



# The Catalyst™

**Catalyst** - noun - pronounced (kat-l-ist):  
A person or thing that precipitates an event or change.

## David's Monthly Inspirational Article

June 2007

You CAN Make A Difference™

[www.DavidLarrickSmith.com](http://www.DavidLarrickSmith.com)

### Degree Theory

Last month I spent a lot of time at my High School Alma Mater South Garland High. It was surreal to be back in the hallways and to actual see some of my former teachers. I owe several people a huge debt of gratitude as they helped to make me the person I am today. Thank you: Mrs. Garrett, Mr. Garcia, Mr. Wetzel, and Coach Nichols.

I would be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge my audience: the wonderful students of South Garland High who exemplified "Colonel Pride" and were so gracious to me. I look forward to seeing all of you this summer at the Gale Field Center for the Developing The Winning Edge Summer Success Series which begins Tuesday, June 12th at 12 noon. Click here for more information. Ironically, South Garland High School was the perfect place to broach this month's topic.

#### What is ©Degree Theory?

©Degree Theory is a school of thought that believes: if you want to be successful in life you need to acquire a college degree. The "theory", or belief, is that an individual with a college degree will be better prepared for life, and have more opportunities for success than the person who does not have a college degree. The concept embodies the following steps.

#### Degree Theory - The 5 Step Formula for Success

Step 1. Get the best grades you can in high school and get accepted into a college or university. If you want to be successful in life, and make the "big dollars" you must have a college education. You can always fall back on your education. Do what you must to get in: student loans, credit cards, loan sharks, federal grants, arm and a leg...whatever, just get in! Stick it out for 4 years and finish. Once you have your degree, you will have the opportunity to get a job, and not just any job, but a good well-paying job that you wouldn't get without a college degree.

Step 2. Choose a position with one of the many "big companies" that are recruiting you - as you will be in high demand because of your college degree. The position will provide you with the salary, status, and career opportunity for the long-term growth and security that you have always wanted.

Step 3. Work faithfully and loyally for 40-50 years for the "big company". The "big company" will pay you the "big" dollars. Those "big" dollars will afford you the "big" house, the nice cars, social status, a financially stable middle class quality of life, and most importantly, job security.

Step 4. Once you have sacrificed your family, your health, your relationships, and your whole life working for the "big company", they will reward you for your loyalty and hard work with a nice retirement party, the respect of your counterparts, a gold watch and pen set, and a "big" pension that will allow you to maintain your current middle class lifestyle for the rest of your life.

Step 5. You will live happily ever after in your "big" house with the white picket fence, your spouse, your 2.5 children, and a dog named Spot. You are now successful!

Did things pan out this way for the faithful employees of Enron, WorldCom, Tyco and the employees of the other greedy corporate giants that bilked thousands of their employees out of their life savings? The scary reality of these crimes is that the aforementioned corporations are just the companies that were caught! Now...you might be saying to yourself: "Dave those were isolated incidents - the majority of people in this country don't end up like that!" See the following statistics for my retort.

If...

The US Department of Health and Human Services reports that by the age of 65, for every 100 people in America, the following statistics hold true:

29 will be dead

13 will live below the poverty level

54 will be dependent on charity, welfare, or social security

4 will be financially free

Then...

Degree Theory DOES NOT WORK for most people, because most people aren't making it!

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, and expecting your results to change." Albert Einstein

If you do what the majority of people do, you will get what the majority of people get! The majority of people in this country live lives of extended mediocrity because they "go with the flow." Yes, I am very jaded and passionate about this issue, because I have personal experience with the fallacy of Degree Theory, it almost cost me my life. I threw myself head-long into the concept of getting a college degree to improve my life, and when it did not work, I was suicidal.

I had no plan B. I wasn't supposed to need one...right. I remember people saying to me: "you can always fall back on your degree." All those people intended the best for me, but they too were unconsciously-incompetent...they didn't know, that they didn't know! It was a case of the blind leading the blind. I realized that I had spent the last 10+ years of my life using information that simply was not accurate. I didn't know what else to do, or how I was going to achieve success.

Unfortunately, Degree Theory is a philosophy for goal attainment that millions of people use. It is probably the most popular theory and methodology for success in America, if not the world. It is not until years later, that most people realize that they have wasted thousands of dollars, and precious years of their lives using this incomplete information for goal attainment and success in life.

Please understand what I am saying here. Degree Theory is not completely wrong, it is simply incomplete! Education is always a good thing to have. It is actually one of the most important aspects of fully functioning human beings; however Degree Theory is missing the following steps

### **If Not ©Degree Theory, Then What? Action Items for Success In Life**

#### **1. Know Before You Go!**

Take the time to discover your major definite purpose in life first, then get the required education, the specific knowledge, to become that person or achieve that goal. If you want to become a Chef, do you need to spend 4 years of your life and \$80,000.00 on a undergraduate degree? Or, do you need an education from the best culinary arts institute that you can find? Do you see where I'm going with this? I'm 100% for education, I just want you to get the education and information that you need to achieve your goal! God put us all here to do great things. Your number one priority in life should be to take the time to find out what God put you here to do, and then work to become that person! When you discover and work in your passion, you are doing God's work, and only good things come from that.

#### **2. Understand That Knowledge is NOT Power!**

The application of specific knowledge is powerful! Internalizing and making this subtle change will equate to huge differences in your results! A degree communicates many things, most notably, that you can finish what you start; however, an undergraduate degree provides you with generalized liberal arts knowledge and very little skill. Employers want employees who have specialized knowledge, developed skill sets, and the ability to produce results. Your ability to perform and produce results is what will allow you to leverage your skills for money, not a degree.

#### **3. Make Your Own Decisions:**

"Yo' Momma" can earn tremendous bragging rights in the parking lot after Sunday church service when your in college. A lot of my peers were going to the other state institutions...if ya know what I mean. I know that my Momma was/is a proud peacock in "da 'hood" because I went to college, and did not become one of the "negative statistics". Because of this reality, many of people go to college because our parents want us to go, not because THEY actually want to go. Parents get bragging rights when they can say: "My son is studying to be a lawyer." Or, "My daughter is pre-med at Baylor University." Never mind the fact that you have no desire to be either one of those types of professionals. Don't be afraid to say no, It's your life! Just be respectful, I'd hate for you to get a "whooping" in front of your friends.

Please drop me an email with your comments. I'd like to know what you think. Let me know if you agree or disagree, either way, I'd like to get your honest feedback.

Remember...You CAN Make A Difference!<sup>™</sup>

Until next month.

Excerpts from The Catalyst<sup>™</sup> may be reprinted in your organization's media provided the following credit line is included:

David Larrick Smith Enterprises, LLC is a business development consulting firm dedicated to helping organizations increase profitability by helping them to improve the productivity of their people. David Larrick Smith is the creator and author of the trademarked program Developing The Winning Edge Series<sup>™</sup>, which encompasses personal effectiveness, sales success, customer service, leadership, and team member development. To book David for your next event, contact Michele I. Stoute, Business Manager: 214-315-7871, e-mail: [miss@davidlarricksmith.com](mailto:miss@davidlarricksmith.com), or online at [www.DavidLarrickSmith.com](http://www.DavidLarrickSmith.com).