

High Performance Change

With Don and Lisa Fraser

Applying High-Performance Principles to Education

This is the third in a series of articles with Don and Lisa Fraser. The first and second articles were published in our December 2010 and February 2011 editions respectively.

Interpersonal relationships are key to high performance. There's no doubt that people are more successful and achieve greater things in life when they have a solid support system behind them. So it is with students in today's career colleges. High performance learning starts with motivation, say speaker-professor Don Fraser and Lisa Fraser, author of the national bestseller *Making Your Mark*.

All of us can be motivated, he says, but that doesn't mean we change our fitness, our nutrition, or even how we learn. But you have to have a motivation to achieve anything in life, and there are three things that are powerful motivators.

Purpose. When a student comes to a career school, the purpose may be thin, maybe only molucous-thin, but they have a purpose and that is to move from the minimum-wage job that is available for all of us at all times into a good, better-paying job or career.

Skill Set or Skill Profile. A student has to learn how to master the industry they're pursuing and to

develop a skill set that will give them entry-level employment. Once you get entry-level employment, you keep learning for the rest of your life, and you keep refining it.

Autonomy. Students want independence, especially those in the 18- to 30-year-old range. They want independence economically and financially for their family. It's a fact that if someone has economic or financial independence, they are much healthier, much happier people. So this ties into our health care; it ties into our psychological profile; and high performance learning is really the foundation, the key to opening up our potential for careers. And once we start that career, the most fundamental thing that continues from it is high performance learning for the rest of our lives.

"It's kind of amazing, shocking and upsetting to me that very few students have been taught about high performance learning," Don Fraser said, adding that there are eight basic cornerstones to high performance learning. They include:

High Performance Learning

1. Attention, eye contact. Your eyes represent where your brain is. If you're going to be riveted to what's going on, you have to control your eye contact. Part of attention is really controlling your state of mind, and being in the

moment of what's going on, not wandering off. You can physically be somewhere, but not mentally in the same place. And whether you're in the moment or not can be seen in your eyes.

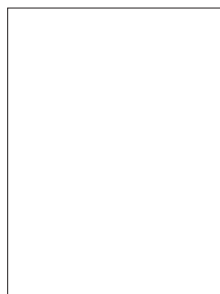
2. Physiology. If you've had a big lunch and then go to hear a speaker, you start feeling sluggish and tired soon after sitting down, even if the speaker is interesting to you. That's because your blood system has gone to your stomach to help digest your food, you're not moving and you have less oxygen in your circulation system. We have to learn how to change our physiology and teachers need to learn how to change the physiology of their students. So every 20 minutes, teachers should reconnect by changing their teaching style, by changing the physiology of the students by having them stand up or having them do something of involvement. Otherwise every 20 minutes, their attention span just slowly drops. To prevent that the teacher has to do something to engage the students and get them involved by becoming active. When you become active, your physiology changes—your blood pressure and heart rate change, and so forth. “I teach students that if their faculty member doesn't change

their physiology, they can do it themselves,” said Fraser.

3. Interest. You have to make sure that whatever's going on, it fits into your skills profile. For example, you might not like accounting, but you recognize that you need to know something about it, even in the most basic of forms. To learn that, you have to be disciplined and you have to find a mental hook as to why it has purpose. Somehow you have to create an interest for your brain.

4. Relationship. The more a student knows the teacher and the more the teacher knows the student the more they respect each other and the more patience they'll have with one another. Having a common bond makes people more patient with each other and they can then more easily connect with and work with each other's strengths, rather than their weaknesses.

5. Context. This is the most difficult one in higher education and it's the one where we do the poorest as educators. Context is really looking at the huge purpose of why a student is there. What is the competency skill profile? What is the career connection? What



DON FRASER is one of North America's leading authorities on student success and retention. A professor at Durham College for the past 30 years, Don delivers seminars based on the college success book, *Making Your Mark* by Lisa Fraser, which has sold over 1.3 million copies. He has delivered

seminars to over 30,000 college staff at various conferences and at over 350 colleges. He co-designed and implemented Durham's student success program 20 years ago and has been working in this area since that time.

LISA FRASER founded LDF Publishing Inc in 1992, authored *Making Your Mark*, and also co-authored *Cornerstone*, a college success book for Prentice Hall Canada Inc.

Contact Information:

Don or Lisa Fraser
LDF Publishing Inc/Making Your Mark
1881 Yonge Street, P.O. Box 48086
Toronto, ON M4S 3C6
Phone: 1-877-492-6845 / 416-484-8118
Fax: 416-484-8118
Email: info@makingyourmark.com
Web Site: www.makingyourmark.com

are the career success stories? It's the macro-view, not the micro-view. The more and more that we build that large purpose, that large context, then the students will buy into all the different syllabi, modules, and micro pieces of information we're trying to deliver to them because they have a way of placing it in their skill profile for their career. That is key.

6. Work ethic. It's not just physically being there. It's being attentive; it's note taking. You have five times the retrieval in your brain if you take notes versus just listening. So if you want great expertise, you have to spend a lot of time practicing and developing it.

7. Repetition. There are two classic facts in repetition. It takes 21 to 42 days to develop or change a habit. And just because you do something for one day doesn't mean you're in the habit of doing it. After three weeks it starts to really be there, and if, after six weeks, it's still there, then bingo, you've got a habit.

8. Have a system. Take all of the first seven cornerstones and integrate them into an overall system, Fraser recommended, otherwise it's just fragmented information. "Once it's part of a system, it becomes the daily way that you operate, the way you prepare for your week, the way you prepare for your day, the way you prepare for your classes. And once you practice that system over and over again, you don't leave it," he said.

Once a teacher, or even a student, understands that those are the eight cornerstones, they then have to learn how to take advantage of those to turn them into high performance change. There are seven stages to high performance change. They are:

1. Review past academic performance. Look at past behaviors and make changes where necessary.

2. Explore limiting beliefs. This is the toughest one of all. For example, one of the limiting beliefs a student has is they can do something later instead of doing it now. They might study the night before an exam thinking they can pull it off. Well, they might be able to pull it off, but they won't get the high performance learning. It won't be integrated into their brain. Another limiting belief is a student thinking he or she isn't smart. That is far from the truth. "Some people with learning disabilities are some of the smartest people out there. It's just that they don't have strengths in every area," commented Fraser. Teachers should find out what their students' limiting beliefs are and they can then start helping them overcome them.

3. Explore positive and negative motivators. The biggest positive motivator is they want a career, but the biggest negative motivator right now is the economy is making students afraid. "They fear that no matter what they do it won't work out for them. If students let that fear, or any fear, dominate them, they won't do anything. To develop a career, it's going to be more challenging all the time, but the alternative is minimum-wage," said Fraser.

4. Identify high performance techniques and systems. It's important to show students what techniques work. But they won't mean anything unless the student turns those techniques into a behavior.

5. Create new patterns and habits. You can't just know the techniques and systems. You have to do them

everyday, so they become part of your way of life; they become a habit.

6. Evaluate short-term results.

Once something becomes a behavior, start noticing short-term results. Tests seem easier if you've taken good notes and studied them beforehand, for example, Fraser said. Or professors seem more interesting if students read class material beforehand.

7. Adopt a lifelong approach to academic and career success. Making these kinds of changes isn't just to get a passing grade in school. It's about following a process that gives you success in all areas of your life.

Finally, to top everything off, Fraser explained there are eight cornerstones of high-performance careers, and they are:

- Attitude
- Educational and career vision
- Self-management skills

- Fundamental skills, like communication and critical thinking
- Workplace skills or career skills
- Content
- Experience—whether it's volunteer, service learning, or entry-level
- Personal life

“I really see a flow. A student spends some time on the cornerstones of high performance learning. Then they take it to the cornerstones of high performance change. And if they do those two well and interact with them everyday, then they start to build the detail and structure and the depth in those eight cornerstones of high performance careers. They're really building the rest of their lives by doing that,” Fraser said. “And when they graduate, it never stops. It'll be with them for the rest of their lives.”