

101 THINGS I'VE LEARNED IN MY 50 TRIPS AROUND THE SUN

*Some Fun, Some Profound and a Few Painful Things
I've Come to Know as I Approach Middle Age*

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Introduction

In recording these insights and nuggets of wisdom, I hasten to say that I have much more to learn. As it's been said many times, "The more I know, the more I know I don't know."

When I left college in 1969, I promised myself I would study harder out of school than in it. I've kept that promise. Although some would say it wasn't that hard to keep, given how little I studied while in school. Nonetheless, I'm committed to a lifelong quest for knowledge and wisdom.

Marcel Proust wrote, "We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us." I trust that this fiftieth birthday is only an early milestone on a long road, and that I'm still in the quest for wisdom, even as I draw my last breath.

I'm grateful to all the learned—and sometimes not-so-learned—people I've read about, met, lived with and loved who have taught me so much. Some have been shining examples and positive models. Others have been warnings. I appreciate both.

Some of these things I've learned easily and quickly. Others required more of a "Mack Truck Approach." And sometimes I needed to be run over more than once in order for me to get it.

Nonetheless, here are 101 things I've learned—and many times *re-learned*—in my first 50 years.

I think it will be interesting to review this list 25 years from now—and hopefully 50 years from now. By then, I'll have even more to add.

101 Things I've Learned in My 50 Trips Around the Sun

1. **Life isn't fair.** I've said it to myself and my kids have said it hundreds of times. I always agreed with them. I only wish I'd had this answer for them: Life *isn't* fair—it's fantastic.
2. **It's better to talk less and say more.** And that's easier said than done. There's a reason we have *two* eyes and *one* mouth.
3. **Worry is not a virtue.** I used to think I wasn't a responsible person unless I worried about things. What kind of parent doesn't worry about their children? What I've come to know is that worry is like prayer in reverse. What you worry about is what you attract.
4. **It's easier to gain weight than it is to take it off.** Like I needed 50 years to learn that! A waist is a terrible thing to mind.
5. **When arguing** with your spouse—or anyone else, for that matter—the less said the better.
6. **Religion.** Many so-called religious people are not very spiritual people. The more someone tells me how religious they are, how honest they are or how great they are, the less I tend to believe them.
7. **The sequence is Be, Do, Have—not Do, Have, Be.** If I become the person I wish to become, I can do more of the things I want to do and have more of the things I want to have. Reversing the order is not very effective, and it's not fulfilling.
8. **Age has little to do with maturity.** I know some very young people who demonstrate great maturity. On the other hand, I've met 10-year-olds who've had more than 40 birthdays.
9. **It's a lot easier to refrain from saying something than it is to take it back after you've said it.** In fact, you can never really take back something you've said. Like an arrow released from a bow—it cannot be called back. You can't unring a bell.
10. **There's more to balance than not falling over.** I think Ben Franklin said it best, "Nothing to excess." And contrary to what Mae West said, too much of anything is not a good thing.

11. **Air travel.** Always try to reserve a seat in an exit row. You get more leg room and in the event of an emergency, you won't have to think about where the nearest exit is. Also, planes are easier to catch *before* they take off.
12. **Having thoughts is not thinking.** It's much more than that. Thinking is hard work—perhaps that's why so few people engage in it. Voltaire wrote, "No problem can stand the assault of sustained thinking."
13. **Thou shalt not should on thyself or others.** This is the eleventh commandment. Many people blame others for holding them back. Truth is, we're usually the quickest to put ourselves down. We shouldn't "should" on ourselves.
14. **Have a soft heart but maintain a thick skin.** And never mix them up.
15. **Shortcuts seldom work.** Perhaps Beverly Sills said it best when she wrote, "There are no shortcuts to any place worth going."
16. **Personal responsibility.** People who take personal responsibility are very rare indeed. Most people want to fix the blame rather than fix the problem.
17. **Comfort.** On the road to comfort, one must be willing to sometimes be uncomfortable.
18. **Clear agreements.** With a written agreement, you have a prayer. With a verbal agreement, you have nothing but air. Clarity leads to power and having clear agreements—and keeping them—makes for better relationships.
19. **The Power of Acknowledgement.** Look for every opportunity to publicly acknowledge others for their good deeds. Tell people about the goodness and kindness of others. Look for the examples of what's good in the world—in small ways and big—and point it out for everyone to see.
20. **Success is not an accident.** If you develop the habits of success, you will make success a habit.
21. **You can be right or you can be happy.** If we're determined to be right, and we try to have everyone think we're right, we'll give up a good deal of happiness.

- 22. There's no harm in asking.** The story goes that years ago, one of the leading Rockefeller women was propositioned by a party crasher. Embarrassed and offended, the woman took her case before the New York courts. The final judgment: "There's no crime in asking."
- If you have little to lose and much to gain by asking—by all means, ask.
- 23. Knowledge.** Facts are cheap, information is plentiful—knowledge is precious.
- 24. It's never boring to listen to someone tell the truth.** When people are speaking from their heart, you can't help but be interested, regardless of the content or whether or not you agree with them.
- 25. Inspiration is the art of breathing in.** The only thing that has to be done today is to breathe.
- 26. Pleasurable reading.** It's better to curl up with a good book and a good woman than a good book.
- 27. The science of appreciation.** If you learn to appreciate more of what you already have, you will find yourself having more to appreciate.
- 28. Never give up.** Perceived failure is oftentimes success trying to be born in a bigger way. This maxim kept me going in some of my darkest hours, and it has proved to be true.
- 29. Kinship.** Family relationships are a great laboratory for personal growth. Being related hardly insures relatability.
- 30. Self-confidence.** Confidence isn't something you get; it's something you are.
- 31. Old dreams never die; they just get filed away.** So often people tell me that they don't have any dreams. What it usually means is they've either not paid attention to them or they've put them so far out of mind, they cannot recall them easily.
- 32. It's important, but it's not serious.** Life is too important to take too seriously. I've heard that angels fly because they take themselves lightly.

33. **A successful day:** to learn something new; to laugh at least ten times; to lift someone up; to make progress on a worthy goal; to practice peace and patience; to do something nice for yourself and another; to appreciate and be grateful for all your blessings.
34. **Happiness is lasting; pleasure is fleeting.** There's nothing wrong with pleasure; it's just not something to pursue in the false belief that it will buy us happiness.
35. **Charisma can kill.** All through history, highly-evolved people have always been, at the very least, misunderstood. They have been criticized and condemned—and even killed.
36. **Making demands.** If you ask something of someone and you're upset over his or her response, then it wasn't a request, it was a demand.
37. **Your progress is hindered to the degree that you're upset about where you are.** If you're in Chicago and want to get to Los Angeles, it does no good to be upset about being in Chicago. In fact, it detracts from your ability to get to Los Angeles. What is just is.
38. **Do it now!** Ideas are worthless. Intentions have no power. Plans are nothing . . . unless they are followed with action.
39. **Spiritual Principle is much like the wind.** It is neither good nor bad, and you must know how to use it. You can be run aground or use it to move you where you want to go.
40. **Happiness is a choice.** You have a choice to be happy or unhappy. Since you must be one or the other, why not choose happiness?
41. **Art Linkletter was right.** Kids will say the darndest things—and usually at the darndest time. Like when my son Will (five at the time) introduced me to everyone in the supermarket checkout line and then announced to everyone in the store that I had plastic teeth (my temporary bridge).
42. **Today's action becomes tomorrow's habit.** Emerson was right, "Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny."

43. **Making money is hard.** Finding ways to serve isn't hard at all. If you put your emphasis on serving instead of on earning, the money will come.
44. **We never do what we *have* to do.** We always do what we want to do. It just *seems* like we have to.
45. **There is a price for success.** But there is also a price for failure. Given the choice, the price of success clearly has the best return on investment.
46. **Courage.** A person with some doubt and still taking action will accomplish far more than one with no doubt taking no action.
47. **There's no need to prove we're valuable.** We just are. We don't take action to gain or prove we're valuable; we take action to gain results and discover more of who we already are.
48. **Everything I do, I do to make my heart sing.** OK, I haven't always done this, and I don't always do it now—but I do try.
49. **Leaders are readers.** It doesn't follow that all readers are leaders, but today, all leaders must be readers. Reading can be a powerful catalyst for thinking; it has the potential for stimulating wisdom.
50. **Use your head, but live in your heart.** I've gotten into big trouble by going with my head instead of listening to my heart. I've also mistaken my emotions for my heart. But I've never, never been misled by my heart.
51. **The only way to truly have what you want is to give up having to have it.** As soon as you let go of *having* to have something, it no longer is elusive but rather seeks you out. There's nothing wrong with wanting something, it's *having* to have it that messes you up.
52. **When you learn something, share it with at least three people on different occasions, and it will be yours.** One of the great riches of life is that you can give away all your knowledge and still keep it for yourself.
53. **Questions are the answers.** Getting the right answers is only possible when you've asked the right questions.

54. **Get it done.** There are no honorariums for people to get up and tell how they didn't do it.
55. **Writing.** Good writing is clear thinking made visible.
56. **Conquer your fears.** Otherwise, your fears will conquer you. Fear has killed more dreams and sidetracked more success than anything else I know.
57. **It's hard to be a prophet in your hometown.** People expect an expert to get off a plane. Heck, even Jesus had to get out of Nazareth.
58. **Becoming.** It matters little what road we take. What's really important is what we become on the journey.
59. **Happiness is an inspiring goal.** You can only be happy when you are in the process of achieving a goal. Without a goal there can be no accomplishment. Without accomplishment there is no meaning—no satisfaction. Humans were created for accomplishment.
60. **If I can always find a way to survive, then I have the same skills it takes to thrive.** Once I realized this, my life started to get much better—and easier. I started to apply my skills in a new direction.
61. **It's expensive to be a maverick.** Starting new things, being the first to do something or to do it in a new way takes time, patience and usually money.
62. **Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you say.** It's not so much what you say, but who you're being that communicates.
63. **Be practical.** Some people are so heavenly minded, they're no earthly good.
64. **The high road.** Doing the right thing is seldom the easy thing.
65. **When raising kids, you have two choices: you can be popular or you can be a good parent.** You can't be both—at least not until they get older and wiser.
66. **It doesn't take guts to quit.** Anyone can quit—and most people do—on their dreams and on themselves.

- 67. Winning isn't everything, but it sure beats losing.** And it's definitely more fun.
- 68. Our job is to decide; the Universe's job is to provide.** The mere act of getting clear on what we want initiates a whole string of events, circumstances and ideas that never would have happened had we not decided. By gaining clarity and choosing clearly what we want, we charge the Universe with tasks, opportunities and situations that bring about what we desire. The world manifests according to our request.
- 69. Marriage.** The decision to marry and the person you choose to marry is probably the most important decision you'll make in your entire life.
- 70. Money is good.** Money isn't everything, but it sure beats *no* money. Money is not evil; it's the *love* of money that's evil. Use money and love people—never the other way around.
- 71. Good judgment comes from experience.** Where does one gain experience? Bad judgment—or the very careful study of other people's bad judgment.
- 72. You can be serious about something without being grim.** Life's too short and too precious to spend it being grim.
- 73. TV is both a blessing and a curse.** It has the potential—and *does* in some instances—of providing great value. But for the most part, it's an incredible waste of time. I call TVs EIRs—Electronic Income Reducers.
- 74. If you're going to laugh about it later, you might as well laugh about it now.** We usually take our problems way too seriously. Most of the predicaments we get into become stories we tell and laugh about for many years. So if we'll find it funny then, we might as well laugh about it now.
- 75. Life is short.** When you're a kid, time flies when you're having fun. When you get older, time flies whether you're having fun or not.
- 76. We can achieve anything we want—we just can't have everything we want.** It's too big a world, there are too many things, too little time and not enough energy to have everything we desire. We have to be selective.

- 77. To me, mediocrity is failure.** There's no inspiration in being average. Average is being the worst of the best or the best of the worst—otherwise known as the cream of the crap.
- 78. Some days you're the bug; some days you're the windshield.** Nobody's ever lead a perfect life. There are no bad days; some are just better than others. Some days are sunny, some days are cloudy, and some days you just have to wonder. I think any day above ground is a good day.
- 79. Regrets.** I have some regrets about some things I've done. But I have far more regrets about things I *didn't* do. Most people would describe me as a risk-taker, but if I were to do it all over again, I'd spend even more time between the trapezes.
- 80. It only takes three points of view to create some reality.** What someone thinks of you isn't that important. However, if one person calls you a horse, you can ignore it. If two people call you a horse, you might want to listen. If three people call you a horse, you'd better consider buying a saddle.
- 81. Learning.** No one's ever argued with me when I've quoted Bucky Fuller who said, "You can't learn less."
- 82. Good Manners.** I'm mindful of my manners and how I might improve them. I strive to look for ways I can be more kind, considerate and polite. And I've learned how important it is to be a good example. Kids watch much more closely than they listen.
- 83. We must discover and live out the best that's within us.** I'm not sure who wrote this, but I believe it. "If I bring forth what is inside me, what I bring forth will save me. If I fail to bring forth what is inside me, what I bring forth will destroy me."
- 84. You find what you're looking for.** Whether you're looking for something good or bad, you usually find it. The Universe reveals to us what we focus upon. Look for faults in others, and you'll surely find them. Look for the good in others, and you'll see them. Look for excuses, you'll find them. Look for solutions and you'll find *them*.

85. **It's your attitude more than your aptitude that determines your altitude.** This is a Ziglarism—and one I believe in wholeheartedly.
86. **Ride the horse in the direction it's going.** I won't say there's never a time to buck the trend and go a different way. However, I've found myself swimming upstream unnecessarily a number of times. It's easier to go with the flow as long as you can be true to your values. On the other hand, to lead a symphony, you must occasionally turn your back on the crowd.
87. **It rarely does any good to complain.** When you complain, 90% of the people don't care and 10% are glad. Whiners have mental BO. Remember, no statue has ever been built of a critic.
88. **An upset is an opportunity to see the truth.** I don't always immediately remember this when faced with an upset. But I do eventually look for what the upset can reveal to me. It's given me great insights.
89. **We teach people how to treat us.** By accepting and tolerating the way others treat us, we tell them it's OK. When we no longer allow others to treat us poorly, we have trained them and enhanced our standing—with them and ourselves.
90. **Nolo Illegitimi Carborundum.** Everything sounds more profound if it's in Latin. Translation: don't let the bastards get you down. Listen to your heart—not the fears, jealousies and limiting beliefs of others.
91. **Correction without invalidation.** Being able to see ourselves clearly is a valuable trait. Being able to look at what we've done and left undone and make corrections without invalidating who we are is rare. A good question to ask ourselves is, "What kind of a world would this world be if everyone in it was just like me?" The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement.
92. **When who you are is what you do, then when you don't, you ain't.** As a hard-working entrepreneur, I'm still working on this one.
93. **Failure is feedback.** And feedback is the breakfast of champions. And I've eaten many breakfasts. They say that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. I complete my 50 circumnavigations of the sun much stronger indeed.

94. **Dreams are some of the most powerful things on the planet.** They have overcome great obstacles. They have inspired greatness in others. They make us stronger and better people. They sustain our spirit. Happy are those who dream dreams and are willing to pay the price to make them come true.
95. **People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.** I've wasted a lot of time and energy trying to learn more and teach more and sometimes tried to impress people with what I know. But it's caring that really makes the difference.
96. **Facts tell, stories sell.** Teaching (or selling) by telling stories is the most effective way to impart information. Jesus was a great storyteller. It's over 2,000 years after He shared His parables, and they're still being told today.
97. **The past does not equal the future.** Most people operate out of their personal history instead of living into the possibility of what they can imagine. What's behind us has only as much impact as we're willing to let it. The hardest thing to learn in life is which bridge to cross and which bridge to burn.
98. **Mastery is putting it all together.** One who works with his hands is a laborer; one who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman; one who works with his hands, his head and his heart is a master.
99. **In order to avoid criticism, say nothing, do nothing and be nothing.** If you're going to accomplish anything in this world, you've got to be able to handle the opinions of others. Dogs don't bark at parked cars. It's a fact that people who want the most approval get the least and people who need approval the least get the most.
100. **"Anything the human mind can conceive and believe, the human mind can achieve."** This was written by Napoleon Hill, and it's always stuck with me. If one person has done it, so can you. If no one has done it, you can be the first. If you can conceive it and believe it, you can achieve it.
101. **Learning goes both ways.** I can learn as much from my children as I can teach them. Probably more.

Conclusion

I end this writing with one of my favorite quotes by Father Alfred D'Souza:

“For a long time it has seemed to me that life was about to begin; Real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be got through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.”

Namasté

(Translation: the highest in me salutes the highest in you.)

SuccessNet Resources

Books

- Success: A Spiritual Matter**
<http://SuccessNet.org/spirit/>
- 101 Best Ways to Get Ahead**
Solid gold advice from the world's most successful people
<http://101BestWays.com>
- 101 Best Ways to Simplify Your Life (late 2005)**
<http://101BestWays.com>
- 101 Best Ways to Stay Motivated and Inspired (early 2006)**
<http://101BestWays.com>

Reports

- 101 Things I've Learned in My 50 Trips Around the Sun (free)**
<http://SuccessNet.org/reports.htm>
- 101 Ways to Save Time and Be More Effective**
<http://SuccessNet.org/101savetime.htm>
- How to Form Your Own Success Team**
<http://SuccessNet.org/teams.htm>
- How to Write a Mission Statement**
Creating Vision and Mission Statements That Work!
<http://SuccessNet.org/mission-report.htm>
- 10 Essential Keys to Personal Effectiveness (free)**
<http://SuccessNet.org/subscribes.htm>
- 101 Best Tools & Resources to Run Your Internet Business**
The top must-have tools and resources Infopreneurs use to get more done with less hassle.
<http://SuccessNet.org/101bestways/resources>
- 101 Ways to Save Time & Be More Effective**
How to get more done in less time.
<http://SuccessNet.org/101savetime.htm>

Tools

- Laser Questions™**
Get clear, get focused, get ahead.
<http://SuccessNet.org/laserq.htm>
- Priorities™**
Determine your most important, biggest pay-off, mission-aligned goals, purchases, challenges and objectives.
<http://SuccessNet.org/priorities.htm>

Programs, Courses & Other Resources

- SuccessNet Gold Membership**
Discounts, private web site access, insider information and much more.
<http://SuccessNet.org/join.htm>
- Freedom to Achieve™ System**
<http://SuccessNet.org/fta>
- Inspirational and Motivational Quotation Library (free)**
<http://SuccessNet.org/library.htm>
- World Class Business™**
Take your business to the next level.
<http://WorldClassBusiness.com>
- Your Core Values™ eCourse**
Discover, define and begin living in accordance with your true values.
<http://YourCoreValues.com>
- Creating Excellence™ (coming late 2005)**
Daily motivation and inspiration to help you excel. For employers and employees who want to make every day more productive and fulfilling.
<http://CreatingExcellence.com>
- Step Up to Success™ Course**
Learn the fundamental principles of success.
<http://SuccessNet.org/stepup.htm>
- SuccessMark™ Cards**
Inspirational and motivational online greeting cards (free)
<http://SuccessMarkCards.com>
- Michael Angier, speaker, coach and consultant**
Michael works with senior executives who want to build world-class companies and with people who want to do value-driven work.
<http://MichaelAngier.com>

About the Author



Michael Angier is the founder and CIO (Chief Inspiration Officer) of SuccessNet, the popular web-based community dedicated to helping people operate at their personal and professional best.

Michael is a father, husband, mentor, author, speaker, entrepreneur, coach and student. He's also the creator of The World Class Business™ Conference and has taught seminars and conducted workshops on goal setting, motivation and personal development in four countries.

Michael's passion is human potential. Helping people discover, develop and fulfill their dreams is his purpose, which is clearly reflected in SuccessNet. Michael is one of those individuals who has found his purpose in life and aligns all his endeavors with it.

Intrigued by the science of individual achievement early in his life, Michael has devoted himself to advancing his experience and expertise in personal and professional development for more than 30 years.

In his youth, already an ardent student of the principles of success, Michael began reading biographies of successful individuals and was fascinated by their lives and the contributions they made to the world.

Michael is married to Dawn Angier—his partner, best friend, mentor, teacher, student and confidant. They live in South Burlington, Vermont and have six children ranging in age from 13 to 33. Michael enjoys sailing, tennis, traveling, reading and helping people realize their dreams.

About SuccessNet

SuccessNet is an international association of people committed to operating at their best—to creating excellence in every aspect of their lives and throughout their respective organizations. We support people in developing the skills, knowledge, belief and passion to achieve their dreams.

OUR MISSION:
to inform, inspire and
empower people to be their
best—personally and
professionally.

SuccessNet is dedicated to helping you become more knowledgeable, prosperous and effective. In addition to our publications, we provide a complete membership package dedicated to making your road to success easier and more fun.

Since 1995, over 150,000 people from all around the globe have benefited from the SuccessNet experience.

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