

The Real Learning Project



PURPOSE

The Real Learning Project aims to help millions of people learn to learn, increase their intelligence, and realize their life goals.

Real Learning is do-it-yourself learning. The **Real Learner** becomes familiar with social, experiential, and informal learning by doing them.

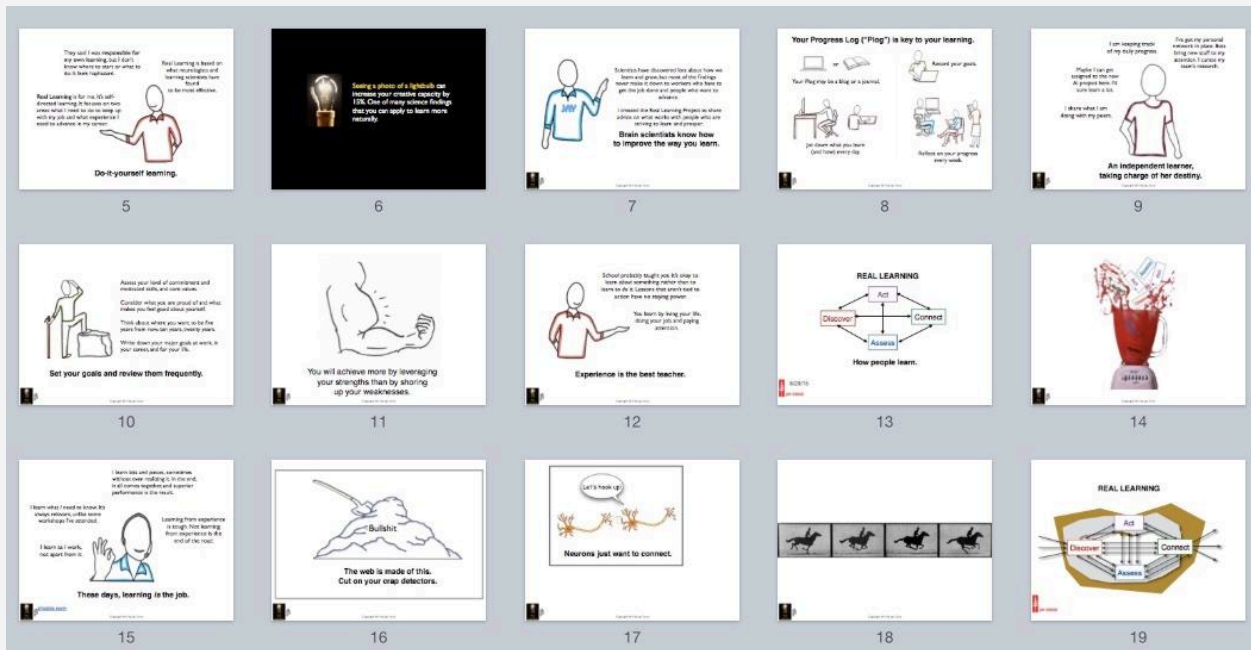
The secret sauce is advances in brain science and learning technology.

Knowledge workers and managers have been told they are responsible for their own learning but have no more idea what to do than the dog who got on the bus (Now WTF?). I want to turn them on to what we know about how brains work and get them off on the right track on their meta-learning journey.

Real Learners use their wits and increase their mental capacity. The Real Learning Project helps them make a sound learning process second nature. Like “Teach a man to fish,” improving one’s capacity to learn pays compound interest for a lifetime.

Real Learning is for people and small groups of colleagues who are taking their professional development into their own hands. No instructors, no classrooms. It’s DIY learning. You will probably learn it with a pal or teammate but you’ll be firm in charge of your own destiny.

Visuals



This quickest way to understanding: [real Learning in pictures.](#)

Site for the book: <http://realllearning.biz> [Articles](#)

BACKGROUND

For nearly half a century, I've helped learners through Learning & Development but L&D only reaches a small sliver of the workforce and their approach is episodic. It doesn't do much to empower the organization. Most people are unaware that learning is even a variable. I'd like to help the people L&D never reaches and help them learn to learn.

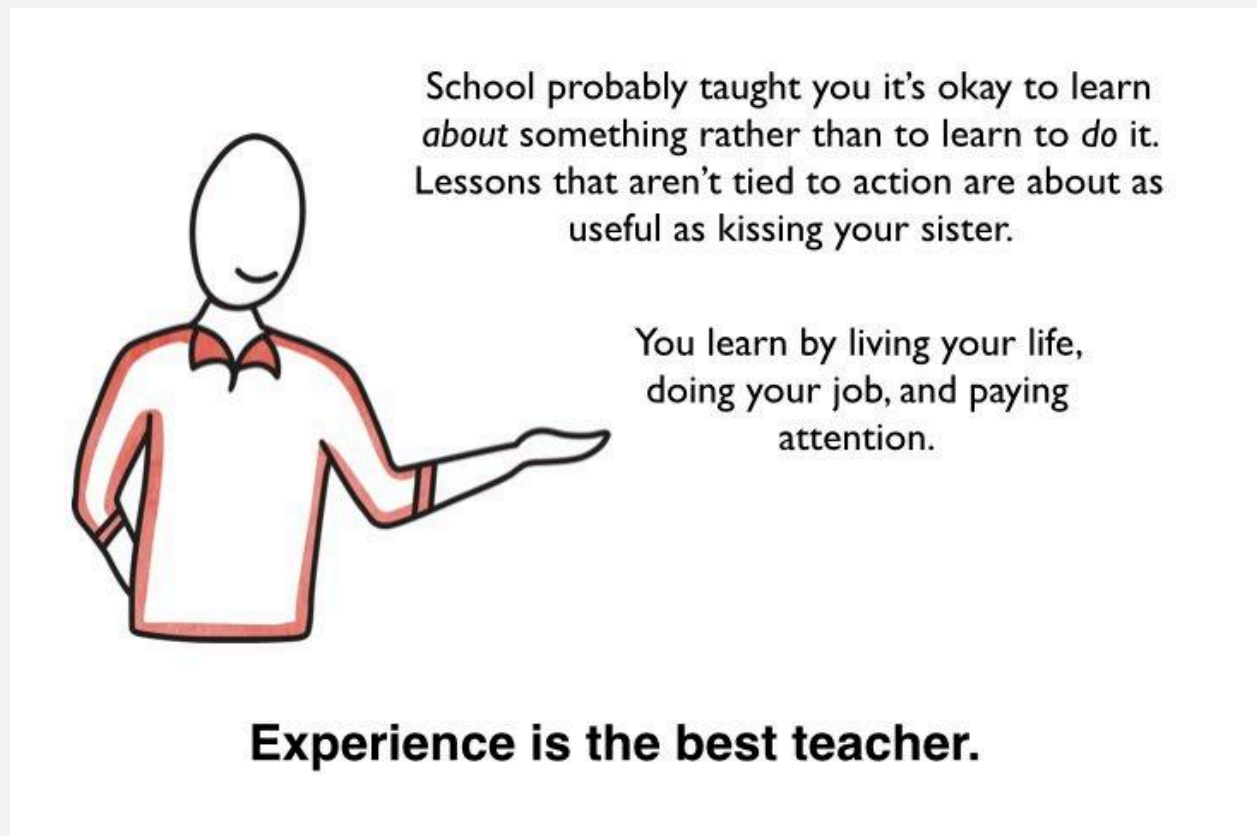
The Real Learning project is a way for me to pay back the people I have learned from over the years and to leave something of value behind as my legacy.

Forgive a stretch analogy, but I'd like to do for learning what Luther did for religion: make the sacred knowledge transparent. Bring things out in the open. (Luther's big move was to translate the Latin Bible into something ordinary worshippers could read.) I want to translate neuroscience and sound practice into a practical bag of tricks everyone can understand and use.

People ask how my new book is coming along. I tell them I'm not writing a book, I'm leading a crusade. The book is simply an artifact. The mission is to bring what we know

about learning into the mainstream and to create a community of co-learners to update and improve this knowledge. Should some money fall in the founder's pocket along the way, hallelujah. I enjoy doing well by doing good.

There are hundreds of books on learning written from the manager's or HR's perspective. Real Learning is one of the rare ones that looks at learning from the learner's perspective.



(graphics are from the book)

Naturally, The Real Learning Project has my fingerprints all over it. I believe:

- People learn most from experience, not courses.
- Informal learning sticks because it is need-driven and usually reinforced with immediate application.
- Learning is ultimately the responsibility of the learner.
- Openness, authenticity, sharing, experimentation, and the golden rule are among my values.

- The world is changing so fast that staying in place in one's comfort zone is not an option.
- Learning scientists and neurologists have discovered many ways to improve our learning but few people apply or have even heard about their findings.
- L&D can't fill the gap because it is FUBAR and has limited reach.
- Aha! Project should be fun or it's not worth doing.

This is an experiment. Borrowing a page from [Lean Strategy](#), I released a minimum viable product into the market to plumb for interest. I began handing out review copies and selling the beta version for \$2.99. Almost 200 people are reading the book. It's been revised and improved four times. I'm receiving very little feedback from them. I need an audience that wants to learn. A five-pack for team leaders? A campaign for companies undergoing digital transformation?

The 1.0 version coming out in November will be slicker, tighter and more professional in appearance.



Assess your level of commitment and motivated skills, and core values.

Consider what you are proud of and what makes you feel good about yourself.

Think about where you want to be five years from now, ten years, twenty years.

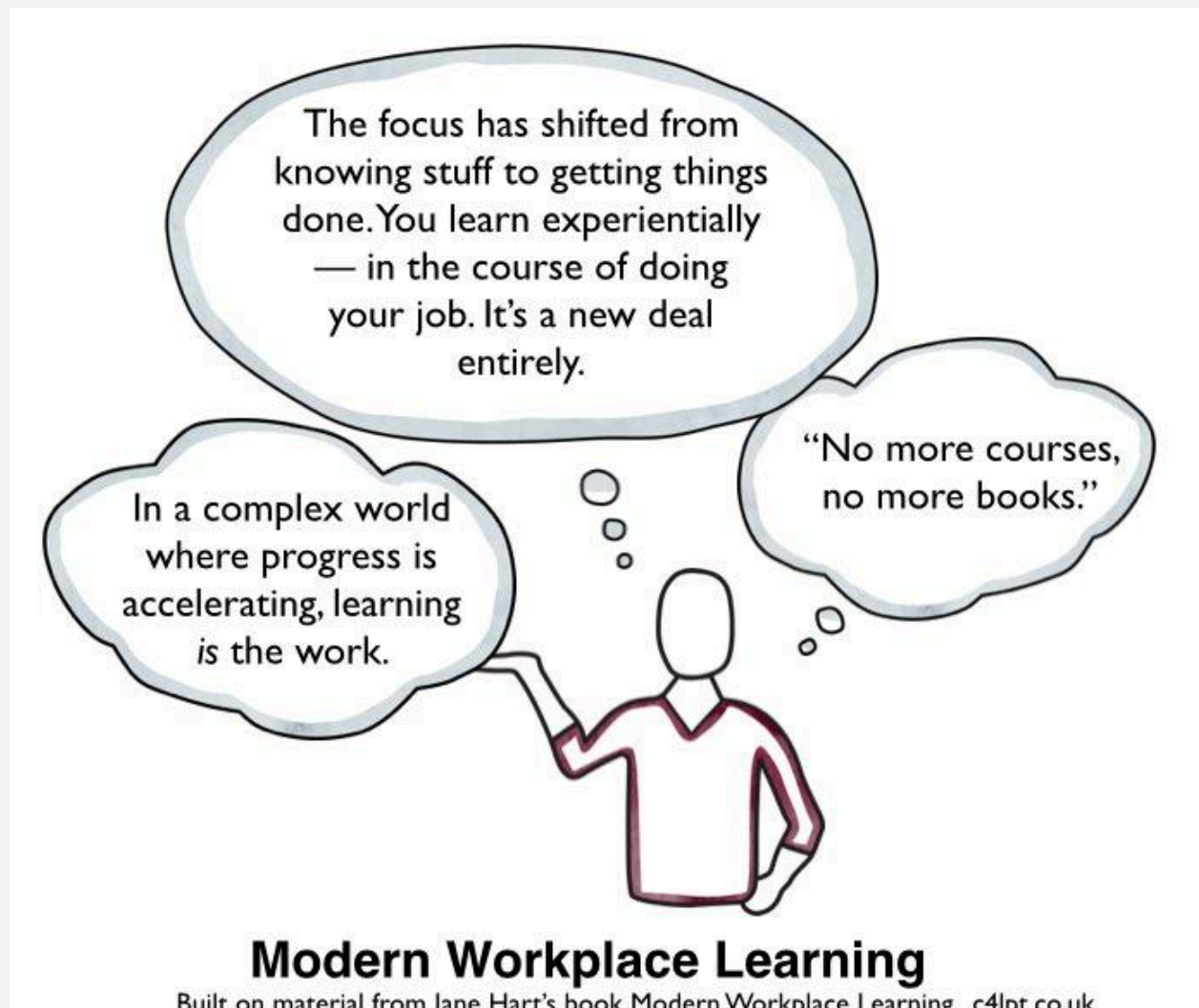
Write down your major goals at work, in your career, and for your life.

Set your goals and review them frequently.

OUTCOMES

Learn from experience without instructors or classrooms. That's Real Learning.

- Work smarter and have more impact
- Learn faster and remember more
- Embrace openness and learn out loud
- Make sound learning practices into lifelong habits
- Co-create knowledge with colleagues
- Plan how to achieve your growth goals
- Learn to be the person you aspire to be



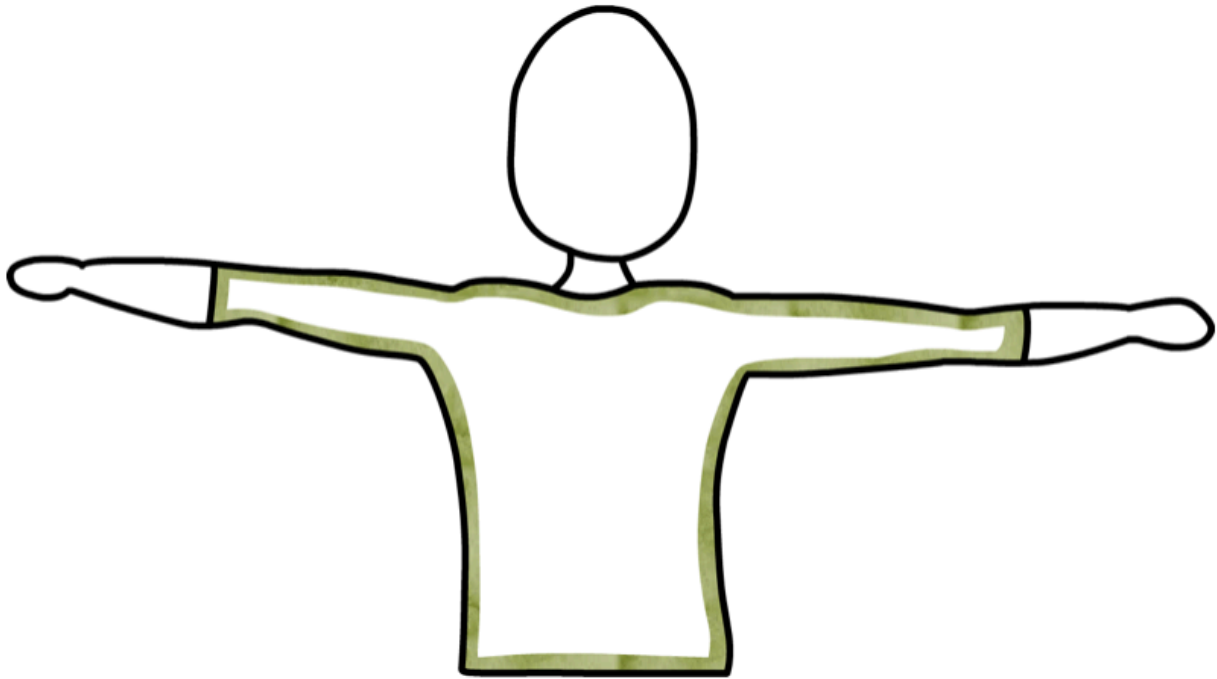
Experience is the best teacher. Real Learning provides techniques and the opportunity to practice these:

- Self analysis and goal setting
 - How people learn in organizations
 - Casting your net into the feeds and flow to extract the good stuff
 - How to learn – and demonstrate mastery – with curation
 - Becoming a search ninja

 - Refining your crap detectors
 - Strengthening your memory
 - When to take breaks
 - Sketching things out
 - Conditions/attitudes for optimal learning

 - Seeking new challenges, leaving “Familiarland”
 - Taking on stretch assignments
 - Social learning, conversing, making relationship work
 - Participating in a community of practice
 - Reflection – on what’s learned, how it’s learned, and how to improve the process

 - Working out loud
 - Getting feedback
 - Talking business
 - Breaking nasty habits
 - Being mindful
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The #1 way to increase your learning on the job is to tackle challenging assignments.

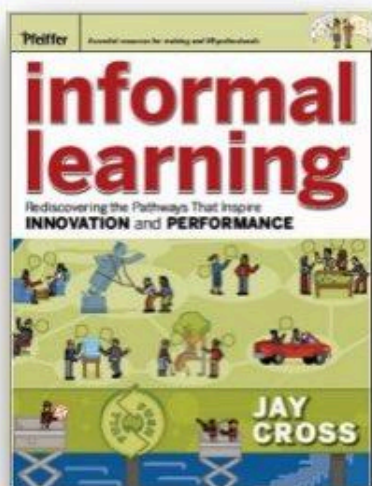
I hope to inspire hoards of people to experience the Aha! of having learned something significant and remembering how they did it. Again and again and again. Instilling motivation is the key variable for a product whose readers sometimes need shock treatment to experiment to keep a growth diary. Email prods will be there but may not be enough.

This is a labor of love, a gentleman's hobby. If it works, it should be a lot of fun and improve a lot of people's lives. Eventually I see opportunity for profit. Currently I'm toying with the idea to see where it goes.

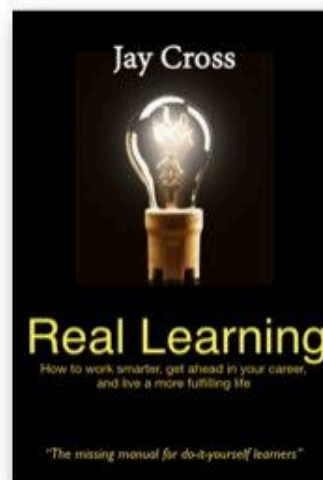
Tangibles

The first deliverable will be an inexpensive book, both an ebook (cheap at \$6.99 and easy to distribute) and a paperback (works better for checklists and highlighting at \$16). Accompanying the book are a [community](#) and a [reference site](#).

Real Learning is the sequel to *Informal Learning*.



What Informal Learning is.



How to learn informally.

Later, the text and patterns from the book may become a playlist of exercises and/or a deck of cards. If we achieve liftoff, I expect to continually improve the book with additional examples, on the annual *What Color Is Your Parachute* model.

After publication, we'll slipstream changes often, using reader feedback to craft iterative improvements and new patterns.

Informal Learning Fast and Slow

Slow: Seat of the pants



Fast: Real Learning



The current book is a piece of crap compared to what it can become. I envision plowing suggestions from the community back into the book hundreds of times. The ebook will probably end up changing monthly. Within two years, the book will improve you the point that it gets the job done optimally.

With such a huge need, I'm counting on serendipity and newsworthy quirkiness to get publicity started. We'll need pilot tests, too. That's what I'm working on now. If you know of an organization with hundreds of independent learners and the ability to monitor feedback, invite them to join us for a pilot session.

My latest thought is that we'll give away a self-assessment and goal-setting tool. People who recognize they need to know are our customers, after all.

Status

The book is in beta. You can buy an ePDF copy at the [Internet Time Press Store](#).

Homebase for The Real Learning Project is reallarning.biz. That's where to find out more about the book, join the community, and leave feedback.

First print version will be released in November at [Online Educa](http://OnlineEduca.com). I am currently collecting feedback. If you'd like to swap your feedback for a free Review Copy, [contact me](#).

We are talking with organizations about doing wholesale testing of Real Learning to find out how people are learning now (we will have an online survey up at all times), distributing the Real Learning book to thousands, and check back to find out what has been adopted and what has not. I can imagine this working its way back to create a profile of the ideal pattern.

Founder's Relevant Experience

[Jay](#) designed the first business degree program offered by the University of Phoenix. He was first to use the term eLearning on the web. He has shaped the way millions of professionals make decisions. He literally wrote the book on [Informal Learning](#). A champion of experiential learning and systems thinking, Jay's calling is to create happier, more productive workplaces. He is a graduate of Princeton and Harvard but was struck by how much more he learns from life than from schooling. He leads The Real Learning Project. [Testimonials](#).

Work in Progress

Current objective is to find organizations to partner with for extensive testing and measurement. I need enthusiasts who can imagine the potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Cross". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jay Cross

[My coordinates](#)

[BOOK SITE](#)

[Feedback from readers](#)

[Bibliography](#)

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Here are a few excerpts from the ever-changing book:

Preface to Real Learning

This book and related site will show you how to use your brain to work smarter, learn faster, and develop into the person you aspire to be.

It all boils down to learning, but not the sort of learning you experienced at school. No, this is learning as a life skill. This is experiential learning. You're learning all the time, taking in new information and making sense of it. You learn by doing, through conversations, and from the school of hard knocks. You're in charge of the process, not a teacher or institution.

Learning is not something that primarily happens *to* you at events or in courses; it's something that you own and experience continuously, with other people, in your life and your work.

Learning is how you solve problems, grow professionally, and achieve your goals. You're already learning continuously, but chances are that you could be much more effective at it. This book will give you seventy-five concepts and tips to help you become a better lifelong learner.

In addition to improving the way you learn facts, you will be *learning to be*. For example, you may learn to be an effective manager, team leader, or artist. You typically learn facts by reading, look-up, and study. Only experience can teach you to develop a new

self-image and become a more effective leader. We're going to concentrate on this second sort of learning.

Time is speeding up. More happens in one of your minutes than in one of your grandmother's hours. Lots of it is complex and unpredictable. You have to deal with it in real time. You've got to take situations as they come, learn on the fly lightning-fast just to keep up.

Learning and work are becoming the same thing. I call that **netWork**. All day long, you extract lessons from the workflow by talking with colleagues and taking on new challenges. Maybe I should say life flow. You learn to do things in the course of doing them. It's whitewater learning.

Think of this as a cookbook for self-improvement. To make the most of it, you've got to prepare and cook the recipes, not just read them. Get ready to do some experiments and acquire some new tastes. *Yum*.

Over the last twenty-five years, neuroscientists, psychologists, and educational technologists have discovered all manner of insights into how humans learn. The news is good. Our brains are "plastic" — we can rewire them to remember more, change the way we take in the world, and lead more fulfilling, productive lives.

Following the scientists' advice will make you a better person, more adept at what you do, continuously adding to your repertoire, fulfilled by living up to your potential, and growing into the person you want to be. You can increase your intelligence. I hope that's enough to satisfy you!

Improving the way you learn improves your life. Let's see if brain scientists and learning experts can get us started on that journey together.

Introduction

Learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change.
And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn.

Peter Drucker

This book shows you how to become more intelligent. Super smarts are within your grasp. Wikipedia defines *intelligence* as...

...the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from experience. It is not merely book learning, a narrow academic skill, or test-taking smarts. Rather, it reflects a broader and deeper capability for comprehending our surroundings—"catching on," "making sense" of things, or "figuring out" what to do.

In short, as psychologist David Wechsler says, intelligence is the "capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment."

Discovery, not spoon-feeding

You learn more from finding something out for yourself than from hearing it elsewhere. This book will get you started with enough information to figure out how a particular pattern of learning works, with pointers for putting it into practice. Nothing more. Don't expect any spoon-feeding. Neither of us have the time.

I learn bits and pieces, sometimes without even realizing it. In the end, it all comes together, and superior performance is the result.

I learn what I need to know. It's always relevant, unlike some workshops I've attended.

I learn as I work, not apart from it.



Learning from experience is tough. Not learning from experience is the end of the road.

These days, learning is the job.

JDI Just Do It The primary lesson of Real Learning is that you learn by doing. If you seriously want to be smarter, you have to put things into practice. The text will be marked liberally with JDI, short for “just do it.” Whenever you encounter new situations, you need to make it a habit to figure out how they fit, to do thought experiments, and then — JDI.

Hint: You’ll remember more if you vary your location while reading this book and practicing its techniques. On the bus. In the park. On the couch after dinner. Take small nibbles (another good way to remember stuff). Jot down your “Aha!’s.” You’ll remember better because you’ll have memories of places coupled to memories of your thinking: more neurons hitting up on each other.

You *must* have Internet access

If you don’t have Internet access at work, change the situation. Route around it with your smartphone or iPad. Find a way to view and participate on the Net. The Internet is the greatest cornucopia of knowledge the world has ever seen. Denying access makes your company look stupid and implies that management does not trust you.

How to read this book

Jonah read the first twenty pages, decided to work on his radar and reporting, read that section here, and hasn't been seen since.

Sam manages a five-person team. They are working their way through Aha! together, implementing what's appropriate for the team as they go.

Pat keeps the book next to the john. Each visit, it's the luck of the draw. The statistics favor sloooooow learning. Sequence doesn't make much difference either. Sometimes Pat leaves the stall mumbling, "Aha!"

Gail rips out a couple of pages and tacks them to the bulletin board every Tuesday morning with a note asking, "Why don't we do this?"

Fritz the engineer read two pages, skipped to the section on patterns, and put some practices in place that afternoon.

Ursula read the book cover to cover, but did not do a single exercise. Two months later, the Forgetting Curve set in and now she doesn't remember a damned thing she read.

Diego read the book as intended. He read about learning and memory, began his learning Plog, reflected on what he wants to accomplish, and read the learning patterns. He slowly worked his way through the patterns and sub-patterns, doing the exercises and figuring out which were worth his while. This took about eighteen months. Now he's the "learning guru" on his team.

Sven and Birgit had similar goals, so they are reading, and doing the JDI exercises together. They are helping each other over the difficult spots.

There are many paths through this material. Sample and cherry-pick as you like. As John Muir said of nature, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

Everything ahead is densely interconnected. You can dive in anywhere without fear of drowning.



Real Learning provides structure because people are more comfortable when they see the patterns.