



Talk versus Action—Planning

Planning is the first step toward making your goals come to life. There are tons of sources online to help you set S.M.A.R.T. goals. Let's assume that you have them written as our starting point. If you don't have them written, go do that before you spend any more time here.

The planning that we're focusing on here is the type that leads to real action, starting with your annual calendar. Think ahead and get everything you can laid out on your calendar. Be sure to include: key business projects, milestones, vacations and time off, major company meetings, national holidays, key personal dates like birthdays and anniversaries, and anything else of note. Computers have made this so much easier than paper systems ever were, since recurring items can be entered once and appear indefinitely if appropriate. At the beginning of each

month, sit back and review your annual plan and make any needed changes. Then turn your focus to the month at hand. Now it's time to get really clear about 'to do' lists to make certain that everything actually happens. At the beginning of each month, take an hour or so to anticipate what you need to do to make your calendared schedule come together smoothly. Block time on your schedule accordingly - not just for meetings, but also for real focused, quality work time. At the beginning of each week, ensure that your time is laid out well for the week, and do your detailed 'to do' list for the next day. Make that 'to do' list a daily ritual. Focus on consistently taking care of your top priority activities every single day.

The only guarantee that comes with all this planning is that you will know what ought to be done when an emergency occurs and pulls you off-track!

Break the Procrastination Habit

Procrastination – putting things off – is a habit, and often a self-destructive one. Fortunately, it's one time-waster you can easily control. To break the procrastination habit, you'll need to develop new, constructive habits.

You can stop procrastinating right away by taking one simple action: get started. Don't wait for the perfect moment – get started right now! Your com-

mitment to simply "put one foot in front of the other," whether you feel like it or not, will help you successfully overcome the challenges you dread



Timely Humor

Five Immutable Laws of Work...

- The first 90 percent of project takes 90 percent of your time; the last 10 percent takes the other 90 percent of your time.
- If you can't get your work done in the first 24 hours, work nights.
- If it weren't for the last minute, nothing would get done.
- Getting the job done is no excuse for not following the rules.
- No matter how much you do, you never do enough.

Without good planning, the odds are high that you will stay off-track. With good planning, you'll probably get back to your important tasks and improve your long term success dramatically. That's the real point of planning.

Trivia Time

Have you ever wondered why typewriter and computer keyboards are arranged in the peculiar "QWERTY" pattern? In the early days of mechanical typewriters, proficient typists would type so fast that the keys frequently jammed against and each other. To prevent jamming, the familiar but illogical QWERTY pattern was developed to space frequently used keys further apart. Might logic prevail in the digital age?



most, and even stimulate creative problem solving.

Another way to break the procrastination habit is to divide the big projects you're avoiding into small tasks. Start with the easiest ones first. By doing a little at a time, you'll eventually reach a point where you'll actually find yourself becoming excited about finishing the job. And that can be habit forming!

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Positioning in Your Job



As youngsters, most of us try to be like everybody else. Our goal is to position ourselves as one of the gang, to fit in. Years later, in business, it is critically important to stand out, to position ourselves as unique or expert in some regard.

Let's think about this with respect to a typical professional office. Some of the typical, positive positions include:

Strategist
Presenter
Idea Seller
Computer Geek
Numbers Person
Developer of People

Negotiator
Listener
Troubleshooter
Detail Person

The positions overlap, and most of us fill all of these to some extent. To assess your current positioning, ask yourself, "For which of these areas do my colleagues really on count me?" When someone comes to you for advice, in which area are they most likely to need support? If you are all over the board, either you are brilliant at everything, or you are not successfully positioned as much of anything. If you are capable of excelling in

all these roles, you may want to consider focusing your energies on the one or two areas you enjoy that are most highly valued at your organization. The key is to have management recognize your outstanding abilities. Take care not to be regarded as 'jack of all trades, master of none'. That may prove a recipe for disposability. Just as the white Wonder Bread of years ago has been largely replaced by a myriad of specialty breads, generalists have also been largely replaced by a myriad of specialists. Be certain to position yourself well so an 'expert' doesn't nudge you out of your workplace.

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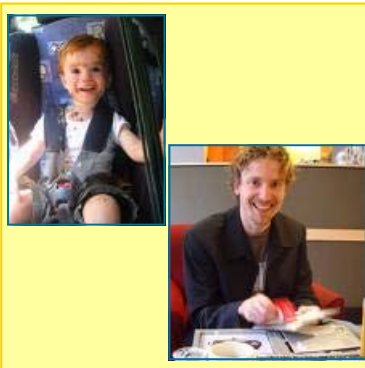
Feedback

Determination is a trait that makes us crazy when we deal with it in others; yet every successful person has a healthy dose of it! Think about a determined child - how do they behave? Repeatedly going after the one thing that they are not supposed to have? Relentlessly asking for the toy that's too expensive? Mercilessly poking their sibling until they get a rise out of him or her? In our efforts to encourage children to behave in socially acceptable ways, we sometimes go too far. Some kids wind up caving in completely and applying that learned behavior to all aspects of their life. Of course, that is rarely what the parents had intended. Different children respond differently to similar parental feedback, so one child may become passive, while his or her sibling may actually

become even more determined.

Our workforce is comprised of these children, albeit a few years later, and whatever conditioning their parents did is ours to contend with, or reap the benefits of, today. Can we change their level of determination at this stage of life? The answer, of course, is 'yes' and 'no'. The odds of influencing a largely passive adult and turning him or her into an assertive, determined performer are slim. It is rare to see wholesale changes in people. More realistically, we can expect to see refinements in the behavior patterns that are typically exhibited. Think back to a parent conditioning a child. The key to altering behavior then was consistent feedback. Guess what? It still is!

This means that far more than annual reviews is needed. First, we need to hire people with the basic attributes the position demands. Then, to successfully mold our team, we need to provide each person with consistent feedback about our expectations, their current behavior and the gaps as we see them. Just as important, we must also consistently tell them where they excel, to reinforce their positive behavior. Just as it was with children, individuals will respond differently to feedback, so we must alter our feedback accordingly. It is, perhaps, the most important work that any leader does. After all, if we take care of and groom our people, they will take care of the business.



"The rewards in business go to the man who does something with an idea."

William Benton
(1900-1973)

The earth is rotating at a slower and slower rate. As a result, tomorrow will be longer than yesterday, and each day will grow longer by about one second per year. Over the last 50 years or so, the day has grown longer by 32 "leap" seconds. By the middle of 21st century, a leap second will need to be added every three months.