



**Reading is Fundamental**

**Skills and Professional Development**

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We are only a quarter into 2018, and while statistics say that many of us have fallen off our resolution bandwagon by now, it's never too late to pick ourselves up and get back on. What 2018 goal did you have to move your life forward? If you want to increase your level of success — either by getting that promotion you've been eyeing or by growing your business — studies suggest that reading should always be top of your to-do list. As far as goal-setting goes, it's a vague and ambiguous one. What exactly does it mean? The most successful people read hundreds of pages, and spend hours doing it, throughout the day. On average, they read two books a month. It's not a matter of having time to read. It is about making time to read because success and reading go together.

What successful people read is just as important as how much they read. At the top of your list should be things that will benefit you in your life, your relationships, and your career. These are books you can learn from, like biographies of successful people or self-help books from experts in the field. The bottom line is that successful people read for educational purposes rather than for entertainment. They are constantly looking for inspiration, direction, and guidance. Couldn't we each benefit from those as well?

I wasn't a fan of reading as a kid, except for thrillers and mysteries. Those stories were less about reading than about solving the crime. And for a long time, unless it was academically required, I didn't read for growth or pleasure. That changed a few decades ago when I became interested in personal and professional development, management, and leadership.

I just finished reading *The Power of Habit*, by Charles Duhigg and *The Big Leap* by Gay Hendrick. I am currently reading *Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself* by Dr. Joe Dispenza, Gary Keller's *The Millionaire Real Estate Agent*, and *The Miracle Morning for Real Estate Agents* by Hal Elrod, Michael J. Maher, Michael Reese, and Jay Kinder. Can you tell I have developed an interest in real estate?

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Up next are MK Mueller's *8 to Great* and Jen Sincero's *You Are A Badass*. While I occasionally read a good murder mystery (and occasionally a bad one), my bookshelf is filled with content that helps me maximize my enjoyment of life and grow as a person. It also provides me with insight that helps my family, friends, and clients do the same.

A 2016 Pew Center study showed that about a quarter of adults have not read a book, in whole or part, of any sort, whether e-book or hard copy, in more than a year. Income, education, age, and gender are factors in how much we read. But the survey seemed to only focus on books and did not take into account non-book formats, such as blogs or magazines, which feature the same types of content for personal and professional development.

The good news is that you don't have to spend hours devoted to reading. Committing as little as 30 minutes per day will have a great impact on your life. In addition to joining the minority of people who continue to read books after college, the benefits to readers include being a better writer and speaker, regularly exercising your mental muscles, and — maybe a benefit you hadn't considered — helping you relax. You'll be amazed at what a few minutes each day will yield in terms of helping you create a mindset that is focused and expands your overall perspective. So let's get those books off your bookshelf — or off your phone or e-reader — and into your hands.

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**Whitnie Wiley** was a long-time columnist for the *ACC Docket*, where she wrote the Lead the Way column for more than seven years. The column provided leadership tips for in-house counsel and others as they pursue their personal and professional goals.