

Form follows function

An architectural theory you can use every day

When the Board of Directors of a mid-sized Eastern college decided to build an extensive addition to their campus, their first step was to hire an architect. Being intelligent men and women, they chose a particularly intelligent architect.

Plans were submitted and approved, and the addition was eventually completed. It was magnificent—just what the directors had hoped for.

“Well done!” they said to the architect, patting him on the back and enthusiastically shaking his hand. “We’re very pleased!”

But everyone else reacted quite differently.

“Weird,” said the students.

“Big mistake,” said the faculty members.

“Most unusual,” said the visiting alumni.

It appeared that the directors and the architect had forgotten something: the sidewalks! Grass had been planted everywhere there wasn’t a building, parking lot or road! Yet, when asked about this, the directors just smiled and said, “Don’t worry. The sidewalks will appear in due time.”

And they did.

Within a year the students, faculty and visitors had made their own paths—the most direct, convenient and heavily traveled paths were those in which the grass was completely worn away. And that’s when the architect



returned and quickly drew plans for the ideal sidewalk system. It had already been planned for him by the people who would use it! Even the necessary widths of each sidewalk were self-evident.

It was all part of the architect’s original concept.

“Form follows function,” he had told the directors. “So let’s make sure we know what functions we’re dealing with before we commit ourselves to a particular form.”

He was right. And this eminently practical theory can be adapted—with equally pleasing results—to other endeavors such as management, sales, and even childrearing.

Here’s what you can do:

1. *If you’re a manager, continually question the policies that you ask your employees to abide by. When were these policies instituted, and for what purpose? Has your industry or company changed since then? How about your employees or customers? Have they changed? If so, some of your policies may be outdated and counter-productive, like sidewalks that force people to*



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walk where they don't need or want to go. Such policies should be improved upon or be eliminated.

2. If you're a salesperson, remember not to treat all your clients the same way. Instead of imposing upon them *YOUR* solution, ask them enough questions to form a clear picture in your mind of what it is they want to accomplish. Whether you drop by unannounced or set appointments, whether your sales cycle is minutes or months long, make sure your product is an exact solution to your customer's needs. How many times has a "salesperson" tried to force your needs to fit

his or her product? Don't insist your customers walk on *YOUR* sidewalk. Walk *WITH* them, on *THEIRS*.

3. If you're a parent of more than one child, be careful not to rear your second child the same as you did your first. Chances are they have different personalities, different needs, likes and dislikes. Treat them accordingly. And if there's a significant age difference between them they're probably growing up in very different environments. So don't make all your children stay on the same sidewalk when they're probably headed toward different destinations.

The tale of two dogs

A reminder about the benefits of positive reinforcement

As a first time dog owner, he failed.

He would call, "Ginger!" but Ginger wouldn't respond. She continued wandering and sniffing bushes, as dogs are wont to do, and only return when *she* wanted to, which was neither soon nor quick enough to suit *him*. And when she *did* come back, he was furious. He would grab her collar, shake her and yell, "BAD dog! You come when I call!" But she gradually became even *less* inclined to respond and he grew more frustrated, until one day he left the dog on a friend's farm where she could run free.

Enter dog number two—Dusty. By now our friend, the misguided dog-lover, had matured such that he remained calm even when Dusty ignored his commands. He just waited until Dusty *did* respond, then he lavished praise and affection upon her. He would hug her and pat her and say, "GOOD dog, Dusty!" Thus Dusty quickly learned that being obedient was a pleasant experience, and she became an exceptionally obedient dog, which made her master a happy dog-owner.

The difference? It wasn't the dogs. It was the *way* they were treated—one negatively, one positively. And if positive reinforcement worked with Dusty, wouldn't it be equally effective with people?



Behavioral scientists answer that question with an emphatic YES, saying that when a person does something and is immediately rewarded, he or she will tend to do it again—consciously or unconsciously seeking further positive reinforcement.

You can test this theory by asking yourself how you feel when someone tells you...

- "Your report to the committee was excellent. Thanks for being so complete, yet so concise."

- “Your office is a haven for the confused. It’s always so neat and well-organized.”
- “Your quick action saved that account. We’re grateful to you.”

How do you feel? Naturally, you feel pleased and proud. You feel more commitment to those who recognized and rewarded you for your effort—and your inclination is to work even harder.

That’s nothing profound, of course. You’ve known about the benefits of positive reinforcement all your life. But now that you’ve been reminded of them...

Here’s what you can do:

1. *Look for opportunities to give positive reinforcement. If a loved one doesn’t keep in touch as often as you’d like, don’t complain. Instead,*

wait until he or she does call, then say, “It’s great to hear from you! Your phone calls brighten my day!”

2. *Next time you watch a football game, notice how teammates pat, hug and praise each other when they perform well. Likewise, whenever those on your “team” perform well, give them the positive reinforcement they deserve.*
3. *Timing is important. Be quick about it! Saying to your mate, “You looked wonderful last Thursday night,” is of no value.*
4. *And don’t forget yourself. Actress Ruth Gordon said, “An actor has to have compliments and positive reinforcement. If I go long enough without getting a compliment, I compliment myself and that’s just as good—because at least then I know it’s sincere!”*

I-B-M, R&D, and Y-O-U

The best investment you can make

As you know, I-B-M stands for International Business Machines—a brilliantly successful company!

R&D stands for research and development, something IBM spends over 6% of its gross income on—about \$6 billion to be exact.

And if “brilliantly successful” is a name you’d like to earn, or continue earning, perhaps Y-O-U should emulate I-B-M and establish your own personal R & D program.

What should your R&D program consist of? Anything that helps you improve in areas that are important to you. For example, you could invest in...

- a jumprope, stationery bike, or athletic club membership
- books or newsletter subscriptions
- audiocassette programs or CDs
- seminars
- college courses
- a “field trip” to another company like yours, which you can study and learn from
- a lunch or dinner with an expert in your field who’s willing to answer your questions and offer suggestions

How much money should you invest in your R&D program? If your salary is \$60,000 a year, you’d have to invest \$3,600 to equal 6%. With an income of \$160,000, you’d have to invest \$9,600 in yourself, and if you’re earning \$250,000 your investment in yourself would be \$15,000. But whatever you decide your R&D program should consist of, and however much money you can devote to it, it’s very likely to be the best investment you’ve ever made!

Here’s what you can do:

1. *Commit yourself now to your yearly R&D budget. If 6% seems too high to start with, invest less. Even 1% will help, and maybe next year you can increase your budget.*
2. *Keep a record of your R&D investments. It’s something you’ll find it gratifying to look back upon. You also might find some tax deductions on this list, but think of that as a mere bonus. You’ll get ALL your investment back, many times over, in the form of increased satisfaction and higher earnings.*
3. *Start today. Get on a volleyball team. Buy a mountain bike. Sign up for a book club. Don’t wait. Do it N-O-W!*

You too can be a champion

The power of your goals

It's history now—but when sitting on Delta flight #1862, from Salt Lake City to Spokane, it was real. It was Monday, the day after watching Dan O'Brien win the 1996 Olympic Gold Medal in the Decathlon event and earn the title "The World's Greatest Athlete." It was exciting, if you remember the event and the media hype—

- "Will Dan O'Brien crack like he did in '92?"
- "Will the past haunt O'Brien?"
- "Can Dan O'Brien do it after his world class failure just four years ago?"

The negatives appeared in newspaper and television commentaries. Rightly so, because this young man was so highly touted to win in 1992—only to fail to even *qualify* for the 1992 Olympic team. No one could even remember someone so highly skilled and ranked failing to even *qualify*! Yet, Dan O'Brien did just that.

After the shock and devastating embarrassment subsided, Dan decided to reset his goal, and began training for 1996 in Atlanta. He sought help from an expert, Milt Campbell, the U.S. Decathlon winner from 1956 in Melbourne, Australia. Milt was conducting a seminar for athletes. Dan attended with 14 others—all world class losers! Milt opened the seminar with three questions: "How many of you have a goal?" All 15 raised their hands. "How many of you have that goal written down?" All 15 raised their hands. "How many of you have that goal written down and with you right now?" Not one did!

That, Dan O'Brien said four years later in an interview with Bob Costas on national television with the Gold Medal around his neck, was the turning point for him. "I went to my room at the first break, wrote down my goal and I carried it with me everyday, no matter where I went." Wow! What a story! Little did I know that in less than 24 hours I'd be sitting

right across from Dan O'Brien as he flew home to the Spokane area.

What would you have done? Smiled at him? Asked for an autograph? Ignored him? As I debated all three, he glanced across and made eye contact... my opening for, "Congratulations, Dan, I saw your interview with Bob Costas and your receiving the Gold. It was inspiring." A few minutes of chatting and we got to specifics—he was relaxed, open and seemed willing to talk. Interesting, not one other person recognized him—not the other passengers or the flight attendant. He was all mine! He asked what I did, and briefly, I told him I was a professional speaker, on my way to address a group of salespeople, and one portion of my four-hour seminar would be on achieving your goals. I said, "Dan, if you were going to speak instead of me, what would you tell them to do to achieve their goals?"

Dan told me, and hearing it directly from "The World's Greatest Athlete" was thrilling—and so impacting. Then I said:

"One more favor, Dan, would you be willing to write that down so I could put it on a visual and show it to my audience?"

Here's what Dan O'Brien wrote for you:

- Set a goal.
- Write it down.
- Carry it with you.

Here's what you can do:

1. Set a goal.
2. Write your 30-day goal down. Be specific and realistic. Carry it with you.
3. When you achieve it, set another goal. Write it down and carry that with you. And keep repeating the process. You too can be a champion!



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