

## 22 Years! But Who's Counting?

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### Senior, Senior

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Gary, an Electrical Engineer for JH Kelly, a Vancouver based construction firm providing services to commercial facilities, told Session 4 of the Leadership Development Lab™:



"In 2016, I received my bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Portland State University. This achievement was a long time coming, a very long time coming. I started college twenty-two years earlier! After some missteps, changing my major, and a couple of other questionable decisions, I found myself in my late thirties with over two hundred credits and no degree. (Bachelor's degrees are usually 120 credits, which is around forty courses.) By then, I had a family, and I was close to finishing my electrical apprenticeship. I considered my educational goals dead in the water, "too late now."

"Most of my work at the time was in downtown Portland and I was driving by PSU campus every day. I had an idea: what if I could still finish my degree, even if it meant



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taking just one class per term? So, I went for it. I re-enrolled at PSU.

"I signed up for whatever classes would fit my schedule and move me steadily toward my goal of an electrical engineering degree. For a little over

two and a half years, I stuck with my plan. The final year was the toughest. I was at school until late at night, waking up early, leaving the house for work at 5 AM. I hardly ever saw my family. But in the spring of 2016, I finally graduated!

"The lesson I learned from this experience is even when it feels too late and I am ready to give up on achieving an earlier goal, as long as I'm able to keep moving there's still time.



"The action I call you to take is to revisit some of the dreams and goals you may have given up on, set a new intention, turn that dream into a goal and get after it. It's never too late to turn losses into wins.

"The benefit you will gain is a steady stream of goals achieved, as your dreams become your reality."

I'm sure there were times when Gary was his own worst critic, condemning himself for wasting all that time and money on courses and programs that weren't getting him anywhere. If he became discouraged, he didn't let it keep him from setting a new goal with a plan for achieving it. He paid the price, made the sacrifice and now, can look back over his life with an earned sense of achievement and confidence. What about you? Look back over your life. Can you spot an area you have given up on? What about it? Could it be worth it? Dust it off, put a plan together and make it your new reality.

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*A dream is just a dream.*

*A goal is a dream with a finish line.*

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