

6 Use the ABCDE Method Continually

The first law of success is concentration—to bend all the energies to one point, and to go directly to that point, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

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The more thought you invest in planning and setting priorities before you begin, the more important things you will do and the faster you will get them done once you get started. The more important and valuable a task is to you, the more likely you will be motivated to overcome procrastination and launch yourself into the job.

The ABCDE Method is a powerful priority setting technique that you can use every single day. This technique is so simple and effective that it can, all by itself, make you one of the most efficient and effective people in your field.

Think on Paper

The power of this technique lies in its simplicity. Here's how it works: You start with a list of everything you have to do for the coming day. Think on paper.

You then place an *A*, *B*, *C*, *D*, or *E* next to each item on your list before you begin the first task.

An “A” item is defined as something that is very important, something that you must do. This is a task that will have serious positive or negative consequences if you do it or fail to do it, like visiting a key customer or finishing a report that your boss needs for an upcoming board meeting. These items are the frogs of your life.

If you have more than one A task, you prioritize these tasks by writing “A-1,” “A-2,” “A-3,” and so on in front of each item. Your A-1 task is your biggest, ugliest frog of all.

”Shoulds” versus “Musts”

A “B” item is defined as a task that you *should* do. But it has only mild consequences. These are the tadpoles of your work life. This means that someone may be unhappy or inconvenienced if you don’t do one of these tasks, but it is nowhere as important as an A task. Returning an unimportant telephone message or reviewing your e-mail would be a B task.

The rule is that you should never do a B task when an A task is left undone. You should never be distracted by a tadpole when a big frog is sitting there waiting to be eaten.

A “C” task is defined as something that would be *nice* to do but for which there are no consequences at all, whether you do it or not. C tasks include phoning a friend, having coffee or lunch with a coworker, and completing some personal business during work hours. These sorts of activities have no effect at all on your work life.

A “D” task is defined as something you can *delegate* to someone else. The rule is that you should delegate everything that someone else can do so you can free up more time for the A tasks that only you can do.

An “E” task is defined as something that you can *eliminate* altogether, and it won’t make any real difference. This may be a task that was important at one time but is no longer relevant to you or anyone else. Often it is something you continue to do out of habit or because you enjoy it. But every minute that you spend on an E task is time taken away from an A task or activity that can make a real difference in your life.

After you have applied the ABCDE Method to your list, you will be completely organized and ready to get more important things done faster.

Take Action Immediately

The key to making this ABCDE Method work is for you to now discipline yourself to start immediately on your A-1 task and then stay at it until it is complete. Use your willpower to get going and stay going on this one job, the most important single task you could possibly be doing. Eat the whole frog and don’t stop until it’s finished completely.

Your ability to think through and analyze your work list and determine your A-1 task is the springboard to higher levels of accomplishment and greater self-esteem, self-respect, and personal pride. When you develop the habit of concentrating on your A-1, most important, activity—on eating your frog—you will start getting more done than any two or three people around you.



EAT THAT FROG!

- 1.** Review your work list right now and put an *A*, *B*, *C*, *D*, or *E* next to each task or activity. Select your A-1 job or project and begin on it immediately. Discipline yourself to do nothing else until this one job is complete.
- 2.** Practice this ABCDE Method every day for the next month on every work or project list before you begin work. After a month, you will have developed the habit of setting and working on your highest-priority tasks, and your future will be assured!