



## What Is The Best Advice That You Have Ever Received?

Listed below are the responses to the "what is the best advice you have ever received" survey we took of some of our key clients:

The best business advice I ever received was from two people Christos Cotsakos and Dave Robino. They were the two people who convinced me to take an international job in the United Kingdom. Christos was the CEO of ACNielsen and Dave Robino the head of HR. Christos later went on to launch e-trade. I was very unsure about leaving my security in the US and move to Europe and run the Business in the UK and Ireland and be a board member of ACNielsen Internationally. I thought they were just giving me the sales pitch to get me to take the job. One of the things they kept on saying that this move to Europe would be a life changing event and it clearly was.

I went to Europe had tremendous personal and professional success. Without their urging and patience I probably would not have taken the role.

*Jim Rose, CEO - Mosaic*

I have received a few time tested pieces of advice that have stayed with me over the years, so here goes: "make the calls that need to be made and you are a manager; make the right calls enough times and you will find yourself surrounded with people that want you to make all the calls."

Bill Smith – President of Huffly Bicycle while Director of Marketing for DP Fitness (1992)

"If you are comfortable in your job you better push yourself and those around you to get uncomfortable or be prepared for someone to pass you by!"

Augie Nieto – Retired President of Life Fitness (1995) - *Contributed by: Chris Clawson, VP Business Development - Stamina Products, Inc.*

Here is mine stated by a very close friend: "Always tell the truth for it is easier to remember in a pinch." What wise words - if you tell the truth the first time, it is much easier to respond to future questions for there is no need to ponder about what you said!

*Debra R. Hopkins, CPA, CIA*

*Director Northern Illinois University CPA Review*

Here's something I heard from a colleague and it continues to ring true:

"Work like you don't need money, love like you've never been hurt and dance like no one's watching!"

What I get from this advice is to remember how constrained we are by our petty concerns and inhibitions. We don't do the work that excites our passion because we "need the money", we don't openly share ourselves and our dreams because we "might get hurt", and we don't dance because "someone might laugh". We really lose out on life that way. When I remember this advice, I reconnect to my commitments and desires, and the concerns that I have accumulated through life begin to lessen.

Swing out!

*Lee Capps, Partner - ClearSpace, LLC*

I think the best advice I ever got was in the form of a question rather than a statement. Bob Williams, who is now the head basketball coach at Schaumburg High School, and has won a state championship with them (beating Eddie Curry's Thornton team!) was the assistant at Palatine when I was there. One day at practice he asked me "Why are you here?" I said "I'm supposed to be here, aren't I?" He said, "No, not 'Why are you here in this gym', but Why are you HERE? on earth. WHAT is your purpose?" A little deep for a 15 year old. I thought a lot about it, and bottom line could come up with only one answer..."I'm here to help others" Personally, I still feel this is the right and only answer. If that's everyone's answer, what a great world it would be. A bit idealistic, I know, but every time I think of this, it puts things in perspective for me, and helps me move forward.  
*Steve Herbst, Client Services Mgr, Broadspire*

"Play the cards your dealt." *Bill Hurley (My Dad)* - My translation: We all tend to spend unnecessary cycles wishing that things were different. This seems especially true when solving problems in our businesses. This advice forces me to focus on what's real and to discard the baggage of what's simply not there.  
*Mike Hurley | Green Square, Inc.*

Best Advice: "Leadership is in your person not your position" - I was given this advice several years ago when my company was going through some very tough times. Executives were under intense scrutiny to perform to key financial metrics. Focus on leading and inspiring people became unimportant to many leaders, while they focused exclusively on themselves. At this time, our management structure also changed such that there were fewer leadership positions on the org chart. It was hard for me to see myself as a leader because leadership in our legacy company was defined by a title. In this new business world, I see leadership as a choice not a position in the organization. With this seemingly minor change in my mindset, people around me have flourish and I have become a much more impactful executive with clients and our employees.  
*Jon Craver - Partner, Accenture*

During my college years, I worked for a social service agency and very closely with its Executive Director, Charles S. Desser. He once told me to take every opportunity to meet people. He said you shouldn't meet people for the purpose of seeing what you can get out of them, but just by knowing enough people, you will develop mutually beneficial opportunities. We didn't know it at the time, since the word hadn't yet been coined, but my mentor was describing--Networking. I followed his advice and encourage each of you to do the same. Meet all of the people you can. Collect business cards. Keep notes on the cards regarding where you met the person, something significant about them or their business and maybe their spouse's or children's names so you can refer to them in future conversations. At the same time, you should not be bashful to take every opportunity to hand out your card.

Recently, a businessman walked into the office of the U.S. Department of Commerce in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He wanted to import certain items from the United States. Apparently someone had my name or my business card as part of their Networking process and told him to call me. We did ship merchandise to him but not before I checked my business card file to locate a freight forwarder. I remembered meeting someone a few years earlier who told me they specialized in shipments to Brazil. Sure enough, I found his card which noted his South American expertise. The result, I had comfort in speaking to an expert who I knew and he was happy to get the job of handling the shipment for us.

Those of you who are able to build an extensive Network, will find that you have tremendous resources for getting things done, while others will be mumbling and fumbling with no idea how to even get started on similar challenges. Start the Networking process today.

*Norman R. Goldstein, CEO - Gold International, Inc.*

Early in my career , pretty much out of college, my boss at Nabisco gave me the now famous "be prepared to say something that will impress whomever you meet in the cafeteria , elevator etc speech" The point being if the GM of the Bakery asked how was it going, so many young people early in their careers just say fine or ok. My boss told me in order to stand out I should always have an answer prepared to "pull-out" for those times. He stated it would make me stand apart from the competition.

Well it was great advice and I found my first encounter with the GM of the Bakery to be so successful he asked me into his office to talk about the subject some more. At 21, I was in the General Manager's office talking about organizational design . WOW!!! Needless to say I have used that advice time and time again with great success and now pass that same advice down to those I encounter. Maybe you have recently been impressed when a young careerist has more to say than HI?

The second piece of advice came from the Director of Labor Relations at the Tribune who has since retired. He was a mentor early in my career. This advice had to do with the fact that at some point in my life I would be faced with a decision at work that would question my values. His advice was to remember that each morning I needed to be able to look at myself in the mirror and that feeling lasts a lifetime versus the temporary feeling from a business decision made counter to my values.

Well, he was right. And..... I can still look at myself in the mirror with pride and confidence.  
*Audrey Southard, SVP – Human Resources, Follett Higher Education Group*

(1) Projects succeed based on one and only one critical factor - because someone wills them to be done. This advice was given to me by Steve Geggie, who is now the CIO of Trinity International University. Over the years I've learned that it takes much more than an org chart and a Gantt chart to ensure the success of a project, and I continue to observe that it is the will of one or more individuals on the team to achieve success.

(2) The Definition of Done; not advice but a concept that is foundational to a mindset. I was indoctrinated with this by Linda Edborg, who is unquestionably the best project manager I have ever known. I'm not saying that she is the best project manager in the entire world, but someone has to be, so she gets the nod for now. In every project, Linda has created a relentlessness throughout the team to focus on the Definition of Done and ensure a common understanding of it among all of the project's stakeholders.

(3) The value of prejudice. Though this wasn't extended to me as advice or titled as such, one of the most important things I have learned is the value of assuming (before getting to know them) that your colleagues, staff, team, etc are competent and trustworthy. I learned this from Darwin John, former CIO of the FBI, for whom I worked during his tenure at BCS. In my own subsequent experiences I have found this presupposition to be invaluable in empowering teams to undauntedly step up to challenges.

(4) Surround yourself with people who are smarter than you and tell you what they think. I don't recall a specific individual as the source of this nugget, but it is core to my approach to building a management team and a "personal advisory board". I've come to truly appreciate the value of those who have insights beyond my own and are fearless in sharing them with me.

*Art Hopkins, Vice President, Blackwell Consulting*

My Advice is from Maverick, The Success Story Behind the World's most Unusual Workplace:

"As workers exercise more control over their jobs, the need for supervisors diminishes. The goal of every supervisor should be obsolescence."

*Brendan Dolan, Broadwing, Director - Financial Compliance*

For me, "Any job worth doing is worth doing right!" is counsel from my Dad I will never forget.

*John Cole, CIO, Pegasys*

I think the best advice I've ever received and something that I've unfortunately had to exercise a good bit in the last 12 months is this ... "You've got to manage your own career, because no one else is going to do it for you." Hope that helps!!

*Diane Rogerson, Chase - IT QA Director*

Less than two months out of college, my very first manager found out that I didn't know how to type. She lectured me on the disadvantages of being a two-fingered typist and suggested that it was never too late to learn. Over the next couple of months I dragged home the office luggable computer and practiced using a typing tutor game for an hour or two a night. I quickly became proficient and every time I stare at an inbox full of emails I thank her for the great advice.

*PJ Weiland, United Stationers Director, IT - Portfolio Management Office, Business Liaison*

The best piece of advice came from my Dad (He is a successful entrepreneur). He stated, "Treat your job as if it is your own business and you will always be successful."

*Angela Harris, Blue Cross/Blue Shield - Manager, Network Reporting Services*

Early 2000, I had just received tenure at Boston College. Our family, however, was all located in the Midwest, and we had always wanted to move back. I had interviewed with NIU and received an offer, and was mulling the implications. NIU was not offering tenure with the position, even though I had it at BC, and so I was wondering if I might screw up my life by leaving a secure thing for something I wanted more. Anyhow, I was having dinner with my guest speaker for that evening's graduate class, Keith Dennelly, the CTO of State Street Global Advisors. I explained my situation to him, seeking advice. He said "Chuck, I tell my executives 'You have to manage your operating unit AS IF YOU WERE GOING TO SUCCEED [emphasis added]'". Meaning, don't manage for failure, or be distracted by it. If I knew I could succeed at NIU, what would my decision be? Obviously to take the job. Anyhow, this advice was simple yet profound for me, and it helped me pull the trigger to come to NIU.

*Charles E. Downing, Ph.D., Associate Professor - Operations Management and Information Systems Department College of Business Northern Illinois University*

"Surround yourself with great people who know the stuff that you don't". Unfortunately, I can't remember who said it.

*Bob Corbin, Director - Sr. Director, Information Systems, General Mills*

My father (an Educator & PR man) told me:

There are 3 basic impediments for success:

Laziness

Fear

Lust

I've been fighting these all my life!

*Ignacio "NASH" Carrillo, -Associate Director Parking, Transportation & Event Services California State University, Long Beach*

tough question to really answer...it seems throughout your career a lot of people offer advice, some good, some bad...I guess it's what you do with it that counts. I truly don't remember anyone specific ever giving me 'the best advice I've ever received' that has meant anything or changed my life in anyway. I grew up in a blue-collar family that instilled in me the virtues of hard work. I saw how my family struggled to give us kids an education, cars etc. and realized that I wanted to make myself do better so I wouldn't have to struggle like they did all those years. So maybe subconsciously that was the best advice I ever received. In retrospect it seems like the old adage of work hard to get ahead is seemingly lost today. Most young people I run into through business today all seem to expect big bucks with little effort, commitment or dedication. The days of someone working 20 years for a company are far-gone. What can we expect in the future...who knows, but it sure would be nice if we went back to the theory of work hard to get ahead!  
*John Bonney, President - Imaginethat*

Best advice I ever received from an old boss - when considering a new job/opportunity, make sure you are running toward it rather than away from your old situation.  
*Senior Executive, Large Consulting Firm*