



Entrepreneurialism Through Education: A Path To Professionalism

by Esther Muller and Michael Williams, Ph.D.



Entrepreneurialism is the engine of the American economy. For centuries, enterprising citizens have translated their visions of the future into the fabric society. For millions of New Yorkers, Manhattan is the crucible for melding new visions into reality. Industry competitors flush with passion, fueled by their conviction to make real their visions, labor to give it life.

For entrepreneurs, their passion and conviction are the stuff of legends. Entrepreneurial icon such as Howard Lorber, Chairman of Prudential Douglas Elliman and Richard Dickson, President and CEO of Jones Apparel Group, Inc. learned their entrepreneurial craft through integrating formal and field-based education.

Fortunately, the rarified ranks of these iconic entrepreneurs are welcoming the next generation of exemplar entrepreneurs. Many of these emerging legends enable their vision of the future through a deep and lifelong commitment to professional education. Their commitment to professional education serves as a powerful model for our own consideration when establishing our strategic business plans and prioritizing achievement goals to be accomplished each year.

Occasionally, an industry leader emerges that so significantly differentiates themselves through innovative thinking and determined action they provide profound lessons in entrepreneurship... a path to professionalism. Consider, David Schlamm, founder and CEO of City Connections.

Innovation Through Education

In a recent conversation with us, David Schlamm stated "Change is good! It provides opportunities and enables us forward." Schlamm's statement generated discussions exploring a variety of change-related professional education topics. Two topics which captured our imaginations were Schlamm's orientation toward transforming the nature of real estate transactions and the causal relationships among entrepreneurship, education, and professionalism. Schlamm offered a crisp and cogent context concerning his orientation toward real estate transactions "I will deliver 'A Better Real Estate Experience™,'" as evidenced in City Connections brand statement. Schlamm ascribes the "goodness" of change to enhancing the ways in which real estate is transacted. At essence is his personal and professional conviction to deliver a cohesive and compassionate interaction between participants and property.

Today, professional education for real estate agents seems adrift on a sea of indifference, taking its navigational bearings from the minimal requirements for content knowledge, regulatory compliance, and ethics education required for sales agent licensure. However sales agent education may have found a guiding force in Schlamm. Schlamm states "I believe life-long professional education is a critical component in developing personal and organizational produc-

tivity." In these tough economic times when real estate companies of all sizes have either completely discontinued or significantly reduced the emphasis and scope of agent education.

In our discussions, Schlamm evidenced superior levels of thought and practice leadership through his contrarian stance to trends in the industry towards reducing agent education. "Encouraging professional education beyond state required minimum requirements for licensure is insufficient to effectively execute the value proposition inherent in City Connections brand statement of providing 'A Better Real Estate Experience™.'" Giving action to conviction, Schlamm implemented a leading edge professional education and performance coaching program for his sales agent; co-sponsoring participating agents for tuition costs. Schlamm states "Professional education raises individual agent, as well as industry professionalism. At City Connections, I proactively promote a culture of unquestionable ethical behavior, business sustainability through client care, and consummate professionalism. As my values, I have embedded them in the organization and professional education enables agents to understand, appreciate, and align their actions with these values." Emerging from a reflect moment, Schlamm muses "It's innovation... innovation through education."

Archimedes and the Power of Leverage

The second century B.C. Greek mathematician and inventor Archimedes declared "Give me a place to stand and a lever long enough and I will move the world." Archimedes provides us with a powerful model for conceptualizing the power and potential inherent in the relationship between entrepreneurship and education aiding us in realizing our visions of business success. Consider this translation of Archimedes's statement, if a "place to stand" were a sales agent's 2010 sales plan articulated through daily, weekly, and monthly behaviors and goals and the "lever" professional education, how could the relationship between the "place to stand" and "lever" be used to "move" your professional world toward increased business?

A Journey and a Single Step

The ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu wrote "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Professional education enables and enhances entrepreneurialism. The 21st century real estate markets evidence increases buyer and seller sophistication in all dimensions of real estate transactions. From increased industry knowledge to self management property sourcing through technology, these conditions diminish the need for and viability of sales agency. Become your own Archimedes and incorporate professional education into your 2010 business plan. Learn from legendary entrepreneurs and seek out those emerging. Pave your path to entrepreneurship with professional education. It will lead you to professionalism. ■

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