

Learning Through Doing and Sharing

Created by Kevin McDonnell and presented by Build Your Edge.

This resource is designed to accompany Kevin's Build Your Edge episode, 'How to Fast-Track Your Career With Continuous Learning'. Start by listening to the episode; it brings these ideas to life with examples and personal stories, and will help you get the most from this guide.

Why this matters

In a tough job market, waiting for formal training or the next big promotion isn't always an option. The good news? You don't have to wait. You can create your own learning loop by doing real things, reflecting on what works, and sharing what you've learned.

This approach helps you:

- Stay sharp and adaptable
- Build visible proof of your skills and thinking
- Attract opportunities by showing—not telling—what you can do
- Learn faster by turning reflection into habit
- Grow your network by working in the open

The value of learning through doing and sharing

The best way to learn is to do the thing. Whether it's coding, designing, writing, speaking, or experimenting with prompts, get your hands dirty.

Try this:

- Take on a stretch task at work
- Explore new tools or platforms in your spare time
- Replicate something you admire, then improve on it
- Start building your own solution to a real problem you care about

Side projects and side hustles

A side project gives your learning purpose. It helps you test ideas, build skills, and create something meaningful.

There are countless open source projects where you can dive in and start contributing. Or, you could launch a side hustle (a small, purposeful venture) that not only sharpens your skills but could also pay you back for the time you invest.

You could:

- Contribute to an open source project
- Start a blog, podcast, or video channel
- Build a tool, app, or service for a niche community
- Launch a micro-business (your ‘5 to 8’ after your ‘9 to 5’)

Resources

- [Intro to Open Source](#) (Azure Series)
- [Donna Sarkar’s 5-Step Process for Choosing a Side Hustle](#)
- [Tech-Life Balance Quiz](#) by Agnes Molnar

Set goals and measure success

Learning without direction can be overwhelming. Set a clear outcome:

- What skill do you want to build?
- What result are you aiming for?
- When do you want to get there?
- Why do you want to do this?

OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) are a simple way to set and track learning goals. They help you stay focused, motivated, and accountable.

Resources

- [Measure What Matters](#) by John Doerr
- [Microsoft Learn: Benefits of OKRs](#)

Work out loud

Don't wait until you're finished. Share while you're still learning.

Working out loud means you show your process; what you're trying, what's working, what's not. It builds your reputation, invites feedback, and helps others learn from your experience.

You can:

- Post updates on LinkedIn, Twitter, or Mastodon
- Write short blogs about what you're exploring
- Record a 1-minute video reflection
- Speak at user groups, internal town halls, or MeetUps

It's not about being polished. It's about being present.

Resources

- [What Is Working Out Loud?](#) (John Stepper)
- [CIPD: Social and Collaborative Learning](#)
- [Show Your Work](#) (Book by Austin Kleon)

Use what you've got

You don't need a budget to start. Use free and available tools:

- Internal learning platforms or wikis
- Lunch-and-learns or brown bag sessions
- Online communities and forums
- Mentors and peers already doing what you want to do

Tip: A 15-minute call with the right person can save you weeks of struggle. Don't be afraid to ask.

Start small. Stay consistent. Share the journey.

That's how you build your edge.