

Value History!

Personal

*History Counsels
Our Personal
Lives*

Civic

*History Guides
Our Civic
Lives*

Professional

*History Strengthens
Our Professional
Lives*

Without the thoughtful study of history, the past remains an impenetrable wilderness. Data grows rampant; meaningless details spread at random; and facts choke out human significance. Where memory is limited to personal experience, life is solitary and its value diminishes. No insight can penetrate a wild, untended past.

The purpose of history is to provide an ordered account of past experience and its significance to us. History illuminates the

obscure, transforms confusing events into meaningful patterns. Ambiguities are clarified; perspective is provided. Retold as history, the story of human existence takes on meaning for each of us.

History is everyone's concern because we are all shaped by it. We need to value history, and apply its insight to our daily lives. History has the power to foster personal growth, to increase civic sophistication, and to stimulate professional competence.



PERSONAL

We study history to understand ourselves and others:

History reveals to us the human condition, illuminating human nature over time. Reading history provides a measure with which to compare our ideas and personal conduct to those of others.

Although knowing history is no guarantee of good character, such character is much nourished by grounding in past examples. In showing how evil has been confronted, or how good has been brought about, the past heartens us to pursue higher purposes in life.

History connects us with many other people. Knowing our past helps us to understand our relationships with others at different times and places.

We study history for pleasure: History often gives pleasure. It entertains by animating protagonists, dramatizing events in sequence, revealing motives and background action. In the perspective of their past, people and places, and even buildings, take on significance.

To our nearby or distant travels, knowledge of the past adds the dimension of time. Historical details enrich our visits, and allow us to exclaim “Now I understand!”

We study history to develop perception: Knowledge of the past refines our perceptions. It develops our ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity. We may wish to create our own future history, but first we must re-create our past. The act of re-creation extends our powers of observation, logic, insight. Each element of historical thinking must be coordinated. Sequence is needed to perceive cause and effect, to recognize patterns in disjointed facts. By furnishing a context, history helps us understand relationships. Events, connected by ideas, take on meaning for us.

History gives us a basis for determining what events, or human characteristics may recur, and which may be unique.

We study history, then, to develop judgment:

Judgment arises from our understanding of human experience. We read about the past in search of truth about human choices, tracing the consequences of these choices. Knowledge of the past presents us with a basis on which to judge major issues of our own day, and the human motivations that lie behind them.

CIVIC

Civic Responsibilities

We study history to illuminate civic choices: Good judgment about decisions concerning our community, or country, requires knowledge of our past and its legacy of culture and traditions. History equips its students with knowledge of the democratic institutions and values that have shaped our aspirations as a nation.

Knowledge of historical methods strengthens our ability to analyze proposed policy. Command of local and national history reveals the context of issues: Connections are drawn; external conditions are revealed; the validity of special interests is scrutinized.

In particular:

- Knowledge of historical scholarship equips citizens to make informed choices on school boards.
- Issues of taxes and appropriations require an historical database. Archives of government records provide such a resource. Evaluation of social policy depends on mastery of historical experience with alternative social policies. Informed appreciation of how our communities were built in the past forms a foundation for civic planning.
- Complex referenda depend upon command of many disciplines. History bridges disciplines, providing perspectives from the humanities and other social sciences. Citizens, for example, are better jurors when equipped to evaluate evidence according to “the historical method.”

Civic Pride

A shared, common sense of values fosters a readiness to assume civic responsibilities; such values are transmitted by our common history. In showing how others have confronted difficult issues, history encourages us and provides inspiration. It helps us deal with change, by reminding us of earlier instances of courage and imagination.

History furnishes rational, concrete examples upon which to base a common civic pride and reasons for civic celebrations. History provides a moral drama of human struggle. The suffering, ingenuity, and selflessness of earlier generations may be shared, as we recount them to each other.

The knowledge of history strengthens professional abilities in all areas, and in all fields.

Management proficiency requires historical “habits of the mind”:

- To extend the boundaries of “case histories” to allow for the breadth of human experience; to examine issues in widely varied contexts.
- To empower managers to deal with, and understand, change and continuity, and the values of each.
- To broaden outlook, to incorporate diverse issues and their consequences into possible solutions.
- To enable managers to identify germinal factors affecting an organization’s performance.
- To develop vision to perceive the conditions necessary to transform organizations, theories, processes resources, markets, and technology.
- To create shared knowledge bases for collaborative decisions and action.
- To develop a literally global view of issues, a practical appreciation of the importance of foreign cultures and expectations.
- To deal effectively with ambiguity by providing guidelines from past experience of parallel issues; to recognize that complexity and ambiguity are the norm in most human endeavors.
- To interpret corporate culture as compared and contrasted with the culture of other human institutions.
- To deal with complex, multidisciplinary issues: for example, technology /manufacturing, financial / marketing, as these are affected by social, economic, psychological, moral, and political forces.
- To recognize and preserve the enduring and enriching characteristics of business enterprise, and those traditions that maintain it as a beneficent force in human life.

Professional insight requires historical perspective:

- It enables us to analyze economic, social, political, and technical events in changing contexts over time.
- It helps us to assess nonquantifiable, but nonetheless real, costs and benefits that have developed, and to interpret not only what events occurred but why they unrolled as they did, and what their consequences were.

Specific decision-making skills require the historical method. The historical method facilitates research, strengthens competitive intelligence, and enriches the analysis of data over time. It also enhances the ability to:

- Tap corporate memory, its lessons and warnings.
- Create and efficiently use corporate archives.
- Analyze historical land use for better building and site evaluation.
- Locate documentary evidence bearing upon needed choices.
- Conduct bibliographic research into the relevant experiences of others.
- Validate source materials of all kinds.
- Confront and overrule false recollections of past actions; increase awareness of past errors, solutions, and pertinent external conditions.
- Master the complex interrelations of business and society.

In sum, history promotes a healthy, holistic approach to work and life:

- History provides a basis for relating the citizen’s public obligations to those of the workplace.
- It enhances personal satisfaction in one’s work as essential to one’s self-respect and to the well-being of the larger society over time.

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