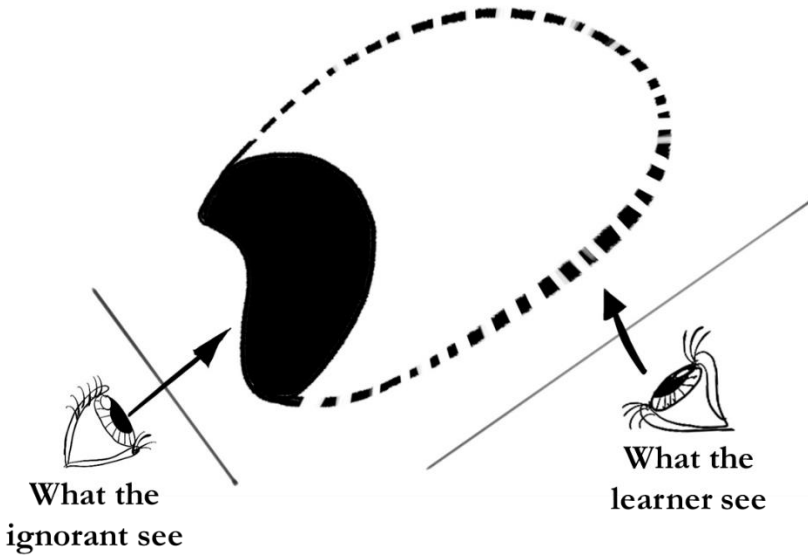


#### 4. DEVELOPING INTRINSIC MOTIVATION



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*The ignorant is blinded by the limited knowledge he has.  
The learner sees the boundary of his ignorance and crafts  
a plan to learn.*

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How to develop the intrinsic motivation you need as an adult learner? One of the assumptions of Shepherd-Knowles' Andragogy of Adult Education model is that adult learners are intrinsically motivated to learn. However, developing the intrinsic motivation to learn something new can be difficult.

The steps for developing that intrinsic motivation are heavily dependent on changing the way you think, setting the right goals, and enjoying what you're learning. I will be discussing each of these steps in this chapter.

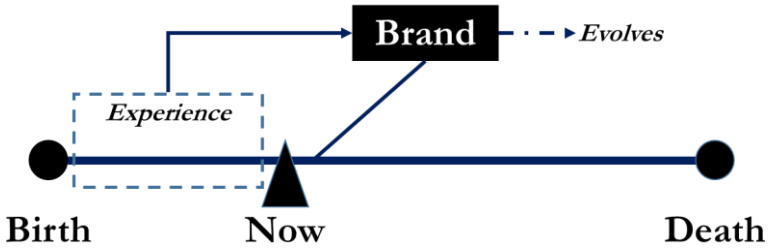
## **DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL BRAND**

The personal brand should guide you towards your overall learning goals. It should lead and contribute towards whom you ultimately will become, sort of answering the question of why we are here. I know it sounds a little grandiose but bear with me for a moment.

We sit between birth and death – if you are reading this book, then there's no exception to that – your brand is the summary of who you are. Your personal brand will evolve based on your cumulative experience, and as you experience new things, it will continue to sum cumulative up to that point.

Your brand can be a little ahead of the game. For example, if you want to be an artist, and you have been painting and have some successes in your attempt to be an artist, then you can carry the brand and probably will be able to carry a name card that says “artist” without attracting ridicule.

However, there's only so much you can push the self-marketing and branding before it fails you. I will illustrate it with a story.



In one of my group mentoring session with a group of consultants, we were discussing the idea of personal brand – what and how to develop one’s brand. Everyone has a brand, and everything that one does or says, positively or negatively impacts our brand in some way. So we were discussing how to continuously work on improving one’s brand.

At the beginning of the session, I asked the group what was their brand. One says “finance consultant who delivers impactful results;” another says “change management consultant that helps organizations manage their transformational journey.” Most of the brand statements were related to work and is on the surface an executive summary of their CVs.

The next question I asked was “what would you like to have etched on your gravestone? Your epitaph?” It was meant to be a provocative question. I asked them in light of what they had just thought about, the brand statement they worked out in the first part of the session. Would they be happy to etch that statement on their gravestone? No one wanted that! Obviously, everyone saw branding as an exercise to push their career ahead but not to create a truly meaningful brand which encompasses their whole life and which includes all their roles in life. So I

gave them another chance. I told them to spend some time thinking about it, and in the next session we'd discuss it.

In the next session, one of them came up with a very creative answer, he wanted his brand to be “legend,” and to have that word etched on his tombstone. I liked his creativity, and I hope he becomes one. However, if he were to carry his name card with the word “legend” on it now, he would have no credibility. He hasn't done enough in life to carry the weight of the word “legend” on his name card.

So I said “personal brand is something that is meant to reflect who you are, in terms of reality versus projecting that brand. It might be slightly ahead of where you are, but it cannot too far ahead. You cannot push the brand beyond what's credible.”

Personal brand must be built on consistencies – consistencies of words and actions that reflect that personality. I doubt one can build a brand that says integrity but without it being true in words and actions. Brands are not built in a single day, or through a single interaction. Brands are built over time, with consistency being the cornerstone.

### **My Brand**

One of the components of my brand is “Leadership Coach”. I carry that with pride and often take time out from work to run workshops for leadership. On my LinkedIn profile, I have that as one of my key brand elements. In my career as an Information Technology consultant, I discovered that I enjoy developing people. I

take pride when any of my team members becomes successful in their career. I find deep satisfactions when I know that I've made a difference in their personal development. I have other components to my brand, but I highlight leadership coach as one that drives me to facilitate leadership workshop and even to write this book. I try to stay consistent with my "brand".

## THINKING ABOUT YOUR LEGACY<sup>7</sup>

Brand has to do with legacy as well, legacy is what you'd want to leave behind in this world. Thinking about legacy allows you to identify what you want your personal brand to be. *Seven Habits* (Covey, 1990) discusses this. It's one of those books that heavily influenced me when I first read it – "Begin with the end in mind." It has led me to think through what I do and say, but I think it has mostly cleared my mind about what I am learning, I ask myself "to what end do I want to learn this for?"

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*"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards"*

*– Soren Kierkegaard*

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<sup>7</sup> A good book to read on this would be "How Will You Measure Your Life?" (Christensen, Allworth, & Dillon, 2012)

So when it comes to branding and leaving a legacy, one has to deal with “The End”. That’s the only way to start. Why do I discuss branding and legacy in a book on learning? Because ultimately what motivates you to learn well has to do with why you want to learn.

I have a few friends who in their eagerness to improve the quality of the pictures they take, bought expensive DSLR (Digital Single Reflex Lens) cameras and other expensive gear. Months into the learning project, they’ve stopped using their camera and it’s now lying on a shelf collecting dust. The difficulties of handling a complex instrument such as a DSLR is almost like handling a jet airplane – you need the ground support and the engineering crew to sustain the jet flying. In the same way, learning how to handle the DSLR requires a fairly good understanding of the complicated equipment, before you handle the equally complicated subject of lenses and lighting. In fact, there’s enough computing power in a modern DSLR to compete with the computing power of a car!

Motivation is therefore very important to sustain that learning journey, for overcoming hurdles and other barriers when it comes to taking up a learning project as complicated as photography. It’s easy to get stuck on the “automatic” setting of the camera and not move beyond it.

Linking that motivation to one’s personal brand and legacy is an important exercise. It requires self-reflection, which is best done in solitude and over a period of months or years. The inner voice is heard discussing “what legacy do I want to leave behind, and with that what skills and capabilities must I have in order to succeed in my plan?” If I were recognized by my friends

and family as being a good “photographer,” that becomes my personal brand. As a result of these skills, my legacy may involve leaving memories for our future generations. But do these sufficiently motivate us? That’s a personal question, the legacy one wants to leave behind, and ultimately that’s the “Begin with the end in mind” type of question.

A photographer for The National Geographic is probably motivated more by capturing the moment, the history playing out in front of his eyes rather than by his paycheck. That is intrinsic motivation coming from deep within the individual. It is much longer-lasting than the fad, the fashion of the moment, the “let’s go get a DSLR and take better pictures” type of learning. It goes much further and definitely results in clearer motivations for the learning project.

## **CHANGING THE WAY YOU THINK**

Henry Ford once said, “Whether you think you can, or you can’t - either way you’re right.” Learning requires you to believe in yourself and your abilities. The moment you begin to harbor self-doubt and negative thoughts is the moment learning suffers. As Chen (2013) aptly states, “The unfortunate superpower of the negative is that it has a stronger impact than the positive.”

You have to learn to train your mind to think positively by intentionally focusing on the positives in life. There is always something positive to see in the negatives of life. Sometimes it just takes a bit of digging to find those positives. The following

tips will help you to focus on positives that will enable you to learn more effectively.

- Use positive affirmations. Start your day off by saying positive things like, “Today is going to be a good day.” Even if you wake up on the wrong side of the bed or if someone or something upsets you, maintain that positive thought in your mind. Repeat it continuously until you feel your mind reacting to the positive message.
- Remove the word “can’t” from your vocabulary. I cannot negate the fact that it’s important for you to be aware of the limitations of your abilities. You shouldn’t try to bite off more than you can chew. However, many of us tend to automatically say that we can’t do something before giving ourselves a chance to try it. The whole premise of this book is that you can learn anything. So, train your mind to believe that you can learn to do that which you think you can’t do. You can.
- Look for at least three positives from your day. No matter how bad your day has been, there must be at least three things that you can appreciate. For instance, you could appreciate the fact that you have a job that allows you to pay your bills, as well as the capacity to learn new skills that can generate additional income. You could also be thankful for your children and family. There are so many things



and experiences that you have been blessed with that you may be taking for granted each day.

- Be aware of your emotions. It's natural for you to experience anger and sadness. However, it's important for you to know what triggers those emotions so that you can view them more rationally. For instance, if your sadness is as a result of a negative self-image, then you know that you need to change the way you view yourself.
- Twist your negative thoughts into positive results. Allow yourself to see a contrast between the negative you feel and the positive you can attain. For instance, if you think that you're fat, instead of saying "I'm fat," you can say "I'm fat, but I am working out every day and beginning to see results." The word "but" can do wonderful things for the way you perceive life. It also creates a realistic type of affirmation that you can believe.

## SETTING THE RIGHT GOALS

A life without goals is like a ship without a course. It's aimless and purposeless. It is possible, however, to set unrealistic goals that do more harm than good to our lives. As you take on the task of acquiring new knowledge, you need to set SMART goals. SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound. I will now

discuss each aspect of this acronym so that you know how to apply it to your goal setting.

**Specific:** Your goals shouldn't be ambiguous. An example of an ambiguous goal is, "I want to run a race." That statement doesn't specify the type of race you want to run and how you're going to qualify for it. A better statement would be, "I am going to train for a marathon by spending time in the gym and running around the University's field."

**Measurable:** You have to put some numbers to your goal to determine if you're really achieving it. Using the previous example the new goal statement would be, "I am going to train for a marathon by spending an hour in the gym 3 days a week and doing at least 5 laps around the University field twice a week."

**Attainable:** Your goal shouldn't be something out of your grasp. For instance, if you know that you don't have the time to commit to training for a marathon, then don't set a goal to run one. You have to be able to commit to your goal and see it as something you can achieve.

**Relevant:** In order for you to stick to your goal it has to be relevant to your life. You have to be able to see some way that you can benefit from it. The person who sets this goal to run the marathon knows that he can benefit from it physically. He knows that it can move him in the right direction of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

**Time-Bound:** You have to set a time limit for your goal. Time limits help you stick to the goal. The final goal statement for the aspiring marathon runner could be, "Within the next year I want to participate in a marathon. I am going to begin

triaging for this marathon in September by spending an hour in the gym 3 days a week and doing at least 5 laps around the University field twice a week.”

Setting SMART goals will help you stay committed to the learning process and achieve even better results. Don't neglect the important task of setting the right goals.

## *Learning Songwriting*

When I was planning our wedding, I had this fantastic idea that I'd write a song and sing that song to my bride. The problem was I didn't know how to write a tune, much less how to write a song with lyrics in it!

I had clear motivation and a clear goal. Now began the adventure of learning how to write a song, and I had about a year to do it. I started buying books on songwriting. In those days, there were no Amazon and bookstores in Malaysia where I grew up didn't stock books on songwriting. Nor did I know any famous songwriters.

Fortunately, I worked for a fantastic firm, Andersen Consulting that sent me to a place called St. Charles, Illinois, USA for training. That year, I remembered carting back a bunch of books from Borders. I bought general books on songwriting, on how to arrange music, on writing lyrics, on sound engineering and mixing, etc.

It took me a further few months, playing by ear, improvising with different chords and testing out my skills in writing tunes. I learned software such as Cakewalk and other software that helped with mixing different tracks. I also learned how to get good recordings, and how to mix them properly.

It was like getting a diploma in songwriting from Berkeley<sup>8</sup>. I was having a blast but 2 months before the

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<sup>8</sup> [www.berklee.edu/](http://www.berklee.edu/)

wedding, I still didn't have the product I wanted, the song for my wedding.

Then a stroke of luck – you always need that in life – the One above needs to bless the work of your hands, and so one day, as I sat in front of my piano, I had the inspiration for both the lyrics and melody. I penned them within the hour and the song was done.

Here's part of the lyrics to that song.

Title: Many Years

Many years have gone by

I am still at her side

She is still my pride, my pride

As we walk down the aisle

Full of joy and pride

She is now my bride, my bride

Upon reflection, I think that the inspiration for the song wouldn't have come to me if I didn't have the motivation, the right behavior for learning, the books I managed to get my hands on, which fed my mind, and the support environment such as my piano and computer to mix my music. Reflecting on my learning process, I concluded that I had 4 elements in my songwriting learning journey: I had Motivation, I worked on Mind, Muscles (behavior) and I had the right environment (Matter), but I would have done much better I believe if I'd had a coach, or friends who were similarly interested in music, which I now term the element of Membership. You will read more about these later.

## ENJOYING WHAT YOU'RE LEARNING

Anthony D' Angelo once said, "Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow." Passion is an integral part of learning. Think about your favorite high school teacher. Was that person your favorite teacher because of the passion she ignited in you for the subject? Some of the teachers that we have the fondest memories of are those who transferred their passion for learning to us.

Before you embark on a learning adventure, you need to ask yourself a few questions:

- Am I passionate about this?
- Is this something I really want to learn?
- Is this something I can become passionate about if I commit myself to it?

Your answers to these questions will determine if it's worthwhile to embark on your learning journey. The more passionate you are about something, the more likely it is that you will see great results from it. Passion transforms talent and hard work into something you can be proud of.

This chapter lays the foundation for what you need to know in order to apply my Adult Learning Architecture. If you can begin to condition your mind to think positively, set SMART goals, and identify an area you really want to learn about, then the process of learning becomes much simpler.

## *APPLICATION QUESTIONS*

1. Write three positive affirmation statements that you're going to make today.
2. Set a SMART goal that you want to accomplish within the next year.
3. Is the goal that you set something that you're passionate about? Explain why you're passionate about it if your answer is yes.

Your Response: