

BUS 1000 The Capstone Course

My MBA Quest

By Daniel L. James

MBA Research Paper for Rushmore University

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Executive Summary

This is the “how-to” part of the saga of how Dan James obtained his MBA from *Rushmore University*. In addition to a weekly journal of all activities related to reading materials, Dan’s reactions to what he has read, any research performed, the development and discussion of any philosophies adopted or employed, comments and wisecracks about events along the way, and any other documentation related to the attainment of his MBA, this document summarizes what he has learned on how to get an MBA, with a 4.0 GPA. Dan was told, early in the process, that it was unlikely he could complete a 37-credit post-graduate degree, via distance learning, working part-time, in less than one year. Ten months later, here we are!

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Introduction

On August 23, 2002, I was officially accepted as an MBA candidate at [Rushmore University](#), through their global distance-learning program. To most people, such an event would seem routine. To me, age 48 at the time, a computer professional of 26 years, and chairman of an information technology (IT) consulting firm, this was a big deal.

Friends, family, and business colleagues were quick to warn me that, obtaining an MBA would be very difficult at this stage of my life (can old dogs really learn new tricks?); and that, since I could not devote all my time to the program, it might take 12 to 24 months to complete the process.

On June 23, 2002 – ten months, to the day after this quest began – I completed the requirements for an MBA, with a sub-major in IT Management.

This document is a summary of how the battle was defined, prepared for, and fought. For the week-by-week details of this effort, please refer to *Appendix A – MBA Course Journal*.

The Challenges

Armed with a fresh Bachelors degree, a graduate continuing immediately toward a Masters program will face obstacles that are daunting enough. But, the obstacles are increased by an order-of-magnitude when the student in question is a middle-aged “geezer” who hasn’t set foot on a campus since the early 1970s.

One major challenge, however, was also the cause of my motivation to pursue an MBA: employment prospects in the IT industry were drying up, and all the experience in the world meant nothing without a post-graduate sheepskin. Thus, not only did I intend to get this “old dog” re-educated, I had to do it during the worst IT economy this country has faced.

In the past, having many years of experience on my resume was sufficient to stay in demand. Nowadays, H.R. departments are flooded with thousands of applicants, so getting my resume on the “to read” pile, without a Masters degree, is an exercise in futility.

A further challenge was to find an MBA program best suited to my needs, within my limited budget, and flexible enough to allow me to custom-design my curriculum, and work from home (or from the road). To read about how I came to

choose Rushmore U., please see my “Foundation” course paper titled, [Profile of Major Influences](#).¹

The next challenge was to organize my mind, my time, and my resources, in a manner designed to overcome the obstacles, many of which – I reasoned – were in other people’s minds. Being a very competitive person, I don’t believe in merely winning, but in overwhelming the opposition. The legal profession calls this a “preponderance of evidence,” meaning, don’t give me just enough evidence to win – give me far more evidence than I need, thus guaranteeing me the win. In this case, the “win” was to obtain an MBA in less time than the minimum others had warned me it would take, or less than 12 months.

The final challenge was to accomplish something I had never done before: be an “A” student. In high school and college, I was content with a “C” average because other things were more important: music, girls, flying, radio, and racing. My goal, therefore, was to complete my MBA early, with a 4.0 grade point average.

Was I “intelligent” enough to do that? Based on past IQ tests, aptitude tests, SATs, and other “measurements,” I should have been able to get far better grades in high school! There is a big difference between accumulated, memorized knowledge, and “successful intelligence.” One of the best books on this subject was Robert J. Sternberg’s *Successful Intelligence: How practical and creative intelligence determine success in life* (Plume, 1997). I learned that I have what it takes to achieve good grades, success in business, and attain any goal I have in mind. Sternberg’s book is highly recommended.

To win the war, however, one must know more about the opposing side than the opposing side knows about itself (Sun Tzu, “The Art of War”). The key is in how intelligence is organized.

Organizing the Mind

Every finished product consists of a sum of its parts. If the product is a Master of Business Administration degree, it is logical to assume that the parts making up that degree will include various required tasks, research, and papers. The list of requirements I received from Rushmore University (RU) indicated that my degree would consist of at least 36 credits, distributed among eight to ten subject areas.

To aid me in getting those subject areas defined, and in laying out a map to reach my goal, Lee E. Hargrave, Jr., MBA, an industry professional, consultant, and author, was assigned as my advisor/professor. I was given the option of choosing a different advisor once my curriculum was set, but during the planning stages, Prof. Hargrave would assist me. Together, we formulated the general content of my first course paper, “The Foundation Course,” which would include a summary of the major influences in my life that led me to RU for an MBA, my career and life goals, my intended curriculum, and my intended MBA schedule.

¹ Daniel L. James, October 2001. “Profile of Major Influences” (www.dljames.com/foundation.htm)

I found this stage of the planning process to be the hardest. Although I had done a lot of writing throughout my life, I had seldom spent that energy writing about myself, especially a summary of my life. I was also overwhelmed with the details, such as the required format and layout of all course papers for RU, how they are to be submitted, the level of research required, and so forth.

During this period, I was also required to order quite a few books designed to help me get organized, and to teach me how to read and write. Fortunately, I didn't have much of a problem in these areas.

The most important book, however, was a summary of everything I would need to know to obtain an MBA: Steven Silbiger's *The Ten Day MBA* (William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999). I liked this book immediately. Silbiger's book consists of his student notes accumulated during his own MBA quest, and his conclusions were both insightful and entertaining. You could boil down the value of an MBA, according to Silbiger, into one sentence: The difference between someone with an MBA and someone without it is the "lingo" used to communicate. I learned from this book that I needed to upgrade my lexicon to include the *language* of business administration. I also learned what I should expect to cover as I pursued my own MBA.

Of all the books on reading and writing skills, the one I found most illuminating was Ayn Rand's *The Art of Nonfiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers* (Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2001). While I didn't agree with all her philosophies, her insight into objective writing was very helpful.

In retrospect, I now understand why custom-designing an MBA curriculum is so difficult. If you do not know, in precise detail, what you intend to do with your life – after you have achieved the MBA – how can you possibly know what to study? For example, in my "Profile," I discussed my multiple interests: music, computers, flying, broadcasting, and comedy. Although I have been an IT professional up until now, this is only what I *do*, not necessarily what I *am*. To develop a useful curriculum, therefore, I had to make some hard choices, and to "organize my mind" to prepare for the consequences of those choices.

It is not enough to simply get an MBA. There are so many industries requiring specific skills, a generalized MBA will not serve you without the added specialization for your chosen industry. My advice to myself, then, was to pick a sub-major – IT Management – and gear my MBA curriculum around that specialization. Thus, even in a course paper on strategic business planning, for example, my intent was to develop a strategic plan for an IT-oriented business. Likewise, my paper on project management would cover an information technology project. In this manner, my intent was to "brand" myself as an "IT Executive with an MBA" rather than an "MBA who also does IT."

Once the curriculum was set, I gave myself an almost-impossible schedule for completion: April 15, 2002, less than eight months! I knew that there may be a few delays here and there – life does this – but I didn't know that, within 18 days of starting on my MBA, America would be attacked by terrorists. I must admit that

I, like many Americans, was paralyzed in front of TV cable news for many days after the attack.

The rule in IT project management is: calculate as accurately as possible the time required, then add at least 40 percent to cover contingencies. When you're satisfied with the result, *double it!* You'll probably end up within 10 percent of reality. In the end, I was off by 25 percent, but still ahead of the "doubters."

So now, I knew what my specialty needed to be, I knew what I needed to learn, I knew I needed to act swiftly, I knew how to format my course papers, and I knew what books to order. Next I needed to figure out how to earn straight A's.

The Secrets of Success

In high school, and to some extent in college, students tend to figure out what their teachers want to hear, and they concentrate on those areas. It basically comes down to supply and demand. Unfortunately, the typical result is that schools crank out "clones" of the teachers: students who know how to make their teachers happy in order to get good grades, students who think like their teachers. In the business world, however, we must think for ourselves, think on our feet, and make thousands of customers happy – each with different needs. If you want to make it in business, you have to really learn what makes business tick. It isn't a bunch of theories and laboratory experiments that prepare you for the real world, only hands-on experience, research, and hard work prepares you.

You can fool your teachers, perhaps, but you can only fool your first employer. One of the things that impressed me about Rushmore University was that its professors were all hands-on business professionals. Sure, some were recently retired, or were authors on various subjects, but they were still active in their specialties, unlike tenured ivy-league professors who live and breath philosophy and theoretical discourse.

In my case, I knew that Lee Hargrave would make an ideal advisor. I knew that he couldn't be fooled. He had written a book on strategic business planning, after having pioneered the subject while at General Electric. He also had extensive experience in the IT field, so he was the perfect match. Besides, Prof. Hargrave actually requested me as his student (I have the e-mail to prove it)!

Not only did I have to prove that I could beat my own challenges, I had to prove to Prof. Hargrave that I was really learning this stuff. The only way I could do that was to submit well-researched, well-written course papers. Since I didn't know what Prof. Hargrave wanted to hear, I also had to submit balanced course papers that covered more than one side of any controversy. Finally, so that he would know that I had backbone, and had benefited from my own professional experience, I had to be willing to take a stand on issues, even in the face of opposing views from the authors and so-called "experts" I would be studying.

The bottom line was work – hard work. In order to ensure a good grade, I did (in some people's view) excessive research. If I had one textbook from a particular author, I found others written by the same author to see if his or her views had changed over time. Then, I found other books with different conclusions. Books

were not enough. To accumulate a “preponderance of evidence,” I used the Internet extensively, searching for articles and websites with up-to-date research on the subject at hand.

Only after reading everything I could get my hands on, and deciding where I stood on the subject, did I begin to write the relevant course paper. Admittedly, the first few papers were a little more “entertaining” than they should have been, mostly due to my comedic background. Fortunately, Prof. Hargrave forgave my asides and wisecracks and graded me on the objective substance of my early papers. Based on his feedback, my writing style matured over the course of the MBA process, and the papers evolved into a more “professional” style.

The key, therefore, to writing papers worthy of top grades is to assume that the professor has received dozens (nay, hundreds) of papers on the same subject in the past, and knows a “fraudulent” paper when he sees one. The same professor will also recognize a well-researched paper, and will reward it accordingly.

Writing style is another issue. Once the content has been decided, the paper must keep the reader’s attention, by “enticing” him or her to continue to the next sentence, and then to the next paragraph, and so on. In other words, you must tell the complete story, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, flowing from one to the other in a logical manner. It’s harder than it sounds, but it is almost as important as the underlying content. For example, I’ll bet that you can’t wait to read my conclusion.

Conclusion

What have I learned from this experience? Assume nothing – find out the truth for yourself. Read everything you can get your hands on – I think I have read over 50 books, about 300 magazine articles, and browsed at least 500 websites since August, 2001. The business world is the “real” world – it’s dog-eat-dog out here, so getting good grades should be only part of your goal. Consider your MBA to be the “right” to manage others, and you’ll only have one chance to prove that you can do it correctly – exactly as it is with folks who don’t have MBAs. The difference is that, with an MBA, you can speak the language of an administrator, you can write understandable business papers, and you can better serve your employer or client.

Or, in my case, now a few more H.R. people may bother to read my resume!

Appendix A – MBA Course Journal

Week Ending 25-Aug-2001

This week was the beginning of my MBA adventure with *Rushmore University*, as all the books – ordered the week before – began arriving. While writing is already one of my strengths, I reviewed the recommended books on the subject, picking to read (cover-to-cover) those with the most to offer, while just skimming the others.

I also began formulating my goals and developing an outline for my Profile, and reading through all the www.rushmore.edu pages. At this point, I did not know who my advisor would be.

Rand, Ayn; "The Art of Nonfiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers;" edited by Robert Mayhew; Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2001

Ayn Rand was a follower of Objectivist philosophy and an author most noted for her provocative treatments of capitalism, politics and art in both fiction and nonfiction articles and books. In the book The Art of Nonfiction: A Guide for Writers and Readers, Rand proposes that the act of writing is a purely objective, professional process. She states that "inspiration" or "muse," being subjective, have little or nothing to do with the writing process, thus people who are not "inspired" to write should never allow their self-esteem to be deflated. She then proceeds to illustrate the methods and structures necessary to approach the task objectively, allowing writers to "work" their way through the obstacles.

Rand draws from her own works to offer examples in support of her writing principles. Her instruction on creating outlines is most valuable and revealing, especially when followed by samples of completed articles derived from the outlines. Further, she identifies the major obstacles encountered in the writing process and deftly illustrates methods of coping and professionally managing the problems.

The primary values I gleaned from The Art of Nonfiction surround the division of writing processes between the conscious mind and the subconscious. Each has its place, according to Rand, and they cannot work together effectively in any writing effort. For example, in writing a first draft, where ideas are initially converted to words, the subconscious is employed exclusively – one simply writes what one knows, unfettered by style or other appurtenances. The task of editing, however, is best performed the next day by the conscious mind, which assists with grammar, style, and the search for better words.

I approached this book from the perspective of an existing writer of both articles and music attempting to learn something new. The professional approach to writing outlined in the book is valuable in eliminating the psychological "block" writers often feel. However, as a composer of hundreds of song lyrics, I can say with authority that Rand's summary dismissal of subjective "muse" fails miserably when applied to writing music. Most popular songs are based on real events, either positive or negative, often traumatic, which act as catalysts or "inspiration"

for the songs. Without a profound, subjective event, a song often remains “unborn.”

As I progressed through the book, however, Rand helped me reconcile the “professional” approach to writing articles with the “inspiration” required to develop a song. I had to admit that, upon receiving the subjective inspiration for a song theme, the subsequent process of completing the work could indeed be performed objectively. A finished composition – no matter how derived – must still possess structure, style, rhythm, speed, and an “envelope” of introduction and ending. The means of successfully engineering these properties are dependent upon a professional approach. Later in the book, Rand admitted that, during difficult periods, she waited silently for her subconscious mind to resolve its conflicts, or to receive the necessary “inspiration” to continue a project. When I read this, I said aloud, “I told you so,” and moved on.

Thus, I admit that my initial reaction to *The Art of Nonfiction* was somewhat defensive. I concede that there *are* elements of writing that must be tackled in an objective manner, while allowing - in my case - subjective influences to “inspire” the fundamental themes of the work. Once the emotional aspects are harnessed and analyzed, one is left with the same task: *producing an organized, consumable, final product*. It is the completion of this task that Rand skillfully outlines in her book.

Finally, I was distracted by the editor’s inclusion of Rand’s atheistic and political comments throughout the book. Considering that the work was transcribed from a series of lectures in 1969 to followers of Objectivist philosophy, Rand can be forgiven her political elitism. However, the book’s usefulness suffers from the frequent demagoguery. An instructional work on nonfiction writing should be about *writing* – to read about philosophy, one could try *Atlas Shrugged*, by Ayn Rand.

Week Ending 1-Sep-2001

This week I completed the outline for my Profile and submitted it to my advisor, *Prof. Lee Hargrave, Jr.* In addition, I skimmed four books that I considered to be less instructive – or a rehash of materials and skills I already possess. Not that I’m “above” such teaching, but that I’ve been writing and communicating for so many years that such material fails to challenge.

Flesch, Rudolf; "How to write, speak and think more effectively;" Penguin Putnam, Inc., 1960

This book is, essentially, a collection of chapters from multiple books, written from 1946 through 1960 by *Rudolf Flesch*, including *The Art of Plain Talk*, *The Art of Readable Writing*, *The Art of Clear Thinking*, *How to Test Readability*, and *A New Way to Better English* (Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.); with some additional materials borrowed from *How to Say It with Statistics* and *How to Write for Today’s Busy Readers* (Printer’s Ink Publishing Corp.).

True to his teaching, Flesch’s book is easy to read and filled with practical rules-of-thumb, drills, and other devices intended to both instruct and correct in the art

of communications. Flesch stresses the simplification of language to make one's work more readable. As he might instruct, I should have written the last sentence: "Flesch tells me to use easy words so people can read it."

**Flesch, Rudolf and Lass, A. H.; "The Classic Guide to Better Writing;"
HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1996 (Original Title: The Way to Write)**

This book was originally published in 1946 under the title, The Way to Write, which is the version I read during my first year of college. I found the book helpful and instructive then, and the new, slightly modernized (50th Anniversary) edition useful now. While many chapters concentrate on grammar and sentence structure, outlining, and other techniques, the authors include useful exercises on generating ideas, keeping readers awake (!), handling bias, and vocabulary building. I found these latter subjects of interest.

The chapter entitled "The Correct Word" (p.220) brought back memories of a radio routine I did in the 70s, where I was asked to "intellectually analyze" a politician's speech. Here, the "correct" words were chosen simply because they were synonymous with "nonsense," which was the key product of the politician's rhetoric. The analysis went something like this:

“...[W]ith some degree of circumlocution, he has couched the vehement vehemence of his address in a periphrastic bit of cajoulistry, which is para-logistic on the one hand, and incapacious on the other. Indeed, his jeremiad, his frenicity – call it what you will – can only be accepted for what it is: an atrabilious amphigory.”²

**Adler, Mortimer J.; "How to Speak, How to Listen;" Simon & Schuster Inc.,
1983, Touchstone Edition, 1997**

I have always enjoyed Adler's books and published lectures, for their form and function, if not their conclusions. In How to Speak, How to Listen, Adler describes the principles of speech, both persuasive and educational, and how (and why) to listen to others.

On the listening front, I once heard then Governor of California, Ronald Reagan, explain to a reporter how his acting skills helped him politically. Reagan replied, "The good Lord gave me two ears and one mouth, and I try to use them proportionately."

This book contains numerous anecdotal illustrations of each principle Adler conveys, some from his personal experience, others from famous oratories. In the chapter on persuasion, "The 'Sales Talk'," Adler uses Shakespear's *Julius Ceasar* as a source of two classic sales pitches: Brutus, on why he was justified in killing Ceasar; and Marc Antony, on why Ceasar did not deserve to have been murdered. The speeches, starting with Brutus, succeeded in persuading the audience to one side, then the other. Adler breaks down the process of persuasion into their Aristotlian components: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, and shows how both Brutus and Antony successfully employed them.

² On-air delivery by "Danny James," on 102.7 FM, KKDJ, Los Angeles, CA.

During my second year of college, I was assigned to a debate with a savvy and highly intelligent opponent on the existence or non-existence of “God;” my assignment was in defense of God’s existence. My opponent went first, expertly and scientifically explaining that, since no physical evidence exists on this planet that there is a supreme being, and since God’s proponents must resort to mysticism and “faith” to believe in God, and that neither believers nor unbelievers have ever *seen* God, then God must not exist.

I knew that I had little, if any scientific basis for argument, but I felt that I could be persuasive. My approach was to shower praise upon my opponent for his accumulated knowledge and logic, and to ask him if, based on everything he had observed in his lifetime, he had absorbed all that there is to know. He answered, No. I pressed, how about *half* of all there is to know. No. OK, let’s say that you’ve accumulated *one-tenth* of all knowledge. He said, no, but would stipulate for the sake of argument (and brevity) that it was possible he had been exposed to five percent of all knowledge. I continued, “And in that 5-percent of all knowledge, you have not found evidence of a God?” He replied, “That is correct.”

I pursued, “Since you do not yet know the remaining 95-percent of all knowledge, then you cannot rule out the possibility that the evidence proving the existence of God may reside therein. In fact, sir, in order for you to *prove* that God does not exist, would you not need to be ‘omniscient’ and ‘omnipresent’ yourself? We all agree you are intelligent and knowledgeable, sir, but none of us believe you possess *either* of these God-like qualities, thus you have failed to *disprove* the existence of God.” I sat down. The audience erupted. While neither of us proved anything, the persuasiveness of the logic, apparently, won over the crowd. Fun stuff!

This week, I also started reading Steven Silbiger’s The Ten Day MBA (Revised Edition) – more on that one next week!

Week Ending 8-Sep-2001

This week I completed the first drafts of two sections of The Foundation Course paper (BUS 1001-1002): *Profile of Major Influences* and *Statement of Goals*. One day after submitting the articles to my Advisor, Prof. Hargrave, I received the following reply:

“You’ve done a splendid job on your profile. You are a gifted writer and storyteller. In fact, I’ve read hundreds of profiles and this one is at the top.”³

It is feedback like this that spawns big egos, but I graciously accept the feedback. It was nice to know that my first efforts were acceptable. Both papers were posted to my website at www.DLJames.com and will later be replaced by the Foundation Course paper.

I continued reading *The Ten Day MBA*, by Steven Silbiger, this week.

³ E-mail from Lee E. Hargrave, Jr., MBA, on 9/9/01 10:47:32 AM CDT.

Week Ending 15-Sep-2001

My goals this week were to complete *The Ten Day MBA* and other books, and to submit an outline of my anticipated Core Area “intelligence gaps” and a proposed curriculum to cure the problem. However...

September 11, 2001 - a day that will live in infamy. I was watching live TV broadcasts of the World Trade Center (WTC) immediately following the first airliner attack, and witnessed the second attack as it happened. Needless to say, I (and countless Americans) spent the rest of the week glued to the news or in contact with friends and colleagues known to have been in New York City on the 11th. I did lose an acquaintance who was working in the WTC. He was attempting to evacuate, calling home by cell-phone from the stairwell of Tower Two as he passed the 13th floor, but he never made it outside. This has been a troubling and traumatic event, an act of war against the United States, for which there is one – and only one – just response. We shall soon see the extent of the “resolve” of our nation’s leaders to avenge these attacks. My personal “resolve” is to prevent this terrorism from defeating my thought processes, and to press onward in pursuit of my MBA. My prayers are with the families of the souls lost in these attacks, and with the leaders of this country as they face the aftermath. May God bless and protect the United States of America.

Week Ending 22-Sep-2001

While I managed to get some reading in this week, I found myself still in a state of shock after the events of the prior week. Despite this feeling, I was able to dispatch an important book:

Silbiger, Steven; "The Ten Day MBA: a step-by-step guide to mastering the skills taught in America's top business schools;" William Morrow and Company, Inc., Revised Edition, 1999

This is one of the best books I’ve read on the business knowledge needed to communicate with executives and MBAs. The book covers the class and lecture notes gleaned during the author’s own pursuit of an MBA. In addition to summaries of each of the Core Areas covered by typical business schools, the author includes the formulas and “buzzwords” used by MBAs when discussing each subject. In fact, the book concentrates on the premise that the difference between someone with an MBA and someone without it is the lingo employed. Anyone can be equipped with the formulae and specific knowledge to aid in decision making and reporting to a CEO; but it is the means of communication that sets the MBA apart from the others.

During my reading, I found myself identifying with certain subjects more strongly than others. Some chapters, such as “Ethics” and “Business Law,” made me realize that I already knew more about the topics than many MBAs I’ve encountered. The book helped me clarify the Core Areas I would need to emphasize in developing my curriculum, and I began writing a first draft of that curriculum. Rather than write an outline first, I found that some careful analysis

was needed for each Core Area, requiring that I logically support my decisions. Thus, I deferred the outline to the end of the exercise.

Week Ending 29-Sep-2001

This week I began to read Successful Intelligence, by Robert J. Sternberg, while attempting to complete my curriculum analysis.

Then, as if the terrorist attack wasn't enough to delay my progress, I was informed on the 25th that my Mother had suffered both a heart attack and kidney failure with a prognosis of "48 hours to 60 days." Upon my Father's request, I packed up some books and caught the next plane to Oregon. My Mother survived her attacks and, after a few days in the hospital, returned home – still in "serious" condition and no change to the original prognosis. I returned home on Monday, October 1st.

Week Ending 6-Oct-2001

Needing to make up valuable time, I doubled my reading hours each day, and was able to complete two books this week:

Sternberg, Robert J.; "Successful Intelligence: How Practical and Creative Intelligence Determine Success in Life;" Plume [Dutton Signet; Penguin Putnam, Inc.], 1997

This was an important book to me. It explained something I had observed throughout my American education (8th through 12th grades, plus three years of college) but didn't quite understand: how kids could do well in class work and homework and then fall apart during tests; and how kids who did well on tests advanced even though their social and analytical skills were way below average.

Sternberg fully "skewers" the concept that "intelligence testing" actually measures intelligence. Instead, he shows logically, and statistically, that IQ tests and entrance exams merely test accumulated knowledge and tend to favor students who "test well," despite poor reasoning powers.

Since two of my professional strengths are systems analysis and "heuristic" (self-improving) data systems, I was particularly interested in the chapter on "analytical intelligence" wherein Sternberg states:

"Successfully intelligent people think heuristically to solve problems. They don't formulate or fixate; they incubate. Faced with a problem, they analyze it carefully and then use creative strategies to find a solution." (p. 176)

Upon finishing this book, I was convinced that one of my problems in early school life (some of which was via distance learning from Brasil), was a total lack of confidence in my own analytical powers. Since I didn't test well, I believed I was stupid. As my introspection reveals in *Profile of Major Influences* (draft submitted 8-Sep-2001), my real problems were shyness and lack of communication skills (until the 8th grade), *not* a lack of intelligence.

The book was a bit dry in some chapters, but each concluded well. The author's recurring themes exposed his long-time frustration with the education industry's resistance to change, dogmatic adherence to old testing methods, and refusal to properly define "intelligence."

Berkman, Robert I.; "Find It Fast: How to Uncover Expert Information on Any Subject Online or in Print;" HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., Fifth edition, 2000

This book is a good primer and reference on obtaining research sources for just about any topic, from multiple media. It is obvious that such a work must be continually updated to keep pace with technological changes in information storage. This is especially true when referencing Internet research methods. Although this book was a newly updated version that included examples of Internet sources, many of the examples were of websites that no longer exist. My suggestion to the author would be to reference general online research strategies, and then direct the reader to his own website containing up-to-date examples of information sites. He might sell a few less books, but would endear his readers!

Week Ending 13-Oct-2001

This week, I spent completing my MBA curriculum and its anticipated schedule of completion, organizing the bibliography of associated books, and integrating all the components of the *1001-1002 The Foundation Course* paper. The resulting paper was about 11,900 words, and was submitted to Professor Lee E. Hargrave, Jr., on 11-Oct for his approval and grading.

In the Professor's reply, he suggested that I do "double duty" with some of the courses, earning scholastic credit while applying my learning to existing consulting relationships and projects. That had been my plan from the beginning – great minds *do* think alike!

I began reading Prof. Hargrave's book, Plan for Profitability! in preparation for my first course on business strategy, which will indeed be used to assist my client, "Vobots, Inc.," in preparing a strategy for obtaining venture capital and planning a marketing campaign.

Week Ending 20-Oct-2001

On Sunday, Oct. 14th, Prof. Hargrave informed me that my course paper (submitted last week) was approved, with a couple minor fixes related to the course number, and that it had earned me six (6) credits toward the MBA, and received a grade of "A"! I was instructed to publish the (corrected) paper onto my website and proceed with my curriculum schedule.

All books related to my approved curriculum were ordered by the 15th, and most had arrived by the end of the week. Viewed as a single stack of reading, the task seems rather daunting, but on a course-by-course basis, it should be manageable.

On Friday, Oct. 19th, I met with the principals of my client, *Vobots, Inc.* (Dallas, TX), that is developing a “natural language” solution for Internet “web agents.” In essence, this allows users of Internet search engines to enter their queries in plain language, without formal syntax. The solution also acts as a natural language interface to corporate databases, and has the future potential of parsing vocal queries as well.

Picture a CEO in the field wishing to determine some current sales numbers. Normally, he would have to wait for the Sales or Accounting departments to formulate and request a report from the Information Systems department. With the proposed *Vobots* solution in place – a natural language “agent” mapped to corporate databases – a CEO could just log, or call, in and transmit a question such as: “How many microwidgets did we sell in the southwest region during the last 3 quarters?” The *Vobots* agent would convert the question to Structured Query Language (SQL), the most common means of performing ad hoc data retrievals, and return the desired results.

Now, picture the same CEO needing to get home from his meeting in the field, simply using his cell phone to ask his *Travel Vobot*: “Find me a first class seat on the earliest flight to St. Louis.” The response would be the next available flight (on any airline) that has a first class seat available. Of course, if the CEO had an airline preference, he could say “Delta flight;” and if he still had one appointment left before traveling, he might say “next flight after 4 PM” or any variation of that language.

The object of the Oct. 19th meeting was to begin the process of developing a *Strategic Business Plan*, suitable for presentation to “angel” financiers and early-round venture capital sources. Using the book, *Plan for Profitability!*, by Lee E. Hargrave, Jr., as a guide, I laid out a basic structure in order to start a meaningful and focused dialogue.

Week Ending 27-Oct-2001

On Monday, Oct. 22nd, at approximately 4:30 PM, my mother, *E. Joann Holder*, died at home in Grants Pass, Oregon. As described in the “Week Ending 29-Sep-2001” section above, my mother was in perilous condition, and the fact that she survived a few more weeks is amazing. She had just turned 72 on Oct. 5th. Needless to say, I was a little distracted this week, assisting my father with the business affairs and feelings associated with losing a spouse, and dealing with my own feelings on the subject. But, life moves forward, and so must I.

Hargrave, Lee E., Jr.; "Plan for Profitability! : How to Write a Strategic Business Plan;" Four Seasons Publishers, 1999

I completed *Plan for Profitability!* this week, written by my *Rushmore University* advisor, Professor Lee Hargrave, Jr. Unlike books covered in previous weeks, I spent extra time on this book, not simply because it is essential to my first “Core Area” course, but because the knowledge directly applies to my present “Virtual CIO” relationship with *Vobots, Inc.* (see prior week).

Unlike other strategic planning books I have read, which are mostly theoretical, Plan for Profitability! establishes its credibility early because the author clearly documents that the information and methods presented are gleaned primarily from his own professional experience – from actual strategic plans he has produced. Mr. Hargrave guides the reader through the logical thought processes required by planners to develop business strategies, and provides ample shortcuts to quickly resolve some of the stickier decisions. I found the book to be well organized and thorough, replete with charts, tables, and formulae to support the conclusions offered.

The use of the semi-fictitious company, *International Microwidgets*, to apply and illustrate each section of the strategic plan, was both instructive and motivating. I looked forward to each chapter to see how the company would solve its mounting market share and production-cost problems. I also liked reading *Hargrave's Law*:

“[A]n unfavorable trend will continue unabated unless positive action is taken to stop it and ... positive action is also required to sustain a favorable trend.”⁴

My first thought was, “Wow, a business principle taken directly from the Laws of Physics!” In Physics, however, you would assume that favorable and unfavorable trends are similarly “lubricated.” Based on *Hargrave's Law*, we find that, in business, unfavorable trends are well-lubricated while favorable trends suffer from high friction. This accurately parallels media and marketing forces, too, wherein negative issues are heralded as “news” while positive information is virtually ignored.

In my opinion, only one area of the book's content needed some “upgrading” to fit the late-90s and beyond (especially since it was published in 1999). Since the majority of the materials used for the book were from experiences in the 1970s and 80s, decades that placed little emphasis on the “strategic” value of Information Technology (I.T.), the inclusion of I.T. as more than a part of “Central Services” would have been appropriate. Nowadays, a corporation's business vision and its I.T. vision must be in alignment, which often results in an I.T. department becoming a “profit center” rather than a “cost center.” Hey, what can I say – I'm an I.T. guy who has been frustrated more than once by a singular lack of coordination between I.T. “realities” and corporate strategies.

Despite this minor, time-based nit-pick, I believe that I will get good mileage from Plan for Profitability! as I assist my client's firm with its first strategic business plan.

Finally, should the author be compelled to reprint this book (a good thing), he should consider a more professional publisher. By no fault of Mr. Hargrave's, I found the production and editing values of the book to be substandard, including

⁴ Lee E. Hargrave, Jr., “Plan for Profitability! : How to Write a Strategic Business Plan” (Four Seasons, 1999) p. 217

over 15 typographical errors, crooked pages, ink that smeared when highlighted, and a weak binding, allowing pages to separate from the book.

Week Ending 3-Nov-2001

This week was spent in San Antonio assisting a client with a “high-level functional analysis of a global systems solution.” This is, of course, computer lingo for “Strategic Plan” applied to a proposed computer system. While such a plan does not follow the pattern of a traditional strategic business plan, it does play in the same ballpark. Market numbers and projected cash flows are out, replaced by system configuration charts and data-flow diagrams.

My spare time this week was invested in reading the following book:

Rouse, William B.; "Start Where You Are: Matching Your Strategy to Your Marketplace" Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996

William Rouse takes a “foundational” approach to corporate strategy: before you even contemplate developing a strategic business plan, you must understand exactly where the company is now, or what its “story” is. In other words, if the objective is to move from point A to point B, and you haven’t precisely defined where point A is, you will not know how to reach point B.

Rouse breaks down the relationships that corporations have with their markets and divides them into ten categories:

- **Vision Quest:** new ideas are being incubated but funding is limited.
- **Evolution:** progress is slow, risks are high, and changes are required.
- **Crossover:** new products are spawned from existing ones, and are introduced as older products have reached the end of their cycles.
- **Crossing the Chasm:** finding mainstream customers rather than innovators and early-adopters.
- **Steady Growth:** ideal situation, with growing sales and market share.
- **Consolidation:** increasing number of players scrambling for the same market space, resulting in lower margins and mergers.
- **Silent War:** potential new players nibbling at heels of major players, and new technologies are maturing in other domains.
- **Paradigm Lost:** technologies or processes are unable to meet market expectations for performance, quality, and cost.
- **Commodity Trap:** everybody is selling the same thing, and price is all that matters.
- **Process:** financial ratios are worse than industry averages, so internal innovations and higher production efficiencies are needed to compete.⁵

One of the most compelling features of the book is a chart containing all ten market situations with lines connecting each other, indicating which situations are

⁵ William B. Rouse, “Start Where You Are: Matching Your Strategy to Your Marketplace” (Jossey-Bass, 1996) pp 20-23.

possible to achieve from any other situation. In other words, the chart can be used as a roadmap of how a corporation will travel from point A to point B.

The parts of a traditional strategic business plan that deal with markets, the overall vision (or mission statement), and the resulting strategies, are assisted by taking Rouse's route to marketplace self-assessment. The author draws on dozens of examples from history, some dating back 100 years.

My only criticism of the book, especially in early chapters, was the author's tendency to repeatedly predict what the book was going to cover, rather than just covering it. My advice: tell me what you're going to tell me – once – and then tell it; then tell it once more briefly in a summary. I found myself saying "so, get to it, already!" many times during Chapter 1. In Rouse's defense, once he did "get to it," the subject matter paid off.

Week Ending 10-Nov-2001

This week was spent serving two clients by developing strategic plans: *Vobots, Inc.* (the "Natural Language" project I've previously described) and *AgEcom, Inc.* (a global livestock data collection system). Between these projects, I have also sprinkled some city council duties, including further work on a "Comprehensive Plan" I am championing for our town.

The plan for *Vobots* will be of a "preliminary" nature, since the company is a new start-up, and will be designed for presentation to potential Venture Capital entities. The plan for *AgEcom* is more of a strategic analysis of the feasibility of a most ambitious project for which the market is virtually "captive," often pre-sponsored by various foreign governments.

In addition, I am starting to read for the course, "2225 Kennedy on Marketing," which will require me to cover five (count them, 5) books by Dan S. Kennedy. I know what you're saying: "Dan, you haven't written your course paper for '2002 Hargrave on Strategic Planning' yet." My response is: "I'd rather be ahead on reading and behind on writing than behind on both." Are we having fun yet?

Week Ending 17-Nov-2001

I got very little reading in this week, but over 12,000 words of writing, specifically on the feasibility analysis for one of my clients, *AgEcom, Inc.*, in San Antonio, Texas. Since my responsibility is to create a technological strategy – a project blueprint, so to speak – I am seriously considering using the resulting documentation as the core material for my upcoming course, "2160 Kharbanda on Project Management," approaching the issue from a "project analysis" perspective. It is my long-held belief that the more discovery and analysis one performs before committing resources to development, the less one will need to spend on development, and the closer to the customer's needed solution the final product will be. This philosophy has been especially true in the technological sector, where I have spent most of my professional career.

In addition to my analysis work for *AgEcom*, I met this week with my other client, *Vobots, Inc.*, to discuss strategies for obtaining venture capital. Specifically, we

explored ways to validate and market test our core product, a Natural Language Engine (NLE) designed to parse and translate plain English sentences into structured query language (SQL), providing data retrieval for non-technical users. Further, we identified and began analysis of our competition, including *Microsoft*, to establish their strengths, weaknesses, and anticipated strategies. I am now beginning to flesh out our first Strategic Business Plan on behalf of this venture.

I will be spending time in Florida from 21-Nov-01 through 27-Nov-01, where I intend to make progress in both my reading and the "Hargrave" course paper.

Week Ending 24-Nov-2001

The project analysis I have been performing for *AgEcom* in San Antonio is nearing completion, so I have accelerated my completion of the reading for "2160 Kharbanda on Project Management," in order to glean any pointers I can pass along to the client. While in Florida this week, I completed the following tome:

Kharbanda, O.P. and Pinto, Jeffrey K.; "What Made Gertie Gallop : lessons from project failures" Van Nostrand Reinhold (a division of ITP), 1996

This book surprised me a little. First, I knew that the primary author was from India. Second, the majority of the projects covered in the book were construction or multi-billion-dollar developments for global governments. The surprise was that the principles of project management espoused by the authors were 1) applicable to most of my recent Information Technology projects, and 2) applicable to my current "global" project analysis.

I was impressed by the abundance of detailed "post-mortem" data from failed projects, and the thorough analysis and clear conclusions gleaned by the authors. The book confirmed that my approach to project management, over the past 16 years or so, has been correct, albeit of significantly smaller scale than the examples given. The recurring themes of most failed projects, according to the authors, are political obstacles and lack of proper risk management. Since corporate politics is as oppressive and distracting as government politics – at least in my experience – the authors' techniques for managing the problem were welcome. The topic of risk management was covered in detail, although from the perspective of "what not to do," leaving the door wide open for differing styles of management.

The risks involved with global projects, including the one I am working on, are enormous. Staying within budget and deadlines are only the beginning. Meeting all specifications, completely satisfying the customer with the desired features, and handling "scope creep" are even more challenging. "What Made Gertie Gallop" (a reference to the Tacoma Narrows Suspension Bridge that undulated in severe winds, collapsing in 1940, only four months after completion) gave me additional ammunition that I will be using in my analysis for the *AgEcom* project as well as my "Kharbanda" course paper.

Week Ending 1-Dec-2001

This week began with me still in Florida, “holed up” in a room reading books by Dan S. Kennedy on Marketing and making notes in preparation for writing my course paper for “2160 Kharbanda on Project Management.” Upon returning to Texas on the 27th, I spent the remainder of the week writing that course paper. Since this paper is going to use my current project with *AgEcom* as an example of how to analyze the functional requirements and perform a risk assessment for a global information technology project, I decided to let the parties review the portions of my paper that referenced the analysis documentation.

Since I am under a strict non-disclosure agreement regarding this project, and I was informed that the majority of the analysis contained “proprietary information,” I was compelled to remove nearly 75% of my course paper samplings, replacing them with vague generalities. This is, of course, disappointing, but understandable. My only real concern is this: will my advisor, Prof. Hargrave, actually believe that I know what I’m talking about, or will he assume that the “vague generalities” in the course paper are the best I can do in my profession?

Hopefully, we will know the answer to this question next week, because I plan to submit the draft of my “2160 Kharbanda” course paper by Sunday, December 2nd!

Week Ending 8-Dec-2001

As promised in the prior week, I submitted my draft of the “2160 Kharbanda on Project Management” course paper, subtitled, “The Value of Analysis and Risk Assessment” on December 2nd. On December 5th, I received a reply from Professor Hargrave, accepting the draft as-is, granting three credits toward my MBA, and giving the document a grade of “A.”

This week I finished reading two of the five books by Dan Kennedy, which apply to the course, “2225 Kennedy on Marketing.” My reviews follow.

Kennedy, Dan S.; "The Ultimate Marketing Plan: Find your most promotable competitive edge, turn it into a powerful marketing message, and deliver it to the right prospects;" Adams Media Corp., Second Edition, 2000

The subtitle is an accurate, but brief, summary of the book. Mr. Kennedy’s background and experience as a salesman, a marketing consultant, and a seminar speaker, is synthesized in this practical work. The author wastes no time getting to the point: for a business to succeed in the market, it must have a “USP,” a “unique selling proposition,” which is defined by the author as the answer to the following question: “Why should I choose your business/product/service versus any/every other competitive option available to me?”

Kennedy provides many examples of successful, and failed, marketing plans to illustrate his many *Ultimate Marketing Secret Weapons* and his *Ultimate Marketing Sins*. The bottom line of any marketing plan, however, is to compel

potential customers to buy your product or service. The author insists that, to be successful, regardless of the product, the plan must lead the customer up five steps, in the exact order listed:

1. Awareness of need and/or desire;
2. Picking the “thing” that fulfills the need/desire;
3. Picking the source for the “thing;”
4. Accepting the source’s price; and
5. Finding reasons to act now.

Kennedy rails against plans he has witnessed that fail to ask for action, calling them “Wimpy. Wimpy. Wimpy.” And he quotes Zig Ziglar who said in a seminar, “Timid salespeople have skinny kids.”

The author spends a great deal of time in the book dealing with the need for businesses to prove their case to the public. He asks the reader to make the assumption that every customer – in response to your pitch - is saying, “Like it or not, I don’t believe one damned thing you tell me.” In other words, all marketing messages must be developed with the understanding that recipients will be stubbornly reluctant to believe them. Validation of one’s claims through testimonials, scientific studies, pictures, demonstrations, and other means, are strongly prescribed. Kennedy adds that merely providing “enough” evidence to the customer is unacceptable; one must offer a “preponderance of proof,” or an excess of evidence, in order to succeed.

A valuable “gem,” starting on page 123, is a statistical analysis – from actual customer surveys – of why businesses lose customers, summarized below:

- 1% die;
- 3% move away;
- 5% follow a friend or relative’s advice and switch to that person’s preferred merchant;
- 9% switch due to price or a better product;
- 14% switch due to product or service dissatisfaction; and
- 68% switch because of what they perceive and describe as indifference from the merchant or someone in the merchant’s organization.

Kennedy follows this study with suggested standards to eliminate or reduce the probabilities associated with the last two reasons, representing 82% of lost customers. The lesson learned here is that businesses should never take their customers’ loyalty for granted.

This book offered very little in marketing theory, and very much in field-proven marketing techniques, many proven by the author himself. While most of the techniques covered were intended for smaller businesses, many still apply to the Fortune 1000, especially since the larger corporations have often been guilty of violating Kennedy’s *Ultimate Marketing Sins*.

**Kennedy, Dan S.; "No B.S. Sales Success;" Self-Counsel Press Inc.,
Second Edition, 1999**

In my lifetime, I have read dozens of "sales" books, listened to cassette tape series on selling and negotiating, and attended sales and marketing seminars. From each encounter, it seems, I was able to take away a handful of techniques or ideas that I could apply to my business. This book, *No B.S. Sales Success*, by Dan Kennedy, however, covers virtually every technique and idea I've seen, plus a few I haven't.

One such "new" idea is Kennedy's "positive power of negative preparation." I had always believed that one must expect the best while planning for the worst, but I hadn't really linked the concept to sales. The author attributes much of his sales success to anticipating every possible question, concern, and objection the potential customer could possibly raise, and then formulating his responses in advance.

A more famous example of this technique was illustrated in the movie, *Patton*, where one sequence shows the General dozing the night before a battle, with a book on his lap: Field Marshall Rommel's book on tactics. The next day Patton's troops drive Rommel's troops off the battlefield into retreat. As the gunfire and other noise ends, Patton is standing alone, leaning forward, whispering across the battlefield: "Rommel – I read your book."

Kennedy states, "Some people would say that acknowledging Rommel's expertise as a tactician and preparing to counter any possible successful moves was being negative. They're wrong. It was positively brilliant." The author expounds at length the value of being thoroughly prepared, from a negative perspective.

Another concept I found interesting was Kennedy's use of "pain" in selling. No, I'm not talking about attaching a thumbscrew to a customer and twisting it until he agrees to buy. But the author defines the strongest motivational power of all to be "pain," or the desire to get relief from pain, whether it is physical, emotional, or financial. He summarizes the concept this way:

"I want two things when I'm selling. First, I want someone who knows he or she has a problem that is causing some pain and, second, I want someone who perceives me as the person best qualified and most likely to solve that problem and end that pain."⁶

Like other books by Dan Kennedy, *No B.S. Sales Success* is relatively short but practical, and based on real-world experience, not theory.

Week Ending 15-Dec-2001

This week, I continued work on the Strategic Business Plan for *Vobots, Inc.*, which will serve as "double duty" for the "2002 Hargrave on Strategic Planning" course. So far, I have accumulated a wealth of market research, as well as

⁶ Dan S. Kennedy, "No B.S. Sales Success" (Self-Counsel Press, 1999), p. 94.

information about the competition. Since few of the competition are even close to a useful “Natural Language” product, and my client has a working prototype, it would seem – on the surface – to be a cinch that *Vobots* will be first to market. Nothing could be further from the truth. Without a name or capital, the project will die for lack of publicity or support. Our goal, therefore, is to write the Plan with venture capital sources in mind. Without a financial history, this will be difficult. Essentially, we must build the company from scratch, employee by employee, project by project, purchase by purchase, until the objectives have been attained – all on paper. This should be fun, if not time consuming.

Kennedy, Dan S.; "The Ultimate Sales Letter: Boost your sales with powerful sales letters;" Adams Media Corporation, Second Edition, 2000

This is a companion book to “The Ultimate Marketing Plan” by the same author, reviewed in the “Week Ending 8-Dec-2001” section above. Mr. Kennedy has had a lot of experience writing sales letters, and this book proves it. He doesn’t miss a trick. I mean that literally. The author knows the psychology of his targeted market, and writes the letter to invoke a specific emotion from his reader. The book follows a carefully scripted 28-step plan to research, plan, write, test, rewrite, and deliver effective sales letters.

Kennedy’s ideas can easily be incorporated into sales copy on Web pages and other promotional venues as well. This is a no-nonsense, hands-on read. Most sales letters I receive in the mail insult my intelligence by assuming that I’m stupid or by patronizing me. If I open the letter at all, and finish the first paragraph, then I’m usually “hooked,” but rarely do I make it that far before the letter hits the trashcan. Kennedy offers many ideas on how to “bait the hook” to keep people like me reading until the close.

Now that I have learned some new letter-writing tricks, however, I will be even more wary of sales letters that use the author’s tricks. I predict that an even higher percentage of sales letters will be subject to the trashcan.

Week Ending 22-Dec-2001

Work continued on the Strategic Business Plan for Vobots, Inc. Based on the rate of progress we are making (I say “we” because I’m at the mercy of the management team whom I am attempting to motivate to strategize), it will be February sometime before this project is done. One thing I am worried about, however, is that – due to the complex subject matter – the resulting course paper will be much longer than the required 6,000 words. A number closer to 12 thousand wouldn’t surprise me. Hopefully Professor Hargrave will forgive me!

This week I started reading “No Rules: 21 Giant Lies about Success,” by Dan S. Kennedy. With the holidays approaching, I may not be able to finish the book until next year. There’s just something about the phone or doorbell ringing every few minutes that makes reading impossible.

Week Ending 29-Dec-2001

This week was spent celebrating the holiday season, visiting with friends and relatives, and eating far too many slices of pie. Merry Christmas!

Week Ending 5-Jan-2002

Happy New Year!

This week, I continued work on the Strategic Business Plan for *Vobots, Inc.*, (and 2002 Hargrave on Strategic Planning). The process is revealing more about myself than I anticipated. Whereas I believed that I would learn a lot about creating strategic plans, and that's true, I am also learning that I must be much more assertive and focused with the client's management team. The Natural Language products the company is developing are so innovative and versatile (allowing people to speak in plain-English sentences to computers) that the principals keep coming up with new, future ideas for their application. Keeping the client focused is of paramount importance. We will not achieve any of the goals unless we achieve the first – finishing the Business Plan!

Kennedy, Dan S.; "No Rules: 21 giant lies about success, and how to make it happen now;" Plume, Penguin Putnam, Inc., 1998 (previously published in a Dutton edition under the title "How to succeed in business by breaking all the rules," 1997)

Of all the Dan S. Kennedy books I've been reading for the course "2225 Kennedy on Marketing," this one is the most entertaining. I could write all day about my reactions to various "lies" that the author exposes. Each chapter offers multiple anecdotal evidence that a widely accepted "truth" is, in fact, a lie. The book starts out with a good one: "Think positive, and life will be wonderful." Kennedy's terse response: "Call me, I have some swampland to sell you."

One of the myths the author attempts to debunk is this one: "You can't get anywhere these days without a college degree." Kennedy shows example after example of people who have reached the top in their respective industries without college degrees. As I illustrated in my "Profile of Major Influences" (1001-1002 The Foundation Course) paper last year, my own epiphany about a lack of college degree was a wake-up call. I had survived just fine for over 20 years without a degree, but, suddenly, it was coming back to haunt me. In 2001, I sent out over 1,100 resumes and contacted dozens of companies and headhunters, to no avail. There are so many people out there with some of my skills, a fraction of my experience, and a college degree, that employers don't need to consider my vast Information Technology experience. So, a few years ago, I would have agreed with Kennedy on the "college degree" myth. Lately, I'm not so sure.

The bottom line for me, after reading this book, was that "attitude" is as important as skill, experience, or knowledge in achieving success. You must fight to succeed, and, because of that, sometimes one is labeled an "asshole" along the way. I don't know about you, but I think I'm a pretty funny guy for being an "asshole." See? It's all about attitude!

Week Ending 19-Jan-2002

This week was spent doing assignments for the Town of Annetta – remember, I’m on the city council – in the wake of the resignation of one of the council members. Between city chores and meetings with the management team at Vobots, Inc., I had little time for any reading.

However, I was able to put a few more hours of work on the Strategic Business Plan (2002 Hargrave). My prediction a few weeks back that this document would exceed 12,000 words may now have been a bit low. The amount of data we are accumulating that directly affects the Plan is quite large. I have completed building a template for all the financial reports, and am locking in all the assumptions and business rules, which will be thoroughly discussed in the Plan. The key issue is in the pricing of the *Vobots* products and services. If we can nail that issue, the rest of the financials should flow seamlessly.

Week Ending 26-Jan-2002

On Monday, the 21st, the management team of Vobots, Inc., met with a potential “alpha customer” that is interested in allowing us to install our Natural Language product on their system to validate its effectiveness and performance against real-world data. This potential customer is in the telecommunications industry, which will give us a head start on our objectives to form one or more strategic alliance in the early stages of the start-up.

We showed the prospects a demo of the Natural Language “engine” in progress, and they were quite amazed, as most people are when they see it actually work. Some of the points this potential customer brought up will likely affect the content of the Strategic Business Plan, so, it appears that I’ll be revising it ... again.

I also finished the final Dan S. Kennedy book for the course, “2225 Kennedy on Marketing:”

Kennedy, Dan S.; "How to make Millions with your Ideas: an entrepreneur's guide;" Plume, Penguin Books USA Inc., 1996

This book is essentially a collection of successful marketing and advertising ideas that may or may not have made it into other books by Dan Kennedy. If you already have an idea of a product or service you’d like to market, this book shows you the steps and offers a list of resources to tap in order to succeed. If you don’t have an idea, the book offers many that are proven to work.

Especially in the area of advertising, in concert with his other books, the author’s experience pays off by listing as many things you shouldn’t do as those you should. Kennedy uses examples of marketers, some famous, some not, who either made it big with the book’s ideas or flopped due to mistakes committed along the way. Sprinkled throughout the book, almost on every page, are witticisms, sample headlines, and corny sayings that the author uses to help make his points clear. I found many of these to be distracting and out of context, but they did break up the pages, which made them easier to read.

I intend to use many of the ideas found in this, and other, Kennedy books to assist a client in San Diego, California. He is a Dentist and needs a complete marketing plan designed for him, including a website. The advice and designs I provide this client will be the subject of my course paper for “2225 Kennedy on Marketing.” Stay tuned!

Week Ending 2-Feb-2002

Despite spending some days this week in meetings, either for city council business or with the management team of *Vobots, Inc.*, I was able to make a lot of progress on the Strategic Business Plan. The unresolved issues are, primarily, financial. Getting the principals to agree on how money will be earned or spent is no trivial undertaking. Once again, I am having to lead by force! My philosophy is this: if my clients wish to succeed, and cannot make up their minds how, my job is to drag them – kicking and screaming, if necessary – to the table and make them finalize the strategies that will get them the venture capital they need.

This is not, of course, to be construed as a disparaging assessment of my fellow management team members! Each of us has our assigned duties, all leading to the raising of over \$3 Million in seed capital. My primary task, as an unpaid “Vice President of Research and Development,” is to complete the research and manage the development of the Strategic Business Plan.

If all goes well, the Plan will be completed by next week and submitted to Professor Hargrave. If all goes even better, the Plan will be shown to venture capitalists this month, who will run – not walk – to write the company some checks!

Week Ending 9-Feb-2002

It took an all-nighter to do it, but by 2:00 PM on Thursday, February 07, 2002, I completed the Strategic Business Plan for *Vobots, Inc.*, and submitted it to Professor Hargrave.

The course paper is entitled, “2002 Hargrave on Strategic Planning,” and subtitled, “Natural Language – Personalizing Vocal Web Services.” The paper is over 17,000 words (about 74 pages) long, complete with tables, graphs, charts, appendices, and a huge market research section. Prof. Hargrave has agreed to find a way to get me six (6) credits for this paper, since it encompasses so many topics and is so large.

I am now proceeding immediately with research on my course paper for “Kennedy on Marketing.”

Week Ending 16-Feb-2002

This week, I reached the half-way mark on my course paper for “2225 Kennedy on Marketing,” which is using a Dentist client from San Diego, CA, as a case study.

Meanwhile, my other client, *Vobots, Inc.*, submitted the complete draft of my Strategic Business Plan (2002 Hargrave on Strategic Planning) to a CPA,

representing various venture capital (VC) sources in Texas, to obtain an advance critique as well as suggestions on how to present the information to the VCs. On Friday (the 15th), we met with the CPA and received the following comments.

The CPA stated that he was very impressed with the volume and quality of research we had accumulated and the descriptions of the technology, competitors, and objectives. He then listed his concerns regarding the organization and content of the document. To wit:

1. Too long for typical VCs - should be 25 to 30 pages, including a 1 to 2 page executive summary at the top.
2. Remove any research pertaining to the future markets, unless we are also going to reflect those markets in the financials. In other words, since the financials reflect one segment of corporate software licensing, our market research should focus solely on that space. In fact, he said we should have separate plans for each future market, complete with their own financial projections.
3. Competitive analysis should show a perceptual map of the market space indicating where *Vobots* fits in the space, and illustrating that there really isn't too much competition for this product.
4. Remove all first-person references by the author, all humorous asides, and never call accountants "bean counters." (Shucks! I thought I could make the paper entertaining as well as informative!)
5. Place all resource details and operating expense details in an Appendix, keeping only the financial summaries in the body of the Financials section.
6. Pricing for consulting should be more conservative - say \$150 per hour rather than \$240.
7. Assumption that accounts receivable will be paid within the quarter incurred is unrealistic and should be recalculated.
8. Too few field salespeople are projected for the volume of customers expected, even after "outsourcing" much of the volume in 2006.
9. Floor space projections should accommodate field personnel when they are not in the field.
10. Projected R&D expense is too low relative to marketing.
11. Need biographical info for each current member of the executive team, and need a projected organizational chart, showing gaps needing to be filled.
12. Since financials go to 2006, market projections should stop at 2006, not 2009.
13. For VCs, always show projected revenues before any resources or expenses.

Frankly, I thought the CPA was correct on every point, especially if the document was read from the potential VC's perspective. He did state that he understood

this was an MBA course paper and that he assumed we'd have it "edited down" for presentation to VC types - which is, of course, the intent. We explained that the course paper was intended to show all the work from my (Dan's) consulting viewpoint, and that VC's would get the appropriate "summary."

In my view, since the VC version will have to be "blessed" by these high-paid CPAs before it will result in any financing, I am happy to receive the input.

I forwarded the CPA's comments to my advisor, although I have not yet received a grade for the submitted course paper. I thought he would be interested in reading what current VC types think of the plan, especially since the document is intended to raise venture capital for a real company.

Finally, this week, I began reading "The Complete Going Public Handbook," by Frederick D. Lipman, for the course "2070 Lipman on Capital Generation."

Week Ending 23-Feb-2002

I completed the course paper for "2225 Kennedy on Marketing" on the 21st and submitted it to my client – a Dentist in California – for review and validation of the facts. As soon as I receive confirmation from the client, I will submit the paper to my advisor.

This week, I decided to postpone any further progress on the "2070 Lipman on Capital Generation" course in favor of "2076 Sincere on Investing." It is very fortunate that my MBA program is with [Rushmore University](#), as they offer the flexibility for me to "bob and weave" through my curriculum as I see fit!

Week Ending 1-Mar-2002

This week, I began reading "101 Investment Lessons from the Wizards of Wall Street," by Michael Sincere (Career Press, 1999), the course text for "2076 Sincere on Investing." The resulting course paper will also reference "The Great Game" by John Steele Gordon, "How to Make the Stock Market Make Money for You," by Ted Warren, and "The Ultimate Safe Money Guide," by Martin D. Weiss, PhD. The paper will reveal evidence of stock market manipulation and expose methods of capitalizing on the profiteering routinely accomplished by insiders and institutional investors.

On February 28th, I attended a demonstration of the "natural language" interface prototype, developed by my client, *Vobots, Inc.*, to a potential customer. The customer was impressed and plans to allow further demonstrations – using real data – to the principles of the company later this month. To paraphrase an old classic, "this could be the start of a beautiful relationship."

Week Ending 9-Mar-2002

This week was spent correlating statistical research of the stock market, specifically comparing the profitability results of known stock trading strategies by applying their principles to the market starting in 1930 and moving forward. Special emphasis was given to years in which major "corrections" occurred, specifically during 1962, 1987, and the 2000-2001 tech-bubble crash. I have

been accumulating much of the statistics since 1997, but hadn't performed as "deep" a historical exercise.

Week Ending 16-Mar-2002

This week I (finally) heard from my marketing client, approving my "2225 Kennedy on Marketing" effort, so I submitted the course paper to Prof. Hargrave on 11-Mar-2002. This one will be a bit of a departure for him in that, up to this point, most of my research has been connected to the IT industry in some manner. The "Kennedy" paper is pure marketing for a dental practice.

Research continued on the "2076 Sincere on Investing" course. I have accumulated excellent quotes from Warren Buffett, as well as solid statistics from the SEC, IRS, SSA, and Federal Reserve websites, which "prove" that most stock investors lose money – therefore, they are doing it the wrong way. My paper will show these investors how they are being manipulated, both financially and psychologically.

Sincere, Michael; "101 Investment Lessons from the Wizards of Wall Street;" The Career Press, Inc., 1999

This book is the course text for "Sincere on Investing." While it is loaded with anecdotal experiences of many of Wall Street's biggest names, the advice offered by most of these "wizards" is strictly affiliated with the "value investing" strategy. The statistical research I have performed so far indicates that over 90 percent of stock traders use this method, as encouraged by most brokers and analysts. The statistics from the IRS and the Social Security Administration, however, indicate that over 93 percent of stock traders lose money – year after year. We must conclude from this that the "value" method of picking and trading stocks is a dismal failure.

To his credit, author Michael Sincere exposes that most investors trade emotionally, not logically, causing them to often buy high and sell low. The problem is that, analysts routinely tout stocks on television they claim were chosen for their good "value," which are over-valued, sometimes up to ten-times the price at which an insider or institutional trader would consider the stock.

Based on the disparity of truth, as indicated in my statistical analyses of nearly 70 stock-trading strategies, to methods recommended by Sincere, I was severely disappointed in this book, and will concentrate my course paper on a "contrarian" approach to investing.

Gordon, John Steele; "The Great Game;" Scribner, 1999

John Steele Gordon is a well-known historian of the financial markets. That introduction sounds a little "nerdish" or boring. His book, "The Great Game," however, is not. Gordon begins, literally at the beginning of capitalism (in Holland) in the early 17th century and chronicles the tricks, shrewd deals, and market manipulations that emerged from this nascent financial freedom. He tells the stories of both "black hat" and "white hat" speculators – some who were

motivated by greed, others who trapped the greedy in their own folly. The saga of Cornelius Vanderbilt (a.k.a., "The Commodore"), alone, is worth the read.

It is often said that, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. If that is true, one of the best defenses is the history contained in this book. I intend to quote extensively from this work in my course paper on investing, mainly to illustrate how manipulations occur in the marketplace, and where such activities originated.

On Saturday, 23-Mar-2002, I was informed by my advisor, Prof. Hargrave, that my "2225 Kennedy on Marketing" course paper had received an "A."

Week Ending 30-Mar-2002

Continuing my research from sources contrary to my course text, *101 Lessons from the Wizards of Wall Street*, by Michael Sincere, I encountered a new book that hit the nail on the head:

Weiss, Martin D., PhD; "The Ultimate Safe Money Guide;" John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002

The release of this book couldn't have been timed any better. My goal was to document stock market manipulations and to illustrate how most stock traders are preyed upon by insiders and institutional fund managers. Doctor Weiss illustrates in his book, *The Ultimate Safe Money Guide*, how modern-day manipulators do their business. From corporate accounting tricks (a la "Enron" and "Global Crossing") to fraud by brokers and market analysts. The author then suggests ways of protecting oneself from these scams.

I was keenly interested in the author's chapters on what he calls "The Great Stock Market Scam," representing the period from early 2000 through 2001. During this market "correction," over \$5 trillion was lost by American stockholders, while corporate insiders and institutional investors made a killing. This book is a financial survival "owners manual" that should be required reading by anyone with, or planning to build, a nest egg.

Using passages from this and previously mentioned books, I completed my course paper for "2076 Sincere on Investing," entitled "Contrarian Investing – Riding the Manipulators' Coattails," and submitted it to my advisor.

Week Ending 6-Apr-2002

I spent this week in San Antonio, continuing IT analysis work with *AgEcom, Inc.*, the client I wrote about in "160 Kharbanda on Project Management" (see Week Ending 8-Dec-2001). The result of this effort will be a completed "Discovery" analysis for the client, which may result in a \$1.2 million project I hope to manage over the next twelve to eighteen months. This project may also contribute to my upcoming, combined course paper, "2261 Gascoyne & 2262 Schulman on Internet Strategy," since the project will be using a custom-built global Web system to collect and report livestock data from around the world.

Week Ending 13-Apr-2002

This week was consumed by city business (remember, I'm a councilman for the Town of Annetta!) and additional analysis work for *AgEcom* in San Antonio. Any remaining time was spent reading the "Corporate Internet Planning Guide," by Gascoyne.

Week Ending 20-Apr-2002

On 16-Apr-2002, I received word from Professor Hargrave that I had received an "A" on my course paper for "2076 Sincere on Investing." In addition, Mr. Hargrave doubled my credits from three to six to accommodate the nearly 13,000 words and extensive research for the paper. His exact quote was:

"This is the best paper that you have written. It held my unwavering attention. Because of its extensive bibliography and length, it warrants, in my opinion, six (6) credits. I have adjusted the award accordingly."

Although I faced another city council meeting and a public hearing, this week I completed the text for "2261 Gascoyne on Internet Strategy" and performed some supplementary research on the Web, looking for successful strategies (survivors of the tech bubble).

Gascoyne, Richard J. and Ozcubukcu, Koray, "Corporate Internet Planning Guide: Aligning Internet Strategy With Business Goals," John Wiley & sons, 1997

If the year was 1997 or '98 and I was planning on launching a global website for my company, this book would have been one of the few available for guidance on establishing a strategy. Compared to other books on the subject, written prior to 2000, this book by Gascoyne and Ozcubukcu was the best I found. The complete thought process was covered, from high-level strategic thinking, to marketing, to team building, to technologies, to legal issues, and to result measurement. The writing style was clear, if not verbose, and mostly devoid of IT jargon.

Since the book was published, however, the vast majority of businesses that employed similar strategies to those outlined therein, are out of business or are struggling to survive. Why? First, the authors do not display any experience in global Internet strategies – they assume that, if you build it in English, the world will beat a path to your website. Second, they offer no suggestions on the integration or replacement of legacy systems that bring most online infrastructures to their knees. Third, the authors do not recommend parameterization of business rules, but assume that they will be hard-coded in the online applications. Finally, the authors recommend the very marketing models that have since been discredited: "sell nothing and rely on customer click-through traffic."

Honestly, I found myself laughing at many of the concepts in the book, although, I would have probably bought in to those same concepts in 1997. At this point, I

hope the other Internet Strategy course text offers some valid insights I can use for my next paper.

Week Ending 27-Apr-2002

I heard back from my client, *AgEcom*, in San Antonio this week. While they are impressed with the analysis I performed and intend to use it to guide the project, they believe that they can hire a project manager for one-fourth (that's 25 percent) of the rate I offered (which was already heavily discounted). I hereby offer no additional comment.

Meanwhile, I completed the next course text for "2262 Schulman on Internet Strategy."

Schulman, Martin A. and Smith, Rick R., "The Internet Strategic Plan: a step-by-step guide to connecting your company," John Wiley & Sons, 1st ed., 1997

In contrast to the prior course text (see Week Ending 20-Apr-2002), this book by Schulman and Smith avoided some of the recommendations that recent history has proven a failure. It also included many case studies by reputable companies whose methods were the basis for the book. Unfortunately, half of those companies have since abandoned their strategies, have adopted completely new methods, or have failed entirely.

I found the book to be a more technical manual on analyzing and developing infrastructure projects. The more strategic issues, such as marketing, international and cultural concerns, and discussions of the customer's online experience, were glaringly absent. It seems that such issues were not considered very important in 1997.

I am now left with a double-course curriculum (worth four credits) with neither course text providing the reliable and time-proven guidance I need. Can you sense the frustration levels rising? I knew you could!

Week Ending 4-May-2002

This week was spent campaigning for three incumbent city council members whose seats were being contested by a special interest group dedicated to giving local developers a free pass on city ordinances. Our counter-strategy was to expose the truth in op-ed pieces in the local newspaper, to start a grass-roots telephone campaign, and to prepare direct mail pieces for all three incumbents. This is not as difficult as it sounds, however, since the total population in Annetta, TX is 1,129 with about 700 registered voters. In past elections, about 100 or so voters would show up at the polls. We are hoping for a bigger turnout this year!

The May 4th elections came and went. Officially, 183 voters turned out. Two of the races were very close, but *all three* incumbents kept their seats. We won!

Week Ending 11-May-2002

With election week behind me, I proceeded to search for alternative reading material to help me formulate my course paper on Internet Strategy. I have

decided on the specific area of international, and personalized Web approaches, which offers a highly customer-centric philosophy. My research uncovered a book that seems to have many fans among present-day Fortune 1000 companies and Web consultants. The book is titled "e-Business 2.0: Roadmap for Success," authored by Dr. Ravi Kalakota and Marcia Robinson. So far, this work is refreshing and up-to-date, recommending strategies far improved over the previous authors (see recent weeks).

In addition to my new reading materials, I found some interesting case studies from Europe of companies employing modern strategies to revamp or initiate their global websites. My favorite, so far, is "Ryanair.com" a low-cost airline headquartered in Dublin, Ireland. I intend to research this company and write about its amazing online transformation in my course paper.

Week Ending 18-May-2002

This week, my online research continued to be productive. Two websites provided a wealth of global strategic data, including "Global Reach" and "e-Strategy International." Between Internet usage statistics and further case studies, I believe I can now begin writing my course paper. I also finished reading my new "surrogate" course text, which I intend to use extensively in my course paper on global Internet strategies.

Kalakota, Ravi, PhD, and Robinson, Marcia, "e-Business 2.0: Roadmap for Success," Addison-Wesley, New York, NY, 2001

One of the first things that impressed me about this book was that it stressed the importance of integrating the company's executives, their philosophies, and the overall culture of the business in formulating an Internet strategy. In other words, the website should be designed from the top-down, not from the technology-up. This approach was very up-to-date and in-keeping with my own consulting philosophy which holds that buy-in starts with the CEO, not the IT department.

The book covered the major trends that have changed the way businesses attack the Internet, and it exposed many of the failed strategies – and associated firms – from which key lessons have been learned. While the authors did not emphasize global issues, they didn't completely ignore them. In the process of identifying and quantifying the online customer experience for a business, factors such as language, currency, and regional culture were discussed. These issues were in harmony with my other online research and case studies.

Frankly, I found nothing negative to say about this book. Many CEOs, and IT managers, will have to un-learn Web concepts before adopting some of the book's recommendations, but I believe those recommendations are sound and based on the most profitable way to compete in cyberspace.

With "e-Business 2.0" complete, my course paper is about one week away!

Week Ending 25-May-2002

On Saturday, 25-May-2002, I completed the course paper for "2261 Gascoyne & 2262 Schulman on Internet Strategy," titled "Developing a Global Web Initiative,"

and submitted it to Professor Hargrave. The final document was about 9,100 words and should be worth four (4) credits toward the MBA. This will bring the total credits so far to 28, which is 76 percent of the degree. More importantly, the submission of this paper completes seven-out-of-ten credits toward my "IT Management" sub-major.

Week Ending 1-Jun-2002

This week I completed most of the reading and research needed to begin writing my course paper for "2260 Kempis on Information Technology." My goal is to have the paper finished and submitted by the weekend of June 8th.

Kempis, Rolf-Dieter and Ringbeck, Jurgen, "Do IT Smart: Seven Rules for Superior Information Technology Performance," The Free Press, a Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York, NY, 1999

This book documents and analyzes a global survey, performed by *McKinsey & Company, Inc.*, completed in 1997, of companies within the full spectrum of size and industry. The intent of the survey was to prove the correlation of strong IT departments to strong and successful corporations. In the process, it was discovered *why* and *how* IT departments contribute to overall corporate success, and how the boardroom and empirically measure IT performance against the benchmarks established by the IT "stars."

Throughout the book, comparisons are made between the IT "stars" and the IT "laggards" (the worst IT departments found), in order for companies to learn how *not* to manage IT departments. While geared primarily toward manufacturing businesses, the book provided insights into measurement techniques, both objective and subjective, and how they illustrate the *efficiency* and *effectiveness* of IT departments.

I found the survey statistics and the authors' related conclusions to be logical and helpful, providing the means to educate the "corporate brass" about their IT departments, how to simplify the job of measuring IT's performance, and how to ensure that such measurements are both fair and accurate.

Week Ending 8-Jun-2002

This week I finished my course paper for "2260 Kempis on Information Technology," entitled "IT Performance: How the Best Are Measured," and submitted it to professor Hargrave on Saturday, the 8th. This paper should fulfill another three (3) credits, and complete the requirements for an "IT Management" sub-major. With this submission, I am now 84-percent complete, leaving one more course paper to write ("2003 Crosby on Management"), followed by the submission of this MBA Journal (a.k.a., "1000 The Capstone Course"), each worth three credits. My goal for the "Crosby" paper is the end of this month (June).

Can you see the light at the end of the tunnel? I know I can!

Week Ending 15-Jun-2002

This week I received grades on my two most recent papers (Prof. Hargrave was out of town for awhile). Both my "2261 Gascoyne & 2262 Schulman on Internet Strategy" and "2260 Kempis on Information Technology" papers got A's! He liked the paper on Internet Strategy, but thought my Kempis paper, while "erudite," was rather dull, mainly because the topic of metrics and measurements of IT department performance is a dull subject to begin with. I am grateful for the grades despite the entertainment value (or lack thereof) of the subject matter.

I worked full-time this week to finish the reading necessary to complete my final paper, now titled, "Quality: How Imperfect People Achieve Perfect Results," and based on the quality management principles espoused by Philip B. Crosby.

Crosby, Philip B., 1979. "Quality Is Free: The Art of Making Quality Certain" (McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, NY)

This book is a classic work on quality management, having sold over 2.5 million copies (hardbound and paperback combined). The key premise is that, as businesses improve the quality of their goods and services, the cost of the efforts to achieve quality is paid for by savings in other areas (waste, scrap, rework, etc.). Crosby's definition of quality is simply "conformance to requirements," and his goal for companies is to "make it right the first time," using prevention rather than post-production inspection the primary tool of the trade. Crosby insists on the objective of achieving "Zero Defects," which lowers the costs of nonconformance – the true measurement of quality.

Crosby has a folksy writing style and he peppers his book with case studies and dialogues designed to illustrate and reinforce his principles. I was impressed by the clarity and simplicity of his philosophy, and the emphasis on employee education to instill the culture of conformance to requirements throughout the organization. A further practicality of his method is the inclusion of accounting formulas designed to accurately measure the cost of quality as well as the cost of error, both of which indicate areas needing improvement. Since Crosby deems cash to be the ultimate measurement, his formulas make the job of tracking quality performance relatively simple.

I am looking forward to reading Crosby's later books, which should benefit from hindsight and usage statistics from companies employing his methods.

Crosby, Philip B., 1984. "Quality Without Tears: The Art of Hassle-Free Management" (McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, NY)

This book is, essentially, an amplification of Crosby's "Quality Is Free," with the addition of some anecdotal and statistical material. One new concept introduced in this work is the "Quality Vaccine," where a company establishes the necessary culture to maintain previously-attained quality goals. The book is a syllabus for top management on how to revamp their mindset toward quality. Crosby's emphasis is that, without top management's buy-in to the principles he outlines, there is no chance of the company achieving any noticeable quality improvements.

I found this book to be further enlightenment of the "Quality Is Free" principles, taking a few of the older concepts and giving them new life, and benefiting from experience in trying to educate Crosby's client companies. I intend to quote from this book heavily in my upcoming paper on quality management.

Week Ending 22-Jun-2002

My goal is to complete my final course paper ("2003 Crosby..."), and this Capstone journal by the end of this week, thereby completing my MBA within a ten-month period. Not bad for part-time distance-learning! To that end, this week was spent reading and surfing the Internet in search of cogent research material on quality management. Included in my research is information on Crosby's two primary competitors in the field, Joseph Juran and W. Edwards Deming. I intend to compare the philosophies of the three "gurus" in my paper.

Crosby, Philip B., 1999. "Quality & Me: Lessons from an Evolving Life" (Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA)

Another folksy approach to life and business by Phil Crosby; except, in this case, the book is an autobiography, a self-reflection, of his experiences and lessons-learned throughout his 30-plus year crusade for quality. Crosby died in 2001, but his "Quality College" continues his work, teaching management groups on his principles. This was an entertaining book, full of his witticisms and humorous bits, and I enjoyed the reading effort, except that it didn't add significantly to what I had learned from his books I completed last week! Besides, time is of the essence, and I must devote the remainder of the week to writing.

* * * * *

During the evening of Friday, June 21, 2002, I completed my paper for "2003 Crosby on Management," titled "Quality: How Imperfect People Achieve Perfect Results," as well as the paper you are now reading, and submitted both to Professor Lee Hargrave for grading and credit.

I have now completed the credit requirements for an MBA from [Rushmore University](#) (37, one extra), with a sub-major in Information Technology Management. I will wait, semi-patiently, for my final grades and diploma!

It has been a sincere pleasure writing this journal, working with my advisor/professor, Lee E. Hargrave, Jr., and dealing with the University. I recommend Rushmore's Global Distance Learning program to anyone.

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