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Dodging Burnout and Minimizing Turnover

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Dodging Burnout and Minimizing Turnover

Fred O. Walumbwa, PhD, I-Chieh Hsu, PhD, Cindy Wu, PhD, Everlyne Misati, PhD Candidate, and Amanda Christensen-Salem, PhD

It is no secret that real estate agencies rely almost entirely on the high-quality service of their agents to maintain an edge over their competitors. Arguably, an organization’s employees are its most valuable assets, especially in service-related industries such as real estate. The service industry represents the largest area of growth for the United States economy—responsible for nearly 80% of total employment in the US—and is increasingly expanding to become a source of global competitive advantage.

Interestingly, studies have shown that these service-related jobs, including careers in real estate, can have negative impact on employees. Possible adverse effects include burnout and decreased motivation, which in turn leads to higher employee turnover within an organization.

About Our Study

How can real estate agencies and managers lessen these impacts on their agents? We aim to answer this question and find practical ways of increasing employee performance and decreasing employee turnover within organizations. A sample of roughly 550 individuals within the service industry was collected. We suspected that incorporating initiating structure leadership would have a direct or indirect impact on four key areas including service climate, collective and individual meaningfulness, service performance, and collective turnover, ultimately resulting in increased employee and organizational well-being (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 summarizes our hypothesized path model.

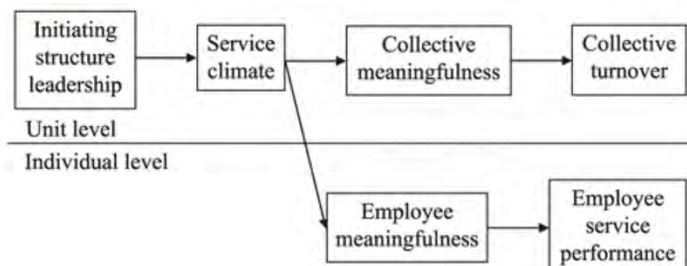


Figure 1. Hypothesized path model.

Initiating Structure Leadership

Initiating structure leadership is leader behavior that involves clarifying follower expectations, roles, and responsibilities. Those with this leadership style are oriented toward getting work done and establishing well-defined patterns of work and channels of communication. Leaders not only set priorities and define task roles and responsibilities among group members, but they also clarify the means by which the work is to be achieved and provide resources to help employees achieve those goals and objectives. Additionally, good managers maintain definite standards of performance. Essentially, leaders should be clear in defining policies, practices, and procedures that constitute the tone and atmosphere in which employees work.

Impact of Initiating Structure Leadership

As shown in in Figure 1, our hypothesized relationships are that initiating structure leadership leads to a stronger service climate, which then results in meaningfulness and lower collective turnover. These relationships were confirmed through our research. With a clear understanding of what is expected and rewarded in the work unit (from leadership that initiates structure), the service climate is enhanced. A service climate is an employee's shared perception of the policies, practices, and procedures concerning customer service. Because of added buy-in, employees find meaningfulness in their work. Leadership arguably represents the most important of all contextual factors that affect motivation, because leaders manage meaning by defining and shaping reality in which followers work. Meaningfulness is not something leaders give employees; rather, it is the responsibility of leaders to create the right work environment that then serves to shape work meaningfulness. Outcomes of collective meaningfulness and employee meaningfulness can be seen at both the unit and individual levels:

- **Unit level:** Meaningfulness within an organization has been shown to reduce the collective turnover level of employees who exit either a group, work unit, or organization. Turnover can cause large disruptions and erosion of company culture or climate and represents a monetary loss associated with training replacements. When an employee leaves, the organization also loses that individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities. Satisfied employees are more likely to support each other by building environments that are associated with lower turnover. Put simply, people stay if they are satisfied with their job and committed to their organization and leave if they are not.
- **Individual level:** Employees who find meaningfulness at work have been found to have a higher level of service performance. Employees who find their job meaningful are also likely to integrate different viewpoints to identify innovative ideas, provide quality service to their customers, and also exhibit enthusiasm toward addressing potential customers issues and problems. Consider, for example, how much more satisfactory is such an employee's performance regarding understanding the needs of customers.

Practical Implications

Initiating structure highlights the importance of task-related leadership behaviors in creating work environments conducive to motivation and performance. Training programs that focus on task-oriented forms of leadership may be a worthwhile investment in striving to increase employee motivation and, as a result, higher levels of service performance. Managers should also pay close attention to creating a motivating work environment, where work duties and roles are well defined and specific goals are set. A manager should strive to align an agent's individual work goals and values with those of the work unit/agency.

Our findings indicate work units/agencies have lower turnover rates when there are higher levels of collective meaningfulness. This suggests that managers/agencies invest in tangible programs that encourage and facilitate meaningfulness, such as training in areas that directly impact an



agent's knowledge and expertise. A manager can get creative in finding ways to stimulate motivation and ensure agents are energized and meaningfully engaged in their work. Inviting in guest speakers, taking time to focus on employees' personal and professional development, creating reward programs to recognize excellence, or simply sending out motivational emails are good places to start.

Managers should strive to create work environments conducive to employee motivation and performance by implementing initiating structure leadership, which has been confirmed to enhance employee service performance and reduce turnover.

Recommended Reading

Walumbwa, Fred O., I-Chieh Hsu, Cindy Wu, Everlyne Misati, and Amanda Christensen-Salem (2019), "Employee Service Performance and Collective Turnover: Examining the Influence of Initiating Structure Leadership, Service Climate and Meaningfulness," *Human Relations*, 72(7), 1131-1153.

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Dr. Fred O. Walumbwa (PhD – University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) has authored or co-authored more than 90 academic technical reports, book chapters, and research papers in a wide range of prestigious journals in business, management, and psychology. He was recently recognized as one of the top 2% most influential authors in industrial and organizational psychology globally.

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Timing is Everything: A Scheduled Plan for Your Social Media Presence

Vamsi K. Kanuri, PhD, Yixing Chen, PhD Candidate, and Shrihari (Hari) Sridhar, PhD

Do potential clients find you on Facebook and engage with your content? When you post content, is there a strategy, or do you only post when you think about it or when you get something new? Some people prefer a strategy known as “spray and pray”—simply throwing content out on social media and hoping something sticks. Part of your strategy may include “boosting” posts as targeted content advertising (TCA). If you do pay to boost some of your posts, are you absolutely confident that you are creating value with the dollars you are spending? The truth is, most real estate agents are very busy, and few agents are at the peak of their social media effectiveness. But as social media platforms mature, strategies must also mature to remain effective.



In an attempt to piece together a more effective social media content strategy, we conducted a study seeking to quantify the impacts of social media posts based on time of day, emotionality of the content, whether content requires high cognitive effort, and the results of boosting. Our basic hypothesis was that posting social media content in the morning would be more effective than doing so in the afternoon, with a bit of a rally in the evening. We also hypothesized that social media content with high-arousal emotions would similarly be most effective in the morning, least effective in the afternoon, and moderately effective in the evening. As we considered posts which require more cognitive stimulation, we theorized that such posts would be most effective in the afternoon, moderately effective in the evening, and least effective in the morning. Finally, we theorized that boosted posts would be most effective in the afternoon, moderately effective in the evening, and least effective in the morning.

The Importance of Working Memory

We based our hypotheses on the concept of *working memory availability*, or how much mental energy people have to store and manipulate information for different tasks during different times of the day. The human mind can only juggle so many subjects at one time, pushing all other subjects into more long-term memory. The working memory availability one has varies throughout the day. For example, your clients potentially have more mental energy to devote to

your social media posts in the morning before the day has become stressful or tiring. We hypothesized that because the working memory one can access decreases as the day gets busier, attention to posts would decrease in the afternoon and then rebound in the relaxed evenings. Accordingly, there would be similar availability of working memory to process highly emotional posts during these times. As the brain engages with more complex problems at work throughout the day, accordingly, we asserted that cognitively engaging posts would perform best in the afternoon. Boosted posts, we thought, would perform best in the afternoon because of how they successfully break into otherwise expected norms on someone's social media feed. At this point in the day, anything which breaks expected patterns will bring more attention, so a post from a fairly unknown real estate agent with a house in a neighborhood that a user has been considering may seem unique enough to cause further exploration. These were our theories based on what we know about working memory, but we carried out a study to quantify these ideas and see if our hypotheses play out this neatly in real social media contexts.

The Study

We studied 5,706 Facebook posts from a top-50 American newspaper employing a social media manager who admittedly did not have a social media strategy beyond a few tidbits of common-sense advice (waiting 30 minutes between posts, for example). Using link clicks as the primary measure of engagement, we recorded the time of the posts, grouping them into four categories (morning, afternoon, evening, and night). We then studied more specialized factors—such as whether the content was “boosted”—and determined whether the content called for high-arousal emotions or high cognitive processing. Because we know that the content a newspaper posts varies widely from content other professionals post, we included statistical controls for these differences. We also account for Facebook's algorithmic bias and strategic posting behavior of the social media manager. Though agents likely do not have the same reach as a major newspaper, the results we found in this study should be helpful to those in the real estate industry.

The Results

In testing our four hypotheses, we found first that, indeed, content posted in the morning receives more clicks than in the afternoon, but surprisingly, afternoon and evening were roughly equal. Second, posting content with negative high-arousal emotions (e.g., angry) performed better in the morning, while performing roughly the same in the afternoon and evening. Working memory likely plays a large role in this observation. Posting content with positive high-arousal emotions did not present an observable trend. Content which required higher cognitive processing performed better in the afternoon and evening, with decreased performance in the morning. Boosted posts performed, as we expected, better in the afternoon, but about equally in the morning and evening. While these results make some sense, what actionable conclusions can we draw from them?

In our study, we articulated five general managerial takeaways:

- 1) Post your non-boosted content in the morning: people are paying attention without needing differentiation during that time. Non-boosted posts performed 8.8% higher in this time period.
- 2) Boost your post in the afternoon when it is most effective. Boosted posts were clicked 21% more in the afternoon compared with boosted posts in the morning.
- 3) If you're going to post negative social media content with high-arousal emotions, schedule it in the morning. This kind of content was 1.6% more effective in the morning.
- 4) If you have a social media advertising budget, re-allocate the money to more effective times of day rather than investing more.
- 5) Boosting effectiveness has diminishing returns. It is helpful to give some money to social media boosting, but beyond a moderate investment, returns are not nearly as effective.

Conclusions

Prioritize your best and most important/interesting posts in the morning. Things like exciting new listings, advice for movers, and showcasing the competitive advantages you offer along with your unique place in the market can be shared in this time slot. The working memory of your followers will allow for these more exciting posts to be received best before noon.



Second, limit the highly emotional content you share, but when you do, try to post it in the morning as well. Posts about dramatic price improvements or a touching news story involving real estate might work best in this time slot. These emotions will be better processed when users still have the working memory of a new day, and posting early could drive up clicks.

Third, have fun with your posts in the evening. Share things like questions and polls, fun facts about yourself or the kind of sales and results you get, interactive articles about what house may be best for clients, etc. After a long work day, users are beginning to regain some working memory, so these posts may be most effective in this time slot.

Finally, don't spend much more of your money boosting ads; simply spend that money better! In general, spend these dollars in the afternoon. Don't neglect posting in the afternoon, just remember that boosted posts are probably your best bet in this time slot.

If you are worried about your professional social media presence, take heart! Effective social media is not only possible for a busy real estate agent, but can be scheduled to receive the most attention from your followers. With a little thought, consistency, and a schedule, you can become a more effective social media manager.

Recommended Reading

Kanuri, Vamsi K., Yixing Chen, and Shrihari (Hari) Sridhar (2018), “Scheduling Content on Social Media: Theory, Evidence, and Application,” *Journal of Marketing*, 82(6), 89-108.

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Boosting Sales Force Morale in Highly Dynamic, Complex Markets: The Role of Job Resources

Nikolaos G. Panagopoulos, PhD, Bryan Hochstein, PhD, Thomas L. Baker, PhD, and Michael A. Pimentel, PhD Candidate

Improving sales force morale, defined as the sales force's collective attitudes toward major aspects of the job and organization, can be a valuable strategy to significantly enhance job performance and reduce employee turnover.¹ For example, Groupon has experienced above average rates of employee turnover due to low employee morale.² Not surprisingly, many companies, such as John Deere and Facebook, are investing substantial resources to measure, manage, and improve employee morale. Despite the benefits that can come from high employee morale, little is known about what factors impact sales force morale. The aim of our research is to understand: (1) What market demands negatively impact sales force morale; (2) What resources an organization can leverage to buffer the negative effects market demands have on sales force morale; and (3) What impact sales force morale has on key organizational outcome measures.

Job Demands and Job Resources

Salesperson behavior and performance are a function of job characteristics that can be classified into two categories: job demands and job resources. *Job demands* are aspects of the job that require sustained physical or psychological (cognitive or emotional) effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain physical and/or psychological costs.³ For example, work pressure or work-related stress can result in salesperson burnout derived



from the consistent effort required to meet work demands. In an attempt to buffer the negative effects associated with job demands, salespeople will often draw on job resources.

Job resources are physical, psychological, social, or organizational components of a job that function to help salespeople achieve work goals, reduce job demands (and their costs), and/or stimulate learning.⁴ When job resources are properly implemented, they can provide salespeople with tools and motivation that help improve work engagement and performance.³ For example, a salesperson who works in a fast-paced environment may become highly stressed. However, if the salespeople are provided the help of a support assistant or technology to automate some aspects

of their job (e.g., automatic e-mail response, automated billing, etc.), that resource makes some aspects of the job easier, offsetting the high demand of other aspects of the job.

Using job-demand resource theory as our theoretical lens, our study shows that the enhancement of morale through three job resources will reduce the negative effect of market demands on sales force morale. These job resources are: (1) *sales capabilities training*, training directed at improving the sales force's task-related knowledge, skills, and abilities in proactive response to job demands; (2) *firm's product portfolio depth*, characterized by firms carrying product lines comprising a large number of product variants; and (3) *sales unit's cross-functional cooperation*, which is the degree to which the sales unit cooperates with the marketing and research and development (R&D) units in the strategy-making process.

Job Demands-Resources Theory

Job demands-resources (JD-R) theory suggests that employee job strain, and thus reduced levels of performance, occurs when there is an imbalance between demands on employees and the resources available to respond to those demands. Thus, we investigated the negative impact of two salient demands inherent in the external market environment—that is, customer purchase complexity and market dynamism—on sales force morale. *Customer purchase complexity* refers to the extent to which sales force tasks entail working with a customer base whose purchase decision-making processes involve long purchase times, high levels of information needs, and/or largely unfamiliar purchase situations. *Market dynamism* refers to business environments that experience frequent change and shifts in focus.⁵ Furthermore, JD-R theory suggests that increases in job resources—that is, “tools” provided by the firm to help the sales force successfully manage increased demands—can “buffer” the negative impacts of job demands.³ Therefore, we also explored three job resources that could attenuate the negative impact of market demands on morale (i.e., sales capabilities training, firm's product portfolio depth, and sales unit's cross-functional cooperation). Finally, we also investigated the extent to which sales force morale would reduce sales force turnover and increase sales force productivity.

Results and Implications for Real Estate

The results of our study revealed evidence that sales force morale helps increase sales force productivity while lowering salesperson voluntary turnover rates. Specifically, we found that an increase of morale by one point on a 5-point scale improved sales force productivity by €226,834 (the equivalent of about \$250,068 in US currency) of operating revenues per salesperson, while it lowered turnover rate by 5%. These findings are particularly relevant for real estate firms that face challenges with high levels of turnover or seek to improve salesperson productivity.

This study informs managers on the steps they might want to consider while measuring and monitoring morale of their real estate agents. In particular, managers may want to focus on employee satisfaction with the job, along with employee satisfaction with company policy and

procedures. Also, with regard to the role of market demands, we found that both customer purchase complexity and market dynamism lowered sales force morale. Although managers have little, if any, influence on the external environment, they can, however, manage how salespeople deal with complexity and dynamism. Specifically, our research suggests that job resources, such as sales capabilities training and sales unit's cross-functional cooperation, can mitigate the negative effects of either purchase complexity or market dynamism.

For example, training real estate agents with a goal of improving their sales capabilities can weaken the negative impact of purchase complexity and market dynamism on morale. If a property sale entails working with customers who need a great deal of information before making a purchase commitment or when customer needs change frequently, agents need to be trained in areas such as understanding customer needs or communicating effectively with customers to acquire the capabilities needed for mitigating the influence of complexity and dynamism.

Finally, our study indicates that when sales forces are tasked with promoting a deep product portfolio, the negative effects that purchase complexity and market dynamism have on sales force morale are amplified. However, this aspect is not likely to affect real estate agents who focus primarily on a single product line. Managers should acknowledge such contingencies uncovered by our research and try to manage their occurrence by providing additional support or coaching to their real estate agents.

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Panagopoulos, Nikolaos G., Bryan Hochstein, Thomas L. Baker, and Michael A. Pimentel (2018), "Boosting Sales Force Morale in Highly Dynamic, Complex Markets: The Role of Job Resources," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 74, 237-253.

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Dr. Bryan Hochstein’s (PhD – Florida State University) research has been published in the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Marketing Letters*, and the *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*. His industry experience includes a twenty-year career in the service/sales industry. Bryan’s *research experience* is within the broad topic of sales. Bryan is a thought leader of research and education on Customer Success Management (CSM), and his research and teaching on CSM are among the first on the subject. Recent research topics include the CSM and the sales-service interface, CSM ambidexterity & role, and the customer’s view of CSM.

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Dr. Thomas Baker’s (PhD – Florida State University) research interests are in the areas of consumer/employee interactions in service settings, service recovery efforts, and organizational approaches to maximizing service delivery. Prior to coming to The University of Alabama, Dr. Baker was Associate Professor of Marketing at Clemson University (2006-2013), Assistant/Associate/ Full Professor of Marketing at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (1994-2006), and Assistant Professor of Marketing at the University of Akron (1989-1994). Dr. Baker has been a visiting lecturer at the Manchester Business School, Zagreb School of Business

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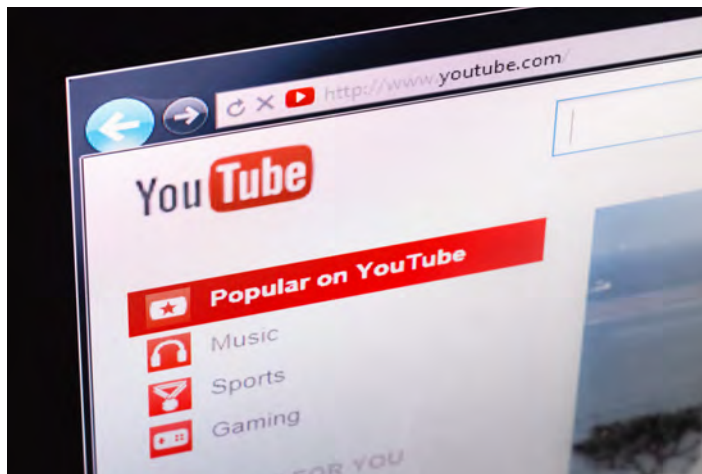
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Riding the Wave: How to Make Your Videos Go Viral

Gerard J. Tellis, PhD, Deborah J. MacInnis, PhD, Seshadri Tirunillai, PhD, and Yanwei Zhang, PhD

A Super Bowl Bud ad of a puppy's charming romance with a Clydesdale pony went viral, racking up more than 60 million views on YouTube. This was an organic ad that the advertiser freely uploaded on YouTube, without forced audience viewing. Such YouTube views get far more viewer engagement than TV ads because they are voluntary, not forced exposure. As such, virality is the new ad currency. We have found that the key driver of virality is sharing of videos. That brings up the next question: what drives sharing?



To answer this question, we conducted two independent studies with YouTube video ads that tested 11 emotions and over 60 ad characteristics. The two independent studies produced consistent results. We found that information-focused content had a negative impact on sharing except when products were new or high in price. On the other hand, emotion-focused content was an important driver of ad sharing. Those video ads that induced positive

emotions, like inspiration, excitement and amusement or induced feelings of warmth were highly effective at enhancing sharing. To arouse emotions, ads used elements like drama, surprising plot, and appealing characters (e.g., celebrities, babies, animals) to foster positive emotions. Ads that had strong commercial content, such as those that were shown the brand name early or frequently in the ad, induced less sharing.

Understanding Your Audience

Why do (or don't) viewers share the type of content described above? We hypothesized that the reasons are tied to previously studied motivations for sharing content. Often, consumers share content for self-serving motivations—that is, because they want to help themselves. For example, consumers might want to look good in the eyes of others by sharing content that is informative or emotionally evocative or because they want others to reciprocate by sharing content that they enjoy or find valuable. Beyond self-serving motivations, individuals also share content to feel included in a group. By being part of a group with whom content is shared, individuals can socialize with others and learn from them. Finally, they can share content because they want to help others—i.e., for altruistic reasons.

How to Make a Viral Video: The Three Types of Content

To be more specific about our findings, we observed that ads with heavy amounts of informational content typically have voice-overs or narrators who argue in favor of or share facts about a product. We expect that most viewers find this content dry and boring, so they are not likely to share it. However, when an individual is considering a large purchase, such as a new home, informational content can positively impact sharing. Information-focused content also results in increased sharing when a product is new or unfamiliar to consumers. Consumers might share such content because they want their friends to know that they are “in the know” about the product, and they also want to protect their friends from making an uninformed purchase.

If an ad arouses discrete positive emotions like warmth, love, pride, and joy, it has a greater chance of going viral. Sharing such content is consistent with the motivations for self-enhancement and social engagement. The best way to produce these emotions in viewers is to use dramatic elements in the ad rather than a third-party narrator; for example, use vivid and relatable characters engage in a captivating plot. The key elements of a good drama are characters and a plot that reaches a climax and ends in a pleasant surprise. Characters who are appealing, have similar traits and concerns as the audience, and are endearing can evoke positive emotions because viewers can see themselves in the drama. A plot engages viewers of the ad, in a way that informational content cannot provide. Babies, animals, and cartoons are appealing characters because they are intrinsically appealing to people. Celebrities elicit positive emotions and are likable, but the price tag for the ad will be much higher. Whereas celebrities are attention-getting characters, the use of babies and animals may be more authentic and cost-efficient for advertisers. We did not find that negative emotions like shame, sadness, and anger resulted in significantly greater sharing. One reason is that such negative emotions were uncommon in the sample of ads that comprised the studies.

The old mantra in advertising was to maximize brand name. Whereas the advertiser wants consumers to remember their brand name, making the brand highly prominent in the ad reduced sharing. Brand prominence can limit the effects of dramatization in the ad by disrupting the flow of the story and the relatability of the characters, negating the positive effects of those elements on sharing. Additionally, viewers might not share ads that prominently feature the brand name because they worry that those with whom they share content believe the sharer is spamming the shared other with an ad message. This inference goes against a self-serving motivation. Our study found that the best place to reference the brand is a short moment at the very end of the ad.

Our study found that the optimal length for a YouTube ad is between 1.2 and 1.7 minutes. This is expected because this is the amount of time needed to make a meaningful connection with the audience through storytelling, but not so much time that attention wanes.

Final Thoughts

Generating a viral video is the new currency on the web. Our research indicates that virality is driven primarily by shares of videos. But what drives sharing? Our research reveals that sharing is not a matter of luck or art. It can be ascertained by scientific research. In particular, ads that arouse positive emotions through drama with limited brand prominence and informational content have the greatest potential for virality. However, information can be helpful if the ad is for a product that is new and/or expensive, but too much factual narration may decrease sharing. Effective drama has a captivating plot, likable, authentic characters such as babies or cute animals instead of expensive celebrities. Plot consists of a series of interwoven events that reach a climax and ends with a surprising solution.



Real estate brokers need to implement these tactics when uploading video ads on YouTube that are shared across social media like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Purchasing a home is a high-risk situation. This means that viewers will want informational content in the ad, but not at the expense of emotional content. Consider information about the current state of the housing market or the parts of the home-buying process with which new homebuyers may not be familiar. Tell the story of a relatable character interacting with your agents to find their dream home. Portray your agents giving a family some peace of mind and a happily-ever-after. There is no need for Hollywood—instead, give the family puppy a cameo. Place your brand briefly and at the very end while you can still hear mom singing a lullaby to a happy baby in his/her new nursery. Give information for the high-risk purchase. Communicate positive feelings of warmth, pride, and joy. Use cute characters with minimal brand prominence. Then sit back and watch your ad go viral.

Recommended Reading

Gerard, Tellis J., Deborah J. MacInnis, Seshadri Tirunillai, and Yanwei Zhang (2019), “What Drives Virality (Sharing) of Online Digital Content? The Critical Role of Information Emotion, and Brand Prominence,” *Journal of Marketing*, 83(4), 1-20.

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Entrepreneurship: The Path to Well-Being

Nadav Shir, PhD, Boris N. Nikolaev, PhD, and Joakim Wincent, PhD

Self-determination theory (SDT) proposes that entrepreneurs enjoy certain psychological benefits from starting and running a new business. These benefits include, for example, higher levels of job and life satisfaction due to satisfying needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. However, in contrast to the benefits, entrepreneurs may also experience high stress and longer working hours, while also fearing lower income. In this study, we examine how autonomy mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship and personal well-being.



Self-determination theory—the idea that human beings are inclined toward self-improvement and are constantly striving for personal growth¹—assumes that people are *oriented* towards well-being; i.e. they are inclined to fulfill their psychological needs. One’s external environment (work environment) has a significant impact on one’s well-being.² SDT asserts that there are three universal human psychological needs with which we are born—autonomy,

competence, and relatedness. Psychologists have defined well-being as happiness or the presence of good feelings.³ Others have suggested that well-being also includes life-satisfaction—the subjective evaluation of how one’s life is going.⁴ SDT holds that happiness and life-satisfaction are present when a person is psychologically healthy, but they are not the full measure of well-being since they naturally occur when one’s basic psychological needs are met.⁵ Thus, SDT postulates that any measure of well-being must also include subjective vitality. This is a measure of one’s ability to do the things one wants to do, i.e. to write one’s story as one wants it to be written.² Together, *happiness*, *life-satisfaction*, and *subjective vitality* constitute well-being. SDT suggests that meeting the three basic psychological needs leads to greater levels of each of the three components of well-being. When individuals engage in self-organizing and self-motivating behaviors, those psychological needs are fulfilled.

Entrepreneurial Tasks are the Best Environment

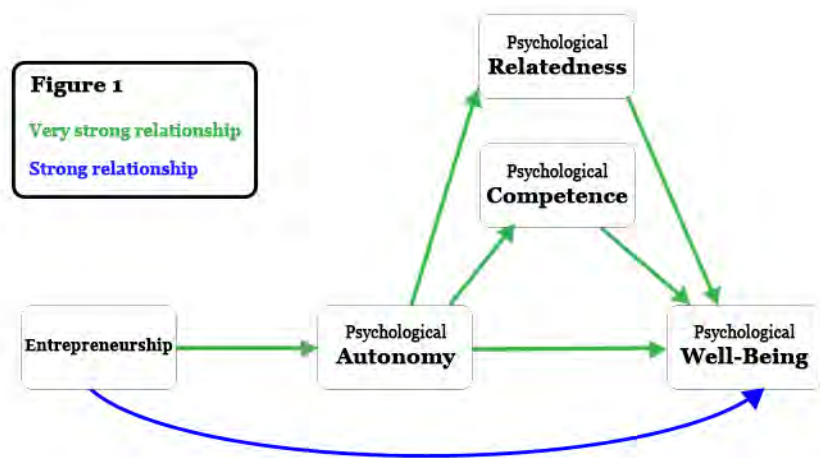
A work environment that is conducive to psychological health would regularly allow individuals to organize their self-motivated behaviors. Of the three basic psychological needs, autonomy is uniquely expressed through the organization of self-motivated behaviors.⁶ Therefore, autonomy serves as a path to fulfilling competence and relatedness. The work tasks that offer the greatest amount of autonomy are entrepreneurial tasks. The term “entrepreneurship” often evokes the

idea of self-employment. However, self-employment is a subset of entrepreneurship as an increasing portion of entrepreneurial activities (the starting up of new ventures, etc.) are performed by individuals employed by medium-sized and large corporations. Moreover, some self-employed individuals spend most of their time on managerial tasks instead of entrepreneurial tasks. Our study focused on a nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial tasks, as those tasks that inherently require individuals to organize and work for their own goals. Compared with traditional wage-employment, entrepreneurial task engagement supports and stimulates psychological need-satisfying experiences. Entrepreneurship catalyzes the self-organization of one’s own approach to work-related goals (autonomy), stimulates personal growth (competence), and supports the formation of authentic relationships (relatedness). Since the three basic psychological needs are fulfilled by entrepreneurial task engagement, happiness, life-satisfaction, and subjective vitality are all positively impacted, leading to well-being.

We sampled 1,837 individuals, of whom 1,586 were non-entrepreneurial (i.e. traditional wage-employed) workers and 251 were actively engaged (i.e. involved in a start-up or owned a business 42 months or less) in entrepreneurial activities. We collected survey data from every individual in the sample and took subjective measures of the three psychological needs and the three components of well-being. Engagement in entrepreneurship was systematically associated with higher levels of well-being compared with engagement in regular employment. This relationship was still present even after adjusting for socio-economic differences such as gender, age, education, income, and the type of employment organization. These results held even after controlling for dispositional traits such as self-efficacy and optimism. This is an important finding because previous studies suggest that well-being is partly determined by individuals’ genetic profiles and stable personality traits.

Our study did *not* reveal that entrepreneurial task engagement was related to increased levels of competence and relatedness. However, entrepreneurial task engagement was significantly related to autonomy, and an increase in psychological autonomy was significantly related to increases in competence and relatedness.

These findings suggest a model we term “multi-path mediation,” (Figure 1) wherein entrepreneurial task engagement influences competence and relatedness *through* autonomy and all three psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—influence well-being. Our model and findings highlight the advantage that entrepreneurship has over traditional wage-



employment for psychological-need satisfaction that leads to well-being. Feeling free and acting in accordance with one's own decisions is a unique benefit that entrepreneurial task engagement has in meeting the psychological needs that underlie well-being.

Real Estate: Who's Business is it Anyway?

From our study, we concluded that entrepreneurship has significant benefits for psychological health. Engaging in entrepreneurial work tasks supports individuals' basic psychological needs because such tasks allow them to organize their self-motivated behaviors at work, leading to higher levels of agency (freedom), competence (ability), and relatedness (organic relationships).

Managers in a real-estate firm could see improved performance from their agents if they incorporate practices that assist their agents' self-organizing behaviors. Agents typically perform a variety of entrepreneurial tasks, such as finding new listings, advertising their services, and interfacing with mortgage companies and other financing sources. Entrepreneurial tasks necessarily include stressors, failure, and grief over losses. Managers may be tempted to prevent agent failure by closely monitoring agents and transactions. However, our research indicates that managers would experience better results and have a healthier workforce if they encourage self-authoring techniques. Managers who allow agents the freedom to write their own stories will see their agents ready to work each day, because those agents have a clear sense of how their job is a part of that story. There may be some failures in the beginning, but the long-term success is worth the short-term setbacks during the discovery phase. Managers who limit micromanagement and encourage freedom should witness their agents experience psychological-need satisfaction, happiness, life-satisfaction, and subjective vitality. These agents are free to be well.

The real estate broker's role has great potential for encouraging entrepreneurial task engagement among agents. Agents must manage and build their personal book of business, which requires self-organization and self-motivation. The agent is free (autonomous) and able (competent) to make the connections in his/her community (relatedness). The agent's business is *his/her* business. Our research suggests that the independence intrinsic to the real estate agent's role leads to his/her well-being by meeting underlying psychological needs. It may seem daunting when an agent is just starting his/her business—every entrepreneur feels this. The long-term health benefits are worth it. Brainstorm. Try. Fail. Reorganize, and try again. Over time independence becomes empowering, self-confidence is a given, and meaningful relationships are multiplied. Where can every real-estate agent find his/her little piece of heaven? In the freedom and ability to write his/her own story the way it should be written.

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Dr. Nadav Shir’s (PhD – Stockholm School of Economics) primary research interests concern the link between entrepreneurship and mental health. In 2010, Nadav initiated and designed the largest study in the world to date on the link between entrepreneurship and mental health. This initiative was received in 2013 by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Consortium, the largest ongoing study of entrepreneurial dynamics in the world. In 2012-2013, Dr. Shir visited New York University (NYU) Stern School of Business and studied in the psychology department. After completing his thesis in 2015, his research was approved and published in the *Journal of Business Venturing* in early 2019. He is fluent in Hebrew, English, and Swedish. Dr. Shir also teaches at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSES). His courses include Personal Development, Negotiations for Startups, and Growth - Managing Your Firm. He regularly gives SSES workshops and lectures on personal development and self-regulation.

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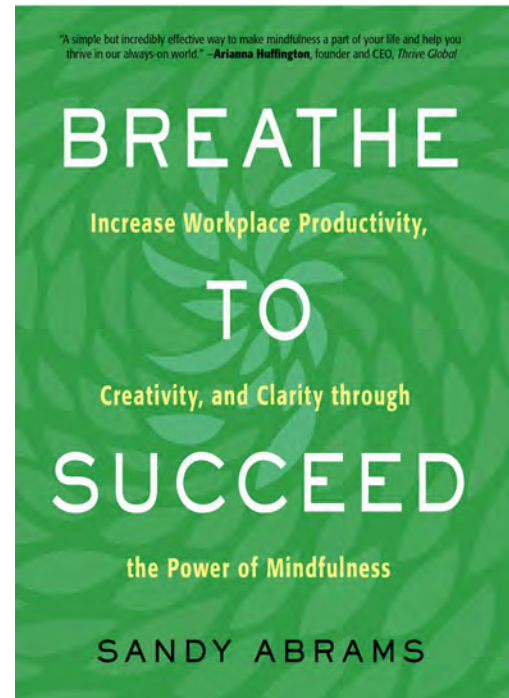
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INSIDER: Breathe to Succeed: Increase Workplace Productivity, Creativity, and Clarity through the Power of Mindfulness

Corrie A. H. Penraat, MBA Candidate

In today's real estate environment, it isn't often you get a chance to just be still and breathe. The demands of multitasking and meeting deadlines under extreme pressure never seem to stop. We operate in a constant state of low-grade emergency immersed in technology that makes it nearly impossible to escape daily tension and strain. Rarely do we physically dispel stress hormones and take the time to resolve the underlying problem or stop to question our priorities.

In Sandy Abrams' "Breathe to Succeed: Increase Workplace Productivity, Creativity, and Clarity through the Power of Mindfulness," we learn how breath, self-awareness, and small changes in our daily routine can be a big part of our overall individual wellness solution, which can, in turn, lead to increased creativity, positivity, and productivity.



THINK POINT #1: Breathe

Oddly enough, findings show that the method in which we breathe *in* can act as a remote control for our brains. By breathing in through our nose, we indirectly control the signals of our memory and emotional brain centers. In this way, we can control and optimize brain function using our in-breath to have faster, more accurate emotional discernment and recognition, as well as gain better memory.

Breath is the catalyst that will begin to change the way you reach your goals. You'll communicate with your brain and instruct it to help your mind and body think and feel in the way that will lead to expansion—more success, more opportunity, and more balance. Patience, persistence, confidence, nonjudgmental behavior, clarity, creativity, and compassion are easily accessible through conscious in-breath techniques and will help tremendously in real estate.

Abrams advocates for the three deep breaths—or 3DB—breathing pattern. 3DB is an easy way to experience the power of your breath and the freedom and strength it brings. Take a deep breath in, and as you inhale bring in something positive. Breathe out, and let go of what's holding you back with every exhale. As you upgrade your breath from shallow to deep breathing

patterns, you will begin to control your energy by connecting to the corresponding part of your brain that regulates emotion. Try using some of these “breath multipliers:”

1. **Act as if:** You don’t have to feel brave to be brave. Act as if you already are successful—if your mind says, “I am successful,” you can begin to mentally and physically believe that you are, in fact, successful. Your body will feel that good energy when your mind tells it to.
2. **Close your eyes:** Quickly reconnect your mind and body. Inspiration may be more likely to strike when we close our eyes—it’s like shutting a virtual door to the everything outside your body.
3. **Visualization:** Visualize what success would look like during breathing routines. Taking thoughts to the next level is a detailed and experiential way of thinking positive.
4. **Mantras:** Use phrases such as “I am... successful, capable, mindful leader, skilled real estate agent” while breathing in. Challenge yourself to say these out loud.

Remember that forming habits takes time, you may not notice the effects of breath right away.

THINK POINT #2: Self Awareness

Self-awareness, one of the rarest of human commodities, begins by understanding who you really are and discovering (and accepting) your personality traits, mental habits, and patterns. It is also critical to recognize when and where you tend to be weak or negative so that you’ll know exactly when and where to add positive reinforcement through breath. Become an observer of your own thoughts, behaviors, and energy. We all know the best version of ourselves that often gets pushed away in order to focus on work. The goal is to be our best selves even when things get crazy. When we see ourselves clearly, we are more confident and more creative.

When you learn how to be self-aware and upgrade your breath, you’ll make mindful business decisions rather than hasty ones. Tap into creativity instead of just working from random or mediocre ideas. Letting negative dialogue drive your decisions is a dangerous daily practice that will inevitably lead you in the wrong direction, and on top of that, your stress continues to simmer. Manage your negative thoughts, because you can’t afford the luxury of a negativity.

Start your journey of self-awareness with a personality test such as Myers-Briggs or the enneagram. Remember, this is a process! Self-awareness grows faster each time you use it and becomes embedded in your mind as a new habit. Check-in—stop, be still, close your eyes, take three deep breaths, and scan your body for stress. Program your phone to receive a reminder to check in or get into the habit of checking in while completing other activities such as eating, drinking water, walking to the restroom, or driving to your next client while opting for silence instead of turning on the car radio.

THINK POINT #3: Daily Routines

Morning Rituals: Gain momentum from starting your day off right with stretches and breath work. Consider using aromatherapy during this time—citrus, rosemary, mint, lavender, and white sage are just a few beneficial essential oils. Do your most difficult tasks first to avoid the dread that comes with carrying them throughout your day. In our peak morning phase, it is best to focus on analytic work that requires more focus, attention, and vigilance. Studies show that what you eat and drink in the morning immediately affects your brain as you begin your day, and the brain is the most easily damaged organ by poor food and drink choices. Thus, Abrams suggests paying close attention to food and beverage choices during the morning hours.



Technology: Are you being negatively affected by your screen time? Research shows we are experiencing a false sense of productivity with reflex check-ins—reading emails or answering texts—and subjecting ourselves to constant low-grade stress. Become self-aware of these habits. We prevent the learning process with constant brain stimulation. It is in moments of idleness that we produce our most creative ideas, so give your mind space and allow it to wander. Abrams challenges readers to take a walk without a cell phone, buy a paper book, set aside lunch time as unplugged, and to turn off cell phones at least two hours before bed. Challenge yourself to build relationships rather than rack up transactional encounters. Nurturing relationships is a big part of success in real estate, and it will require effort. Put your phone away when talking to clients and give them your full attention. You may be surprised at the results.

Conclusion

Bringing breath into real estate helps manage negative emotions by letting them go with each deep exhale—thereby breathing in confidence, optimism, and a higher level of patience with each inhale. Abrams explains that by implementing these techniques, she grew stronger emotionally, which gave her a new sense of physical energy as she chose positive thoughts, achieving milestones faster than she imagined.

Recommended Reading

Abrams, Sandy (2019), *Breathe to Succeed: Increase Workplace Productivity, Creativity, and Clarity through the Power of Mindfulness*, Career Press: Newburyport, MA.

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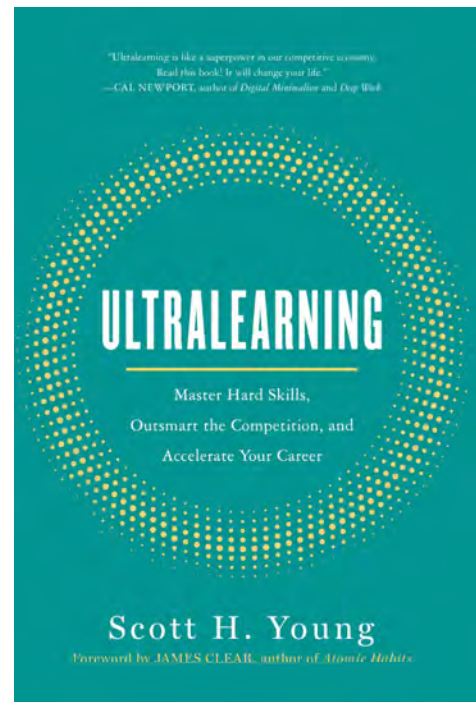
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INSIDER: Ultralearning

Brian LeCompte, MDiv/MBA Candidate

What dreams do you have for the future? What skills stand between you and where you want to be? Perhaps you dream about having a better career or being the best in the world at something you love to do. The world is filled with smart people, though, so how could anyone expect to stand out in a world where there is always someone more talented? Most people think genius is an unmerited inheritance for a few lucky people, but what if genius could be learned? Moreover, what if it could be learned *quickly*? If you could master in a few months what you are only curious about today, the possibilities would seem endless. You would probably think about changing industries, moving somewhere new, or even becoming your own boss. If you could learn like that, it would change your life.

In *Ultralearning*, Scott Young arms his readers with the principles for becoming self-made experts in a skill set they want to develop in less time than is expected. Young shares his stories of completing all the coursework of a four-year MIT degree in computer science in one year, of learning four different languages in one year, and of attaining expert-level, self-portrait artistry in a month. He assures readers that these feats are not magic. The pages of his book are filled with stories of child prodigies, competition champions, polyglots, and trailblazers. They are examples of proper application of nine ultralearning principles. If you can dream it and are willing to work for it, you can *be* it.



THINK POINT #1: Making the Case for Ultralearning

Ultralearning is conducted through projects that are self-directed and very intense. Most people lack the self-motivation to finish intense projects. Why would any normal person go to such extreme measures? Today's job market is more competitive than ever. Our culture is witnessing an era of *skill-polarization*. Medium-skilled jobs like clerks, travel agents, and factory workers are becoming increasingly automated, and there is significantly less demand for these roles. Demand is rising for low-skilled (e.g. customer service) and high-skilled (e.g. technical or managerial) jobs. There are opportunities for higher-level skills in the real estate industry. As more and more customers search for and list their properties on the web, it is no secret that competition is as tough as it has ever been in the real estate industry. The best agents will prepare for the future of the home-buying experience.

Higher education is expensive, and much of it is indirect learning wherein skills are practiced outside of their normal environment of use. Higher education depends on the belief in skill transfer—that skills learned in school will translate into competence in a job role. The truth is, even PhD recipients require on-the-job training after their formal education. Of course, if a position for which you have an interest requires a professional degree, then there is not much choice in the matter, but you will have to constantly gain new skills to remain competitive in your job role. The biggest obstacle standing between most people and their dreams is learning.

THINK POINT #2: Learning Effectively

Metalearning is the first ultralearning principle. It describes the research phase of every ultralearning project. Draw a map that shows your destination and the path you need to take to get there. Why are you learning this skillset? What knowledge do you need to have? How will you learn (i.e. resources)? Putting ample time into this first step will save you massive amounts of time in the next eight steps. Metalearning is an aerial view of your project that charts the whole course so you will not make a wrong turn when you are in the weeds.

Focus is the next principle that every ultralearning project requires. Procrastination is the first problem for those wishing to develop their ability to focus. Some good news is that the distracting impulse that causes procrastination does not last long. A helpful suggestion to overcome this short-lived set back is to force yourself to work for short periods of time with intermittent breaks at first. It may take some experimentation to find the right study environment for you, but the key to retaining focus is to engage in the right task. Find a task that is engaging, and you will be surprised how easy it is to stay focused.

Directness refers to the relationship between the learning process and the real-life practice of a skill. In contrast to most formal education at universities, ultralearning projects provide skill transfer by ditching the classroom for the real world. If you want to learn a programming language, learn by engaging in a project to create your own program. If you want to learn to speak a new language, immerse yourself in a place where you must use that language to communicate. If you want to learn something well, make it difficult by placing yourself in a high-stakes environment where missing important lessons and feedback is less likely.

THINK POINT #3: Practice Makes Perfect

Drill is the principle for overcoming the toughest parts of the ultralearning project. With every skillset there are individual skills that *must* be mastered in order to possess it. The weakest skills will require the most attention. Drill exists in tension with directness, because you will identify these weak points in the field and then use drills at home to strengthen them. Try to copy the work of an expert if it helps, but the key is to sharpen your skill so you can practice the entire skillset in a direct environment.

Retrieval refers to the act of recalling necessary information from memory. Many people get discouraged if they cannot remember information they need to know for a test or a project, so they quickly resort to passively looking up the correct answer. However, those who endure the discomfort and attempt to retrieve the information from their memory experience better results and deeper understanding of the task at hand. In other words, taking tests is a form of learning. Embrace the struggle of staring at a question until your mind can dredge up the answer and it will not be easily forgotten.



Feedback is one of the most complicated principles for ultralearning. Feedback is necessary, but there is a plethora of feedback in this world that is harmful to learning. Both negative and positive feedback carry the potential to kill motivation. A large amount of feedback is directed at the characteristics of a person rather than activity itself. It is important to eliminate the noise of unhelpful feedback by finding tasks that are

complex enough that they will generate unexpected feedback. Usually, the unexpected responses are the ones that are the most helpful.

THINK POINT #4: Mastery

Retention is the seventh principle. One of the most challenging truths about learning is that it is much easier to forget than to remember. Retaining the information from your ultralearning project is a lot of work. Avoid cramming information, and instead space out intense study sessions. Work until you can perform the skill without putting much thought into it. It is better to learn too much about a skill than to learn too little. Overlearning something increases the chance that it will never be forgotten.

Intuition is the product of a large amount of experience working with a particular problem. It is a level of mastery that sees cognitive connections between situations that do not appear similar to most people. It is a sense or feeling for how to solve a problem that only comes from a deep understanding of the skillset. Obsess over the details and eventually you will see the things no one else sees, even if it is right under their noses.

Experimentation is the key to mastery. It is the final ultralearning principle that ties the other eight principles together. Previous learning principles depend on work that experts have already done, but experimentation moves from copying the experts to creative expression. Usually, projects start with learning the tools of trade and then move on to common techniques for using

them. After some time mastering the resources and techniques, ultralearners find their unique approach to the task. Creating an original product is both the goal and the process of learning.

Conclusion

During the mid-20th century in Hungary, an educational psychologist named Lazlo Polgar decided he wanted to raise his daughters as geniuses. He believed genius was trained, not born. By the time his youngest daughter, Judit, was seven she had won her first chess game against a chess master while blindfolded. Today she is considered to be the best female chess player of all time. The Polgar sisters are known for shaking up the male-dominated world of competitive chess. Grown men who played chess their entire lives lost at the hands of teenage girls who grew up with metalearning research, focused exercises, direct learning, drills, retrieval challenges, feedback, retention maximizing practices, intuition development, and experimentation. They were raised as ultralearners. Whether you have a few hours a week or ten hours a day, ultralearning is for you. Whether you want to earn that next promotion or change industries completely, ultralearning is for you. Whether you are 22 or 82, ultralearning can help you accomplish your dreams. Innate talent does play a role, but learning makes all the difference. Maybe you are uncomfortable with new technologies. Maybe you are experienced and want to start your own brokerage. Maybe you are content in your career, but you want to learn a new hobby. Every ultralearning project you do makes the next project easier to accomplish. The only thing standing in the way is your desire to learn. There is no better time than right now. So, what will your first ultralearning project be?

Recommended Reading

Young, Scott (2019), *Ultralearning: Master Hard Skills, Outsmart the Competition, and Accelerate Your Career*, HarperCollins: New York, NY.

About the Author

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