



YOU ARE YOUR CHOICES



"Every choice moves us closer to or farther away from something. Where are your choices taking your life? Do your behaviors demonstrate that you are saying yes or no to life?"

Eric Allenbaugh

This past January 2018, I had the privilege of teaching my fourth New York City J-term course for the Harrington School of Communication and Media at the University of Rhode Island. This one week course offered the students an opportunity to network and learn from over 70 business professionals in 55.5 hours. We had the privilege of visiting the corporate offices of Thomson Reuters, MetLife, Citi, CNN, Union Square Hospitality Group, Hulu, Coty, Initiative, Google, Momentum and Hungry Root to name a few. The executives shared their respective experience and attributed their success to leadership, life-long learning, communication, initiative and work/life balance.

Put down your phone and offer the gift of your full attention.

That's Not My Job?

Geoff Leonard of Google encouraged the students by sharing sage advice: *"You will find a place where your skills are most needed and when you do, always do 5% more that everyone else, every day!"* Do your best at every task you are assigned and you may be the best candidate when another position opens. You will be asked to do things that are not your job – do them! Everything is your job. Are you able to do the job of the person in a position above you and below you? Take Initiative! Look for opportunities to volunteer on projects in both your company and community. This will assist you in expanding your internal and external network. Volunteering is an opportunity versus obligation.

Leadership

Why would anyone follow you? Hire you? Buy from you? As the students enter the workplace, among the leadership traits that will serve to advance their career are integrity, competence, follow through, inspiration and vision. If you have been working for several decades, it is important to re-visit and hone these skills as well. Dom Cerio of CNN discussed the importance of your delivery and your "pitch." Dom questioned the students – *"In sales and life in general, what are you bringing to the table? Why should a person take your call or meet with you?"* Think about what you offer. How would people describe you?

Walking the Balance Bar

Search for balance. Set boundaries – you cannot be your best self in your career if you cannot find time for the things that matter to you. Work and life balance is a challenge; especially when you are new to your position or work for a demanding industry. You spend so much time at work leading to why loving your job is so important. And if not loving it, enjoying it! As Michael Stefanski of MetLife advised: *"You don't regret the things you do, but the things you don't do."*

Leaders are Learners

Life-long learning will increase your knowledge. Margie Fox, President of Fitz and Hen, encouraged the students to watch a Ted talk every day and listen to business podcasts. There is always something to be learned and skills to be enhanced that will serve to improve your value, personally and professionally. She also shared her "Plus One" theory: Do one more thing than what is asked of you.

As you approach the day, week, year – be a shining star. Shift your mindset to what you can contribute versus what life "owes" you. Establish your personal values and pave your own personal path to professionalism. In the insightful words of guest speaker, Erica Keswin, Founder, The Spaghetti Project. *"How do you bring yourself to work? It's all about the human connection. Bring your human to work."*

Communication

Being able to communicate clearly and effectively is crucial. Communication will assist you in improving your interactions with clients, vendors and colleagues. It begins with your credibility; people do not believe the message if they do not believe the messenger. Be clear about what is important and why. As Kay McKean, Founder of SALT Leadership discussed, *"Think of your last communication with someone. How much of that approach reflected your values?"* Our communication reflects our values. Focus on connecting with the person or people in front of you.

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