

Managing Yourself

By R.A. (Rick) Beauchamp

Have you found you have been a little frustrated with yourself lately? You have all the trappings of success: an impressive career, a home you are proud of, a handsome family, a prominent position in your community?

So why do you feel something is missing? Why is it that every time you score another achievement, the bar seems to ratchet up a little higher? And why is it that the harder you struggle to uphold obligations to bosses, family, and community, the less fulfilling your life seems? Well, you're not alone and if you're like most overworked managers today, you may need to focus more on managing yourself.¹

'Managing yourself' can be described in many ways. Peter Drucker perhaps puts it best when he describes managing yourself in the realm of work:

"To remain engaged and productive during a professional life that may span 50 years you need deep understanding of:

- 1) Your strengths.
- 2) Your work – style preferences.
- 3) Your values.
- 4) Your ideal work environment.
- 5) Your most important contribution – how best you can enhance your organization's performance.²"

Analyze Your Use of Time

There are only 24 hours or 1440 minutes in a day so it is important to maximize the use of our time as it is a precious commodity that can only be used once. Many of us claim our days are never wasted. "I'm very organized," we say "I know where I am going and what I'm going to do." If you truly feel that way then you are in the minority. Most people become frustrated with a day that is unproductive. We would all like to get more done in a day. Do you know where you're spending your time?

There are common time wasters that need to be identified in order for a time management process to work. It is important to know what aspects of our personal management need to be improved.

Here are some time stealers you need to analyze to see where improvement is needed: interruptions, personal visitors and telephone, meetings, tasks you should have delegated, procrastination, acting with incomplete information, dealing with team members, crisis management, unclear communication, lack of planning, desk management and the big killer – the inability to say "No".³ There are many articles, books and courses to help you get refocused on effective time

utilization but you need to identify the areas that have perhaps slipped a little over the months or years and are now in need of attention.

Self-Awareness

How well do you know yourself? It is important to know your strengths and weaknesses so you can capitalize on your strengths and improve on your weaknesses. For those areas that you can't capitalize on, find a way to surround yourself with people who can fill this void to maximize your effectiveness. We have a tendency to think we are good at certain things but in actual fact we are usually wrong. More often, people know what they are not good at – and even then more people are wrong than right. And yet, a person can perform only from strength. One cannot build performance on weaknesses alone or on something one cannot do at all.

In order to identify your strengths it is necessary to use feedback analysis from your peers or consultants. How do you perform? Amazingly few people realize how they get things done. Are you a reader or listener? How do you learn? Some people need visuals to learn while others need written examples to fully understand a topic or process. Do not try to change yourself. You are unlikely to succeed. Work to improve the way you perform. If your life feels unfulfilled despite increasing dedication to work, family, and community, your commitments may not match your convictions or deepest values. To align them, use this process of listing the things that matter most to you and identify any gaps that may exist between your convictions and commitments.

Maintain Balance

To be in control of your destiny and be effective you must have balance between your career and personal interests. With information overload, emails, project demands, financial pressures, family demands, and little time for oneself we find a high prevalence of stress today with managers that is taking its toll. Some authorities are predicting we are in a crisis mode with significant pressures being placed on our medical system.

It is important to take periodic checks of our stress levels. Our friends, peers and family doctor are good feedback indicators that you may not be your normal self and are not as focused and effective as you once were. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback and help. Stress is one of our biggest medical killers. Establishing some balance in one's life is extremely important. It can be in a number of forms ranging from active sports like golf, baseball, and soccer to walking, aerobics and other less strenuous activities like bird watching, stamp collecting, or music which can be very therapeutic. The key is a change of pace to allow you to take focus off your stressors.

Reestablish Goals

When we are overwhelmed with work and personal responsibilities we have a tendency to get off our game plan and lose focus on our personal plan and goals

we have set to meet our professional and personal objectives. Stephen Covey states that one of the most common elements of all self help and management literature is the idea of the power of goals. We have been told to set long-term goals, medium-term goals, short-term goals, organizational goals, personal goals and lifetime goals. The virtues of “measurable, specific, and time bound” goals have been preached from the pulpit and self-help books for generations. Goal setting is a powerful process. It is based on the same principle of focus that allows us to concentrate rays of defused sunlight into a force powerful enough to start a fire. It’s the manifestation of creative imagination and independent will.⁴ Re-establishing our goals periodically allows us to refocus and realign our goals to help us meet our short and long term objectives.

Match Your Convictions

For most people it takes a crisis, illness or disaster before we will refocus our commitments of money, time and energy on what really matters to us. But why wait for a crisis? Instead, why not use a systematic process to periodically clarify your convictions and assess whether you’re putting your money, time and energy where your heart is. Identify high priority values that are receiving insufficient resources – or outdated commitments that are siphoning precious resources away from your deepest convictions. Once you’ve spotted gaps between what matters most to you and how you’re investing your resources, use a time-out (sabbatical, course, or retreat) to rethink old commitments and define new ones more consistent with your values.⁵

Manage Your Future of Success

When you follow a process as we have prescribed and gain agreement with yourself, you’ll have a clearer understanding of where your focus should be each day.

With clear focus comes a renewed sense of purpose, because you’re now spending your time on what truly matters – both to you and your organization. And when everyone’s needs are met in a way that supports a common vision, the result is a more productive and happier work environment and greater personal satisfaction and peace is found at and away from work.

Managing yourself is a practical, easily absorbed and implemented guide to the assessment and then continuous personal improvement of your emotional intelligence.

And make sure to remember *“Life’s tragedy is saying, ‘Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today.’”*

¹ Managing Oneself by Peter Drucker – pp 1 Harvard Business Review

² Managing Oneself by Peter Drucker – pp 1 Harvard Business Review

³ Time Management – pp 1 Time Management Training Skills and Tips

⁴ First Things First by Stephen Covey – pp 136 The Power of Goals

⁵ Do Your Commitments Match Your Convictions? – pp 1 – Harvard Business Review