

The Value Added You: Constantly Improving your Competency

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Often when it comes to our careers, the focus is solely on [landing that dream job](#). Possibly you catch yourself sending out resumes and going on job interviews with that thought of “If I just get this job (this client, etc.), everything will be set.”

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It no longer makes sense to skate by on only your college education for the entire duration of your college career.

But the key to being successful doesn't end when you land that big campaign, get that promotion or get the key to the executive washroom. It really lies in continually building your confidence and constantly improving yourself, so you are always competent, no matter where you find yourself.

“Competence includes anything that improves your ability to perform – your knowledge, skills, relationships, resourcefulness, processes, systems and information,” says Lee Colan in [8 Ways to be Constantly Improving](#).

So how can you constantly improve yourself? Here are a few of Colan's suggestions to get the ball rolling.

- **Build the foundation before the house.** Tackle on new skill, new tool or knowledge area at a time and use it until you become an expert, says Colan.
- **Seek feedback on your performance.** Be ready to eat some humble pie. You want an honest appraisal of your work, so don't just seek out “yes” men. You never get better if you don't know what you need to improve.
- **Hear rather than be heard.** Colan quotes the great Mark Twain: “If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two mouths and one ear.” You would be amazed what you learn when your mouth is shut but your ears are wide open.



- **Build your BEST team – Buddies who Ensure Success and Truth.** This is great advice both both in and out of the workplace. “Choose your team wisely. Ensure each member offers the energy, truth, and positive perspective you need to succeed. Connect with your BEST team, individually or as a group, on a consistent basis. Learn from them and help them—it goes both ways,” Colan relates.
- **Be decisive!** Some people really grab decisions by the horns. Many, however, don’t. It’s often the fear of being wrong, being less than perfect and that dreaded “F” word – failure – that brings them down. Get a majority of the information you need, then make the best decision you can. Remember, “Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new,” Albert Einstein.

In a pure business sense, everything in this world today is “value added.” So why not you? It no longer makes sense to skate by on only your college education for the entire duration of your college career. That would like taking the rotary phone version of yourself to an iPhone convention. Constantly improving yourself may even be the difference between getting hired and floundering around out there in the job-search pool.

I always ask interview candidates to tell me what they’ve done during the last few years to ‘upgrade’ themselves; in other words, what have they done to improve their skills and abilities recently? One job candidate looked at me, laughed, then said, ‘Nothing lately, I graduated from college a few years ago so I’m finally finished with my education.’ Ouch. Guess what? As you can probably imagine, this person didn’t get the job. ... View yourself as a competitive product with features, benefits, assets and liabilities — all waiting to be improved upon year over year, carefully differentiating yourself from others and creating your personal brand.”

- Lisa Quast, author of [To Increase Your Value, Think of Yourself as a Product, and Upgrade Yourself Every Year](#)

