



BOOSTING YOUR VALUE  
**WITHOUT**  
TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

How to Get An Education **Without** Attending College and  
**Without** a Lifetime of Debt, Stress, and Family Strain

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## Introduction

One of the greatest benefits of the information age is that it has leveled the playing field between those who *know* and those who *need to know*.

Just as the printing press helped to widen literacy beyond the ruling class in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, so too has the Internet widened access to nearly any topic imaginable to anyone with a computer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Not too long ago, anyone who wanted to gain a high degree of knowledge and skills had to attend college. ***Today, an exceptional online library and a greater appreciation of learning through real-life experience has widened the learning opportunities.***

For example, some of the high demand professions today, like graphic design, web content development, and computer programming, require skills that can be developed through independent study using online resources, internships, and mentorships. Plus, interactive and professionally developed seminars and conferences are available in almost every career specialty.

***The real value of continuing education today is that it is multi-faceted and it can be done independently.***

There is a wider variety of tools and services that you can access online, in your community, or across the country than ever before. And these learning resources make it easy to boost your skills, talents, knowledge, and value without following the long, costly, and sometimes irrelevant, college route.

**Here are some of the tools and resources that will help you gain a greater understanding of your subject area:**

- ✓ ***Audio MP3s*** can deliver hours of content while you commute or do other tasks.
- ✓ ***Videos*** allow you to watch an instructor deliver demonstrations and talks without having to physically be there.
- ✓ ***Live, interactive seminars and conferences*** give you the opportunity to learn in-person, on the phone, or online.
- ✓ ***Professional associations and peer groups that offer one-on-one mentorship and coaching*** will guide you through available resources and teach you tried and tested techniques.

- ✓ **Internships** sponsored by large employers or small business owners help you gain the knowledge and experience of hands-on tasks.

**Attending college is only one option** and, depending on your professional needs and life priorities, there are likely far more effective and beneficial alternatives to achieving your educational goals!

## Your Local Library

Your public library is a treasure trove of free information. Don't overlook the following tremendous learning opportunities offered by your local library:

1. **Current periodicals (magazines, regularly published journals, newspapers).** If you were to subscribe to these, they could cost you hundreds or thousands of dollars in subscription fees. Yet, at the library they're free so take advantage of them!

- ✓ Some of these professional periodicals – for instance, internationally acclaimed magazines for meeting planners, graphic designers, writers or life coaches – offer some of the best and most current information on best practices, new procedures, business management models, and more.

2. **Books in your field.** As you delve into the topic of your choice, you'll surely find books that offer excellent information. Purchasing every item on your book list could cost you hundreds of dollars, so make good use of your local library.
  - ✓ Not every book on your book list will be one that you'll want to keep, instead, sign out the book, make notes of relevant information, and return the book when you're done. That could be one less book gathering dust on your shelves.
  - ✓ Save your money for books that you'll use frequently as reference.
3. **Professional advice.** Your local library is staffed with professionals who have a wealth of knowledge about reference materials, local organizations and services that may be of interest and relevance to your learning needs.
  - ✓ Bring your queries and concerns about resources, topics, and learning options to your librarian. If your library is well staffed, you'll end up saving yourself hours of searching and you may even pick up a few good shortcuts as well!
4. **A varied learning environment.** Even though you may be choosing to educate yourself independently, that doesn't mean that you should

keep yourself sequestered in your home. Your tax dollars pay for your local, cozy library – so enjoy it!

## The Internet

Nowadays we have the great luxury of the vast resources available freely on the Internet. What was once only available to institutions and big businesses is now available to all.

Not only is most of the information *free*, but it's also available *instantly* without leaving the comfort of your home!

The Internet levels the playing field regarding access to knowledge because it's:

- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ Available to anyone immediately
- ✓ Constantly evolving to reflect the needs and desires of our world

## Unbelievable Access to Knowledge

With millions of users sharing information in forums, discussion groups, and blogs, as well as millions of organizations making their own

data available via websites, there are now massive databases of information on just about any topic.

For example:

✓ ***The choice is all yours.*** There are thousands of websites you can access from the comfort of your desk that contain videos, audio files and eBooks to teach you everything from “*how to knit*” to “*how to start an Alpaca farm*” and everything in between!

✓ ***Multimedia access has changed the learning landscape.***

The internet is growing each minute with hundreds of thousands of videos, audio recordings, and interactive resources being posted online. With new technologies like live online seminars and webcasts, it’s easier than ever to expand your knowledge, while getting instant feedback from others.

## **Connecting Users to Knowledge Groups**

You can start by first locating a popular and credible online discussion group or forum in your topic. A visit to a discussion forum can give you a variety of opinions about a particular resource or service and help steer you in the right direction.

For example, if you’d like to learn how to become a technical editor, but aren’t sure which training program to purchase or participate



in, you might want to get a recommendation from the peer group at a forum for technical editors.

You can do your research and find relevant groups by searching on Google. Also, take a look at the section about “Finding a Mentor” for more information on this topic.

## eBooks

The introduction of eBooks in recent years has empowered those in pursuit of independent learning and practical education in enormous ways.

Not only is more information now available online via eBooks, but it's also affordable and there's no need to pay hefty shipping costs nor wait for delivery.

***You simply purchase the eBook you want online and gain access to it immediately.***

So if you're awake at 3:00 a.m. and you want to learn how to start a cake decorating business, you can buy and download the material instantly, without having to wait until your local stores are open.

A great benefit of reading eBooks is that these resources aren't printed on paper. You can read your eBook on your screen and avoid the destruction of more trees.

Of course, it's wise to have an organized system of filing your eBooks on your computer so you can find them when you need to. Also, be sure to back up your files using an online file backup storage service or an external hard drive.

## **Seminars and Conferences**

Many people require face-to-face interaction with others to retain and learn topics and skills effectively. That's why educational seminars, conferences, and trade shows are so popular.

For some people, the thought of reading a 300 page textbook is inconceivable! Some comprehensive seminars on particular topics can provide as much – if not more – practical knowledge as a densely written text book.

Seminars may range from a few hours in length to several days and can include in-depth discussions, presentations, and other learning activities that encourage retention and comprehension.

***Whereas seminars focus on one topic, conferences often focus on a particular field or subject area.***

Conferences can include a number of related workshops where smaller groups are involved in more hands on, interactive activities. There may also be sessions where one speaker or panel discussion group addresses all the conference attendees.

Contact a professional association or mentorship group in your field to learn about upcoming seminars and conferences.

## **Find a Mentor**

A mentor is an experienced and knowledgeable individual who is trusted to help and counsel others. ***Mentors are very popular in the business world.*** They help people navigate and develop their careers or overcome stumbling blocks that are holding them back.

Participating in a mentorship is an *enormous* educational opportunity. Mentors can provide encouragement and advice because they have the real-life experience and they've made the mistakes so you don't have to.

***Your mentor can give you information based on hands-on experience, not just theory.***

Mentors can also save you a lot of time by directing you to the best resources available to help you achieve your educational and professional goals.

## Where to Find a Mentor

**You can find a mentor in a number of ways:**

1. **Join a mentorship group for your field.** For example, if you want to become a professional speaker, it would be wise to join one of the most recognized professional speakers' associations in your region or country.

- ✓ Professional associations often offer mentorship opportunities, pairing up new members with more experienced members.
- ✓ They may provide discussion groups and forums where all members can discuss issues and ask questions. Newer members can then learn from and create relationships with experienced members through the group discussions.

2. **Attend seminars and conferences.** Take note of those presenters who've impressed you with their knowledge and experience.

- ✓ Make an effort to make a connection with them at the event or obtain their contact information so you can communicate your

admiration for their work, as well as ask if they are available to mentor you.

3. **Conduct online research to identify leaders in your field.** Try to locate local leaders so you'll have an opportunity to have more face-to-face opportunities to meet with your mentor.

## Become an Intern

One of the best ways to get an education about a particular job or career is to get an intern position.

An internship is a work arrangement whereby the intern works in a temporary position with an emphasis on on-the-job training rather than necessarily securing employment. *Internships can be paid or unpaid.*

The benefit of an internship is that you get hands on experience in the field of your interest. For some learners, practical experience is far more effective than theoretical learning through books alone.

Another benefit of an internship is that potential employers look favorably upon candidates that have experience in a job through internships or volunteering.

As an intern, you're not expected to know everything about your field, so you can make mistakes without fear. It's an ideal way to learn on the job while receiving the support and attention of those in the work environment.

## Summary

Between online resources, peer group organizations, seminars, and conferences, there are many viable and effective alternatives to college when searching out an education to secure your career or business goals.

Choose educational resources and methods that respond to *your* particular learning needs for the most successful learning outcome.

***Your goal is to boost your value and become indispensable through life-long education.*** In the workplace, this means that you need to bring in more money than your boss is spending on you. If you can do this consistently and reliably, than you'll open doors without having to pay for expensive schooling!