

All in the learning business

Lifelong learning

When people ask me what business I'm in, I often say, "I'm in the learning business." It sounds intriguing, and it is certainly true. But, truth be told, we are all in the learning business. Why?

Because as humans, we are learning machines. We are most alive and functioning closest to our potential when we are learning, adapting, adjusting, and finding new ways, approaches and techniques to improve our lives (or the lives of others) in some way.

I believe in the above statements. They are as true as any other statement I could write here. But rather than talking about the philosophy of humankind, let me get much more pragmatic.

Change and Learning

Change is all around us. Some say the rate of change is increasing, but whether that is true or not, this is definitely a fact in our business lives. Products change, customers change, process and policies change. We are put on a new team, we are entering new markets, and we have set new goals. In all parts of our daily professional lives change surrounds us.

In order for us to cope with that change, we need to be willing and able to change. And learning is a key component in developing that ability.

So when I talk about continuous learning or life long learning, I'm not suggesting everyone needs to take a course at their local college, or go back to school for a new degree. Continuous learning is an attitude and a set of behaviors that allow us to succeed in our ever-changing environment, and is the best lever we have to turn who we are today into who we want to be tomorrow. Change requires learning and conversely, there is no learning without change.

So if life long learning doesn't necessarily mean the "professional college student" and doesn't require us to be the person who was always asking questions in every class we ever attended, what are the behaviors that make up a true continuous or life long learner?

I'm glad you asked.

The Behaviors

There are some common threads among those who actively are learning and growing as professionals (and humans). Life-long, continuous learners:

Have a beginner's mindset. If you approach anything with the mindset of an expert, you will learn nothing. With the expert's mind, you are looking for confirmation and validation of what you already know. A beginner on the other hand, looks constantly for one new tidbit, one or more ways to expand on their current expertise. In other words, expert or not, they don't think that way, because they know that only with an open, beginner's mind, can they benefit from the learning opportunity.

Make connections. Peter Drucker, the famous and influential management thinker wrote, "To make knowledge productive we will have to learn to see both forest and tree. We will have to learn to connect." Continuous learners do that. They continue to think about what they have learned in one part of their life and how it relates to and connects with challenges, problems, opportunities and situations that occur in other parts of their life.

Are flexible and adaptable. Learning requires change, so continuous learners realize that they must be willing to adapt and change if they want to grow.

Are always learning something. Continuous learners learn new things "just because." They've always wanted to play guitar, so they take lessons. They want to ride a unicycle, so they try it. They learn how to quilt. They learn a new language. These people don't invest the time required just so they can play "Love Me Tender" or say "good morning" in Chinese. They also do it because they realize that our brains are like muscles. The more we exercise them the stronger they will be.

Are continuously curious. One of the most powerful learning questions we use is "Why?" Why is the question of the curious. Continuous learners remain curious about people, places, important and mundane things as well. By cultivating their curiosity they are adding to their knowledge and perspective, while exercising an important part of our learning brain at the same time.

Learn in multiple ways. In school we learned in a relatively limited number of ways, which unfortunately leaves some people with a limited view of learning. Continuous learners know that they can learn by reading, by listening, by trying, through others, with a mentor, etc. (etc.!).

Teach others. Something magical happens when you teach someone something - you suddenly understand it better yourself. Continuous learners teach others not just to help the other person (or to show them how much they know) but because they know it helps them deepen their mastery of their own learning.

How to Use This List

Now that you have read this far I hope you are convinced of how valuable it can be to be a more active learner. You have also read a list of characteristics. Now that you have read that list of characteristics, I'd like you to read it again. As you read it ask yourself these questions:

How well do I stack up against these behaviors?
Which ones would I like to get better at?

Who do I know that is exceptionally good at each of these characteristics?

How can I learn these traits and habits from those I know who are better at them than I?

Your answers to these four questions (and the action that you take) will put you on the road to being a more continuous and life-long learner.

Enjoy your journey. -sideroad.com



International Finance Corporation World Bank Group

Background / General description

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, promotes sustainable private sector investments in developing economies to help reduce poverty and improve peoples' lives. The IFC is expanding the South Asia Enterprise Development Program to promote SME and Micro enterprise development in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

IFC has positions for a Monitoring & Evaluation Analyst and a Communications Analyst in the Colombo Office. This is a two year local coterminous position, extension beyond two years is dependent upon donor funding and performance.

MONITORING & EVALUATION ANALYST *Application Deadline: 17 June 2011*

The M&E Analyst will work under the overall supervision of the Head Advisory Services, IFC-SEDF Sri Lanka-Maldives, and will also report to the Regional M&E Officer based in New Delhi. His/her main duties/accountabilities will be to:

- Provide guidance and support to project teams and the clients to ensure compliance with IFC's internal M&E system and reporting requirements as well as donor(s) expectations and objectives. This will include impact and other indicator selection in early stage of project design, supervision and completion reports, and post completion monitoring.
- Develop a system in cooperation with the clients to track progress against projected results and ensure the quality of reporting on results.
- Support project teams in the development of logical frameworks in line with IFC and donor requirements.
- Support project teams and the clients in the development of reporting/monitoring formats to capture project level data on results, and coordinate with them to ensure timely and adequate completion.
- Identify, in conjunction with projects teams and the Regional M&E Officer in Delhi, projects that would benefit from rigorous and/or innovative evaluation methods.
- Support the design and implementation of surveys (baselines/evaluations) to measure project and program effectiveness. This will include developing TORs for external consultants, supervising consultants jointly with project teams to ensure that quality outputs are delivered, reviewing reports, providing feedback, and providing regular updates on evaluations to regional M&E.
- Leverage internal M&E systems to identify lessons learned and best practices, and present the same to project staff, SEDF SL-M senior management and donors as required.
- Support regional portfolio team in monitoring the portfolio and pipeline of advisory programs in Sri Lanka/Maldives and tracking progress against key milestones.
- Reporting on the portfolio both internally (to IFC management) and externally (Donors)
- Ensuring that project documents meet overall quality standards and are compliant with IFC guidelines.
- Prepare summary reports on results achieved for the Sri Lanka and Maldives semi-annually or as needed for internal/external reporting purposes.
- Respond to information requests from Regional M&E/Portfolio team in New Delhi, SEDF Senior Management and donors.
- Implement corporate-wide initiatives and guidelines on M&E.
- Liaise with the Results Measurement Network, other M&E staff in the South Asia region, and the Independent Evaluation Group as needed. Keep informed about developments in M&E across the corporation.
- Coordinate with IFC clients and other stakeholders and guide them on M&E procedures.

Selection Criteria:

- B.A/B.Sc in Statistics, Management, Finance, Economics, Public Policy or a related specialty from a reputed university
- Minimum of three years experience in project implementation and monitoring and evaluation
- Hands-on expertise in designing and applying M&E tools in the development context
- Experience in project management/M&E in Access to Finance would be an asset
- Strong analytical, conceptual and research skills and familiarity with statistical applications and data analysis
- Ability to work in a team and with minimum supervision
- Good written and verbal communication skills. Fluency in English is essential
- A keen interest in development finance and in working in a multicultural environment.

Interested individuals are requested to visit <http://www.ifc.org/careers> (Job # 110986). All applications must be made through the on-line job posting portal. You will be required to create your own account to apply/login

COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATE *Application Deadline: 17 June 2011*

Communication Support Needs in IFC South Asia

IFC recognizes the importance of a broad-based communications program to achieve the intended outcomes of the overall program. An integrated communications approach in the region includes external and internal communications, crisis communications management, managing key relationships with opinion makers and stakeholders including the media, trade bodies, industry chambers, governments, donors and civil society. Communications activities include media, publicity, events and publications to support increased awareness and understanding of issues that affect the private sector business environment and economic development in South Asia. IFC requires extensive communication support services for its programs.

Duties and Accountabilities

This is an exciting opportunity to develop the profile of IFC within the South Asia region & the World Bank Group, and to work as part of a strategic and dynamic communications team.

IFC South Asia's Communications team provides strategic and operational communications support to the full regional program across the corporate, strategic pillars, industry and investment and advisory streams. The team is responsible for coordinating campaigns to support the profile IFC internally and externally, including the developing of briefing materials, magazine articles, press releases, media management, development of website content, as well as the development and management of advocacy and communications capacity building campaigns to support our projects and for selected private sector and government client organizations.

The Communications Associate will be responsible for assisting the program staff responsible for IFC's activities in Sri Lanka and Maldives in developing and implementing external and internal communications strategies for the IFC, working with firms to develop content for soft and hard copy publications, developing relationships with media to place stories and build IFC's profile, and managing external and internal events on behalf of IFC. The Communications Associate will assist the Regional Communications Officer based in New Delhi to support other communications deliverables in alignment with the regional communications strategy and approach. The position reports to IFC Regional Communications Officer for South Asia, based in New Delhi and IFC Regional Manager for South Asia, based in Colombo. The position requires a well connected, media savvy communications professional with the following specific responsibilities to be undertaken:

1. Generate communication material for external communications

- document achievements, lessons learnt and processes from programs and projects
- assist in production of publications and other communications materials
- coordination with design and printing vendors
- assist in development and preparation of communication materials including briefing materials, presentations, press releases, video materials
- assist in updating content for the South Asia external and internal websites

2. Ensure implementation of the internal communications strategy

- assist in developing and implementing a calendar of HQ focused events to tell the Sri Lanka and Maldives story
- support content development, coordination of production of distribution materials to share knowledge and successes
- assist in optimizing various internal IFC web platforms

3. Event management support to IFC workshops, press conferences etc to reach out to internal and external stakeholders

- coordination with associated partners
- interface with external vendors
- brand and signage in accordance with IFC guidelines, etc.
- preparation of appropriate distribution materials

4. Research, retrieval and analysis of data/information from internal and external sources for creating communications materials

5. Support to regional communications in reporting

- daily and monthly media monitoring report
- preparing Sri Lanka and Maldives daily leads updates

Selection Criteria

- Excellent written, verbal communication and presentation skills
- At least 5 years experience in media relations and communications management
- Fluency in English
- Project and time management and multitasking skills.

In addition the following is preferred:

- International work experience
- Regional Media experience
- An advanced degree in a relevant field - e.g., Communications, International Relations is preferable

Interested individuals are requested to visit <http://www.ifc.org/careers> (Job # 110987). All applications must be made through the on-line job posting portal. You will be required to create your own account to apply/login.

No paper mail or faxes. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.