



A Blue-Print for Sustained Success for Students of Business Administration

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This paper will be based mainly on the Empirical Data collected over decades of Tertiary Teaching, coupled with years of involvement as an Advisor of students at the Graduate and Undergraduate levels; of being the Academic Chair of the School of Business, for seven years, reporting directly to the Provost, in the absence of a Dean of Business; of having been twice elected Chair of the Academic Standards Committee at Dowling College; and as a Member of the Board of Trustees, and Chair of its Academic Standards Committee at Briarcliffe College, Long Island, for over two decades; and earlier, as the Academic Advisor to local students in my Community in Bombay, India; and now, as a Scholarship Judge of Delta Mu Delta, the International Honor Society for students of Business Administration.

I believe that I have been blessed with this valuable experience, mainly because of the excellent education I received initially from my Parents at home, and at St. Xavier's College, Bombay University, India, where I obtained my Degrees in Medical Microbiology and Chemistry; and at Pace University, New York, where I majored in International Business: Management and Marketing. I am the recipient of the President's Award for Academic Excellence for my Doctorate degree.

In my opinion, based on years of experience, adhering to *strict* Academic Standards at the time of Admission of students, is a sure way of taking our Country back to its **#1** Academic Standards position. We held the Global Gold Standard of Excellence, for decades. If only to *make up the desired numbers needed to fill classrooms*; [a case of *sacrificing Quality to maintain Quantity*]; students who do not measure up to the rigid Academic Standards set initially, are accepted, the result will produce problems way beyond expectation, and we will slide down a slippery slope, academically. As



Americans, we just can't stand by any longer, and continue to let this happen to us. I hope that my suggestions stated here will help to put an end to our current problem.

An incident that occurred rather recently, set me thinking. A student met me with a question that seemed to concern her. She said, "Dr. Pereira, I love your class; but I was surprised that you gave me a **C-**, in spite of the fact that I *studied very hard for the exam*". After a short pause I asked her to give me some details of her *very hard studying*. I was indeed shocked to hear her response, "**I read it once**". That was her idea of *studying very hard!* The next time I met that class, I asked a few relevant questions, and realized that *she was not alone*. Since that time, I tell the students in similar situations, that I am available, on certain days, after 8:30 PM up to any time, however late; and that I will be happy to help those students who need some special assistance with their studying. Students who attended my "special classes" did extremely well in their subsequent tests. Some details will be stated here:

Let's start at the very beginning. I will take you back to a time, when you first went to school, and came home all excited, anxious to tell all at home about your new "home away from home"; your new school, new friends, and your new teacher who told you that you had a lot to learn about the **three R's: Reading, Writing and Arithmetic**. Coming home with text books, copy books, and pencils made you feel very important. At first you had to learn the alphabet; to recite and write them; then some poems and songs. Later, addition, subtraction, division and multiplication, with the proverbial "times tables". Just think! It is years since you learned all that; but have you ever forgotten any of those basics? Of course not! How can you ever forget what you seem to be **repeating** all through life?

So, that's the secret! From your KG class when you first learned the alphabet, you have been using those same 26 letters over and over again, for decades on end, in different permutation and combinations, in more advanced and sophisticated form; but still they are those same 26 letters. That is why we NEVER forget those famous 26 letters. **Repetition is the name of the game**. Let us never forget that. It is for that very



same reason that advertisements are repeated over and over again, *ad nauseam*, at times; till the name of the *product*: goods, service, institute, issue,... is almost etched in our memories. If we treat our studies in an almost similar way, we will find it difficult to forget them. We will have taken a major stride on the road to Sustained Academic Success.

As Business students you have already experienced some successes. You have graduated out of High School and are now in a College or University. Your Graduation day was not referred to as the *Finale!* Instead, the Ceremony is referred to as the *Commencement*; as you are now on your own; expected to continue your Education, to the best of your ability. We can thus aim at being **intellectual achievers**. But this academic success must not get to you. *Intellectual pride /conceit* can never be condoned. My parents made that very clear to us from the start. Students graduating today must realize that at the same time, there will be millions of graduates from all walks of life, from all over the world. Employers today have fewer positions available; and with the many applicants for those very few positions, they will obviously pick only the **very best**. I know; for I spent a great part of my professional life on that side of the *proverbial fence*.

To be successful, students must aim at having the most attractive, the most unusual CV; *something special* in their resume; that states that “I am not just a student with the stipulated number of credits; I also have a practical background, having worked in a Corporation as an Intern; where I learned *in practice*, what I learned *in theory*, in the classroom”. Other attractive additions would include extra-curricular activities and community service, revealing the *leadership potential* of the student. Also, make a sincere attempt to **study yourself**; make a note of your **strengths**; work on them, to increase them in quality and quantity. Then list your **weaknesses**; work on them, making every effort to reduce them in intensity and numbers. That will be your best start. Students must always be **Regular** in attendance and attentive in class. Assignments must be prepared and presented on time. The other **R's**:



Responsibility, Respect, and Remembering for the Rest of your Life, the important issues in the subjects that you have studied, are also very important.

Responsibility: In Genesis, the first book in the Bible, we read that when our First Parents disobeyed the Lord; they realized they had done something *really wrong*. The Lord God approached them and interrogated Adam. He blamed Eve. When she was questioned, she blamed the snake. Ever since then, we all tend to blame something or someone for our mistakes. Why are we not strong enough to take responsibility for our own actions? President Kennedy once said, “Success has many fathers; Failure is an orphan”. We must be man / woman enough to face our own mistakes; for only then will we be able to correct them.

In selecting students for induction into Delta Mu Delta, the International Honor Society, for students of Business Administration, one criterion we use is Academic Achievement. The other is that we are expected to encourage our student achievers to be Socially Responsible. That is why we organize the collection of non-perishable food, clothing, books and even toys for tots. Much has been given to us - so much is expected of us. Being responsible is a much appreciated characteristic.

Respect: This is something we cannot demand or purchase. We have to give it, to get it. One has to *respect one's self* first. That implies doing all we can to maintain our *self respect*, despite peer pressure and the temptations that the world of today displays all around us. If we do not respect ourselves, we will find it difficult, if not impossible, to respect others. The issue here is that once we have achieved the respect of our peers, and others, we must do all in our power to hold on to those high standards that we have set for ourselves, irrespective of peer pressure and other temptations. In the corporate world, respect for authority is certainly appreciated, and the young person who has this special quality, is remembered for positive consideration at the time of selection.

Remember what we learn - for the Rest of our Lives: We invest much of our money, time, effort and energy, in our education. Don't we want a Return on our



Investment? If we study just for the examinations, we are bound to forget most, if not everything; soon after the examination. At times we don't even remember what we have studied, at the time of the exam. To avoid this catastrophe we must change our study habits. It is never too late. In an ideal situation we should rapidly read through the subject matter before it is assigned. Once assigned, we should read and re-read it, making notes and notations at crucial points, for issues to stand out in our memory. This will create a mental impact, and even a glance at our notes, any time later, will help us remember the entire lesson. Studying again, at the time of the exam, will bring back the details and we can definitely expect excellent results right away - and years later too.

I was compelled to adapt my study habits to my new subjects, as I started classes in Science, and later, in International Business: Management & Marketing. These were disciplines that were *foreign* to me. I had no idea of what to expect, and how to start studying for them. I spent much time trying to *catch up* on the *basics* I had missed, well before classes started. After that, my understanding of the subjects improved. I began to believe that the words and terms used, seemed somewhat familiar. I worked on ways to remember each one, till I felt comfortable thinking and talking about them. This made things easier for me, and I no longer felt like an *outsider* during class discussions.

In India it was not easy for a 'girl' to be accepted initially as a Science major. One had to have a really high GPA. To be admitted to the prestigious St. Xavier's, it was even higher. Even though I had the required GPA, I (and the very few 'girls' in my class), was told during the First Semester, that "*Girls do not have the brain to study Science. Why not switch over to the Liberal Arts?*" To be accepted for Research for the Masters and Doctorate degrees in Science, it was even more difficult, but I was determined to be accepted and admitted.

At my request, the College President intervened, because of my good academic standing. The Director stated that his Department, though located in St. Xavier's, is



financed by the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research in New Delhi, and the Government of India would not want “*to waste its money educating a Girl.*” Finally, I was reluctantly accepted; but I was assigned a project that guys had shied away from; as it involved the dreaded disease, Tuberculosis. I accepted the challenge, and obtained excellent results, working with a Scandinavian Scientist who developed a liquid medium in which the TB germs grew faster. An Indian Chemistry Professor assigned a structural formula to my product.

For a comparative study, I used some additional fast-growing enteric bacteria, particularly the fastest growing Cholera organisms. My final experiment grabbed the attention of a very prestigious audience: The Dean of the Science Department and some senior Scientists of St. Xavier’s. I had worked on the Cholera germs to make them *very virulent*, just to obtain the most accurate results. [In India in those years, we did not have sophisticated equipment]. I was *orally ‘pipetting’* the liquid *virulent Cholera culture*. One of the visitors said something very funny. That distracted me, and I swallowed some of the liquid, *virulent Cholera culture*. The Microbiologists, all aware that the Cholera germs have a ***six-hour incubation period***, looked at the clock. They knew that in six hours I would, most certainly be dead. They were concerned; they all rushed up to me, while I first sterilized the equipment I was using. They planned to call my Parents and siblings, who had just left St. Xavier’s for the day. I told them that I will be OK if they would cut up some of the lemons we had in our “tea club”. I sucked up and tried hard to eat those lemons. I must state here that I was the junior-most in that laboratory. The other Microbiologists were my Professors and Assistants. **They** taught us; but **they all forgot** what **they** had taught us. I was surprised when they asked me why I wanted lemons. I stated what I remembered from their teaching: that the *Cholera germs can only grow in an alkaline medium*. Naturally, I would not drink Sulphuric, Nitric, or even Hydrochloric acid. Lemons were my only hope. You can clearly see now, that remembering what I had learned earlier, saved my life. [It must be stated here, that in those years in India, Science text books were very scarce. They had to be imported]. We therefore **relied heavily on the notes we took during the lectures of our Professors. They were the sole source**



of my knowledge; and they forgot!!! This is only *one of the few* incidents in which **remembering what I learned** in class, saved my life. The results of my experiments were excellent. If my research continued, I had a great product that killed TB germs, and had no toxic effect on mice. In fact, they increased in weight after each experiment. Naturally, I was asked to stay on at St. Xavier's, ignoring the excellent job opportunity that I was offered. This time it was the Director who had to be coaxed to let me go.

[At Pace University, I had no problem to register for the Executive MBA and Doctorate. President Mortola was impressed to note that I had the *guts* to register for degrees in Business, even though I had no BBA, and no idea of Business courses. Business in those years was considered to be the major for **MEN** only]. My classmates were all Vice Presidents, who specialized in Management, Marketing, Accounting, Finance or Economics, in top Corporations; whereas I was only a Quality Control Manager in Bristol Myers in Upstate New York and Pfizer Limited in India. I worked very hard at these *new* subjects, and obtained the President's Award for the Doctorate in International Business Management & Marketing. I believe that it was my Science background that helped me.

No more **R's**, but I would like to make sure that you all take your education seriously. I just mentioned that studying in India, we had to *make do* without the equipment and **books**, the life-blood of education; that we in the United States take for granted. Having lived, studied and worked in India, and visited and lectured in other countries, almost all of which lack the facilities and things we take for granted here, I just can't understand why ALL those countries have students whose **academic performance** is far **superior** to ours. What are we doing wrong? Are we resting on the laurels of the past? Believing that we are *special*? This is not true. Students in those *less-advantaged* countries are performing at levels we just can't reach. What has happened to us? We seem to be more materialistic - worshipping at the altar of the Almighty Dollar; and today, this idol is proving to have feet of clay. Where is this *materialism* going to take us? It is time we revise our thinking and our behavior.



History should remind us that the great empires of yesterday are no longer great today. Are we going to let all those countries, considered hitherto as less fortunate than we are, race us in all the ways that count? This is where our **patriotism** is going to be tested. So I say to you, put an end to the *old ways* wherein we do the least amount of work and hope to get a great grade. If we want a good grade, let's work, and work hard for it, so we will remember what we learn, and use that knowledge to raise the academic standards of our United States of America.

As has happened in the recent past, people continue to graduate and get degrees. To that I say, "Big deal!" even thermometers and barometers have degrees. When you get your degree, make sure you have a really **Good Education** to go with the degree. This includes, *inter alia* a positive response to the following questions:

- (i) Has your education helped to improve your Character?
- (ii) Is it making you more marketable?
- (iii) Has it resulted in widening your Horizons?
- (iv) Has it made you more Ethical & Socially Responsible?
- (v) Has it improved all aspects of your Communication skills?
- (vi) Has it helped to reduce Prejudice?
- (vii) Has it helped you to work well with people of other cultures?

If you have positive answers to ALL or most of these seven questions, you can be sure that your degree has helped to give you a really good education.

Students of Business Administration, you now have the tools; all you have to do, is use them. Don't force Bill Gates to turn to India and other academically successful countries to fill the many positions he has at this very moment. Your Academic Achievement is the means to an end. You now need a suitable position in the corporate world, to utilize the academic skills you have just acquired. But that alone is not sufficient. The corporate world is looking for something more. They want smart people who are **Management Material: people** with **Social Skills** too; who with minimal training, can step in and represent their Company. Do we, as students, have those Social Skills? Are we Management Material? Young people today do what they



see their peers do; which is not always in line with the expected *social skills*. Any book on **Good Manners** will certainly be of help. It is essential to make a sincere effort to be well equipped to satisfy the demands of Corporate America. We will wait and see: The *proof of the pudding lies in the eating*, as a famous British phrase goes. Let's make a start today.

Thank you.



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