

Back to Work Preparations by Darren Hardy

Tomorrow kicks off our new year—so it's back to work time.

So then, what should you do to prepare and set yourself up for a great year?

You already know, you even teach it to your kids, but maybe haven't applied it to yourself.

Let me illustrate.

It was a beautiful Saturday afternoon late last summer. I had agreed to review an investor pitch deck of a friend of mine, Tim, who had the biggest presentation of his life that next Monday. I met him at his house. He was deep into his mock pitch to me when there was a muffled kick at the door. Not expecting anyone, Tim went to the front door and slowly opened it revealing a woman carrying a pile of boxes stacked to her eyebrows with no fewer than ten shopping bags hanging from her forearms and one in her teeth as she had tried to work the door handle. It was his wife Angela. Behind her was their son Colton and daughter Sophia, also weighted with goods.

Before we could even exchange hellos, the kids barged through the front door and dumped their treasures on the living room floor. "Dad! Dad! Wait till you see what we got!" Sophia said, gasping for breath. I'll admit, I was confused. It was August, not December, yet these kids were as excited as if Santa himself had just dropped them off at the curb. Tim gave me a look and said, "Get comfortable, looks like this pitch is going to take center stage." So he and his wife settled into the couch on either side of me, awaiting the big show. I asked, "What's this all about anyway?" Silly me. Angela replied, "It's back to school time. This is part of the prep work."

Now, I must admit, that though I have heard of this phenomenon, I myself have never experienced it. My dad, a single father, would drive three blocks out of his way just to be sure the mall didn't appear in the windows of our car. And if our trousers did get to about mid-calf, then he would march into Mervin's (remember Mervin's?!) like General Patton with us nearly in a sprint behind him just to keep up. He would march right to the checkout counter, look at his watch and announce, "You have six minutes to get what you NEED." He'd emphasize "need" as to immediately eliminate any "wants" we had. Then he'd shout—well, state, but it felt like a shout—"If it's not on this counter in six minutes, tough. Go!" And we would scurry around Mervin's in an anxious, heart palpating panic.

Just thinking back on it now makes me nervous. We'd run up to the cash register praying we didn't miss the deadline and pile our rations on the counter. Then of course he'd eliminate half of them and we'd be marching back out the front door. When we got outside he'd take a deep breath, as if he'd been holding it the entire time, look at his watch and snicker, "Nine minutes and 36 seconds."

So you can see why this "Back to school" stuff was a new phenomenon for me. Back to the show...

There they were, Tim's son and daughter pulling every single item from the multitude of bags, creating a giant pile of mayhem. They held up each item, one by one for their enthralled audience to view. Every T-shirt, sweatshirt, pair of jeans, and shoes with lights on the bottom elicited oohs and aahs by the rapt audience. And there were backpacks, lunch bags, socks and even underwear. Sophia squealed as she held up a Justin Bieber dual-pocket folder and Colton carefully checked to make sure every inch of his new red-plastic ruler was accounted for. The show went on for at least 20 minutes. I have never seen another human

so excited about a pack of No. 2 two pencils as Tim's kids were that day.

"Well kids," Tim said in a fatherly tone. "Do you think you're ready?"

"Yes!" they both shouted. "This is going to be the BEST year!" Sophia said as she clutched a Hello Kitty notebook to her chest.

Tim explained to them, "Daddy and Uncle Darren [I'm not sure why I always get the Uncle title!] have some work to do so we will be excusing ourselves." As we left the family room I overheard Angela asking them what they wanted to make for their lunches for the first week and which friends they were excited to see and what subjects they thought would be their favorites this year and which teacher they hoped they got and what sports they were going to try out for and what grades they were striving for this year. Every question was followed with excited answers.

As we entered his home office and he closed the door, he apologized for the spectacle and delay. "It's just something they always do before the new school year starts," he said. "It gets them fired up and ready. The back to school shopping process helps them start the new year feeling confident and excited about what's ahead."

"I can see that," I said. Then I said, "Grab your keys, Tim; we're going back to Monday shopping. The pitch is fine. What it needs is your energy and conviction. You bring a tenth of the excitement and confidence I saw in that family room to the boardroom on Monday and you will own the room. You will elicit the same oohs and aahs your two youngsters got just moments ago."

His eyes lit up like an 8-year-old and he replied excitedly, "I'll grab my keys!"

What is it going to take for you to be prepared to have a great year?

What's going to launch you into your new "school year" or "work year" excited, confident and ready?