

Five Steps to More Effective Days **by Dick Warn**

When asked about success, Earl Nightingale said: *Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal.* He knew that human beings were designed to be highly creative achievers.

To feel alive, creative, and at peace with yourself, you must be stretching, growing, and climbing toward something benefiting others. Why? Because you have a need to feel constructive, a need to know you're moving forward, and a need to feel good about what you're doing. To satisfy these needs, you must have goals, plans, and keep score. Sounds absolutely limiting – yet, it's truly liberating, once you get the hang of it.

Step 1: At the End of Each Day – List Your Six Most Important Tasks for Tomorrow

During the last five to ten minutes of each work day, list the six most important tasks to get done the following day. A common trap is loading our plate with more than we can handle – then becoming depressed and nothing gets done. Six tasks are more than enough – considering the changes that we will be forced to make.

Wouldn't first thing in the morning work as well? Not really. Subconsciously we are drawn toward tasks we like, repelled by the things we hate, and decisions are much wiser when we're planning for tomorrow. Plus, when our morning begins, phone rings, problems appear, people visit and before we know it, the day is over and we haven't made our list.

Step 2: Identify Your Least Desirable Task

From the list of six, find that one task you least want to tackle and make it number one. When we procrastinate with tasks, we create clouds of impending events that follow us around. On the other hand, when we tackle a nasty task and put it behind us, a sense of relief arrives and the rest of our day is easier.

Step 3: Set Your Priorities for Tasks 2 - 6

Mark remaining tasks in the order of their importance.

Step 4: Leave Your List Behind

Once your list is complete and priorities are set, move your list aside and leave it behind.

One reason so many people feel overwhelmed is that they never stop working – mentally. By refusing to plan, tornados spin in their heads – including: Could Have, Should Have, and What Might Go Wrong Tomorrow? By making a list and leaving it behind – closure takes over. You will find more quality time wherever you go.

Step 5: Work Your Plan

Begin with item one and keep working through your list – as best you can. Game plans provide road maps and by checking off each task completed, you gain a sense of accomplishment. Tasks that cannot be finished move to another day – or get dropped when they no longer matter.

Success is a moving target and effective time use is juggling, the art of keeping your most important balls in the air. Some will drop, but that's a reality of growing and moving forward. What's important is taking time each day to reset your priorities, keeping your most important tasks in sight.

People who refuse to plan are planning to fail – and don't know it.

Three Common Excuses for Not Making Lists:

1 - I keep everything in my head.

People who say this should read more about life and business. Thomas Edison, Dale Carnegie, Henry Ford and Albert Einstein all agree that our mind cannot be trusted with details. How many times in your life – has an awesome idea arrived, only to be lost within a minute or two?

2 - I have tried working with lists, but things change too rapidly here.

Some people fall in love with crisis management. It tests their ability to dance and allows them feel really important, needed and busy. Yet, busy bees are bottle necks.

3 - I cannot work with lists.

Some people hate rules, accountability and structure – as if they were cosmic exceptions. In their small worlds – cannot means will not.

The Bottom Line

The laws of accomplishment are not optional for anyone, nor are the laws governing success, self-esteem and peace of mind. To feel good about yourself – you must take charge of your time by planning your days, setting your priorities and working your plans - one day at a time. In no other way can you truly become the person you were designed to be.

Nothing new has been said. Yet, these five steps are truly powerful and liberating. They set your mind free to be creative – rather than preoccupied with undone clutter.

If you're willing to dive into this in blind faith, without questioning the steps and methods, you will discover – as others have – the most rewarding time management tool known. This process works wonders – for the few brave souls willing to make it a daily habit. Please apply the desire, commitment and self-discipline to become one of them. Life didn't come with rewind.

Things which matter most – must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.
Goethe

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