

# WOMEN'S business

By Patricia Langridge

In a society where knowledge is prized as never before, lifelong learning is a fact of life. Not just the on-the-job, pick-it-up-as-you-go sort that comes inevitably with maturity. I'm talking about the formal education that some thought was over the day they swapped school bag for briefcase. If you're lucky or talented enough to land a job, your employers will expect you to seek further qualifications and training. Learning is one of today's greatest growth industries.

It may be years since you tackled serious study — or maybe you're looking for ways to make the process easier and more effective. Here are some hints.

They key to success in any area is self-knowledge. Your answers to the following questions will help you unlock the door.

- What do I really want out of life?
- What's my order of priority for those things that are important?
- What motivates me?
- What are my strengths and limitations?
- How can I minimise my limitations and use my strengths?
- What's my preferred study environment, time of day for studying and so on.

If it is self-knowledge that unlocks the door to successful study, then motivation will give you the momentum to open it. Attitudes are vitally important to your ability to remain motivated, so think of yourself as someone who can - and will - succeed, and make sure you tell other people the same affirming things about you, the student.

Goals are your final destination on this journey of academic achievement, so make long and short-term goals that are specific, realistic,

measurable and tied to a time-frame. A long-term goal might be gaining an industry-related degree, diploma or certificate, a goal that will eventually lead into your preferred career. Acceptance into your chosen course at polytechnic or university would be a necessary short-term goal.

To meet your goals you need to:

- Plan regularly
- Write goals down
- Programme your life to meet your goals
- Evaluate your progress

The next step is to put together a plan of action, taking into account the skills and information needed sources of research and the support or involvement of others. Now decide the best time for study and block it in on your daily timetable.

Be prepared to be flexible - your goal may be two hours a day, no matter when, or it may be 7 - 9 pm, no matter what. Consider specifically, your answers to these questions:

- What exactly do I need to learn?
- Where will I get the information from? Sources might include textbooks, other references, the library, or informed people.
- What constraints am I operating under? Examples are an inadequate study location, poor concentration skills, or a heavy sport schedule.
- How am I doing? Your plans will need evaluating and updating constantly.

Plan your time carefully and write out your long-term goal, placing it on permanent view. List your short-term goals on your planner or in your diary, preparing a daily study "to do" list and ranking each item in order of importance to your short-term goal. This is best done the night before. Tackle important and difficult tasks first.

Before beginning a course of study, it's helpful to understand your own learning style. Everyone has a

characteristic way of processing information and a certain attitude towards learning. We also use preferred ways of learning and specific learning environments. Recent research is uncovering different intelligences as well as different abilities in problem solving, perception skills, memory, thinking and speed in processing information. If you're interested in having your learning or working style assessed professionally, the Creative Learning Company, based in Auckland, can supply you with an extensive questionnaire.

Book author and Director of Training & Research, Barbara Prashnig, chief executive officer, explains, "The focus of Learning Styles is on an individual's own strengths and preferences, an approach that makes learning fun and a whole lot easier. Learning and information intake then becomes a tailor-made process designed to suit individual needs rather than merely a robotic process of churning out chunks of knowledge in factory-type fashion."

## WHAT KIND OF LEARNER ARE YOU?

### SOME LIKE

- to get the big picture first
- theory before practice
- learning with a group
- a structured learning situation
- a competitive environment

### OTHERS PREFER

- to work through details
- practice before theory
- learning independently
- a loose, flexible study situation
- not to compete or be compared