

Street Smart

Eight Ways to Raise Your Street I.Q.

By

Mariette Edwards

Street smarts, according to most respondents, are learned.

-Professor James Heskett, Harvard Business School

Street smarts were something my mother really valued. She believed that being street smart was worth much more than a formal education when it comes to succeeding in life. Based on my own experience working with hundreds of individuals, many of whom have the finest of formal educations, it's very clear that street smarts are what turn desire into results more than any other factor.

What does it mean to be "street smart"? It means you follow your instincts, you listen to your gut, you don't over-think things, you pay attention to the details that tell you what's really going on, you learn the rules and how to use them, you know when to speak up and when to shut up and you know enough to know what you don't know and what you must know. You use your curiosity, ingenuity, industriousness and initiative to advance you towards your goals. You don't wait for other people to do it for you. You control and leverage your attitude to position yourself for success.

To be street smart you've got to be both optimistic and realistic

Nay-sayers don't get nearly as far as people who believe in the possibilities. But just seeing what's possible without applying a healthy dose of practical strategy isn't going to get you anywhere. It's not magic, after all.

Instinct vs. Intuition

There's an element of both instinct and intuition in the formula for street smarts. Instinct is a natural aptitude or gift for something while intuition is pure, untaught, non-inferential knowledge, you just "know". You can have an instinct for art or science or mathematics or law or anything, really. And, you can have "a feeling" or "just know" but still not be street smart.

Harvard Business School weighs in on "street smarts"

In his article, "Do MBAs Need More Street Smarts?", Professor James Heskett, moderator of the Harvard Business School's online publication *Working Knowledge*, defines the term as "knowing how to close a sale, when to walk away from a deal, when to remain silent, (and) how to select winners as employees or colleagues." Students and alumni had very strong opinions on the subject with a consensus view on "street smarts" as "skills taught by experience, role models, and experiential learning techniques such as

case analysis and discussion (in that order)". In short, "most felt that street smarts are learned."

If "street smarts" are learned, you can learn them

If street smarts are, in fact, learned, you can learn them. Or I should say, you can learn how to tap into them. (You already have some measure of street smarts already. We all do.) Here's how to raise your street I.Q.

- Follow your instincts. If you're in the habit of talking yourself out of what they are telling you, stop it. Instincts are something that get stronger with use.
- Don't over-think things. Resist overriding your instincts (and intuition) by thinking too much. Go with your gut.
- Pay attention to the details. Details are often what your instincts, intuition and gut are reacting to. What's off? What's missing?
- Learn the rules. Every organization you work for or with has its own set of rules. Learn them!
- Speak up and shut up. It's as important to stop talking as it is to start. Make your point or state your request and then stop.
- Know what you don't know and what you must know. Be honest with yourself about what you don't know and make a plan to learn (or hire) what you need.
- Control and leverage your attitude. A good attitude will take you a lot farther than a poor one. Use it. It's one of your most effective tools.
- Unleash your curiosity, ingenuity, industriousness and initiative. Don't wait to be plucked from obscurity!

Knowledge is power! Learning can raise your street I.Q.

###

Mariette Edwards is a business and career strategist. For more on Mariette's programs, visit her web site at www.starmakercoaching.com.
<mailto:mariette@starmakercoaching.com>
www.starmakercoaching.com

©Copyright 2005 Mariette Edwards All rights reserved

