

## **Learning Minute: 10/2/2020 -Sharpening Your Axe**

“Give me 6 hours to cut down a tree, I’ll spend the first 4 sharpening my axe.” Abraham Lincoln

For this week’s Learning Minute, I want to tell you a story.

*A young, strong and ambitious lumberjack began working for a new logging company. Eager to prove his strength and wood cutting abilities, he challenged one of the older veteran lumberjacks.*

*“I’ll bet you a week’s worth of pancakes that by the end of today, I’ve cut down more trees than you.”  
The young lumberjack said.*

*“Deal” replied the older lumberjack.*

*The young man was certain that his youth alone was enough to win this bet. The two lumberjacks set out to complete their challenge on opposite ends of the hill, with a common resting camp in the middle on top of the hill.*

*The young lumberjack is working tirelessly, eager to win. Not even an hour in, he looks up at the camp and sees the old man resting. “Resting already” he thought, “I’ve got this old man beat easy!”*

*This pattern continues just about every hour. The young man is confident he is going to win, with the amount of breaks the older lumberjack has taken.*

*At the end of the day, the two meet up to compare results.*

*“I cut down 15 trees!” the young lumberjack states proudly. “How about you old man?”*

*The old lumberjack smirks as he replies, “45”.*

*“WHAT!?! How could you possibly have cut down three times as many trees as I did? I saw all the breaks you took. You must have cheated!” The young man shouts.*

*The old lumberjack is laughing as he speaks, “you thought those were breaks? You fool, I was sharpening my axe!”*

Fail to prepare, prepare to fail.

Attempting to do anything without the requisite skills or experience is like chopping down a tree with a dull axe. Sure, you might get through a tree or two, but you would be considerably more successful if you spent some time sharpening your axe.

So, what does this have to do with Learning and HITT University? Ask yourself this question, when was the last time that you sharpened your axe? Sharpening your axe can be done in many ways. Perhaps it is listening to a Podcast while you are driving that will help you with Coaching your teams to be more effective. Maybe it is watching a Ted Talk about improving your Executive Presence for customers. Or perhaps it is reading an article on innovative technologies in the Construction Industry. (see all these resources below).

No matter what tool you use to sharpen your axe, the most important point is that you get it done! And of course, let us know how we can help!

## **Learning Minute: 10/16/2020- Investing in *Your* Base Build**

What is a base build? Being new to the construction industry, I am still learning many of the terms and lingo that many of you have been using for my lifetime. However, as I am learning more and more every day, I find that many of these terms can be used as a metaphor as well. Take a base build for instance; This is the shell and core of the building, right? It is the primary structure. In this case, I would say that we all need to work on building our own base- all that we are and that we do is based on what is inside us- our core!

In light of HITT's Wellness month, for this week's Learning Minute I want to walk you through, what I think, are the three key focus areas for personal wellness.

1. Surround yourself with greatness
2. Filling your cup (at least 30 minutes every day)
3. Learn something new once a week

### *Surround Yourself with Greatness:*

Have you ever heard the term "You are only as strong as your weakest link"? That is certainly the case when it comes to your crew and your team. There have been multiple times in my career where I was told to hold back on my passion or influence or guided to hire 'beneath me' for a new member on my team. The fact of the matter is, when my crew or team looks good- I look good! Measure your success on the success of those around you- and the best way to do that is to make sure you are surrounding yourself with greatness. So how do we do that? It all starts in the interview process. Being able to spot motivation and attitude during an interview is key to finding your new team member. We do this through behavioral interviewing. Asking the right questions, in the right way to each and every candidate allows you to have an understanding of what you may get after their start date. In fact, behavioral interviewing is said to be 55% predictive of future on-the-job behavior as compared to traditional interviewing, which is only 10% predictive. To learn more, register here for HITT University's Behavioral Interviewing class open to all team members and scheduled for 10/28/2020, 10:00am – 12:00pm EST.

### *Fill Your Cup (at least 30 minutes every day):*

"You can't pour from an empty cup!" I heard this quote in a spin class recently and it resonated so much! I know what you are thinking, "Come on, this is fru-fru stuff, who has time for this?" I get it, trust me, but let me ask you this, who reading this knows of someone who had a heart attack by the time they were 50? (I Do!) Who reading this has high blood pressure by the time they are 40? (I do!) I know that we are all pushing to be the best of the best, after all, we are at HITT, and that is what we do here. But, not taking the time to give yourself a breather is not helpful to anyone. Not to you, not to your family, and not to your boss. Providing yourself with just 30-minutes of self-care a day has been seen to boost your physical and emotional health, decreases stress and can reduce your risk of heart disease. Filling your cup doesn't have to be difficult, time consuming or complicated. For me it is jumping on the Peloton, going for a run, or even taking a moment to sit and drink my coffee *in peace*. I do something to fill my cup every day. I get in my time the hour before my family wakes up and I have to be 'on' for them while also getting ready to come into work. Maybe for you it looks different- maybe it is sitting on the couch to veg out while you watch the game, going fishing, taking a walk, or journaling. Whatever it is, be

sure it makes you happy and soothes your soul- bonus points if it also burns some calories! Give it a try- 30 minutes a day for 30 days and see how you feel! For more information and resources on filling your cup, see the article below.

<https://contentmentquesting.com/fill-your-cup/>

*Learn Something New Once a Week:*

I recently read an article, [The Top 7 Benefits of Learning a New Skill](#) and I was blown away at the depth of benefits learning something new can have. For instance, did you know that learning a new skill actually helps you to learn things faster over time? Who knew! People who learn a new skill are also less likely to develop dementia in their later years. If your brain is always triggering and learning something new, you are not giving it a chance to fail. In this area, let HITT University help! We are adding new resources and classes weekly and are always here to help you in any way that we can. If you have a recommendation for a new class or resource that you would like to see on HITT University Online, let us know. You can utilize our Course Request form here as well as emailing us at [HITTUniversity@hitt-gc.com](mailto:HITTUniversity@hitt-gc.com).

Remember, focusing on *your* base build, is not selfish, it is a requirement. Surround yourself with greatness, fill Your cup and learn something new once a week. These three things may seem small, but they are instrumental to your personal and professional success! HITT has fantastic resources in place to help you with in your base build journey. Visit the [Wellness Corner](#) to learn more.

As always, let us know how we can help!

Thank you for your time and **Never Stop Learning!**

The HITT University Team

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### **Learning Minute: 10/30/2020- How to give *and receive* an Effective Performance Reviews**

Within the next few weeks, many of us will be adding onto our calendars time for our annual performance reviews. Whether you will be giving or receiving a performance review, let me ask you this... are you looking forward to it? Do you see review time as development and growth, or something different? Well, did you know that career conversations boost employee engagement and retention? In fact, a study conducted by Right Management stated that 82% of respondents said they would be more engaged at work if their manager showed more interest in their career progression. It is quoted to say that "Regular career conversations would make them more likely to engage with their work, share ideas, and look for career growth and longevity in their current organization." I think it is time that we, as managers and employees, start really looking forward to these performance reviews!

Here at HITT, we have an amazing group of leaders. Many of which were promoted for achieving stellar results. They were asked to move into a manager role in order to push their teams to achieve those

same results. However, just like at many companies, I have to wonder if some of those managers have been set up to fail? What if they were not given the tools and knowledge on the best ways to inspire a team towards success. Luckily, performance reviews are a perfect opportunity to reset, align on expectations and begin your own brand of Coaching.

So what is Coaching?

Coaching is an **ongoing perpetual process to support growth and development** of each individual in a team through **observation and conversation** to enhance their performance.

When coaching, it's important to *ask questions* to encourage your teammate to uncover strengths and opportunities. By asking questions rather than providing all of the answers, you will help your teammate to *uncover opportunities and gain buy-in for improvement*.

While I could talk all day about the importance of identifying coaching opportunities on a daily basis, this article is about performance reviews, so I will save that for another day. Today, I am going to focus on two types of coaching conversations: Performance & Development. In my opinion, a good performance review will be a mixture of these two aspects.

**Performance Conversations:** This is the sum of multiple specific behaviors that have been demonstrated over time. It is typically formal and happens once or twice a year. During the conversation you should review each goal that had been set for your team member and discuss what went well, what progress has been made, what is helping to achieve the goals and what challenges might be getting in the way. Share your honest assessment of the employee's performance and provide **specific** behavioral examples. Discuss both areas of accomplishment as well as any areas that may require focus, coaching, or training and development. Set an action plan for next steps to improve including formal training, shadowing, or time management. Then, set a time to follow up on a regular basis.

**Development Conversation:** This type of conversation is focused around helping the team member identify their professional goals in the current role and in their career. This is a thoughtful and productive **two-way conversation** about a team members career development. In this part of your review, the manger should be talking 20% and the team member 80%. Afterall, this is their career- not yours! Ask open ended questions to get your team member thinking. Examples might include: What type of career growth is most important to you? What 2-3 skills could you focus on in the next quarter to help you grow and develop? See more question examples in the article [15 Performance Review Questions you Should be Asking](#).

**EMPLOYEES:** I know, I know, you are thinking, "this does not apply to me, I don't have any direct reports." Well guess what... If you think that you don't have to do any prep for your performance review, you are wrong! This is YOUR career that you will be talking about, and with that said, you have just as much responsibility, if not more, in ensuring you have a successful performance review.

Come prepared with successes that you have had against your goals in the last year. I personally have a folder in my email that is called "Toot Toot" where I store positive feedback from leaders and stakeholders about my work. This way when it is time to "toot my own horn" I have the quotes to back it up. You could also keep a section in Microsoft OneNote called Accomplishments and then a Page for

each month. Include on the page any successes that you had around goals and competencies. To learn more about tracking your accomplishments see [this article](#) from LifeHacker.

You also need to be prepared with questions that you can ask your Leader in order to understand expectations and understand the company's goals and landscape. Check out [6 Tips for Holding a Great Career Conversation](#) by Reflektive.

Remember, a performance review should be valuable and actionable! This should be a time to celebrate successes and make a plan for improvement of opportunities. Be sure to match any missing competencies or gaps to development that could be done in those areas. HITT University is moving towards matching each of the learnings within our Schools to match our current survey questions for reviews. We hope to have that launched next year.

Also, for Manager, stand by in Q1 of 2021 for a suite of tools, resources, online and instructor-led classes that you can use to increase your leadership skills, including Coaching Conversations.

As always, give us your thoughts of this article below and let us know if you need anything. Always Remember, **Never Stop Learning!**

The HITT University Team

Video Podcast: 5 Coaching Conversations: Developmental Coaching - <https://youtu.be/1S2B1A0v6go>

Article: Career Conversations with Employees: Questions and Tips for Managers.  
<https://fellow.app/blog/2019/career-development-conversations-with-employees/>

TedTalk: The secret to giving great feedback <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtl5UrrgU8c>

Podcast: Give Better Feedback <https://insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu/article/podcast-give-better-feedback>

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### **Learning Minute: 11/16/2020- What is Psychological Safety Anyway?**

In last week's Friday Flash, Ashley had a safety moment on Psychological safety. Well, that made me think, what is psychological safety anyway. Well, as someone who loves to learn, I started researching, and I wanted to share with you what I learned and some resources for you to learn more today.

Psychological safety is defined as "being able to show and employ oneself without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career,

When team members are motivated at work and want to share an idea for improving performance, they frequently do not speak up because they fear that they will be harshly judged.[7] When psychological safety is present, team members think less about the potential negative consequences of expressing a

new or different idea than they would otherwise.[2] As a result, they speak up more when they feel psychologically safe and are motivated to improve their team or company.

Psychological safety benefits organizations and teams in many different ways. The following are the most widely empirically supported consequences of a team being psychologically safe:[13]

- Improves likelihood that an attempted process innovation will be successful[14]
- Increases amount members learn from mistakes[15]
- Boosts employee engagement[16][17]
- Improves team innovation[18]

[Wikipedia](#) defines psychological safety as ‘a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.’ It further goes on to say ‘it can be defined as being able to show an employee oneself without fear of negative consequences of self image, status, or career,’ which is attributed to William Kahn, who coined this term in 1990 in an article titled ‘[Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work](#)’ in the Academy of Management Journal.

Of course information isn’t going to be flowing up the chain of command. People are going to try to cover their own asses and not tell their boss that they just made a mistake, or that something’s going very wrong. If they’re the one that gets blamed for it, well, why volunteer that information?

Phrases like “fail fast, fail often” or embrace failure, let’s learn from it” are all created in environments where psychological safety is practiced. Here people aren’t afraid to take risks because they know it is what is needed.

Letting up on the breaks vs. letting go of the gas. Free people up to really engage and not be afraid of each other.

If you are ONLY creating Psychological Safety then you are creating a comfort zone, but you may also be leaving money on the table. Accountability

If you are only talking about peoples accountability for excellence, and not making sure that they are not afraid to talk to each other, then they are in the anxiety zone. Want to be in the Learning Zone. Learning Zone = High Performance Zone

- When psychological safety as well as accountability levels are low (apathy zone), employees are apathetic and constantly jockey for positions.
- Bureaucratic organizations where currying favor rather than sharing ideas is the norm typify this zone. When accountability is high but the necessary psychological safety is absent (anxiety zone), employees are stressed and anxious. They are wary to experiment, to offer new ideas, or to seek help. Burnout is a frequent outcome. Banks and consulting are typical examples.

- Environments in which psychological safety is high but without performance pressures (comfort zone) are breeding grounds for complacency. There is hardly any sense of urgency and doing the minimum is the norm. Family businesses and small firms can be found in this quadrant.
- Teams that operate in the learning zone often frame their work as a learning challenge: one that entails experimentation, trial and error and has room for failure. This zone is also known as the Performance zone.

How do we get there?

3 things that can go a long way in creating a workplace where we can avoid the catastrophes that may occur if we are all silent.

1. Frame the work as a learning problem, not an execution problem: recognize that there's enormous uncertainty and interdependence ahead. We have never been here before. We have to have everyone's knowledge and voices in the game.
2. Acknowledge your own fallibility. Say simple things like "I may miss something or I need to hear from you" this goes for reports, peers or leaders. This creates safety for speaking up.
3. Model Curiosity. Ask a lot of questions. This creates a necessity for voice.

4 stages of Psychological Safety. <https://wind4change.com/4-stages-psychological-safety-timothy-clark-inclusion-learner-contributor-challenger/>

We need people to bring their full selves to the challenging jobs ahead

"People are not afraid of failure, they're afraid of blame" – Seth Godin

Podcast: [How Leaders Can Create Psychological Safety in the Workplace](#)

Ted Talk: [Building a psychologically safe workplace](#)

Book: [The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth](#)

Article: [7 ways to create psychological safety in your workplace](#)

Article: [A Superintendent's Case for a Psychologically Safe Jobsite](#)

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### **Learning Minute: 12/16/2020- Personal Branding for Success**

Branding has become quite the buzz word as of late, especially when you think of all the internet sensations and influencers out there. You see them on Instagram with their picture-perfect lives and not so subtle advertisements for products they (probably don't) use. However, branding is much more than

logos and pretty packaging. Branding- when it comes to your PERSONAL brand, can make the difference between a mediocre career and an extremely successful career. Your *personal brand* is your reputation whereas your *personal branding* is the managing of your reputation.

Whether you are looking to increase your client base, get promoted, move into a new role within your team, move across sectors, or just want to change that first impression that has been following you around for years; all of this can be accomplished by building and maintaining a stellar personal brand.

So, what is a personal brand? It is the unique combination of skills, experience, and personality that you want the world to see. It is the telling of your story, and how it reflects your conduct, behavior, spoken and unspoken words, and attitudes. Simply stated, your personal brand is how you promote yourself and how others see you. This is what makes you stand out from the crowd. If you want to change that first impression or want to be on the tip of everyone's tongue when it comes to a promotion, then you need to be memorable.

When I was 33, I decided to do a full 180 and change my career. At the time, I was not sure what I wanted to do, or how I was going to make an impact on the world. Then I took a class on Personal Branding that literally changed my life. Understanding what I wanted to be able to do and give to the world through my career and how to put that message out to the world opened doors that I never would have expected!

So, Let's talk about how to get there. In developing your personal brand, there are three different areas that you need to know and be able to communicate in everything that you do:

### **Your Why:**

Author Simon Sinek says, "*People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.*" Prior to my career change, I worked as a Certified Demonologist at a high-end jewelry store. Now, I was actually a very successful salesperson, but it wasn't easy. The thing about jewelry companies that you may not know is that most of them are owned by the same conglomerate. That meant that the jewelry that I was trying to sell the customer, was the exact same item, at the exact same price, that they could get down the street. I learned quickly that my customers were not choosing to buy a diamond from the company I worked for, they were choosing to buy a diamond from ME. Now why is that? It is because I stood out from the competition with the service that I provided and with the passion that I put into my work. Without knowing it at the time, I was exhibiting my own person brand.

Think about what you are passionate about. What is it about your job, or your dream job, that keeps you energized and engaged on a daily basis? How does this line up with what is most important to you in life? All of this is part of what we call your **Core Purpose**. Start by reflecting on what talents you have and what is important to you and then come up with your own **Core Purpose Statement**. I went through this activity myself in the personal branding class that I mentioned above and it was extremely helpful! To help you out, I have put together [this worksheet](#) that will guide you through the process. Once you are complete, I would love to see your Core Purpose Statements below- mine is in the comments.

### **Your Message:**

Now that you know what is important to you, you must determine how to get your message across in all communication channels. How is your message coming across in emails, meetings or even your



voicemail? What does your LinkedIn profile look like? What about Facebook, Instagram & Twitter? In today's world, social media is everywhere. You may think that your boss or clients are only looking at LinkedIn, but you may be wrong. I can tell you from personal experience, prior to interviewing any candidates, I am a full-on social media stalker, and I assure you that I am not the only one. Be mindful of what is out there and when someone does a Google search of you, be in control of the message and impression that they receive.

When you are delivering your message, it's okay to show your personality. Let it be seen what you are passionate about and what is important to you. It is imperative that you are authentic and consistent in your message. The worst thing you can do is act and say one thing in front of leadership, but then act completely different in your personal life and behind closed doors. Authenticity & consistency builds trust and credibility.

Finally, don't try to be an expert in all things! Pick your niche and be the expert and thought leader in that area. This will enable you to stand out from the crowd and make an impact. When people hear your name, what words do you want to come to mind for them? Then do everything in your power to make that happen.

Finding your unique voice and staying true to it is one of the key aspects of creating a powerful professional brand. As Oscar Wilde once said, "Be yourself, because everyone else is taken"

### **Your Control:**

Control what you can control! You may not be able to change a first impression, but you can certainly step up your game for the second, third or even 100<sup>th</sup> impression. Maximize the nonverbal messaging that you are sending about yourself. This means dressing for success- the old adage "Dress for the job you want, not the job you have" can be used when working in HQ, but what about on job sites? Are your boots and PPE old and dirty? Are your jeans and shirt wrinkled or torn? If your clothes could talk, what would they say about you? This is all part of your personal brand- however, remember what I said about authenticity- If your personality and message speaks Target vs. Christian Dior, that is okay; just take pride in the appearance you are putting off.

Another thing under your control is your performance. This is fundamental, of course. You need to deliver quality results in your work. If not, your personal brand will only be tarnished and all the work that you have done to build it, was a waste. Treat others the way that you want to be treated. Do what you say you are going to do and deliver with passion! Image is about what other people think of you- it's your personal brand!

Once your image has been created, then it is all about exposure. This is about making sure people know who you are, and what you stand for. Be everywhere and ready to deliver your message, wither verbally or nonverbally. Talk to people, go to networking events (possibly virtually at this point), take a seat at the table. Also, consider creating your own web page. This will allow you to not only get your message across, but also provide a way to showcase your talent, previous successes, and your work strategy. Believe it or not, it is easier than it sounds. Check out [Weebly](#) and other free sites to learn more.

If you want to do better at your current job, build stronger relationships with clients, get promoted, or move into a new career- building and maintaining a successful personal brand will get you there! When it comes to personal branding, remember your reputation is everything. Take the small steps now for a bigger career tomorrow!

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Articles: [What is Personal Branding](#)

[Personal Branding Secrets: 7 steps to building an outstanding personal brand](#)

[10 Golden Rules of Personal Branding](#)

Podcast: [8 Tips for Building a Personal Brand That Will Stand Out From the Crowd](#)

Book: [You are a Brand! In Person and Online, How Smart People Brand Themselves for Business Success](#)

Ted Talk: [Designing a purposeful personal brand from zero to infinity Tai Tran](#)