the pyramid and the higher you go, the smaller the numbers of people. At the very top you'll find the world's most brilliant people. We may not all be able to reach the peak, but we can control where we sit between the very top and the very bottom.

You can get into the top 5% and live well and successfully. It's not about being "over" anyone, it's just being ambitious and refusing to settle for anything less than living the best we can. The higher you climb up a pyramid, the further you can see, the fresher the air and the less crowded it is. As you climb, you help others to climb too.

Knowledge will help you climb that pyramid. To an extent, the more you know, the higher you can reach. But where to begin? No one can know everything and human knowledge is growing, growing far too fast for any human to keep up. So where to start? Start with the study of your language, and then move on to your general area of interest. Two steps to take you further up that pyramid. First, language, in the case of this lesson: English.

Our ability to use language effectively came up in *lesson 7*. Too few people realise that our ability to use language determines our place on the pyramid and influences the amount of money we'll earn.

The management guru, Peter Drucker, was clear about the importance of communication and clarity of message. If you don't have the vocabulary or linguistic skill to get across what you want to say, you'll struggle to make yourself understood.

A broad vocabulary helps you to communicate more accurately, allowing you to select the most appropriate word and put across your precise meaning. It also allows you to be more concise, subtle and even diplomatic. Because you can express your ideas and be understood, it builds your self-confidence.

Understanding language is key to learning everything else. Millions of people are being held back because they haven't mastered their own language, they can't make it work for them. Language determines the extent of our knowledge. You need language to be able to grasp new concepts and ideas. You need language to be able to express those ideas. Our ability to translate our thoughts and ideas into words in a powerful and effective way is inextricably linked to our growth in the world of business or any other organisation.

So improve your vocabulary. Read widely, read things that challenge you. Note unfamiliar vocabulary. Learn it and use it – make it yours.

How would you rate your use of language? If you rated yourself fair, get a good book on English and study it. If you rated yourself as poor, take an online or night course in English; many excellent courses are available. More people speak English now than any other language on the planet, with Mandarin and Hindi not far behind. English literature, from Shakespeare to Hemingway, is arguably the richest and most extensive on Earth. So when you're studying English, you're studying one of the world's greatest and most interesting subjects.

If you think you don't have time, Louis Shores, the librarian who promoted the library as the centre of all learning said it only takes 15 minutes a day.

He said: "Each of us must find his own 15 minute period each day for reading; it's better if it's regular. The only requirement is the will to read; with it you can find 15 minutes no matter how busy your day. That means you will read half a book a week, two books a month, 20 a year, and one thousand in a reading lifetime. It's an easy way to become well-read, and it takes just 15 minutes a day."

So you're improving your mastery of language. What about your general interest? We all have something we're more interested in than anything else. It's true whatever you do for a living. Reading to increase your knowledge in this area is for profit and pleasure.

Nightingale shares an anecdote to illustrate:

"A woman once said that it was her ambition to write poetry. The story goes that, when asked how long she'd been studying poetry and what kind of collection of published poetry she had, she said she didn't have a single book on poetry and had never read it as a study. I mention this because it's so often the case: people will say they want to do particular thing, but a bit of questioning quickly reveals that it's a whim, not a real and important goal."

If you have a goal, read around the subject, learn about it. If you don't it's just a whim and you won't achieve it.

For many years I've been passionate about understanding how people can succeed, how we can be better and do better. I've devoted hours to reading work by Napoleon Hill, Wallace D. Wattles, Thomas Troward, and many others including Earl Nightingale whose wisdom I'm sharing here. I was a qualified chartered accountant but wanted to learn more. I studied at London Business School, Harvard Business School, Oxford University and Stanford University in California. I share some of the things I've learned in my books and courses. But I'm not finished. I will keep on learning. There's always something more.

A good personal library is essential (it doesn't need to be a physical library anymore). A library with good books and a dozen or so excellent online

programs. Online programs are great value for learning. Audio lessons are effortless yet effective. Learning by listening to the human voice is how you learned almost everything you know. Often we only read a book once, but online lessons can be listened to over and over weeks, months, even years later. You can listen to them while you're doing something else: getting ready in the morning or on your way to work whether it's in the car or on the train. You can share it with others by listening at home. If you don't have a good library you're missing the joy of learning the things that you want to learn. Books are an investment that rewards you with ideas, knowledge, pleasure and financial reward.

Books can transport us into the past, to learn from the ideas, successes and mistakes of men and women who came before us. They can teach us almost anything. If you live without trying to expand your knowledge, you're shutting yourself off from so much in life. The world is moving so fast, faster than ever before. We need to keep up, to grow or we'll fall by the wayside. Learning will help you reach your goals and, along the way, help you enjoy living. Reading and learning opens your eyes.

Don't think that your education, or lack of it, is a barrier to achieving your goals. If you know where you're going and you're determined to get there, you'll make the grade. If a particular qualification is necessary for you to achieve the goal, you will get it. Persistence and determination will get you there.

*Let's recap.*

Knowledge is power; the more knowledge, the more power we have over our lives and our futures. Society is like a pyramid made up of layers, a wide base and narrowing at the top. Pick the place on the pyramid you want to get to and start climbing. Since you can't know everything start with language, and next, your general area of interest.

Language is the one thing we cannot hide except by silence. Improve your language to the point where it can do the job you want it to do for you. To a surprising extent, our ability to use our language and the extent of our vocabulary will determine our income and our future.

Spend at least 15 minutes every day reading something that will stretch your mind. Once stretched by a new idea your mind can never return to its original dimensions; a chicken can't go back into the egg. Make an effort to grow your vocabulary.

And finally, remember that graduating from school or university is just the beginning, don't stop learning! Wisdom will bring you kindness, patience, love, understanding, and success as a person. Never stop.

If you rate your use of your language as fair or poor, commit to improving it. Note what you will do below.

| Action | By (date) | Completed |
|--------|-----------|-----------|
|        |           |           |

*What is your area of specialism?*

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*What will you do to build your knowledge expertise in that area?*

| Action | By (date) | Completed |
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