

13. How long did it take you to get down to perfection, if perfection is even possible? When do you finally start catching on to everything and it starts to run smoothly?

Debbie Tixier:

You will never have it down to perfection because it all changes from year to year, but give it at least 2 to 3 years until you finally feel like you have an idea how everything fits together. This job is so multifaceted that it just takes time and experience to figure out a system to manage it all. At about year three, you will finally see things falling into place and you will feel more comfortable because you have done it all before. You can then start drawing from your own experiences! Don't beat yourself up too soon. We've all been there, and having someone in your town or state who will be a mentor when you have questions is extremely helpful. You'll find that most marketing teachers are willing to share just about anything they have. It will all add up to more students being successful after high school and college.

Lucinda Mason:

Perfection, let me see, what does that mean? No, I make changes every day and every year—I change DECA activities, lesson plans, how we practice for competition, and qualifications for my leadership team! A wise teacher, now retired, encouraged me early on to spend a year working on my classroom (activities, projects, lesson plans), a year working on my cooperative education program, and a year on DECA. And, until I did that I felt very inadequate. Now, it's just tweaking those things each year. Just the nature of what we do and the fact that we work with different individuals every year, every day, and every class period means there are going to be new challenges all the time.

Al Gancarz:

From personal experience and from speaking to new advisors, it usually takes about 5 years before you feel comfortable with what you are doing. Perfection takes time, but quality is very important. It took me about 10 years before DECA was a household name in our community.

I used to do the Outstanding Chapter Project (now the Chapter Awards Program). It was a 200-page scrapbook full of photos and documentation of chapter events, conferences, etc. It also required an installation ceremony and recognition banquet. These activities will help you build a great DECA chapter.

The Chapter Awards Program/ICDC Management Institute can be found at the end of the Chapter Management System either on the disk that was sent to you or on the Web site at www.deca.org/pdf/DECAChapterManagement.pdf.

Bill Lind:

What is perfection? My answer would be that you never reach perfection. When your students, teachers and administration start to value your program, that is

probably success. In terms of competition, it's a roller coaster. Attracting quality students—leaders, those with strong academics, the really good kids—is the best you can do. Maybe the real answer comes later when you see your students successful in their careers and they attribute it to you and your program.

Dennis Sweetapple:

It never happens! The sure thing in life is change, and that keeps you searching for improvement all the time. It takes a couple of years. If you step up and get involved at all levels—district, state, and international—it will come to you much faster.

Mike Karpie :

I doubt if you could ever say DECA runs totally smoothly. The process involves change and making things better, just like the real world. It's like a marriage: you love it but you have to work at it all the time to make it better.

Start small and build up to the big things. I started with 19 members, and for a number of years I had 150 members. Now I have about 50. I took only 20 to the state career conference for competition and guess what? I had 18 winners and 16 qualified for international competition. I want to work for quality, not quantity.