

# The last word | Finding the balance

**Paul Bridle**, professional speaker, trainer, business advisor, personal executive coach, and author, has the last word on learning, goal-setting and leadership



**My son** is going through the mid-term blues at university. You know what I mean, we have all been there. We start out with loads of enthusiasm and then part way through the year reality kicks in and we start to wonder why we are doing this? We pull ourselves out of it just in time to start a hectic dash for final exams.

I had a chat with my son in an endeavour to encourage him and re-vitalise him in some way. I said something that even made me stop and think! I said, "Remember, it is not the degree that is important here but rather what you learn along the way". I went on to explain that discovering how to learn, how to present his case, how to discipline himself and how to plan his work and study, were all far more important than the degree at the end of the three years.

Afterwards I thought about what I had said and wondered if that was a contradiction of what I tell people about achieving an outcome? I tell people to remain focused on what they are trying to achieve, to have a vision of where they will end up and be clear on the outcome and not the process. Does this mean that what I said to my son was wrong?

The conclusion I came to is that we need to keep balance in our perspective. His desire and determination to achieve the degree is a good aim but at the same time he needs to

keep it in perspective. If he achieves the degree and doesn't benefit from the learning along the way, then he joins the massive queue of people who have an education but lack intelligence to make a living. I call these, the educated derelicts!

Please don't get me wrong. I am not belittling the achievement of anyone who has got a degree. Far from it, but it does worry me that people haven't got the greatest (and in many cases) the most important part out of working towards a degree.

What use is knowledge if a person does not know how to use it? The same applies to everything we do especially in business. We get so focused on the share price, the sales target or similar objectives, that we don't take time to get some of the enjoyment and learning process.

### So my first thought is:

**1.** Are you so focused on the goal that you are not taking advantage of the learning you can get out of the journey? In this busy world with deadlines and targets, it becomes easy to get caught up in the big push to succeed.

Sales people fall into this trap. They are so focused on making their targets and closing the sale that they forget to learn from each and every encounter with a customer. If the customer doesn't buy they just move onto the next one without asking valuable questions

such as, "What could I have done differently that would have made that sale possible?" or "What did I do right that I could do again next time?". Questions like these make that sales person better at selling. They are learning from the process and not lost in the mad push to achieve the goal.

So what has this got to do with Leadership? I think that the leader's job is to help people find this balance. A leader needs to keep the balance in people's minds. The leader's job is to help people not only remain focused but also to make sure that they are learning from the journey and getting the most out of it.

### My second thought is:

**2.** How good are you at helping people maintain that balance? Do you keep emphasising the outcome without balancing it with the learning, development and enjoyment that we should be getting out of each day?

Helping people get the most out of the journey is not only as important as achieving the outcome but in some ways it can make achieving the outcome possible.

For my son, if he learns how to plan, how to discipline himself, how he learns best and how to deal with the challenges and deadlines of being at university and doing a degree, then he will probably do well in the degree as well. Most of all he will have an ability that will serve him well for the rest of his life. ■

## Profile

Paul is currently a Leadership Advisor for the Institute of Leadership and Management; a faculty member and regular international speaker for the Institute of Management Studies; an Enterprise Advisor for the UK Government's National Enterprise Advisory Service, and an Investor in People Assessor for national and international organisations.

Paul is looking to improve their personal performance. Paul is past president of Professional Speakers Association and is 2004-05 President for the International Federation For Professional Speakers. His work is now devoted mainly to developing and training people to build successful organisations. His specialised area is in 'Leadership' where he has spent over 16 years researching the subject and developing training and coaching programmes.

He is also a member of the British Coaching Academy and is both a private and business coach to assist individuals

**Contact:** paul@paulbridle.com,  
www.paulbridle.com,  
www.ema-international.com.