



THE KEY TO EMPLOYMENT SECURITY: KEEP LEARNING

by

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“From the boardroom to the factory floor, work is understood more and more clearly as an expression of thought.”

Nathaniel Brandon

Our workplace has permanently changed. Increasingly, our employment *security* is connected to what we can *produce* from what we *know*. Our *minds*, not our muscles or our good intentions will keep us working.

Using our *knowledge* to earn a living, for all types of work and across all industries and services, requires a new attitude about learning. It needs to be continuous. It, also, needs to be seen as *essential* by each individual, *planned* and then *achieved* as part of each persons strategy to become, then remain *employable*. The new workplace will convert education from being an *event* that was tolerated into being a *process* that is welcomed.

Educational institutions must become much more *pragmatic* about what and how they teach. For individuals to take responsibility for their learning it must be shown to be in their *self interest* to do so. The connection between the learning of relevant skills and gainful employment must be made from kindergarten to graduate school. Education must produce students with the ability to contribute *results* to a potential employer. Without that ability, there is no incentive for either the student to receive the education or an employer to employ the student.

Once employed, the worker must produce *results* that meet the employer’s current needs and anticipate future needs that, likely, will require more or different skills to achieve. Employers may provide some of this training to their workers, but individuals cannot afford to rely on them for it. Companies will face even more competition in the future and their main focus, properly, should be on developing their business. Workers who want to increase their chances of being retained when their employers’ needs change must assume responsibility, as any other “business” must, for having the ability to meet or exceed the new requirements. More and more, that will mean continuing to learn new skills.

Computers and the Internet will be a great help as we continue to acquire the knowledge we need to have to remain viable in the marketplace. We will have access to myriads of resources to further our skills as we, literally, plug into continuous education. Harvard in our homes is technically possible today and will be a reality very soon. We need to demand it, then be prepared to take full advantage of these new learning resources as they evolve.

When our education becomes as important to us as it needs to be, the concept of “unemployment” will be eliminated. *Knowledge workers employ themselves*. Between projects, they will become fully engaged in acquiring additional skills. Keeping current on developments in ones chosen fields will become automatic. Using your knowledge to contribute to an employer or to continue to build your “stock-in-trade” will be seamless. Knowledge workers will always have plenty to do.

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Thank You -----

To accomplish a “learning workplace” will take the combined efforts of government, education, business and, of course, the individuals who want to continue to be employed in the future. Government, education and business, in order to insure economic stability and a steady supply of results-producing human capital, must work together to make education a *means* to an end, not an *end* in itself. The end, of course, is productive people performing productive work. These interests must actively engage in the process of teaching individuals “how to fish,” not giving them “the fish.”

Individuals must become more self-sufficient, empowered and independent. They must manage their own careers and work as though they were, literally, their “own businesses.” Just as all businesses must adapt and grow to remain competitive, so too, must each of us continue to acquire and refine our skills in order to attract “employers” of them for whatever period of time suits the parties.

Our national roots are firmly embedded in entrepreneurship. It won the American West, then it won the free world. Capitalism works as well for individuals as it does for large businesses. At the heart of the free market system is the individual who is prepared to make a continuous contribution to their own business, someone else’s or both. Once we fully realize that our “marketability” is our responsibility and, literally, “our business,” then continuous learning will come more naturally to all of us.

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