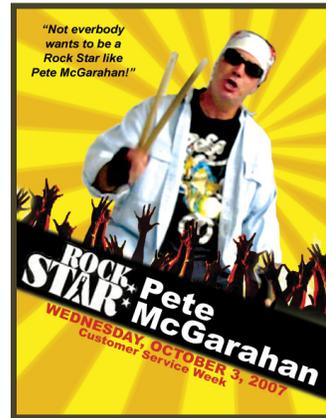




Being the CEO of You

Creating Your Value Proposition

Being the CEO of You is about taking personal accountability for one's career. Today's competitive business environment demands that not only must companies continuously improve themselves, but also the people who run them. Leave it to Mark Twain to explain the unfairness of it all: "You can be on the right track and still get run over by the train."



OVERVIEW

As a professional, you must constantly evaluate your skills based upon market demand and formulate a professional development plan. It is your responsibility, and yours alone, to ensure that you continuously educate and elevate yourself. As the CEO of You, it's your accountability to constantly assess your skills, develop your education plan, and execute against it. As I've written in VICTICRAT OR ROCK STAR — THE CHOICE IS YOUR, there are no excuses and no victicrats (Being a victim of your own choosing) allowed! Instead, it's up to you to model a determined, unshakeable mindset in which, "I will work hard every day to be the best at what I do and continue to enhance my skills so that I'm always a value-add to my customers and organization."

What's my what?

I remember a business mentor once asking me, "What's your value proposition to the organization?" I was taken aback by the question and begin rattling off what I did for a living. He quickly stopped me and said, "No, Pete, what value do you provide to the organization on a daily basis?"

I have to admit I had never been asked that question before, and I had no clue how to answer it. It was at that moment that I began a never-ending journey — professional and personal — to ensure if ever again I was asked that provocative question, I would hit 'em between the eyes with a compelling, memorable value proposition.

Your Verbal Business Card

A professional and personal value proposition — call it a Verbal Business Card, an Elevator Pitch, whatever — quickly, clearly, and indelibly communicates the unique value you bring to an organization in terms of success, however it may be measured or treasured. Whether it's revenue, profitability, customer satisfaction, retention, or something infinitely more personal (e.g., education, certifications, skills, experiences), you must be able to articulate your acumen and leadership — in short, your value proposition — to whomever asks.

Talk the talk, walk the walk

Now that I understand what my mentor was asking me that day, what would my answer now be? Simple: To close the most profitable deals in the company.

Strive to improve and expand - I have. I journeyed to complete my MBA and spent twelve years in leading learning organizations such as PepsiCo and Taco Bell in IT, support and business planning. I navigated full steam ahead through a blessed career of opportunities that I always seemed ready to tackle. Coincidence? Accident?

Of course not.

But really, enough about me

But this article is not about me – it's about you. It's about leaving behind the victicrat in you (and in all of us) and instead being the CEO of your own career and development. Remember this one simple, abiding rule: Take advantage of every opportunity.

Get out of your comfort zone. Risk. Learn. Stretch. Grow. Develop.

The experience, skills, and knowledge I gained in business planning, which was outside my comfort zone, was life-changing. It was the best career move I ever made. I wasn't, nor was I ever going to be, the best business planner, but upon my return to IT nobody knew the business better than I did. I was intelligently and strategically focused on delivering support value that brought the business goals to life.

Victicrat or Victor?

In my classes I teach students that everyday of their lives they have a stark, immutable choice: To be a change barrier or a change agent. It is much more inspiring, invigorating, rewarding — and yes, fun — to chose the latter. But how do you become an agent for positive change?

It's not rocket science; it's three simple questions you should ask yourself at every juncture:

1. What did I do today to make a difference and add value?
2. What did I learn today?
3. What did I learn today to make a difference and add value tomorrow?

Learning, learning, learning

An out-of-towner stops a guy on the streets of New York and asks, "How do I get to Carnegie Hall?" The guy replies, "Practice, practice, practice."

The joke is almost older than me, but it illustrates my point: If you never want to stop adding value, then you must never stop learning. For that to happen, keep in mind these ten guidelines to being a lifelong, vibrant, valued learner:

1. Readers are Leaders; Leaders are Readers — read a book, article, magazine or newspaper
2. Go back to school — take a course, take a certificate program, finish your degree
3. Take a Certification program – you won't have to look too far
4. Attend a seminar, webinar, conference, etc.
5. Join a professional association — they work hard to create community and share best practices and career development opportunities
6. Do something you always wanted to do — don't wait until it's too late
7. Volunteer — give back to someone who needs it

8. Become an expert on something — experts are highly valued and highly compensated
9. Take an educational sightseeing trip — go to the museum, opera or the symphony
10. Recruit / be a mentor — it's a great way to learn and share

If you're not uncomfortable, you're not learning

Andy Grove, retired CEO and Chairman of Intel Corp., writes, “For the sake of your career, you need to be a little paranoid. It helps fend off any career challenges, focus on maintaining market share, and assessing and developing new and marketable skills.”

Get out of your comfort zone! Risk. Learn. Stretch. Grow. Develop. Add Value!

ABOUT MCGARAHAN & ASSOCIATES



Peter J. McGarahan is the founder and president of McGarahan & Associates. Pete is also the acting Chairman of the IT Infrastructure Management Association, a sister organization to HDI. Pete's value to the service and support industry and business is his thought leadership. As a practitioner, product manager and support industry analyst and expert, he has influenced the maturity of the service and support industry. His passions for customer service led the Taco Bell support organization to achieve the **Help Desk Institute Team Excellence Award**. IT Support News also named him one of the **"Top 25 Professionals in the Service and Support Industry"** in 1999. Support professionals voted McGarahan **"The Legend of the Year"** in 2002 and again in 2004 at the Help Desk Professionals conference for his endless energy, mentoring and coaching and his valuable contribution to the support industry and community.



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Service and Support Value

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