



**TED SUN**

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## Redefine what it means to learn with three-step plan

What does it mean to learn? After working with countless leaders in for-profit and non-profit organizations, one basic skill continues to elude most professionals. As countless studies have shown - a crucial key to your success is your ability to learn; this basic skill is lacking in business professionals. So how do we really learn...? What have you learned thus far today...? How will you apply that tomorrow...? In the countless workshops and seminars I've delivered, many people defined learning as taking in new information. In a traditional sense, learning might be viewed as a form of brainwashing, where your job is to only regurgitate what's been stuffed into your brain. Remember when you were in school, most teachers expect you to regurgitate what you've learned. The TRUTH about learning is that it involves taking action with new information.

The environment of learning in most organizations, including schools and training workshops in companies, uses the old paradigm. They take the assumption that they are giving you meaningful information. Another poor assumption is that the various forms of evaluation equal effectiveness. These evaluations take the form tests, quizzes, papers, and feedback forms. Many are known to be "Smile Sheets", as trainers measure their effectiveness by how much you liked or enjoyed the course. Is that really learning, sitting through a course while someone speaks at you? There's no room for the application of the content within a safe environment; thus knowledge retention is below 5%, according to a study by Cornell University.

Regardless of your environment, you have the power to make learning much more powerful. You can take three basic steps:

- 1). Conduct a self-review
- 2). Conduct a post-review
- 3). Conduct an impact assessment

The self-review is a simple status check with respect to the course you're taking. Look at any professional sport - they measure everything so that they can improve on it. The same must apply before walking into a training session/class. You need to know what you know; more importantly, you need to be aware of what you don't know. In addition, you'll also need to quantify two primary elements for effective

outcome you look to achieve? Second, what is your motivation for attending the course? Be honest... You might find that your motivations do not align with your learning outcome. For example, one individual wanted to effectively communicate with peers in a communications workshop. Yet, their top motivation was "I was told to be there" or "Everyone else is going". If someone forces you to attend a course, your openness to learning may be very limited. Don't waste your time and money. You must have a desire to be open and learn.

After the completion of the self-review, attend the class as you normally would.

During the course, be sure to jot down notes on what was important to you. As a habit, always take notes. Whether they're detailed or high-level overview, the act of writing helps solidify knowledge inside your mind. Immediately after the course, give yourself a post-course review. This could take five to fifteen minutes. First, write down the top lessons you've learned. Replay the course in your mind and understand how to apply the new information. Second and the most important part of learning - create an

action plan based on the new information. This action plan must have specific actions to take and a timeline in the near future (within days) of the course. Each of the top lessons should have a specific implementation schedule into your life. Share the plan with someone who will hold you accountable. Furthermore, create some measurements to determine the impact of this application.

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The final aspect to learning is your impact assessment. This should come no less than 2 weeks after the course, and sometimes a month or two after the course. The purpose of the impact assessment is to measure how you've implemented the new information and its impact on your life. Compared this assessment with your initial learning goals established in step one of the three step learning process. It will also reveal additional strengths and opportunities for growth which feeds back into step one.

As you can see, learning is a conscious effort. It does not happen by chance! Countless immigrants face the same challenges repeatedly; often, the only difference is in the names of people and companies. The process of learning is often more important than the content itself. This process is completely in your own control. Life is a classroom, so why not make each moment of your life a learning experience. By doing so, you'll capture the wisdom that's inside each and everyone of you.