

Learning From the Past: 10 Lessons for the New Generation of Landmen

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At some point you have probably heard the quote from George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The core message of the quote can serve as a great lesson for the younger generation of landmen who are building their careers in our industry.

Let's take ourselves back in time about 30 years. The oil and gas industry was in the midst of one of the most drastic commodity-price collapses in history, and companies were struggling to stay in business. Likewise, landmen were losing their jobs and struggling to find work. Hundreds left the profession, and our industry faced a crisis of identifying future leadership.

Fast forward to current times as our industry met significant challenges in the form of a nationwide financial crisis in 2008-09. A few years later, a collapse in oil and gas prices triggered similar effects to those seen in the 1980s.

The landmen who continued to forge ahead in those times of uncertainty during the mid-80s learned valuable lessons that helped shape their careers. I interviewed a handful of senior landmen, and my goal in this piece is to share some of their lessons learned with the younger landmen who are beginning their careers and who are the future of our profession. Here we go:

1. **The devil is in the details:** It is imperative to learn the basics of the profession. It doesn't matter if you have a PLM, MBA, JD or any other initials. Establish your foundation so that as your career progresses, you can continue to add experiences and more advanced topics to your knowledge base.
2. **Pump the brakes:** Sometimes landmen get too trapped in the thought process that quicker is better. We all have bosses and external pressures that add to this line of thinking, but a lot of times mistakes come from trying to complete a task as quickly as possible instead of as accurately as possible. If you have a tight deadline, stay late or arrive early to the office to be able to put more time into your work. It will also help if you set realistic expectations with your boss or client.
3. **Listen to The Great One:** Wayne Gretzky once said, "I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been." When working on a project, try and anticipate steps 2, 3 and 4. This will help you be more responsive and increase your efficiency.
4. **Six degrees of separation:** One of the greatest traits a landman can have is networking. Getting involved with groups like AAPL and your local association will give you access to hundreds of contacts you wouldn't have otherwise. You will be amazed how much establishing relationships with landmen around the country will assist you in your job and aid in your career development. NETWORK! NETWORK! NETWORK!
5. **You are not Francis Underwood:** This one is tough to avoid, but you will be better off in the long run if you avoid office politics. I hope all of you find yourselves in work environments

where everyone gets along and brings the best out in each other. Unfortunately, that isn't likely. Talking politics is a losing game. Work hard, surround yourself with a good team and your reputation and work product will do all the talking you need.

6. **A rising tide lifts all boats:** Surrounding yourself with a good team and developing positive working relationships will do wonders for your career. Don't have the mindset that you as an individual will receive promotions. Instead, remember that others — specifically your colleagues — will promote you in your career.
7. **Words of wisdom:** Among the best resources for young landmen are the experiences and advice of those who have walked in their shoes. Take time to ask questions, bounce ideas and learn from the senior landmen around you. Doing this is a sign of maturity and self-awareness that will garner respect from your colleagues.
8. **Failure can be a positive:** Spoiler alert — all landmen make mistakes and experience failure in one form or another. The main point is don't be afraid to fail. Retired Gen. Colin Powell said, "Success is the result of perfection, hard work, learning from failure, loyalty and persistence." Don't allow failures to discourage you; instead, use them as learning experiences that will make you a better landman.
9. **Look in the mirror:** Take time for yourself to reflect on where you are, where you have been and where you want to be. Self-reflection is important for personal as well as professional growth. It is vitally important to enjoy life outside the office. Work hard, but make sure you are taking time to unwind and recharge your batteries.
10. **The path less traveled:** Remember that there is not "one true path" for a landmen. Some will start in the field, some will start in-house, some will begin their careers with a small startup and others will begin with a supermajor. The point is landmen can choose from an infinite number of paths to achieve their career goals. Enjoy whichever path you travel, and don't be afraid to change directions. Fortune favors the bold.

Like many seasoned landmen, I've experienced what young people go through early in their careers. Several of these concepts were helpful for me, and I hope you will find them useful too. Our industry and profession will face even greater challenges over the coming years, and we will need robust, insightful leadership. I hope these points will help you prepare for those challenges and that 10 or 15 years from now you will be giving even better advice to the next wave of landmen. Remember what Louis Pasteur said, "Chance favors the prepared mind."