

Strategies for Personal Renewal: Part 2

1 **Play.**

Studies have shown that many highly creative learners have a childlike perspective when it comes to ideas. They “toy” with new ideas, without fear of criticism or disapproval, rearranging them and looking at them from many different perspectives. Einstein saw playfulness as “the essential feature in productive thought.”

2 **Create daily routines.**

Successful professionals tend to make regular investments in their personal growth. Make a calendar of developmental activities that you do daily (e.g., working out), weekly (e.g., writing a blog or newsletter), and monthly (e.g., having lunch with your entire team at work).

3 **Start reading again.**

Once we get out of college or graduate school, the amount of reading we do takes a dramatic dive, and you have to consciously counter this trend. Read widely, from a varied selection of fiction or non-fiction texts. Focus on a few, key publications, such as the Economist and read them religiously. If you read just 5-10 books a year, this would put you way above what the average professional does.

4 **Take a deep dive.**

As you become more senior, you spend—appropriately—more and more of your time focused on the big picture and on building and managing relationships with senior executives. But insights and ideas don't just come from only taking a 100,000 foot (or 30,769 meters!) view of the client's situation. Don't be afraid to get your 'hands dirty' and directly engage in client work. Although they can be time consuming, these experiences can offer insights that would never be visible from the top.

5 **Add “outliers” to your network.**

Over time, we tend to draw on the same, small group of people in our network. Studies suggest there is value in reaching outside your traditional set of relationships and connecting with so-called “weak links.” These individuals can connect you to other networks which you might not normally have access to. Also, compared to your closest associates, they may have a more unbiased view of the problem you're grappling with and therefore be in a position to offer fresh advice.

6 **Expand your expertise into adjacent areas.**

This process can represent a natural extension of your knowledge base. The best industry experts, for example, develop knowledge and insights across the entire value chain for their industry, from suppliers through to end-users.

7 **“Minor” in a process or function.**

Create a secondary or tertiary expertise in a function or process that is important to clients in any industry, such as information technology, innovation, change management, organization design, leadership, supply chain management, and so on.

8 **Take time for reflection.**

Some researchers in the field of creativity believe that our best insights develop during the moment of reflection and relaxation that often occurs after a period of intense activity. In fact, many of the great thinkers in history—from Sir Isaac Newton to Albert Einstein—made it a conscious habit to get away from the hub-hub of their daily life and create time for solitary reflection.

9 **Get a mentor or coach.**

To grow and develop, we all need a bit of raw, unvarnished feedback about our strengths and weaknesses. A good mentor or coach can provide this. Objective feedback on your performance is essential to mastery.