



# VIRIDIANT business

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## Newsletter

### Introduction To The **Learning Effectiveness** Series

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A great deal has been written on how to be more effective in our professional and personal lives. Peter Drucker defined effectiveness as the ability to “get the right things done.” To be “effective” an individual must manifest several skills on a regular basis. To be more specific, these skills must become habits. Twelve important skills are

1. Choosing your roles
2. Organization of projects
3. Determining your goals
4. Organizing space
5. Managing yourself
6. Finely tuned decision making
7. The ability to prioritize
8. The ability to focus
9. The ability to ignore
10. Conducting regular check-ups
11. Communication
12. Managing the clock

Future issues of the newsletter will describe in detail how you can make these skills an integral part of your daily life. The Viridian Business Newsletter will discuss

the facts related to learning the skills of effectiveness.

**I:** Courses and workshops almost never make an individual more effective. Assuming high quality content, courses and workshops may introduce techniques and skills that contribute to effectiveness, but to actually increase your effectiveness, you must incorporate these skills into your daily routine.

**II:** All knowledge workers should master effectiveness. To maximize effectiveness in knowledge based organizations (the majority of businesses today), not just the CEO, but all knowledge workers need to increase their effectiveness. If you are reading this newsletter, that includes you!

**III:** Most habits that contribute to effectiveness are not innate. While some of these skills may be innate in some individuals, it is the rare person who possesses them all. To maximize effectiveness, the skills above need to be learned and become habits. Don't assume your superiors “have it in them” —that is simply not true. As a rule, the skills above are learned.

**IV:** Developing these skills on one's own is difficult. Some people had parents who taught them these skills (though having a drill sergeant for a parent may have had its down side). Even as an adult, hard work is involved. You will see results within one month, but you will need to dedicate 30 minutes a day for one year to ensure permanent change. Why is a full year required? 20-30 days are required to develop

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one good skill, depending on your current skill level in that particular area. Since you need to develop twelve skills in all, it is suggested that you dedicate one full year to developing these skills. Performing your new skills daily, for one year, will turn them into lifelong habits.

You think one year is too much time to dedicate? Consider this—many people read a magazine article about improving their effectiveness, but rarely does it lead to any significant change. Others buy numerous books about effectiveness, only to have them gather dust on the shelf (not us of course!). The problem is this: books contain “stories,” but effectiveness requires a set of “skills.” You can read about basketball, but at some point you have to PLAY basketball to become good at it. The same is true for effectiveness. To excel at effectiveness you must practice the required skills until they become habits. You wouldn’t expect to learn to play the piano with a single practice session. It takes many practice sessions over an extended period of time. Perhaps Tom Peters said it best. To paraphrase: “Athletes do it, astronauts do it, marathon runners do it. It’s called training.”

Training and re-training have become common practice in the modern world. Our grandparents learned a skill that became their work for life. But remember, they trained. They worked as apprentices, or residents, or rose through the ranks of an organization over many years. Times have changed. Jobs are no longer “for life” and each job change requires that employees learn new skills. The point is we should all expect to train and practice in order to learn new skills. It took you approximately one year to learn to walk, and two years to learn to talk. To learn to play the instrument called “effectiveness” will require thirty minutes of daily practice for one year. That is not a lot of time to learn skills that will serve you well for the rest of your life.

**V.** To learn new skills, you must stay positive. Learning new skills takes time and practice. Do not expect to master these skills in a short time. However, follow the newsletter guidelines consistently and, in time, you will notice improvement. If you feel down and question your ability during a tough job, remind yourself that learning new skills is a tough job. If the process seems difficult, and negative feelings set in, remember that it takes 20-30 days to break a bad habit. Being ineffective is a bad habit. Stay positive, stay with it, and in time you will be more effective. As Confucius said, “Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

**VI:** To master new skills you must practice. First we learn to crawl, then we learn to walk and then we learn to run. Good training programs build new skills upon the ones learned before. With time you find yourself functioning at a whole new level. But you must practice the skills daily. Your first grade teacher made you write the letter “B” ten times each night for a week. It may have seemed trite, but you still remember how!

**VII:** To master new skills you must visualize. Visualization is a powerful force in how we develop new skill sets, and will be used to develop the effectiveness skill set.

**Viridiant** is a consulting firm with particular expertise in innovation, strategy, change management, biotechnology, education and healthcare.

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**Viridiant** LLC  
210 West 89th Street, Suite 6G  
New York, New York 10024

T/ 212.787.2161  
F/ 212.787.1994

[www.viridiant.com](http://www.viridiant.com)