

The Capability You'll Lose If You Don't Use

As you think about the goals you want to accomplish, think about the new knowledge and skills you need to achieve them. Identify the areas in which you need to develop. There are many formal and informal learning methods as well as resources you can employ. The obvious formal learning methods include on-the-job training courses, college courses, and professional certification programs. There are even more less-formal options which provide the most learning. Here are a dozen less formal but highly effective learning methods to leverage:

- Create or participate in a small group focused on learning such as a team book club, team coaching program, or word-of-the day distribution list.
- Read non-fiction books and industry publications.
- Subscribe to online articles and blogs on topics related to your industry or self-improvement areas.
- Teach at staff meetings, work lunch-and-learns, industry programs, or local college courses. No one learns more than the teacher.
- Mentor and coach others. Like a teacher, mentors and coaches learn too. Offer to mentor someone who could benefit from your knowledge and experience. If you are a manager, adopt a “leader as a coach” style and make coaching a regular part of your management activity.
- Receive coaching. Hire a coach who can help you learn and hold you accountable to achieving your goals.
- Attend professional seminars on topics such as time management, public speaking, managing conflict, or whatever you aspire to work on.
- Speak at industry seminars or community events. Effective speaking requires effortful learning including research, practice, and memorization.
- Write white papers, blogs, or articles for professional publications. Like speaking, writing requires research and helps with memory retention.
- Conduct research. Review online summaries of studies, surveys, assessments, and experiments. Look for new discoveries, innovations, and best practices you can apply that have the potential to significantly improve your performance.
- Take on special assignments. Lead a cross-functional project at work, volunteer for a corporate initiative, or work internationally.
- Seek new experiences. Get out of your comfort zone. Attend meetings and events outside of your normal groups, meet new people, volunteer for a charity organization, or join a non-profit board. Participating in new areas requires more effort which calls into action more of your neurons.

Select the learning methods that suit your needs. Use them as regularly as possible to help retain your steady growth of neurons as well as increase your overall capability.



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