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Moving To Still Higher Reading Speeds

In your last two articles, I have shared with you the importance of schema in making text meaningful. Now we shall learn how to use schematic clues to increase reading speed.

Consider this very important statement: author's publish text for a group of people, but you must read that text as an individual. A writer offers **all** the information they believe that **anyone** reading their text might require, because a writer can't anticipate what every possible readers' map of a subject might contain. On the other hand you tend to read text on subjects that are relevant to your work or hold special interest to you. This mean that **you often have a map** of many of the important points found in many of the texts you must read, and you can use this map or schema to reach incredibly high speeds in much of your reading.

Ironically, many individuals actually slow down when encountering familiar or easy material. It is human nature to seek out and feel comfortable with familiar surroundings. For example, what might happen if you were reading a really complicated, boring, and challenging Chemistry text, and then found a really interesting, familiar, and easy section in that text. Would you be in a hurry to finish this easy and interesting

portion of the text so you could focus upon difficult and boring information, or might you spend more time than you should staying in this comfortable and familiar text? Most people make the mistake of wasting valuable reading time focused upon things they already know, rather than productively using their time to learn new and necessary information. You won't make this mistake ever again. In the future, as soon as you spot familiar or easy information, you will increase your reading speed and use your time to learn new, unfamiliar, important information. There are many significant applications of this point in business that I would like to share with you.

Imagine you are reading your daily newspaper. In business, it is essential to stay on top of timely and important information. Yet, you often hear the news on the radio on the drive to work, or perhaps view it on television. By the time you read the newspaper, much of the information it contains has already been learned. Spend more time on the news that you didn't know about, and you will find yourself becoming a more productive newspaper reader. This is a skill I've shared with companies like Prudential Realty. Information changes daily in real estate, and good brokers search for leads in the newspapers, while keeping abreast of economic changes and changes in the law that can affect their industry. They know that failure to keep abreast can hurt their bottom line just as using that information correctly can increase their profitability. This same principal holds true for newsletters, and magazines that often contain sections of very familiar information.

Your daily mail, and e-mail are another area where you can put this reading strategy into practice. Many executives have their mail screened by others, because they don't have the time to pour through a pile of unopened mail. How often has someone

made a poor judgment call and not shown you a piece of mail that you would have judged important? Scan your mail swiftly looking for things that require your personal attention, or letters that are responding to your personal requests. Look for mail that can be tossed, postponed, or delegated to someone else. Using schematic clues you will find yourself quickly getting through your mail more efficiently than any assistant could possibly accomplish. During a recent program I gave in Montreal for Cisco systems, I was told how they were receiving as many as 300 E-mails a day that seriously compromised their time and efficiency. Learning to speed read their e-mail greatly cut down on this waste of their time. Ironically, many of the e-mails were sent simply to notify people that a letter was on the way. You can significantly cut down on this waste in your company by making people aware that they should either send their letter by e-mail, or use the regular mail. Have them stop cluttering up your associates' time by sending e-mails announcing that regular mail is on the way!

The schematic technique we have just learned works well for familiar or easy material, but not everything you read is easy or familiar material. We need a different strategy for speed reading unfamiliar information. It is important to remember that only about 40% of a text is information, and that the rest is explanation. Explanations take the form of stories, anecdotes, examples, and illustrations. Writers use these structures to clarify, simplify, and exemplify the information they are offering to you. However, you will often find that you understand points made in text and don't require any additional assistance. When this happens, you can quickly skim these embellishments and move onto the next new and significant point in your text. Only when you find yourself confused or unable to understand a technical point should you take advantage of

the extra information the writer included to help make difficult text easier for you to learn.

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