

# Articles for Managers

## What's Your Current Edge for Development?

by Ian Cook



Ian Cook, trainer, consultant, keynote speaker and Principal of Fulcrum Associates Inc., helps managers and supervisors get more from their people and teams through modern leadership approaches. Contact Ian to discuss the ideas in this article or to find out about related training programs, facilitation and coaching services, and keynote presentations for your organization.

They had a momentary pause of puzzlement when I asked them. So, I put the question to my audience again,

*What is your current edge for development?*

“What do you mean?” they ask. “I mean” I say, “if you could snap your fingers and instantly improve significantly in *one aspect of your work* that would have the greatest leverage on your overall effectiveness, what would it be?” “Oh” say their faces as they proceed to ponder the query.

*“...the driver that keeps us continually learning”*

For many people this is a difficult question. For some, absolutely nothing comes to mind! Managers in my sessions have a variety of responses...

- think more strategical–vs. responding to “crises” all the time
- be able to confront a poor performer without my own legs turning to jelly
- lead meetings that are satisfying and accomplish a great deal
- organize my desk and deploy myself according to my priorities.

Try out the question right now. Come on now,

*What is your current edge for development?*

This is a vitally important question for each of us to ask ourselves regularly. It is the driver that keeps us continually learning. And when you have your answer, I have a follow-up question for you,

“What do you intend to do over the next twelve months to develop this ability?”

As a professional speaker, my current *edge* is to build more stories into my presentations. I’ve avoided them because, I imagine, it will be difficult. I don’t notice stories. I don’t remember stories. I don’t even like stories in other people’s presentations. Yet I know they will add more to the overall impact of my message than anything else I could do.

How can you identify your current edge? Ask people–your boss, your peers, your staff, your customers... your significant other! Consult your last performance review. Or, consider your vision for yourself in, say, two years’ time. What knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes are missing that would make that vision a reality?

*“...instantly improve significantly in one aspect of your work”*

Then, develop and implement a plan to acquire these attributes. When you have succeeded, return to the

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question. A new edge for development will emerge, returning you to being a (beginner) learner.

This is what “continual learning” means.

And I believe it is the only way we can survive in this crazy, convulsive world.

Managers, professionals, and knowledge workers must master a complex weave of competencies.

Author George Leonard calls mastery, “the mysterious process during which what is at first difficult becomes progressively easier and more pleasurable through practice.” Notice that mastery is a process, not a destination. We must never cease.

Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, was a consummate “master.” But when he died he asked to be buried with a *white* belt on.

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**Fulcrum Associates Inc.**

Call 1-888-FULCRUM (385-2786) • [info@888fulcrum.com](mailto:info@888fulcrum.com) • [www.888fulcrum.com](http://www.888fulcrum.com)  
US • 1711 Pine Valley Drive • Vienna, Virginia • 22182-2339 • Phone (703) 255-4605 • Fax (703) 255-4607  
Canada • 250 The East Mall • Toronto, Ontario • M9B 6L3 • Phone (888) 385-2786

