

# Preparation

Georgia Tech invited 20 aerospace engineers and college professors to a paper airplane flying contest to see who could design a paper airplane to stay up the longest. A contest had also been conducted for second graders in the state of Georgia to see who could design a paper airplane and fly it the longest. The seven year old boy who won that contest was invited to Georgia Tech to compete with the aerospace engineers.

After they all made their paper airplanes and flew them to record their times ... 20 aerospace engineers and professors were embarrassed when the second grade boy, came in first place with his **Double Delta Flyer**. His paper airplane flew for 4.3 seconds and missed the longest time ever recorded in history by half a second. When the contingency of engineers and professors came over to question the small boy about how he did it, he said, “*I don’t know.*” So they went to his mother and asked how her 7 year old son beat 20 aerospace engineers and college professors. She said, “*Since he was 5 years old he has made over 2,000 paper airplanes ... so I guess he who makes the most planes wins.*”

You want to be a gold medal winner in gymnastics; preparation that is required - about eight years of training, six hours per day. The same is true of all great athletes; years of training/preparation. Preparation required to become a concert pianist, approximately seventeen years. Great attorneys, doctors, lawyers, Realtors, artists, computers analysts, chefs, teachers, managers, bosses, etc., don’t just happen; the more they prepare the better they will be. The same will be true for you.

Proper preparation is very simply the critical ingredient in the success formula. Now that's not to say that diligent preparation will insure that you are successful, but it is to say that *the lack of proper preparation* will almost certainly lead to failure.

Proper preparation also helps to reduce stress. So many people put everything off to the last minute and then try to pull off a miracle. The pressure mounts, little mistakes become giant problems because they have left themselves no time.

I don’t think it is appropriate for companies to allow their people to learn at the expense of their customers, but companies do it every day. Many companies today have their employees face the customer long before they are prepared.

I can’t tell you how many times I have been in a restaurant, department store, or car dealership and had some rookie try to assist me. Don’t you find it annoying when you ask, “*What is the soup for the day?*” and they don’t know. Car dealerships have a lot of salespeople just standing around waiting for you. These people are usually just passing the time waiting on the next person to drive up. Why aren’t they studying? Why aren’t they learning the answers to the most obvious questions? Why aren’t they in the cars, studying the product they are supposed to be selling.

Salespeople should never be allowed to go learn how to sell at the expense of the customer. They should have studied extensively before ever being allowed to address the potential customer. If I can’t get the answers I am looking for from the salesperson, then I will go some place I can.

Please understand I realize a rookie salesperson cannot know nor had time to develop all the skills a veteran salesperson has. But they can know their product/service inside and out. They may miss closing signals or may not be as confident as the veteran, but they should at least know their product/service.

**A company is being graded by the consumer at every point of contact they have with that company.** If I am dealing with a person who has not been properly trained to deal with me, how should I feel about the rest of the organization?

I remember walking up to the counter of a major hotel chain and having the front desk person ask me if I wouldn't mind having a trainee check me in. I told them that depends on how much training the trainee already had. They told me it was their first day. I said, "*Is this your first day on the job or your first day behind the counter after having been thoroughly trained in all aspects of checking a guest in along with a great deal of practice on the steps required to check me in using their computer?*" She said it was her first day on the job. I then told them that I did mind.

Why would I want to spend an extra 5, 10 or 15 minutes helping to train their employee when they basically had spent none. I had been on the road all day, making airline connections, trying to get cabs, dealing with traffic and the weather. I wanted to get to my room, check back in with my office, call my family, and relax. I felt it was very inappropriate that they had even asked; but at least they did ask. Some companies just stick that person behind the desk and let them stumble, bumble and fall at our expense.

**If you took a look at who were the top Fortune 500 companies in 1970 to see where they are today, you would find that 60% of them are either gone or worse off.** They may stumble, bumble and fall at our expense once .... But they will stumble, bumble and fall at their own expense in the long run. To me it is simple:

***Without proper preparation  
there can be no success.***