

# SECRETS OF IMPLEMENTATION

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21 PROVEN WAYS TO  
GET MORE DONE  
IN YOUR BUSINESS AND YOUR LIFE



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JAMES KARL BUTLER

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HOST OF  
THE SOUND LAWS OF SUCCESS PODCAST

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21 PROVEN WAYS TO  
*GET MORE DONE*  
IN YOUR BUSINESS AND YOUR LIFE

BY

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*“Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together.”—Vincent van Gogh*

*“Bigness comes from doing many small things well....Individually, they are not very dramatic transactions.*

*Together, though, they add up.”—Edward S. Finkelstein*

*“Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time for that is the stuff life is made of.”—Benjamin Franklin*

*“To have begun is to have done half the task. Dare to be wise.”—Horace*

*“Order and simplification are the first steps towards the mastery of a subject.”—Thomas Mann*

*“Little by little does the trick.”—Aesop*

*“Victory is won not in miles, but in inches. Win a little now, hold your ground, and later win a little more.”*

*—Louis L'Amour*

*“The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.”—Chinese proverb*

*“I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks*

*as if they were great and noble.”—Helen Keller*

*“Let us then be up and doing,*

*With a heart for any fate,*

*Still achieving, still pursuing,*

*Learn to labor and to wait.”*

*—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

In the pages that follow, you're going to learn twenty-one proven methods and processes you can use to get more done. As you work to implement your list of priorities, you'll have days where you didn't accomplish as much as you hoped. It's okay. Regroup and refocus. Remember, success is built on the foundation of failure. Thomas Edison once said: "Once I have started working on a goal, I believe that it is only a matter of elimination before I find the way that will work. Therefore, I look upon every failure as a successful step that eliminates one more way that won't work." If you've experienced disappointing days that have frustrated you because you haven't been able to accomplish more, you'll love what I will cover in the pages that follow. In this eBook, I'm going to teach you the twenty-one best processes that I use to get more done.

## 1. DEFINE AND DECIDE.

Each of us has the responsibility for our own lives. We have to accept responsibility for how our time is used. We have to define and decide what it is that we want.

Brian Tracy says:

"The highest-paid activity in America, and in your life, is thinking. The time you take to think about who you are and what you want is more valuable and has a higher payoff to you than any other single activity. Most people act impulsively. The phone rings, someone knocks on the door or comes in, they get an idea or the mail arrives, and they are off! The average person is like a dog that sets off to chase a rabbit across a summer field. As the dog bounds after the rabbit, another rabbit jumps up, and the dog veers after the second rabbit. Then a third rabbit appears, and the dog changes course once more. By the end of the day, the dog has been chasing rabbits back and forth around the field for hours and is completely exhausted. But the dog has caught no rabbits. This is the way most people manage their lives."

He continues:

"The opposites of complexity and confusion are focus and concentration. The most important life skill you can develop is the ability to focus single-mindedly on your most important goal or activity and then concentrate completely on achieving that goal. Work without diversion or distraction. Keep coming back to your key task. Discipline yourself to work on your highest payoff activities even when you don't feel like it."—*Victory*, pp. 179-180.

Are you taking time to think?

I think everyone can relate to chasing so many things that you feel exhausted, but haven't accomplished much. It matters that you decide what you will let take your attention and your energy. Choose priorities that will help you get the results you want. When you define and decide on your priorities you can accomplish so much more than if you just try to get out there and do everything on your own.

Remember, only *you* can define and decide how you will use your time. In order to implement more, you've got to view your time as a precious, finite resource that must be planned around your priorities.

Many entrepreneurs experience the frustration that comes with time because their businesses consume so much of their daily lives. Even when a business becomes successful, an owner may find that now they don't have enough time to enjoy the fruits of their labors because they are so busy. This is no different in your business or in your life. We are all short on time in almost every area of our lives. The key is to view time differently and start having it work for you.

All of us have 168 hours in every week. If you sleep 8 hours a day you have already used up 56 of your 168 hours. If it takes an hour each morning from the time your alarm goes off through showering, brushing your teeth, eating breakfast and heading out to the store, here is another 7 hours a week. We'll add another 3 ½ hours at 30 minutes every day for the amount of time it takes to wind down, get ready for bed and go to sleep. Now there are 101.5 hours left in the week. If you commute each day to your business or job, you probably could spend another 3-7 hours every week just driving in your car commuting. Then if you are physically at your workplace 8-9 hours a day, you have used another 48-56 hours depending on how many hours your business is open and whether or not you work 5, 6, or 7 days a week.

When you factor in the time that you run errands and eat dinner, you are left with less than forty hours a week (or an average of 5-6 hours a day, to get done everything else that really matters to you). With essentially 75% of our life consumed each week by our work and other necessary activities, we are essentially left with a small percentage of time left to do things for our spouse, our children, hobbies or interests, sports, exercise, friends, personal errands, TV shows or entertainment, and I'm sure that you could add another dozen items or more that take up your remaining time.

Brian Tracy once observed: "Time is inelastic; it cannot be stretched. Time is indispensable; all work and accomplishment requires it. Time is irreplaceable; there is no substitute for it. And time is perishable; it cannot be saved, preserved, or stored. Once it is gone, it is gone forever."

In the hustle and bustle of life, it is so easy to let everything in our work or business consumes our lives. When we have so much to do and too little time, it is easy to get overwhelmed and feel that we are losing control of our time. Time management helps us control the *sequence* of events in our day so that we can better *control* our lives.

However, remember that we are always free to choose what we do *first*, what we do *second*, and what we choose *not to do* at all. Our lives are the sum of the choices we make each day. By making better choices and better decisions we can redirect the course of our lives so that we can be happier.

One of the reasons that we sometimes fail in our time management is that we allow lesser priority activities to take precedence of higher priority activities simply because we don't plan the higher priority activities and set them in stone. When you know your priorities and plan around them, it is amazing how much more you can get done that brings personal fulfillment. Plan around your priorities and this difference in perspective on your time will help you get more done.

A great example of someone who defined and decided on his role was Lou Whittaker. In 1984, Lou led the first all-American team to the summit of Mt. Everest. After months of grueling effort, five members of the team reached the final campsite at twenty-seven thousand feet. With two thousand feet to go, they met in a crowded tent. Whittaker had a tough decision to make: he knew how highly motivated all five climbers were to stand on the highest point on earth. But two would have to go back to the previous camp, load up on food, water, and oxygen, then return to the camp where they now met. After completing this support assignment, these two climbers would be in no condition to make a try for the summit. The others would stay in the tent that day to drink water, breathe oxygen, and rest, preparing them for the summit attempt the next day. The first decision Whittaker made was to stay at the twenty-seven-thousand-foot camp to coordinate the team's activities. The next was to send the two strongest climbers down the mountain to get the supplies; it was the tougher job. The two weaker climbers would rest, renew their strength, and receive the glory of the summit. When asked why he

didn't assign himself the summit run, his answer was interesting. He said, "My job was to put other people on top."

That's the power of defining and deciding what you must do to accomplish your goal. You will improve your productivity when you *increase* your clarity and focus. You may find yourself getting online and wasting time if you are frustrated, discouraged or unclear about what you want. When you are clear about what you want, you will spend less time on routine, non-value tasks and more time on tasks with tremendous value that will help you achieve your goals.

Make up a list of all of the things you do in your business (there might be 15-20 things) that only you can do. Then determine—what is the *most* important thing you do? What is the most valuable use of your time right now? Whatever the answer, do that and only that. Delegate the rest.

The more clarity you have behind why you are building your business the more motivated you will be to release the internal power to accomplish your goals. Disraeli put it best: "Nothing can resist the human will that will stake its existence on the extent of its purpose."

If your purpose is to sell to the vast majority of every client in your marketplace who needs what you offer and you are passionate about that purpose, you will find you will awaken the energy to realize and fulfill your purpose. You can get even clearer in this purpose by continually asking, "And I want to do that because... or I want to do that so I can do..."

Author Steve Chandler says:

"Most people are surprised to learn that the reason they're not getting where they want in life is because their major goals are too small. And too vague. And therefore have no power. Your major goal will not be reached if it fails to excite your imagination. What really increases motivation is the setting of a large and specific *power* goal.

A goal is just a goal. A *power goal* is a goal that takes on virtual reality. It lives and breathes and provides motivational energy. It gets you up in the morning. You can taste it, smell it and feel it. You've got it clearly pictured in your mind. You've got it written down. And you keep writing it down because every time you do it fills you with clarity of purpose."--Steve Chandler, *100 Ways to Motivate Yourself*, p. 24.

The clearer your purpose, the more motivated you will be to get out and make it happen. Focus. If you can focus single-mindedly on any task, you can accomplish anything in the world. Determine that you are going to concentrate single-mindedly on your most important tasks and focus on these. Concentrated and focused effort gives you renewed energy and motivation to continue on to the next task.

## 2. TAKE THE DIRECT APPROACH.

Brian Tracy tells this story about Operation Market Garden in his book *Victory* about the power of simplicity and the chaos that results from having too many steps. He says:

"In September 1944, British Field Marshall Montgomery convinced General Dwight D. Eisenhower that he could bring World War II to a quick conclusion if he could just have enough men, material, and paratroopers to simultaneously seize five key bridges over rivers and canals in the Netherlands and

cross the Rhine River into Germany in force. At the same time, Allied tanks and infantry were to push through from the front line, relieve the airborne troops, and cross the bridges. Reluctantly, and because of political pressure from Churchill, Eisenhower allowed Montgomery to proceed with Operation Market Garden. This plan was in sharp contrast to Eisenhower's strategy of attacking along a broad Allied front, but he nonetheless allowed it to proceed. It turned out to be one of the big mistakes of the war.

"In the midst of the planning for this operation, one of the intelligence officers, Lt. General Roy Browning, observed that in attempting to take four bridges in a row, and then the fifth bridge at Arnhem, the allies were perhaps going 'a bridge too far.' This turned out to be exactly what happened.

"In one of the most complex offensive operations of World War II, thousands of paratroopers were dropped throughout the Netherlands, each group assigned to seize a particular bridge near their drop area. However, because of faulty maps and poor information, many men were dropped miles from their assigned bridges. They then had to fight their way to the bridges over hotly contested terrain, armed only with light weapons.

"The Allies received a warning that German troops were in the area, but the warning was late and was ignored. Some of the finest German infantry and Panzer Corps were refitting in the area. They were immediately put into action to counterattack the Allied troops landing all around them.

"Meanwhile, there was only one road along which supplies for the beleaguered paratroopers could be brought. Maps turned out to be inaccurate, and entire regiments got lost. There were communication problems as well as a lack of supplies and ammunition. Trucks broke down, and river crossing equipment went astray. More Allied troops were both dropped and trucked into the battle. There were not enough aircraft to deliver the troops all at once. The Germans also had anti-aircraft defenses near Arnhem that made it too dangerous for the gliders to land there; consequently, they landed seven miles away, thereby destroying the element of surprise. The Germans quickly figured out the Allied plan, reorganized their forces, and counterattacked furiously. By the time Operation Market Garden collapsed, it had been a complete defeat; costing thousands of lives and leaving the Allies right back where they started. The entire offensive violated the principle of simplicity from the first moment. The operation was ill conceived from the start. There were simply far too many variables, all of which had to come together at once to assure success. The complexity of the operation was such that virtually no one, at any level of command, had a clear idea of what was happening, or what could be done to minimize losses or achieve victory. In retrospect, it was a foolish waste of precious human and material resources."—pp. 165-167.

What an important cautionary lesson! Trying to do too much on too many fronts will usually not end well. It is much better to be focused and clear about what is trying to be achieved. When there are lots of moving pieces, it is even more important the overall strategy is understood by all. The clearer your plans are, the easier it will be to achieve them. The other thing to remember is that business is not conducted in a vacuum. Your competition will launch counterattacks against you. It is just a matter of time before they respond to what you do in the marketplace. This means that you have to adjust as well.

### **3. HAVE THE RIGHT MINDSET: PIG HEADED DETERMINATION**

Chet Holmes calls the process of sticking to something until it is completed "pig headed determination."

When you are passionate about something, you are more likely to have pig headed determination, but it does not necessarily mean that you will get out of your comfort zone and do anything about what must be done. When you do things you've never done before, you will gain confidence and power in accomplishing the tasks you have before you. You've got to begin and see it through.

I really like what Anthony Robbins says about this in his book *Awaken the Giant Within*. He says:

“If we want to create change, we have to realize that it’s not a question of whether we *can* do it, but rather whether we *will* do it. Whether we will or not comes down to our level of motivation, which in turn comes down to those twin powers that shape our lives, pain and pleasure....If you’ve tried many times to make a change and you’ve failed to do so, this simply means that *the level of pain for failing to change is not intense enough*. You have not reached threshold, the ultimate leverage.”

He continues:

“So why would someone not change when they feel and know that they should? *They associate more pain to making the change than to not changing*. To change someone, including ourselves, we must simply reverse this so that not changing is incredibly painful (painful beyond our threshold of tolerance), and the idea of changing is attractive and pleasurable!”--*Awaken the Giant Within*, pp. 127-128.

So, if we want to change and get more done, we have to get out of our comfort zone and do different things. Seek growth experiences outside of yourself that will stretch you and help you to grow.

You’ve got to have pig headed determination to succeed or you’ll go right back to what you used to do. I like this statement by author Marshall Goldsmith that outlines why most people aren’t better implementers in life. He says:

“As much as we all claim to want happiness and meaning in our lives (very few people say that they want to live miserable, empty lives), there’s a paradoxical catch that thwarts us at every turn. I call it the Mojo Paradox and I want you to burn it into your memory:

*Our default response in life is not to experience happiness.*

*Our default response in life is not to experience meaning.*

*Our default response in life is to experience inertia.*

In other words, our most common everyday process—the thing we do more often than anything else—is *continue to do what we’re already doing*.

If you’ve ever come to the end of a TV show and then passively continued watching the next show on the same channel, you know the power of inertia. You only have to press a button on the remote (an expenditure of less than one calorie of energy) to change the channel. Yet many of us cannot do that. Quite often, inertia is so powerful that we can’t even hit the remote to turn the TV off! We continue doing what we’re doing even when we no longer want to do it.

Inertia is the reason I can say the following with absolute certainty about your immediate future. The most reliable predictor of what you will be doing five minutes from now is what you are doing now. If you’re reading now, you’ll probably be reading five minutes from now. The same is true for almost any other daily activity. If you are drinking or exercising or shopping or surfing the Internet now, you will probably be drinking or exercising or shopping or surfing the Internet five minutes from now. Take a minute to let that sink in and weigh the statement against your own life.” – *Mojo: How to Get It, How to Keep It, How to Get it Back If You Lose It*, pp. 34-35.

He continues:

“Very few people achieve positive, lasting change without ongoing follow-up. Unless they know at the end of the day (or week or month) that someone is going to measure if they’re doing what they

promised to do, most people fall prey to inertia. They continue doing what they *were* doing. They don't change their behavior, and as a result, they don't become more effective.”—Marshall Goldsmith, *Mojo*, p. 36.

Many entrepreneurs fall prey to this trap of going with the flow (of doing things the way they've always been done) instead of looking for new ways to improve. Here are four ways you can avoid going with the flow:

- 1) *Improve your associations.* Get around others who stretch your mind and help you see the possibilities. There is a story told that indicates how important it is to get around others who know different ways of doing things. As the story goes, one morning the family got a late start, and the six year old missed her bus to school. Though it would make him late for work, the father agreed to take her to school if she could give him directions. They left the neighborhood, and the young girl began directing her father to take one turn after another. Following twenty minutes of circuitous driving, they arrived at the school, which turned out to be only eight blocks away. Steaming, the father asked the kindergartener why she had him drive all over the place when the school was so close to home. “We went the way the bus goes,” she said. “That’s the only way I know.” Look for other associations who can help you learn different ways to do things than how you’ve always done them. You may learn shortcuts and more efficient ways to get better results. Without improved association, you’ll stay confined within a self-made prison where there is only one-way to do something (which may or may not be the best way to do it).
- 2) *When you experience discouragement and defeat, choose to bounce rather than break.* Author Roger Crawford was born without seven fingers and one leg. How many in a similar situation would have broken with such a condition? He didn’t. He has bounced back from this setback to become a successful tennis player and is a highly sought after motivational speaker. In his book *How High Can You Bounce?* Crawford makes this statement: “Life’s problems are like small fires in a large building. If we can shut a door and confine the problem to one area, it is less likely to spread. But if all of the doors are open, the problems can feed on each other and build into one huge inferno of negativism and hopelessness. Which would you rather be, powerful or pitiful? Would you prefer to take charge and take off? Or just take it? To act or to react? Nothing can devastate us without our permission. We can choose to describe any situation in resilient language.”--p. 25.
- 3) *Break free of your comfort zone and get a better recovery rate.* When you take a physical examination at the doctor’s office, they usually measure your recovery rate. A nurse will first check your resting pulse rate and then have you do some type of vigorous exercise for a few minutes. Then, two minutes after the exercise, your resting pulse rate is tested again. They are looking for how quickly you’ve recovered or your recovery rate. People who are in good shape return to their resting pulse rate quickly. People who are not in shape often still find themselves wheezing, out of breath, and with a higher heart rate. To better deal with change and beating the status quo, you need to have a good recovery rate. If you choose to make a different decision with your business and you are paralyzed by fear shortly after you make the decision to the point where you stop or quit the progress you’re making, you’ve experienced this type of resistance. Work at being more resilient and open to doing new things. It will help you grow quicker and get to where you want to go much faster than sticking with the status quo.
- 4) *Know where you are going.* The clearer you are about your own personal vision, the easier it will be to say no to competing demands for your time and efforts. We can’t be like Alice in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*, who asks for directions in this way during her encounter with the Cheshire Cat:  
“Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?” she asks.



“That depends a good deal on where you want to get,” the cat replies with a grin.

“I don’t care much where,” she answers.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” the cat responds.

If you are undecided about the direction of your business, you will merely *drift* along and will likely not achieve the success you could if we would just focus in on what we need to do and do it.

Thomas Edison once said: “Sticking to it is the genius! Any other bright-minded fellow can accomplish just as much [as I did] if he will stick like hell and remember nothing that’s any good works by itself. You got to make the damn thing work. I’ll never give up, for I may have a streak of luck before I die.”

#### **4. DON’T LET OBSTACLES STOP YOU.**

The difference between an average income and an extraordinary one is implementation. No competitor has any more time than you do to get things done in a day. Each of us has no more than 60 minutes to an hour, 24 hours to a day, or 7 days to a week. Time is the great equalizer. What matters is how you choose to use the 1,440 minutes you are given each day.

Every person has more ideas than they take time to actually implement in their lives or in their business. With the same amount of time each day, the only difference between the results people get is how it is spent and what actions are taken everyday. Some actions will produce miniscule results. Others produce massive results. Choosing where to put your time and choosing to act on the best ideas that will help you achieve your goals will be actions that will have the biggest impact in your life.

There are five big obstacles to getting more done. They are:

**1. Choosing lesser priority things because true priorities haven’t been established.**

Stephen Covey in his book, *Principle Centered Leadership* says: “The essence of time management is to set priorities and then to organize and execute around them.”

If you don’t take control of your time, time will control you.

**2. Failure to plan out time effectively.**

Author and speaker Jim Rohn said, “Don’t start your day until you have it finished on paper first.”

Take time to think – at least 15 to thirty minutes each day of uninterrupted thought. You can at least take 14 minutes of the 1,440 minutes that are in each day (less than 1% of the total day) to think about and plan your day. Take a pad of paper and pencil and think on paper about the upcoming bridal shows you have, the challenges you’re facing with your staff, how to bring more brides into the store, how to help your staff sell more, how to sell extra prom inventory at the end of the season, etc. The key is to take time every day to think and to plan. Make the decision that you won’t start your day without finishing it on paper first. You will find that you will accomplish so much more if you will think on paper—even though you will get interrupted continuously as soon as you walk in the store. Do your best to get back on task as quickly as you can. This is so much easier if you have outlined what you need to do each day then if you just kind of wing it.

**3. Failure to value personal time. Even if you do, there may be members of your staff who do not.**

**4. There is too much to do and too little time to do it in.**

We all have too much to do and too little time. Why is this true?

1. Every time you turn around you get more to do—you have more phone calls, more mail, more emails and more challenges to deal with the prospects entering your marketing funnel and clients coming into your business.
2. As you become better at what you do, you attract more opportunities to do it. If you're like me, it is difficult sometimes to say no, because you know that you *can* do something well. Since we are responsible people, we don't turn away the responsibility to do something.

Here is a painful reality: You will *never* get caught up. You're never going to get everything done. No matter how good you are at time management, how early you get up, how late you stay at work, you will never get caught up. With that said, you can choose to focus on priorities that you can finish and that is what this is about. You can choose what to do with your time and then force yourself to use a better system where you can plan and then act on what must be done.

**5. We aren't organized.**

Fortunately, organization is a skill and can be learned. Everyone can learn to become extremely well organized, efficient, and effective. The payoff for good planning is huge. You save 10 minutes on execution for every minute that you spend planning.

## **5. WORK BY DEADLINES.**

A deadline is a stop time by which something must be completed. Too many entrepreneurs have start times, but no stop time. They'll spend too much time working on something that they don't need to.

Use the timer on your smart phone to schedule a start time and an end time for what you will do. It will ring or beep when the time you've allotted is up. Then, when the timer stops, you have to stop working on that activity. To be more focused and productive, you have to have a beginning time *and* an end time.

I have been able to accomplish a lot in a short period of time through this method. When you set the clock, don't let anything distract you from your goal to complete the task in the next 30, 50, or 90 minutes blocks or whatever time allotment you give yourself. If you do this, you will get so much more done.

If you set aside just 50 minutes each day of productive time (and you eliminate all distractions so that this time really is productive), you'll find that you will gain 188 hours a year of intense productivity (if you just do this once per day for 5 days a week). That's nearly eight days of time that you will have spent in focused marketing work at your business. Set a goal to try this this next month. Come into work at least an hour and a half earlier than anyone else. Turn off your phone, disable your Internet access from your computer, close your email program and focus on one thing that can help you business to grow. If you will do this consistently every day for 1 week and then one month, you'll be amazed at how much more you are able to get done.

Be clear about why you are doing what you are doing. The more clarity you have and the more tied your daily activities are to your goals, the more productive you will be. Deadlines work to get things done. Use them.

## 6. BATCH AND BLOCK YOUR WORK.

When you do several similar tasks together, the tasks become easier and you get them done quicker. The best way to do this is to separate out all of the tasks into batches and do them in one time block. I call this skill batching and blocking. So, you can return all of your phone calls at one time. You can send all of your return emails in a batch or write on one subject for a specified period of time. When you batch things together, you'll discover that not only do you get better at it, but you'll be able to do it quicker. I've learned this anytime I've learned a new piece of software or any new business skill. When I first start, it typically takes a little longer than I expected to learn the skill. Of course, skill development can speed up with good teachers and training. But, if there is a skill that you want and need to learn then batching those activities into a specific time period will allow you to get those actions done more quickly.

For example, when I batch audio editing files into a specified time period with a start and end time, I found I could get it done quicker and more efficiently. If you want to get more done, this is one of the best strategies to do it. As you go through the learning curve with any new skill, you'll be able to get the core activity completed more efficiently as you do it consistently in batches and as you block the activities together in time segments.

One of my favorite stories about blocking time to get something done is from the life of Charles Lindbergh. Even his seemingly solo flight was a team effort since nine businessmen from St. Louis were his sponsors and he also had his plane built by the Ryan Aeronautical Company. Lindbergh's solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean lasted more than thirty-three hours at a distance of 3,600 miles. That kind of focus over such a sustained period of time takes practice. Lindbergh's friend Frank Samuels flew often with Lindbergh in the 1920s from St. Louis to San Diego to deliver mail and to check on the progress of his plane, *The Spirit of St. Louis*. "One night Samuels woke up shortly after midnight and noticed that Lindbergh was sitting by the window looking at the stars. It had been a long day, so Samuels asked, 'Why are you sitting there at this hour?'

'Just practicing,' answered Lindbergh.

'Practicing what?' asked Samuels.

'Staying awake all night.'"—John C. Maxwell, *Go for Gold*, p. 154.

What an inspiring example of batching and blocking out time! Some tasks can be batched and blocked as they are in the manufacturing process. What makes manufacturing more efficient is when a task is broken down into a specific series of steps and the person who does that task specializes in getting it done. I have been amazed when I have watched the process of how things are made at factories I've been to around the world. For example at a clothing factory, there are different seamstresses who specialize in the skills of beading, embroidery, or cutting fabric. They can complete their work much more efficiently because they have specialized in it. They are able to get it done more quickly because they become more efficient. When you have a large group of people assembled in a factory manufacturing anything, it is amazing how quickly something can be completed because of this principle.

We all know this instinctively, yet on occasion, I still try to do things on my own. You may have this tendency as well. Yet, when you delegate and have team members specialize in specific tasks, they get better and more efficient and together you are able to accomplish so much more. When I was younger, I used to go with my father to horse pulling competitions since my father is a farrier. I was amazed to

watch how much more weight two Clydesdale horses could pull together than a single horse could pull on its own. You will accomplish more synergistically with others than you ever can all by yourself.

You have to work at what you want to improve. A great example for me is writing. When I first started writing, it would take me a long time to compose my thoughts and they were often jumbled together and not very cohesive. In fact, my seventh grade teacher once returned a marked up paper I had turned in with the words at the top: “You will never be a writer.” Now that I’ve written several books, I thought about sending her one. I’ve acquired that skill and gotten better at it because I have worked at it for years, working on it in blocks of time specifically set out from my schedule. You must batch and block out the skill areas you want to develop as well. Once you determine the result you are after, you can build your focus to achieve success in these areas.

As I’ve traveled and I’m sure you’ve noticed this too, there are people who can’t go 2 minutes without checking their email or looking at their smart phone. Technology can be a complete distraction if you allow it to be. Email messages can wait for a little while. They don’t have to be answered immediately. It is best to get to them within 12-24 hours, but you can do this all at once and all at one time. To avoid this tendency, you’ve got to work at it. You’ve got to consciously choose NOT to look at your smart phone when you are talking with others or when you have a quiet moment. If you don’t control it, it will completely overtake and control you.

## 7. WORK IN YOUR AREA OF GENIUS AND DELEGATE THE REST.

Your actions and feelings affect each other. If you are doing something you aren’t very good at, you won’t be confident about completing it. You’ll put it off. Remember to work in your area of genius. By controlling your actions and doing what you do best, you feel positive about what you are doing and more confident in completing the task that lies before you. The most important thing is to begin. If you can’t do it, then delegate it to someone who can.

Goethe said: “Each indecision brings its own delay and days are lost lamenting over lost days. Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute! What you can do, or dream you can, begin it! Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Only engage, and then the mind grows heated. BEGIN, and then the work will be completed.”

Choose to work in your area of genius and you’ll confidently move towards the completion of your goal. When you are uncertain, you will hesitate. I love this statement by W. N. Murray:

“Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness.

Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: That the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would otherwise never have occurred.

“A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one’s favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way.”

Whatever it is that you want to do, begin to do it. Once you put forth the effort, you will receive the energy to complete the task.

## 8. REPORT AND REVISIT. HAVE ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS THAT YOU CHECK IN WITH AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK.

Laura Vanderkam in her book *What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast* says:

“Numbers have consequences....If you’ve ever tried to lose weight, you know that nutritionists will tell you to keep a food journal, because evidence shows it works. One study of a year-long weight-loss program, published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* in 2012, found that women who kept a food journal lost about six pounds more than those who did not. Writing down what you eat keeps you accountable for what you put in your mouth. Likewise, writing down how you spend your time keeps you accountable for the hours that pass, whether or not you’re conscious of them.”—pp. 89-90.

If you’re going to implement more, you’ve got to follow the principle of report and revisit. You’ve got to report to your self or a coach what you’ve done. I have a coach I talk to on a weekly basis who I’m accountable to. I have to report on what I did from the previous week. Knowing I’ll have to report in and revisit what I committed to do helps me ensure that it gets done. I don’t want to show up to a meeting I’m paying for and report that I haven’t done what I said I would do. I would encourage you to have an accountability partner who you work with in this way who keeps you on track with what you want to get done. It may just be that you send an email that reports in or you have a live call where you can report and revisit what you said you would do. I’ve found this action extremely helpful in keeping me on track.

## 9. OVERCOME THE PARALYZING INFLUENCE OF PERFECTION – REMEMBER, COMPLETE IS BETTER THAN PERFECT.

It doesn’t have to be perfect. It needs to be finished. Complete is better than perfect. Perfect will likely never get done. So, focus on what you can do and get it done.

President Ronald Regan told this story before he left office about *Three Musketeers* author Alexander Dumas:

“The novelist and a friend had a heated argument, and one challenged the other to a duel. Both Dumas and his friend were expert marksmen, and they feared that if they proceeded with the duel, both would die. So they decided to draw straws to determine which of them would shoot himself. Dumas picked the short straw.

With a sigh, he picked up his pistol, walked into his library, and closed the door, leaving behind him a group of worried friends. After a few moments, the loud report of a pistol echoed from the library. His friends immediately charged into the room, and there stood Dumas with the pistol still smoking in his hand.

‘An amazing thing just happened,’ said Dumas. ‘I missed.’”--John C. Maxwell, *Failing Forward*, p. 142.

Don’t let mistakes or the inability to get what you wanted done the day before kill you. Recognize it for what it was (‘a miss’) and move on.

## 10. HAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR DELAY AND PROCRASTINATION.

If you don't have a consequence for procrastination, you will probably keep putting it off. Since the goal here is to help you better get things done, I've found that forcing myself to put off something I want if I don't get something done helps me push through the resistance that causes procrastination in the first place.

Stephen Pressfield in his book *The War of Art* says: "Rationalization is Resistance's right-hand man. Its job is to keep us from feeling the shame we would feel if we truly faced what cowards we are for not doing our work."—p. 53.

He continues:

"Resistance is fear. But Resistance is too cunning to show itself naked in this form. Why? Because if Resistance lets us see clearly that our own fear is preventing us from doing our work, we may feel shame at this. And shame may drive us to act in the face of fear. Resistance doesn't want us to do this. So it brings in Rationalization. Rationalization is Resistance's spin doctor. It's Resistance's way of hiding the Big Stick behind its back. Instead of showing us our fear (which might shame us and impel us to do our work), Resistance presents us with a series of plausible, rational justifications for why we shouldn't do our work. What's particularly insidious about the rationalization that Resistance presents to us is that a lot of them are true. They're legitimate....What Resistance leaves out, of course, is that all this means diddly. Tolstoy had thirteen kids and wrote *War and Peace*."—pp.53-56.

Don't buy into your excuses. If you have something to get done and you've been putting it off, get to it now. There's no excuse for procrastination when you are clear about what you want. You've got to overcome your fear and face the fact that if you don't do the work, you're just a coward. That is a realization that I don't think anyone really wants to make about themselves. Don't let this be true about you. Do the work and beat resistance and procrastination.

Here are 9 suggestions by Brian Tracy to help you eliminate procrastination from your life:

1. "Set clear, written goals and write them down on paper. It may help to also make a list of all the reasons why you want to or need to get a task done.
2. Break goals down into bite sized activities. Take one step at a time. The more you can break a task or goal down into baby steps, the easier it will be to achieve. Don't let your big goals remain big goals. Instead break it down into smaller steps. A good way to do this is to write down 7 ways to accomplish the goal and then break this down into 7 more steps for each goal. When you are done, you will have 49 steps to achieve your goal.
3. Select one single task that will help you achieve your goal and start on it immediately.
4. Look at the job ahead of you as a block of cheese or a piece of Salami. Slice off one piece of the job and then do that one piece.
5. 20/80 the task. Sometimes the first 20% of the job is 80% of the task. Get started. Do what you need to do.
6. Set a time limit. Work on the job for 15 minutes.
7. Set up a rewards structure. Give yourself a reward for completing part of the job.
8. Promise others that you do something by a certain period of time. If we promise someone that we will do something, we are more likely to get it done.
9. If you were called out of town for one month, what one task would you have to do?"--Brian Tracy, *Time Management for Results*

## 11. LIVE IN THE NOW.

Your competitors can cut their price, say negative things about your product or company or spend more money on advertising than you can, but here are three things they can't prevent you from doing:

1. Working harder
2. Thinking smarter
3. Serving better

All three of those strategic behaviors are completely within your control and can be done when you live in the now.

I really like this statement by Daniel Drubin in his book, *Let Go of Your Bananas* about the difference between motivation and willpower. He says:

“Remember, there is a very big difference between motivation and willpower. Motivation tends to come from an outside source and is very often short in duration. I have never seen a person who relied on motivation accomplish long-term success in his or her life. However, the people I know who have the internal drive created by sheer willpower seem to be able to work miracles. They function with great clarity about their goals, certain about achieving those goals, and they continually move in the direction of their desires. Willpower comes from passion, and when you are passionate about something you will be inspired to greatness.”--p. 59.

This is so true in your business and in your life. When you *do* what makes you feel good about yourself, *you will do more of it*. As you know, the best time to make a sale is right after you've made a sale. Successful actions give you the motivational energy to complete another successful action. Living in the now will help you implement more now.

## 12. BEAT RESISTANCE.

You can change if you aren't happy with where you are. You can overcome setbacks, defeats and failures. Failure is not fatal. However, you've got to beat the resistance to change by changing the software in your mind. Dr. Henry Cloud makes this observation in his book *Boundaries for Leaders*:

“Resistance to change is a fact of life. If you want change to take hold, you must have good boundaries to contain the forces that are working against your effort.” --p. 216.

You've got to create those boundaries in your thoughts and emotions. So, choose to begin each day with the attitude that when you walk out to work with brides each day, you will astonish them. Don't be boring. Don't be predictable. Be different. Take control of your business. Refuse to be controlled by fear. Stop internalizing your disappointments, defeats and discouragement and letting the three P's prevent you from doing what you are capable of at your store. We all fail. Yet, we can rise from these failures to accomplish new and amazing things.

Leonardo da Vinci said:

“Obstacles cannot crush me. Every obstacle yields to stern resolve. He who is fixed to a star does not change his mind.”

### 13. KNOW YOUR WEAKNESSES AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY.

Unfortunately, many people today (and you may be one of them) let their weaknesses stop them from accomplishing more. They paralyze themselves and their growth by letting their weaknesses control them and by being fearful of the future.

Andrew Matthews in his book *Being Happy* said: “As the things that we love and most fear will tend to occupy our thoughts much of the time, so will we tend to attract those very things.”

Consider these examples of this:

- Have you ever totally ruined a new suit of clothes the very first time you wore them? Just as you were thinking to yourself, “I don’t want to dirty this lovely new shirt or blouse,” you spill your drink or something all over yourself.
- Or have you ever heard someone say: “I drove a beaten up old wreck for seven years and never even scratched it. As soon as I got my new car, people started driving into the back of me, sideswiping me and running me off the road.”

Then he makes this statement:

“I spoke earlier of the woman who had five accidents in seven years. At last she realized that she has dwelt so much on her fears that she has attracted what she did not want. Even if we say to our mind, ‘I don’t want ‘A’ to happen, we will gravitate toward ‘A’. ***Our mind cannot move away from anything only toward something.***”

He concludes: “Focus on what you want. Dwelling on your fears will bring them upon you.”--Andrew Matthews, *Being Happy!*, pp. 70-73.

On top of attracting what we fear into our lives, we also face the challenge of overcoming our weaknesses. We have to be the leaders here – since as playwright Lister Sinclair once observed: “A frightened captain makes a frightened crew.”

### 14. KNOW WHAT MOTIVATES YOU AND REWARD YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY FOR COMPLETION OF A TASK.

When you fail to keep a promise to yourself because of laziness or a lack of desire, you weaken yourself and your motivation for the future. For your own growth, it is just as important to keep the promises you make to yourself as you do for others.

Let’s talk about rewards. Give yourself a reward for completing part of what you’re working on. Take a sip of your favorite drink after you’ve done something, or give yourself one bite of a cookie. Perhaps you set the reward as eating lunch after you’ve finished the task you’re working on. Or you allow yourself a Hershey’s kiss or some other treat. Maybe your motivating reward can be saying: I am going to go out tonight with my spouse if I can get \_\_\_\_\_ done.



Remember, you are more likely to get something done if you promise someone else that you will do something by a certain period of time and then have to report to them whether you did it or not. Then, reward yourself once that action is completed.

For example, if you set a goal to lose weight and you don't go to the gym, after you have told yourself you will, you lose self-respect. When you do what you say you will do, you will feel a great sense of accomplishment and peace of mind. When you do what you say you are going to do, you create more energy to do it again.

You will find that you will have more energy and will stay motivated by putting positive things into your mind so that you can encourage those around you to be more motivated as well. You'll never be great at implementation unless you can motivate yourself to do something. Sir Edmund Hillary, the first person on the top of Mount Everest said: "Strong motivation is the most important factor in getting you to the top." Wise words.

## 15. KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS AND DO WORK IN BLOCKS THAT CORRESPOND WITH YOUR ENERGY LEVELS.

To get more done, you've got to know your limitations. There are times in the day when you are more energetic so arrange your day so that your most difficult and important challenges coincide with your peak energy levels. Charles Givens in his book *SuperSelf* says: "Every person has a specific time of the day when we are most effective. If you have ever referred to yourself as a morning or a night person, you are already aware of your peak performance period. It is the time of day when you have the greatest clarity of thinking, have the most creativity, the most confidence, and the most energy. Research has shown that the average person experiences four periods of performance during the course of a sixteen-hour day.

These are:

- Three hours of peak performance
- Five hours of good performance
- Six hours of feeling as if they are not operating on all cylinders
- And two hours of complete exhaustion"

During our peak performance times, we can accomplish and produce more results than during our off-peak times. Your goal should be to determine when your peak hours are and then do your highest priority, most focused activities during this time.

In his book, *SuperSelf*, Charles Givens invites the reader to evaluate three statements to assess how well you are working during your peak performance time in your life right now. These are great statements to consider. They are:

- I currently plan my activities and my day around my peak performance hours.
- I am aware of my peak performance hours, but only occasionally schedule my activities around them.
- I currently do not schedule my activities around my peak performance hours but will begin today.

Make a list of the activities that you do at your bridal store each and every day. Divide these into two categories: 1) activities that require peak performance and 2) activities that can be done in off-peak

hours and then stick to only doing activities in each area during the appropriate time. It is amazing how much more efficient we can be if we utilize our time effectively this way.

To help you start with this list, here are a few ideas:

<b>Activities that Require Peak Performance</b>	<b>Activities that Can Be Done in Off-Peak Hours</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing campaigns for the store</li> <li>• Decision making for the store</li> <li>• Preparing for training meetings for staff</li> <li>• Analyzing reports and determining what to buy before attending markets</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Thinking about the direction of the store and how to improve and maybe how you can specifically implement things you've learned from what I have taught you here</li> <li>• Meetings with staff members about performance and improvement</li> <li>• Setting goals for the store for the month or year</li> <li>• Selling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bill paying</li> <li>• Going through the mail</li> <li>• Phone calls, Sending/Receiving Emails</li> <li>• Errands (going to the bank, picking up supplies, etc.)</li> <li>• Changing dress displays or retail displays around the store</li> <li>• Sending thank you cards to brides who have bought dresses</li> <li>• Meeting with vendors</li> <li>• Meeting with salespeople from various manufacturers or advertisers</li> <li>• Going to the post office to drop off catalogs to be mailed out</li> </ul>

Once you determine your peak performance times, do your best to stick to doing only those things during that time. It will make a huge difference in your productivity and effectiveness and ensure that you implement your most important tasks more quickly.

## 16. ESTABLISH YOUR PRIORITY OF THE MOMENT AND GET THE MOST FROM THOSE MOMENTS.

Now, this minute, is all of the time that we have. If we can learn to manage ourselves minute by minute, the hours and days will take care of themselves. As John Maxwell says, "Today matters."

A recent survey of 1,800 global executives reported by Paul Leinwand and Cesare Mainardi in the *Harvard Business Review* revealed that 64% of all executives report that they have too many conflicting priorities. I once observed a group of entrepreneurs who brainstormed and listed all of the things they wanted to get done that they felt were their most important priorities. Then, they went through the list twice more prioritizing those lists until they had one area of focus. Then, they went to work on that one priority with complete focus. It was a great lesson to me how taking the time to focus and decide made all of the difference in how quickly something was implemented. Don't diffuse your focus into too many areas (some of which may be in conflict with one another).

There is an old saying that "if you have too many priorities, you have none." This concept really goes into the idea of batching and blocking. You can only work on one priority at a time. So, choose wisely. What will help you get to your goal quickest? You've got the same amount of time as anyone else. If you want to implement more, you've got to focus so you can use your time wisely.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once asked, “What would be the use of immortality to a person who cannot use well a half an hour?”

Periodically, ask yourself: Am I making the best use of my time now?

To determine your most important priority, think on paper. Make and use lists. All of us know that we are much more effective when we think through our day on paper first. We don’t do this more often because *it is easier to begin and get distracted* on other activities than it is to take five minutes to plan out your day first and focus on these things systematically throughout the day. Take time to plan out the next day before you leave the store. If you didn’t do this, spend 10-15 minutes first thing to plan out what you will do that day.

The biggest reason why we don’t work off of lists very well is because we have too many things on the list in the first place and it is easier to get distracted by easier things than it is to focus on all of the many activities on the list itself.

Chet Holmes says it very well: “The key to being productive is to stick to the six most important things you need to get done that day. You’ll find that when you have a long list, it becomes the management tool for your time. When you want to feel productive, you go to your list and just pick something and do it. It feels good. When you have a long list, you generally do the easier, less productive tasks just to trim down the list. At the end of the day, you find that the most important things on the list didn’t get completed because they are either the hardest, the most time-consuming or both. Long lists also mean that you will never finish your list. There is a negative psychological impact to not finishing your list. But there is an enormous psychological boost to crossing off that sixth item on your list, especially when all six of them were the most important things you needed to do that day. So here’s the rule: list the six most important things you need to do and, by hook or by crook, get those six things completed each day. That doesn’t mean you don’t keep a side list of running items that need to be done. When you plan each day, you can go to your long list and use that as a menu of items from which to build your list of the six most important things for that day.” –*The Ultimate Sales Machine*, p. 14.

When you plan, write down the six most important priorities you need and will get accomplished the next day before you go home. When you get interrupted, do your best to get back on task as quickly as you can. Remember, productivity is about control.

A great way to help your bridal consultants overcome the tendency to not use their time effectively is to put a dollar figure on the value of their time. Help your bridal consultants figure out how much they want to make per hour and then ask: “Is what I am doing right now earning me \$\_\_\_/hour? If not, what can I start doing to make \$\_\_\_/hour?”

You can help your bridal consultants know the value of their time by what they do in it. Require them to fill out a Daily Productivity Work Sheet so they start measuring their day in terms of accomplishments instead of time passed.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said: “Guard well your spare moments. They are like uncut diamonds. Discard them and their value will never be known. Improve them and they will become the brightest gems in a useful life.”

## 17. FOCUS ON ONE THING AT A TIME. MULTI-TASKING IS A MYTH. YOU'LL GET MORE DONE WHEN YOU FOCUS.

We have all heard that multi-tasking is an essential and important part of getting things done. Unfortunately, multi-tasking is what causes us to be less productive than we could be if we would just focus on one thing for an extended period of time.

Multi-tasking is a so called “skill” that many individuals claim they have and do well. The definition of multitasking on Wikipedia is an interesting one. It says that “***Human multitasking is the performance by an individual of appearing to handle more than one task at the same time.***” The distinction here is “appearing”. There is a difference between “appearing” and actually doing.

There is a really interesting book written on this topic called *The Myth of Multitasking* by Dave Crenshaw. His thesis in the book is that “*multitasking or switchtasking*” reduces your efficiency (doing things right) and effectiveness (doing the right things) because it constantly switches your mental focus.

Listen to what he says: “When most people refer to multitasking they mean simultaneously performing two or more things that require mental effort and attention. Examples would include saying we're spending time with family while were researching stocks online, attempting to listen to a CD and answering email at the same time, or pretending to listen to an employee while we are crunching the numbers. What most people refer to as multitasking, I refer to as "switchtasking." Why?

Because the truth is we really cannot do two things at the same time—we are only one person with only one brain. Neurologically speaking, it has been proven to be impossible. What we are really doing is switching back and forth between two tasks rapidly, typing here, paying attention there, checking our "crackberry" here, answering voicemail there back and forth back and forth at a high rate. Keep this up over a long period of time, and you have deeply engrained habits that cause stress and anxiety and dropped responsibilities and a myriad of productivity & focus problems. It's little wonder so many people complain of increasingly short attention spans!”—Dave Crenshaw, *The Myth of Multitasking*

Tim Ferris, author of *4 Hour Workweek* says that multi-tasking lowers your IQ more than pot smoking!

On the other hand, research has shown that those who stay focused on one thing for a specific period of time are able to get much more accomplished than someone who is trying to get multiple things done at the same time.

One of the biggest lies we can tell ourselves is that we are great multi-taskers. Don't get sucked into believing this lie. Now, you are probably saying, “But, Jim, I really am good at multi-tasking.” Even if you could be good at multi-tasking, those around you at your store are probably not. But, if you feel like that, listen to the results of this study and what it means for you at your store:

“Beginning in 2004, [Gloria Mark] persuaded two West Coast high-tech firms to let her study their cubicle dwellers as they surfed the chaos of modern office life.

One of her grad students, Victor Gonzalez, sat looking over the shoulder of various employees all day long, for a total of more than 1,000 hours. He noted how many times the employees were interrupted and how long each employee was able to work on any individual task.

When Mark crunched the data, a picture of 21st-century office work emerged that was, she says, "far worse than I could ever have imagined." Each employee spent only 11 minutes on any given project before being interrupted and whisked off to do something else. What's more, each 11-minute project was itself fragmented into even shorter three-minute tasks, like answering e-mail messages, reading a Web page or working on a spreadsheet. And each time a worker was distracted from a task, it would take, on average, 25 minutes to return to that task." --Clive Thompson, *The New York Times*, October 16, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/16/magazine/16guru.html?ei=5088&en=2864cc65d74cefb8&ex=1287115200>

Can you believe that? When people get off task, it takes an average of 25 minutes to return to that task because they are constantly interrupted. Think about the consequences of this in your life and at your store. One of the things I continually work on with the top bridal retailers I coach in my Quantum Leap program is this area of carefully measuring how productive they *really* are. Most store owners I've interviewed on this topic have privately admitted to me that they are not as productive at their store as they could or should be. They all attribute it to being constantly interrupted or distracted.

Tony Schwartz in his book *The Power of Full Engagement* says that "the greatest power of the human mind is the ability to focus on one thing at a time." The problem with distraction and interruption is that it causes us to lose our natural ability to focus. This is a very difficult habit to overcome. It is so much easier to log on and check our email and let others control what we do. This causes us to be reactive in our businesses instead of proactively determining and doing what needs to be done.

Get control of yourself. Don't fall for the lie that multi-tasking makes you more productive. In reality, it spreads you thinner so that nothing really gets done as well as it could if you would just focus on one thing single-mindedly for a period of time.

Here are some questions for you to consider:

- Do you feel that you are good at multi-tasking?
- How many times in an average day at your store do you find that you are interrupted?
- How often do you find yourself trying to juggle multiple projects at the same time?
- What one idea have you gotten from what I've shared so far can you start using at your store to become more productive?

Take the time to think through these questions. Most of the things that we do in this business require our focus. When you take your mental focus off of one thing to focus on another, it is certain that you will make mistakes and not accomplish as much as if you would just focus on one single thing at a time.

## **18. AFTER WORKING IN A FOCUSED BLOCK OR WHEN YOU FEEL FATIGUED, TAKE TIME TO REGENERATE YOUR ENERGY.**

Charles Givens says:

"At the opposite end of Peak Performance Periods are those hours in the day when you feel totally fatigued and not much good for anything. Have you ever said to yourself, 'I'm just too tired. I'll do it later?' That's an indication you've stepped into total fatigue time. Fatigue seems a natural excuse for inaction; when repeated over time, it leads to a pattern of personal effectiveness. Get tired, and you are

often stopped to overcome fatigue and reduce the number of totally fatigued hours you experience each day.” –*SuperSelf*, p. 275.

He recommends the following to overcome fatigue:

- 1) *Drink plenty of water.* When you feel fatigue beginning to set in, drink two to three glasses of water and then repeat the process again in fifteen minutes. Loading up the body with water activates the lymphatic system and flushes out toxins, including lactic acid, which is a main physical cause of fatigue. You will feel the effect within five minutes. You will also be running to the rest room more often, of course, but the fatigue-reducing effect is remarkable.
- 2) *Breathe deeply and sit up straight.* Take ten deep breaths. Breathe in deeply and quickly to the count of two, completely filling your lungs. Hold for two seconds, then exhale slowly to the count of four. Do this breathing exercise while sitting or standing. You will increase the supply of oxygen in the blood, which then carries it to your brain, causing you to feel more alert. You will actually feel it happen in an instant.
- 3) *Do some quick exercises.* Do ten push-ups or jog in place for thirty seconds. Exercise will help eliminate fatigue by quickly increasing your heart rate, which slows down dramatically when you become fatigued.
- 4) *Trigger your adrenal glands.* There is a point in the palm of your hand which, when rubbed for twenty to thirty seconds, will trigger your adrenal glands to pump adrenaline in your system, making you feel more alert and alive. The point lies approximately one inch below the base of the longest finger of each hand, in your upper palm. You will feel a bump, which is part of the bone, at the correct place. Place your thumb on that point and, pressing fairly hard, rub in a circular motion for twenty to thirty seconds. Do the same thing with the other hand, and within a minute you will feel a sense of alertness and renewed energy. Do this whenever you experience fatigue or when you wake up drowsy from a deep sleep or a nap. I use this strategy two or three times every day.
- 5) *Refocus on your goals and objectives.* A powerful mental antidote to the onset of fatigue is to remind yourself why it is important to stay on track. Since by now you are filling your day with prioritized activities, think about how your current activity is important to your goals.
- 6) *Use short naps to overcome fatigue.* The mind and body can actually replenish their abilities and strength with as little as a fifteen-to-twenty minute nap during the daytime. I have used the napping technique as a fatigue-buster ever since I was a kid and read about Thomas Edison’s practice of lying down in his laboratory for frequent naps.”—pp. 277-283.

These six strategies are great ways to regenerate your energy when you feel fatigue. I have used all of them. It is hard for me to take a break because I just like to keep going and going. However, I’ve found that when my energy wanes, I feel much better and can continue on to complete a task to completion by regenerating my energy in these ways. We all need to be better at exercising and “sharpening the saw” as Stephen Covey puts it in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Schedule more time to sharpen your saw. If you don’t you will accumulate stress, tension, and anxiety in your life.

Some of the direct results of high levels of continuing stress are:

- Emotional outbursts and explosions
- Migraine headaches
- High blood pressure
- Ulcers
- Skin rashes
- Insomnia
- Depression
- Lack of energy and fatigue
- Tension headaches
- Heart attacks
- Nervous twitches
- Fear, worry, and apprehension
- Clumsiness

You don't want those things in your life. So, eliminate stress by following these four suggestions:

1. *Exercise.* Exercise allows your muscles to go through alternating cycles of tension and relaxation. Forcing your muscles from an abnormal state of tension to a more natural state of relaxation helps to alleviate stress. We all know we should exercise more. Start exercising at least 20 minutes every other day until it becomes a habit. It will help you to eliminate tension and be more productive throughout the day. And, you will feel great about yourself!
2. *Eliminate negative influences from your life.* It is amazing how much negativity there is in the news or when you are around some people. Choose to be positive and be around positive people and influences. It will help reduce the stress of working at the store each day – especially if you've had a nasty experience with a bridezilla or her mother.
3. *Read good books.* Take time to read an uplifting book that can inspire you. I have found that biographies are a great way to be inspired. It is inspiring to read about how great individuals have accomplished so much because of the encouragement of others. Stopping to read also helps you think about how you can improve your life.
4. *Listen to positive people or motivational speakers / teachers.* There are plenty of audio books or podcasts available today that can help you learn new business skills and encourage you. It is amazing how listening to an uplifting recording can lift your spirits after a stressful day.

## 19. WORK IN A CLEAN, UNCLUTTERED ENVIRONMENT.

Clutter saps your discipline, your time, and your energy.

Here is a great definition of clutter: If you haven't looked at it in a year, if it is changing color or fading, if people in your store make fun of it, or if you don't know why you saved it in the first place, it is clutter and you should get rid of it.

If you have been overcome with clutter in your store or in your office space, consider these four things to organize your workspace:

### 1) Clear your desk.

Direct mail entrepreneur Joe Sugarman once wrote a book explaining his five rules for success. One of his five principles was, "End every day with a clean desk." He made this a rule throughout his organization. This policy forced all employees to work more efficiently and complete their work by the end of the day. It made a major contribution to success.

Brian Tracy in his book *Time Power* talks about how he introduced this rule into his company. He told everyone that they were expected to clean up their desks and leave them neat and orderly at the end of each day. When they argued with him, he told them that if they didn't follow this rule, he would go from office to office and throw away everything on their desks into a waste basket to be taken away that night. He said that he only had to follow through on this threat once before everyone realized that he was serious.

One of his managers (who was probably the messiest in his company) gave every excuse he could for working in a cluttered and chaotic environment. Brian refused to listen or compromise and after one week the manager came to him and apologized for being so argumentative. He said, "All my life, I have thought that I worked better in a messy environment. In the last week, I have accomplished two to three times as much as I ever accomplished at work before. I am absolutely astonished at how much more I get done when everything is put in its proper place throughout the day."

What kind of difference could cleaning up your office space mean to your productivity?

Here is a good exercise for you. Stand back from your desk or work area or if you are really brave your front desk that customers see when they enter the store.

Ask yourself: What kind of person works at that desk?

What kind of store has a desk or front counter like this?

Honestly evaluate yourself through the eyes of a neutral third party. What do you *really* see?

In a recent survey of senior executives, it was found that 50 out of 52 said they would not promote a person with a messy desk or a cluttered work environment. Even if that person was producing good work, these executives said they would not trust a position of responsibility to a person who could not get organized. We all can work better at this. Take some time to organize your office this week.

Make the change and everyone will see the difference.

## **2) Assemble everything you need before you start.**

Just like a good cook gets out all of the necessary ingredients to prepare a dish before he begins, or a master craftsman arranges all of his tools, assemble all of the tools of your trade before you start working on a particular job. If you have to place an order with a manufacturer, be sure to have everything you need before you make the call (so that you aren't running around looking for items you forgot like wear dates, size, color, etc.). If your desk is clean and you are organized you'll be able to find everything so much faster and get it done so much quicker.

## **3) Handle paperwork that crosses your desk right the first time.**

It is amazing how much clutter can occur just from stacking bills, mail, printed out emails, orders, Post-It Notes, etc. It is best to take action and handle papers only once as I've already mentioned.

If you choose to file something, ask yourself this question: "What would happen if I couldn't find this paper?" If the consequence is negligible, you may want to consider just tossing it.



It has been found that 80% of papers that are filed are never needed, used, or seen again. Don't create more clutter in your file cabinets just because you are filing.

If you do file things, be sure to have an organized way of filing things. A shocking statistic that I read is that as much as 30% of working time today is spent looking for misplaced items. These are things that have been lost because they have not been filed correctly.

Create a system that works well for you. Here are a couple of suggestions:

- *Alphabetize your files.* This takes some organization, but if you have a list of all of the files that you have outside of your file cabinet, this may be a good way for you to organize it.
- *Organize your files by topic or business area* (example: Marketing, Market Orders for the current year, etc.) or vendor name
- *Set up a 45-file system* – this allows you to organize your time and your schedule for up to two years in advance. Here is how it works—Get a box of 45 files with fourteen hanging files to put them in. The forty five files are divided like this:
  - There are thirty-one files numbered one through thirty-one for the days of the month. There are twelve hanging files for the months of the year (January – December). The last two hanging files are for the next two years. When you have a responsibility or a piece of paper or a bill that needs to have your attention several months or years from now, simply drop the paper into that monthly file. At the beginning of each month, take all of the papers out of the file and organize them into your daily files, numbered one through thirty-one. Each day, take out the file for that day and that becomes the starting point for your planning. It will take a little bit of time to set up, but it is great to help you organize yourself and stop stacking piles of papers around your desk.
  - As a side note, one thing you can do that is helpful in terms of productivity was to prepare our tags after market during the slower times in December prior to receiving the merchandise. This helped us save a tremendous amount of time when we received our merchandise and were trying to get it out as quickly as possible.

**3) Throw away what you don't need.** It is amazing how much stuff we accumulate. Recently, I visited my Grandfather's office. He passed away more than five years ago. They are still trying to organize and get rid of files that he accumulated his entire life. Don't let this happen to you. Throw away catalogs that are more than 2 years old. You don't need to have all of them and you probably can't get many of those dresses any more anyway since they are likely discontinued.

**4) Tear out pages of magazines and articles that you read and file them so that you can use them later.** John Maxwell talks about how he has filed everyday for nearly 50 years and as a result he now has the material to write two books a year. Don't keep magazines lying around your office. Only keep what is valuable and then discard the rest. It will help you to stay much more organized and will give you the material you need to help you train your staff. It will also be a good example to your staff that you expect others to do the same.

## 20. REPURPOSE

One way to get more done is to repurpose something that has already been done into a new format. For example, if you've written a special report to brides, you could take that same content and use it again as a newsletter article, blog post, podcast episode, part of an e-book, or even an email education campaign. Each of these uses may be seen by a different audience.

## 21. VISUALIZE THE COMPLETION OF THE TASK.

Your thinking must be positive, specific and detailed in order for you see and seize what you want. A great book that goes into a lot of detail about this subject is John Maxwell's book: *The Dream Test*.

Here are a couple of things that you ought to visualize each day:

- What kind of business you have (size, amount of sales, etc.)
- Doing what needs to be done to reach your daily goal (We will hit \$\_\_\_\_\_ today – you can even visualize yourself taking the deposit to the bank the next day). When you imagine yourself doing what needs to be done in a successful, positive manner, you will be motivated to do it and make it happen.
- Your reasons (why you do what you do). As Brian Tracy said: “Reasons are the fuel in the furnace of achievement.”

To visualize the completion of the task, expect the best of yourself and think positive thoughts about what you want to achieve. To visualize success, you've got to stop thinking negatively or thinking about failure. I would encourage you to go on a 21-day diet of watching or reading any kind of news. Instead of filling your mind with the negative thoughts of others, fill your mind with ideas or things you can do to improve yourself and your business. Here are three suggestions to help you better visualize the completion of the task:

- **Fill your mind with your own self-suggestions.** Self-suggestion is an important part of self-motivation. So, fill your mind with thoughts such as: “I am cheerful.” “I make things happens at my store.” “I am the best salesperson in the world.” “Every bride I meet wants to buy a dress from me on her first visit.” “My store is successful and growing every day.”
- **Write positive quotes or thoughts on a 3 x 5 card or a little notebook.** Carry it around with you and reflect on what you've written down
- **Let go of your limitations.** “Ricky Henderson, the greatest base stealer in the history of baseball, had a decision to make each time he contemplated stealing a base. He could choose not to steal the base and remain exactly where he was, or he could run the risk of leaving safety and comfort for the possibility of something greater. Ricky understood that if he wanted to get to second base, the first thing he had to do was take his foot off first base....The same could be said of a trapeze artist. To get from one side of the net to the other, he or she must be prepared to let go.”--Dr. Daniel Drubin, *Letting Go of Your Bananas*, pp. 3-4.

Visualizing what you don't want will hold you back and prevent you from accomplishing what you want. Instead, be clear about what you want, write it down and then mentally see yourself completing the task in front of you. *Remember, you can't get to the next level without letting go of where you are now.*

Feeling overwhelmed is a bad habit. It is easier to stop doing something because you get overwhelmed then it is to break down what needs to be done and work on it one thing at a time.

I have a business coach who taught me this lesson. I am in the process of learning a new design skill. It is challenging and I'm not very good at it. My coach taught me: I see you getting that glazed look in your eye. You've got to stop feeling overwhelmed. Look, I'll teach you how to do this, step by step, but if you can't get past this feeling of being overwhelmed, you'll never learn this skill.”

That is great advice. None of us can get better at improving our business skills until we charge forward to learn the skill instead of making excuses for why we can't. All of us are busy. All of us have more to do than time to do it in. We all have the same 24 hours in a day.

If you want to implement more, you've got to choose your individual priorities and be committed to work on those items you've identified as most important each day. Focus on systems that will improve your business. Focus on priorities that pay big dividends. You can learn skills that aren't currently easy and do what you need to do to grow and get better. Breaking down your day into time blocks with start and end times has been so helpful to me and I know it will be for you as well.

I hope you've been inspired by these twenty-one proven ways in which you can implement more in your business. Remember, the difference between those with an average income and an exceptional income is implementation. Choose to be a finisher and an implementer. You can do it!