

# Andrew's Ax

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## READ!

Jumping up on my soapbox here, let me ask you a question: How many books have you read in the past three months? Be honest. A passing grade is...ready?

Three.

Anything less, you get an "F." Four or five and you're on the right track. More than five and you're on the "A" street of professional development.

But who has that kind of time? You do. How do I know? Because you're an Ax Reader, and Ax Readers know how to create more Quadrant II activities, those that are important, yet not urgent. (See Andrew's Ax Issue 16: [http://amt-group.com/archive/ax/Andrew\\_sAxSept04.pdf](http://amt-group.com/archive/ax/Andrew_sAxSept04.pdf))

### 5 W's & 1 H on reading

Let's talk about the 5 W's and 1 H of reading: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How to read.

You already know Why. Reading *anything* works your brain cells and engages your mind; reading the *right* things will improve every aspect of your life. So let's look at "what" to read.

Or rather, what *not* to read if you find yourself (as most leaders do) with little to

no "extra" time. For a week, or even a day, put down the newspaper or log off of your favorite news websites. I know—you're thinking you won't be "informed."

Hogwash! You will still know what's going on, and what's more, if you replace those 30 minutes a day with "real" reading—say, a classic great book, a novel or an excellent business book (suggestions below), you will impact your professional life on a much deeper level.

### Write your own summaries

One more thing *not* to read: those book summaries bookstores are so often peddling. Pick up the real book and *skim* it for yourself—highlight what you think are the most important words in a given chapter. Much better than reading someone else's take on the book.

And you will remember what you read! I bet you can't tell me what the headlines were yesterday, let alone a month ago. But if you have *ever* read *Catcher in the Rye*, you still remember some of Holden Caulfield's favorite words, right? I bet you can find lots ways to use a classic in your next sales presentation or internal meeting. Far more than if you were to use yesterday's news.

### Here's what

Here are three (or four) "What's" or "must reads" for the business leader: David Maister's *True Professionalism* and *The Trusted Advisor*, Dan Farson's

*Management of the Absurd*, and new to my list (and what I'm currently reading) Daniel Pink's *A Whole New Mind*.

### **But when?**

So we've covered *Why* and *What*. Let's move on to *When*. When is the best time to read?

Whenever! With audiobooks, you can even read on the way and back from your local station and while traveling anywhere.

And if you stop reading the newspaper for a week (or even a day per week), and use that time with a Great (or even good) book, you'll hit that book-a-month goal easily.

Where? Again, *wherever!* Be sure you have a book or audio book with you always. Don't waste any more time waiting for people, whether it be for colleagues to show up for a business meeting, a friend at a restaurant, a train to arrive, or for the weather to change. Have a book with you so you can feed your mind rather than your anxiety or anger at having to wait. Reading beats waiting!

Now for a big one: *How*. Yes, you already know "how" to read, right?

Maybe. Mortimer Adler's *How to Read a Book* crossed my path more than 20 years ago. He teaches how to read the classics, and also offers suggestions for reading other types of books. He suggest making

your reading a *conversation*, at least with the author and ideally, as we've started at AMT Group, with others.

### **Reading Clubs**

To get even more out of what you read, extend the conversation beyond the one between you and the author. Include like-minded, goal-oriented people in a reading club.

You'll get more out of your reading, and you'll put a little extra pressure on yourself to get that reading done.

I'm not saying it's easy, especially if you're not an avid reader already. But just a little change now will make a big difference later. Our office library now has 744 books, and I've read 90% of them. I say that not to impress you but to *impress upon* you that it is definitely "do-able."

Charlie Tremendous Jones says, "You will be the same person in five years that you are today except for two things: the people you meet and the books you read."

And those books can make a whole lot of difference. So, Leaders: Read!

*Andrew Silberman is President and Chief Enthusiast for AMT Group, founded in 1992 with the on-going mission of "Developing Global Thinkers!"*

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