

The Metatarsal of Career Success

Our oldest known relative is Lucy, whose skeleton is believed to be 3.2 million years old. The fourth metatarsal was discovered in another skeleton believed to be contemporaneous with Lucy. It is a key bone in the human foot because it permits us to walk erect, and paleoanthropologists believe it was that upright posture which enabled our species to rise to the top of the evolutionary heap.

Standing erect gave Lucy and friends the mobility and breadth of vision to overcome the stronger creatures and challenges of nature they faced. Today, we need an equal degree of mobility and breadth of vision, but they will not be derived from our posture, but rather from our brains. We can't outrun or outmaneuver the market competitors that now endanger us, but we can outsmart them. And we must, because it is the quality of our thinking which will determine our survival and level of prosperity. It is the metatarsal of career success in the modern workplace.

Building a Strong Brain Every Day

It doesn't matter whether you're a rocket scientist or operating a robot on an assembly line, whether you're a sales clerk or a senior executive, the caliber of your job performance depends almost entirely on the intelligence and innovation you bring to work. By most estimates, however, we use only ten to twenty percent of our brains. In effect, we do our jobs with over half our intellectual ability tied behind our backs.

That may have been good enough in an industrial workplace, but it's a formula for extinction in a knowledge based economy. Most people already know that. They listen to the news; they see the government reports. But, they don't do anything that would untie their intelligence. Instead of upgrading their skills and knowledge, they continue to search for the fast disappearing kind of job that requires the use of a tiny fraction of their brain.

Why?

Because our culture has convinced them that only a very small percentage of people are "thinkers" and the rest of us are not. It's a widely held view that is an artifact of a school system that tracks kids by their academic performance and not their capacity for excellence. And, that's a mistake. Because every person is born with the inherent ability to apply their intellect and creativity to the accomplishment of tasks they find rewarding. That capacity is an attribute of our species. It is as much a part of who we are as a bone in our foot.

While we all know how to take care of our bones, however, many of us seem never to have learned how to take care of our minds. We know we have to nurture our bones so they'll grow and strengthen, yet we

often as act as if we can stop developing our brain just because we have an academic degree of some sort or have attained a certain level of seniority. And, that's simply not true. We live in a world of constant change and that change requires that we adapt by continuously learning new concepts and capabilities. Moreover, all of us – whether we got good grades in school or not – have much more of our brains to tap into and bring to work.

We humans have come a long way since Lucy walked the grasslands of Africa. We were able to grow beyond that humble beginning because we refused to stand still. Physically to be sure, but with our minds, as well. Each of our ancestors saw themselves as “a work in progress” and so should we.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

Visit me at Weddles.com

Peter Weddle is the author of over two dozen employment-related books, including the recently released blockbuster *The Career Activist Republic* and *Work Strong, Your Personal Career Fitness System*, one of the most innovative career success books in print. Both are available at Amazon.com.

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