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The Path Of Least Resistance: A Student's Guide For Working Smarter, Not Harder.

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2016 Senior Capstone Project

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***The Path Of Least Resistance: A Student's Guide For
Working Smarter, Not Harder.***

By Scott Abel



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Senior Capstone Project Proposal

The path of Least Resistance: A Student's Guide for Working Smarter, not Harder.

The amount of stress that accumulates over the course of one's collegiate career can be overwhelming to say the least. What if I told you that with a basic strategy you could cut your workload in half and alleviate much of the stress that goes hand in hand with school? Well now you can. This capstone project shows students different ways to achieve their goals by my method of *Working Smarter and not Harder*.

5 Easy Steps For Less Stress And More Success

#1 Develop Relationships With Your Professors Early



<http://combiboilersleeds.com/keywords/handshake-1.html>

Meet with your professors early in the semester/quarter to find out what exactly what they want from you. It has been my experience that knowing what your professors expect you to achieve, in terms of an understanding of the material can sometimes greatly differ from what your personal opinion may be. It is absolutely crucial that you have conversations with your professors about their expectations before it's too late. Sooner rather than later I always say. The reasoning behind this is two fold. Firstly, by having these interactions you will far better understand what it will take for you to achieve your class goal. Most likely this goal will be to get a solid grade in the class and to also gain a deep understanding of the material. If you think about it, you can't really have one without the other. A deep understanding of the material will inevitably get you that solid grade, and having this conversation

with your professor will greatly assist you in achieving these goals. Secondly, and even more importantly, carving out time to meet with your professor shows that you are committed to excellence. You should treat this meeting just like you would a job interview. Go into this meeting prepared to display an exuberant interest in the class and its learning outcomes. Arrive to the meeting prepared with at least three questions pertaining to what you must do to be successful. This also shows your professor that you are eager for success. Finally, now that you have laid the groundwork showing your professor that you are “in it, to win it,” simply tell them exactly that. Tell them with that you are a hard worker and that you do whatever it takes to succeed. All of this will show them that you take school seriously and that you are willing to meet their needs. You will ultimately leave a lasting impression on them that they will be forced to remember. All of this will only take about 15 minutes and will do nothing but facilitate your success. I would also urge students to meet with their professors multiple times throughout the semester/quarter to reinforce these traits as well as to ask follow up questions. The best tutors are often the professors themselves. They know exactly what they want from you and are almost always there to help you.

#2 Don't Bring Your Work Home With You



<https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcT8uD6gwDQJ5g3KMw6plXXHAK7V5GfXxvgj1KStSgT67t5DZM9aTg>

Avoid doing “homework” and research at home. Ever heard of the saying “don't bring your work home with you?” This may sound a bit cliché but it is the absolute truth. The more work you try to do at your house, the more stress will build up. Remember, by *working smarter, not harder*, we are trying to keep our stress levels at a minimum while maximizing our success. First of all, it is important to state that everyone is different. If you are someone who truly thrives at doing homework, research, and assignments at home, then by all means stick to what works for you. However, I know that for me, and many others this is not the case. Just like a job, school can beat you up and tire you out. You go into work everyday and are expected to carry out your duties. You complete these duties and are free to leave at the end of the day. Some of us after a long day's work go home to relax

and decompress, while others go home stressed and worried about what is going to come tomorrow. School can be invariably similar. You can choose to keep your home a place of peace and comfort, or you can turn it into a stressful environment that provides no room for relaxation. Personally I have found that completing the vast majority of my schoolwork away from home is extremely beneficial. If you can find a place that provides a productive work environment I highly recommend that you make this your go to study area. A library (which is my #1 recommendation), or a peaceful coffee shop are both viable options. By doing this you will not only get far more work done, but you will end up treating this space as a true workplace. School to many people is a lot like a job, so why don't we treat it as such and log consistent hours? This question leads me to my next point in selecting what hours during the day are best to study and how to use those hours wisely.

#3 Figure Out The Time Of Day In Which You Are Most Productive



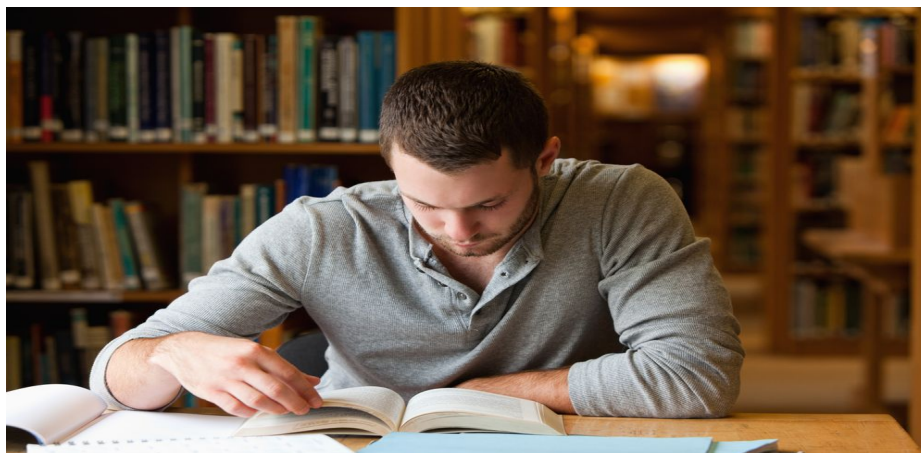
http://media.indiatimes.in/media/content/2013/Jan/are_wrist_watches_going_out_of_fashion_1357543083_540x540.jpg

Do the bulk of your studying and homework in the morning or early afternoon. In my experience the earlier you can get a start the better off you are. You will be far more productive by working during the morning and early afternoon hours as opposed waiting till the evening to embark on a seemingly endless pile of assignments. By beginning your studies at a time when you are fresh with a clear mind, you will not only get more done, but you will also produce better work.

Once again I must state that everyone is different. If you are someone who does their best work at night then by all means, do what works best for you. However, if you are someone like me who does their best work in the morning and midday, try to capitalize on this and allocate time during these hours for important assignments. If you feel like you must do some form of studying at night it is my suggestion that you leave this time for reading only. Not necessarily reading for

absolute retention, but more so reading for general familiarity and absorption. By practicing this simple style of reading for short periods of time, going back to the material the next day won't look nearly as foreign. In accordance with this method of proper study hours, you should also have a specific focus when embarking on a given assignment. Clear cut goals will always enable you to maximise your output. Think about general chores. If you are ever planning on allocating time to do house work or run errands, a simple "to do list" will greatly facilitate your completion of these tasks. When finished with one, you can move onto the next. Nothing is left out and everything is accounted for. School assignments should be thought of in the same way. If you know you have to complete an assignment or get some studying done, don't show up to the library with a vague understanding of what you're trying to complete. Go into that study session with a specific goal in mind. Treat that work session as if you are meeting a deadline. You will be far more productive with your time if you are attempting to complete a checklist. Also, completing this checklist will give you a sense of accomplishment, and these small victories are more important than you would think. We must all give ourselves a pat on the back every once in a while to boost our confidence and give credit where credit is due.

#4 Test Preparation



http://www.collegebound.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/shutterstock_85474711.jpg

Preparing for tests! For tests, I highly suggest that you take some time to make your own study guide. Even though most professors will provide you with a general study guide for an upcoming test, it is always beneficial to create your own personal version. Doing this will serve multiple purposes. I am sure we have all heard academics say that making a sufficient and thorough study guide will inevitably help you to become prepared for the upcoming test because of the time spent creating the guide itself. Yes, this is a very simple idea I know, but often the most simplistic strategies can produce the most effective outcomes. Here is my guideline for an effective study guide. Take a standard 8''x10'' sheet of binder paper and fill it with with all of the necessary info you think your test will include. For terms that require specific definitions, write out the terms in accordance with

their given definitions as well as a second definition in your own words. It is of course important to be able to give a standard “dictionary definition” for a given term, but it is equally important if not more important to be able to explain the definition of that term in your own words. This is what is called having a “deep understanding” of a subject. There is something I must add to this idea of creating a sufficient study guide. It is better to gradually build it rather than cramming in all of the information it contains at once. By cramming, the information you provide will decrease in quality. If you try your best to spend quality time over a few days building these review sheets, the overall outcome will be far better in the long run. The practice of creating quality work over a gradual period of time brings me to my next point, procrastination.

#5 Do Not Procrastinate!



<http://www.universityprimetime.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Screen-Shot-2015-06-20-at-8.21.33-PM-710x362.png>

If nothing else do not procrastinate. I cannot stress this enough. To force this idea to sink in, say it 100 times over if it helps you understand. Do not procrastinate! Nothing good can come from the practice of procrastination. While I will always advocate for people to practice the study methods that work best for them, procrastination is not one that makes the list. To put it simply, if you think procrastination is something that legitimately works for you I am almost certain that you are lying to yourself. There is no way you can produce your best work by waiting till the last minute, and worse than that the stress levels that will inevitably engulf you during these times will be at an all time high. My motto to avoid serious procrastination goes like this.. “A little bit everyday, goes a long way.” I understand that this probably sounds ridiculous but it is absolutely true. Think

about an upcoming essay that isn't due for 6 weeks. It must be 10 pages in length and you are dreading it. Instead of putting it off until the last minute as many of us do, try writing a half page per day. You can do the math.. In 20 days, roughly 3 weeks prior to your essays due date you will be finished. Sounds like a novel idea that all of us think about, but few of us actually follow through on. A few things can potentially happen when this practice of gradual work is effectively carried out. One of them may be that you realize how easy it is to write a half page at a time. Another one may be that you start to create great work immediately because you have fragmented the length of your writing process. And one more may be that you get in a flow state and end up writing more than a half page at a time, at which point you will obviously complete the assignment faster than you initially thought. As you can plainly see, there are no downsides to this method. By using this idea of gradual work you will stay on top of your studies like never before and your stress levels will plummet as a result. Like I said before, “a little bit everyday, goes a long way.”

Conclusion

Now that I have displayed these 5 methods for the success of students at all levels, it's time to put them to work! Good luck, and enjoy the success you are bound for.

Reflective Essay

CSUMB has been the ultimate experience in preparing me for my end goal of graduating college with a bachelor's degree. The required mlo's attached to CSUMB's majors and concentrations are set in place to help us students navigate the many facets that dictate what we will encounter in the current and future work force. The relationships I have built with my professors and fellow classmates have helped me a great deal throughout my schooling and have contributed to my success in and out of the classroom. I attribute the quality of education at CSUMB to the outstanding professionalism displayed by its faculty and student body. CSUMB has truly shaped me into the person I am today and I believe I am far more prepared for life beyond college now that I am ever closer to graduation.

I chose the PPE (practical and professional ethics) for my concentration within the major of hcom because I felt as though it closely resonated with my overall personality. I have put quite a bit of thought into ethical theory and how interactions and communications between people of all ages affect the relationships we develop over our lifetimes; and because of this, I found PPE to be the right fit for me.

The concentration of PPE, not only has assisted me with my overall management of schooling, it has also served me well in my relationships amongst friends, family, students and professors. Although I admire many aspects about the environment CSUMB offers, something that stands out to me in particular is what the various concentrations stand for within a given major. With so many different options, CSUMB offers students with a variety of interests opportunities to succeed in the field that best suites them as individuals. Not only can students connect with a concentration and better their chances of success due to a higher level of motivation, students also are given the gift of time spent enjoying the process. This I think is a big factor students can fully recognize once they come to the crossroads of their senior capstone.

Our shared capstone theme as it relates to personal identity, has been greatly influenced by the the mlo requirements CSUMB offers and the work they include. The major of human communications as well as the mlo's in which it embodies has substantially prepared me for this capstone theme of personal identity because, human communication has a direct correlation to the development of one's personal identity. I can say with confidence that being a human communications major has helped me grow as a person and develop many skills that can be applied directly to the real world. The many classes that are required as an hcom major

include learning outcomes that support the development of communicative skills that are used in everyday life. All types of relationships including work scenarios, interviews, discussions with professors, as well as personal relationships, embody the principles obtained through the course work and discussions had in hcom. I cannot think of a more comprehensive major that deals with these inevitable factors of life than that of hcom.

My overall experience as a student at CSUMB has been nothing short of incredible. All of those who I have met, both students and faculty, I have built lasting relationships with. This program has helped me grow into a well rounded individual who is prepared for life after school. I now have a new level of confidence as someone who will no longer struggle to ask specific questions and be a critical thinker. CSUMB has been a pillar of guidance through my path of higher education and one I will always highly recommend to those in need of direction in choosing a compatible university. Thank you CSUMB for all you have given me.

Final Synthesis Essay

During the thought process leading up to my senior capstone project, I began brainstorming ideas that resonated with me. At first I liked the idea of completing an internship because of the practicality of the project. Internships are invaluable for college students and documenting my experience through the guidelines of this potential project seemed like a viable option that would give me necessary experience for my future in the workforce. However, I wanted to keep my options open. Next I analyzed the option of compiling a research paper of my choice. Choosing a topic that I find current and intriguing and submerging myself to gain a deep understanding of something I know little about. Again, an excellent option. However, the final option of assembling a creative work of my choice began to call to me.

Aesthetics:

In many ways I thought this option to be the most difficult because I would have to come up with an idea that connected with the theme of the human communications capstone major. I decided to go for it. I had some good ideas initially but part of me had already decided on what my project would be. I decided to make a short self-help book that assisted and promoted the success of college

students. I thought of this idea because it took me many years to find the right strategies in order to succeed without having overwhelming levels of stress. In many respects I have often overworked myself through being stressed because I was unaware of what I could have done to assist myself in being successful. There is nothing worse in school than overworking yourself in an attempt to succeed, only to get a moderate result. After my third year at community college which I completed at Cabrillo College in Aptos Ca, I started to figure out how to smooth out my workload by *working smarter, not harder*. Hence where the title of my project stemmed from. I began to realize that if I could use the knowledge I had gained over my many years of schooling and share that with younger students who may not have yet developed a strategy of their own, I could potentially help these students get a jump start on being successful. As a Human Communications major, how much better of a concept could I create? I was extremely excited to get started on my project and produce something that would not only conceptualize my college experience as a student, but also help guide those who are looking for methods that could make their time at school more beneficial.

Audience:

While my premier audience is directed towards college level students, primarily because of the advanced courses that are required as well as the overall

increase in classwork and research, many of the ideas that I propose in my self-help book can be applied to students of all ages. I say this because all of this information I have put forth is nothing new. I am not saying this in an attempt to self-deprecate my work, but rather to be truthful in that ultimately much of the best advice you will receive throughout your life will contain ideas that you've already heard. To use a simplistic example, think about the saying "don't be so hard on yourself." How often have we all heard this small piece of wisdom and how frequently do we forget it? The answer is all the time. Not being so hard on ourselves is one of the most positive things we can do because self-loathing creates nothing but negativity in one's life. So in the same sense, many of the practices I allude to in my project are things students have always heard but that many have forgotten.

What I love most about the concept of my project is the fact that I know if I had read this simple information and had it available as a reminder throughout my schooling I would have been far better off. Because of this I know that my book, as simple as its concept seems, can help others to succeed as it would have helped me. I have become a giant fan of "hack" books that apply to all facets of life. Whether it is how to invest your money properly in order to save enough for retirement, or how to develop a workout or diet plan that works for you and fits your lifestyle,

even a cookbook with simple yet delicious recipes that are produced in only a half hour. All of these concepts intrigue me because they show that more often than not, it can be far easier than you might initially think to achieve your goals. And all it really takes is a plan. It's almost always that simple. Because of these trues I can say with confidence that the purpose of this creative work is to not only inform students of easy ways to help them succeed in their classes and reduce stress throughout college, but also to inspire them to realize that with a little bit of consistent effort every day all facets of life that may seem unattainable can in fact be attained.

Process:

The creative process of this project began with my love for self-help and “hack” books. I have always had an affinity for these works because they have helped me discover the possibilities of successful thinking through minimal effort. I don't want to sound like I am trying to give everything in life a “lackluster” effort. In fact, it is quite the opposite. These “hack” books made me understand that there are ways to achieve specific goals through means of working far more efficiently than other possible techniques. Going away from my experience of these ever popular “hack” books for a moment, allow me to draw on a personal experience that brings this idea of efficiency to life. My father has been a general

contractor for almost his entire working career. He is a master builder and has the ability to create almost anything he wants given the proper materials. There was a day when I was doing grunt work for my father on one of his job sites. I had been using a spade shovel to scoop loads of dirt and gravel into a wheelbarrow for about five minutes. As I said before, this was strictly grunt work. My father came over to me after watching me struggle with this simple task and stood over me. he handed me a flat head shovel and simply said...

“You’re working too hard.”

He then took a few extra minutes to display a more effective technique of shoveling the pile of dirt and gravel and because of this, saved me an extra hour or so of work. The idea behind my project is no different. I cannot stress enough that this concept of working *smarter and not harder*, has nothing to do with lack of effort. Instead it has everything to do with finding the best and most effective ways to work, while at the same time maximizing your success. All of these lessons that shape the way we choose to operate in all walks of life come down to the process of problem solving.

The idea of problem solving is at the forefront of my capstone project simply because the crux of my idea was developed through the self-realization of my past mistakes. While I have learned many valuable lessons through experiences where I

made the right decision, the most valuable knowledge I have ever attained has been drawn upon from my mistakes. as I stated earlier, much of what my project is based upon came through the trial and error I experienced throughout my years of schooling. I took many falls and overworked myself over and over before I realized what I truly needed to do to be successful. This idea of problem solving is what I think directly connects to the theme of identity in which this capstone project is based on. Being an effective problem solver is an extremely important characteristic of all of our identities. In order to navigate the many difficulties and stressors of life, you must be able to process what comes at you, put it through your own cognitive filter, and sort it all out; both the positives and the negatives. My project is a condensed version of all of these moving parts. I attempt to show how to find the method that is best for you and run with it. Luckily for those who are in school, what it takes to succeed is practically universal for the majority of subjects.

Thematic and social/historical context:

This project's premise directly relates to the social context of our capstones theme of personal identity because it is fully connected to the methods of becoming a successful individual through methods that are developed through one's personal experiences. The idea of *working smarter, not harder* can be applied not only to school, but realistically it can be applied to any and all facets of life. This to me is

so relatable to identity because using methods such as *working smarter, not harder* inevitably will shape one's identity into a more proficient and concise person.

Many of us struggle to with completing tasks in our lives because they seem overwhelming or out of reach. These tasks that we never seem to complete or even attempt can often bring negative feelings to our lives. Feelings of lack accomplishment or unfulfillment. These are only natural outcomes when we don't tackle the things in life that we know will bring us joy. However if we take things slow and attempt to complete small steps every day, eventually we become more accustomed to our new surroundings and we start to flow like we never have before. Generating a new perspective on how to succeed in a given arena takes time. But I truly believe that by condensing your goals and streamlining your approach to whatever it is you're after, you will be far more successful than you would be with no real plan. All this takes is a bit of preparation and the awareness to complete a small portion of your overall goal each and every day.

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