I'M GRADUATING - WHAT NOW?

Universal Tips for Success

- **Approach things with positivity** - always - which may sound a bit corny or cliche, but anyone who actually practices this understands how powerful it is. This is possibly the least appreciated methodology for exponentially increasing happiness and success, that can be easily employed. To this day I don’t understand how it works, it just does.

- **'Know thyself'**, again - cliche - but also very underrated. Take the time to understand what you’re driven by, what you’re passionate about, what your strengths and weaknesses are, how you best learn and grow, what things really matter to you, who you really care about, what biases you have, etc. and you’ll start to function at a much higher level as a person and professional. Be extremely competent at answering the following questions:
  1. **What do you do (not what is your professional title, but what is it that you actually do)?**
  2. **What are the big goals that you currently have for yourself (professional and life)?**
  3. **What are you doing to achieve those big goals?**

When people can answer those questions effectively, they are far more capable of conveying their value to the world around them (and how they fit into it). Self-awareness is something that is incredibly rewarding for us as individuals, and it is also something that we seek in the people we hire, do business with, and establish relationships with.

- **Don’t be afraid to say ‘no’**, especially when your bandwidth is already exhausted. Something that happens a lot - especially with new members of teams/organizations - is a propensity for high-performers and eager teammates to overextend themselves, by agreeing to support too many initiatives that fall outside of the realm of their individual role/responsibilities. Before you say ‘yes’ to a new project/initiative, make sure you have the bandwidth to do so and that your responsibilities/role won’t suffer as a result of you supporting someone else. A metaphor to help people understand why saying no can be better than saying yes, is a hypothetical that involves rescuing people who are struggling to stay afloat in an ocean: if you try to help too many people stay afloat, eventually you’re going to drown under the additional weight/responsibilities and then everyone you’re propping up will sink with you...you have to know when to say ‘enough is enough’, and understand that not overextending your bandwidth is best for yourself and others.

- **Never stop learning and growing**, be a tree in this regard - as soon as trees stop growing, they start dying. One of the things that surprises students most after graduation, is learning that the ‘learning’ doesn’t stop once you earn your degree. It doesn’t matter what industry you enter, the most successful professionals remain students of their craft and open to growth throughout their career.

- Alastair Knowles | Institute for Professional Development