

Business Prodigy: College 'Biggest Regret in Life'

Neil Patel is only 32 years old, but he has already founded three companies and received numerous recognitions, including making President Obama's list of top 100 entrepreneurs under 30. Naturally, Patel's success makes him a prime candidate to learn from.

In a recent edition of [Forbes](#), Patel bluntly states that he didn't learn the one thing he really wanted to in college: critical thinking ("an entrepreneur's greatest asset"). And since critical thinking is the main item many colleges purport to sell to their clients, Patel's admission isn't all that encouraging.

However, a less cynical person might say that Patel's education was redeemable because of the following three lessons:

1. He Learned to Optimize His Time
According to Patel, he soon discovered that college dragged out a process which could be expedited. He therefore crammed all of his classes "in a block of time early in the day." He also notes:

"I hired fellow students to take notes for me and help me prepare for tests. The system that I invented grew and developed into a note ring. Select students were assigned specific classes to take notes, and other students would

compile them for the group to use. (Note: It was not a cheating ring!)"

2. He Learned to Strategize

Once Patel realized he wasn't learning much in college, he charged forward to do the time and get the piece of paper. One way he did this was by finding out which professors had a reputation for being easy. Another way he did this was by offering favors to others like the following:

"I devised a parking plan. Since it was a commuter school, finding a decent parking spot was impossible. I figured out a way to give students rides from class to their cars, and then I swap parking spots with the student."

3. He Learned to Pass His Knowledge on to Others

"I helped other students optimize their life by teaching them schedule hacking, helping them save time throughout the week."

If you're laughing by now, I don't blame you. Patel's advice isn't exactly what people would normally expect when it comes to college.

But his advice should cause us to take a serious look at what we know as higher education today.

In 1987, Professor Alan Bloom [noted](#) that the modern university guards an important secret. This secret, he declared, is that "colleges do not have enough to teach their students, not enough to justify keeping them four years, probably not even three years."

We have come to this state, he explains, because college has become focused solely on career preparation. This focus is in direct contrast to the one practiced in Western Civilization for centuries, one which held that a well-educated individual was familiar with a set canon of knowledge.

Patel's experience seems to back up Bloom's observations. Based on these occurrences, is it possible that the modern college experience is not really one of true intellectual import that we've been told?

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