

CHAPTER 7

Focus On Key Result Areas

"When every physical and mental resource is focused, one's power to solve a problem multiplies tremendously."

Norman Vincent Peale

Why are you on the payroll? This is one of the most important questions you ever ask and answer, over and over again, throughout your career.

As it happens, most people are not sure exactly **why** they are on the payroll. But if you are not crystal clear about why it is that you are on the payroll and what results you have been hired to accomplish, it is very hard for you to perform at your best, get paid more and promoted faster.

In its simplest terms, you have been hired to get specific **results**. A wage or a salary is a payment for a specific quality and quantity of work that can be combined with the work of others to create a product or service that customers are willing to pay for.

Each job can be broken down into about five to seven key result areas, seldom more. These are the results that you absolutely, positively have to get to fulfill your responsibilities and make your maximum contribution to your organization.

Key result areas are similar to the vital functions of the body, such as blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate and brainwave activity.

An absence of any one of these vital functions leads to the death of the organism. By the same token, your failure to perform in a critical result area of your work can lead to the end of your job as well.

The Big Seven in Management and Sales

For example, the key result areas of management are: Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Delegating, Supervising, Measuring and Reporting. These are the results that a manager must get to succeed in his or her area of responsibility. A weakness in any one of these areas can lead to underachievement and failure as a manager.

The key result areas of salespeople are: Prospecting, Building Rapport and Trust, Identifying Needs, Presenting Persuasively, Answering Objections, Closing the Sale, and Getting Resales and Referrals. Poor performance in any one of these key skills leads to lower sales and sometimes failure as a salesperson.

Whatever you do, there are essential skills that you must have for you to do your job in an excellent fashion. These demands are constantly changing. There are core competencies that you have developed that make it possible for you to do your job in the first place. But there are always key results that are central to your work and which determine your success or failure in your job. What are yours?

A key result area is defined as something for which you are completely responsible. This means that if you don't do it, it doesn't get done. A key result area is an activity that is under your control. It is an output of your work that becomes an input or a contributing factor to the work of others.

Clarity Is Essential

The starting point of high performance is for you to first of all identify the key result areas of your work. Discuss them with your boss. Make a list of your most important output responsibilities and make sure that the people above you, next to you and below you are in agreement with it.

For example, for a salesperson, opening new accounts is a key result area. This activity is the key to the entire sales process. Closing a sale is a key result area. When the sale is made, it triggers the activities of many other people to produce and deliver the product or service.

For a company owner or key executive, negotiating a bank loan is a key result area. Hiring the right people and delegating effectively are both key result areas. For a receptionist or secretary, typing a letter or answering the phone and transferring the caller quickly and efficiently are defined as key result areas. The employee's ability to perform these tasks quickly and efficiently largely determines her pay and promotability.

Give Yourself a Grade

Once you have determined your key result areas, the second step is for you to grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 in each of those areas. Where are you strong and where are you weak? Where are you getting excellent results and where are you underperforming?

Rule: Your **weakest** key result area sets the height at which you can use all your other skills and abilities.

This rule says that you could be exceptional in six out of seven key result areas but really poor in the seventh. And your poor performance in the seventh area will hold you back and determine how much you achieve with all your other skills. This weakness will act as a drag on your effectiveness and be a constant source of friction and frustration.

For example, delegating is a key result area for a manager. This skill is the key leverage point that enables a manager to manage, to get results through others. A manager who cannot delegate properly is held back from using all his or her other skills at their maximum level of effectiveness. Poor delegation skills alone can lead to failure in the job.

Poor Performance Produces Procrastination

One of the major reasons for procrastination and delay in the workplace is that people avoid jobs and activities in those areas

where they have performed poorly in the past. Instead of setting a goal and making a plan to improve in a particular area, most people avoid that area altogether, which just makes the situation worse.

The reverse of this is that, the *better* you become in a particular skill area, the more motivated you will be to perform that function, the less you will procrastinate and the more determined you will be to get it finished.

The fact is that everybody has both strengths and weaknesses. Refuse to rationalize, justify or defend your areas of weakness. Instead, identify them clearly. Set a goal and make a plan to become very good in each of those areas. Just think! You may be only one critical skill away from top performance at your job.

The Great Question

Here is one of the greatest questions you will ever ask and answer:
"What one skill, if I developed and did it in an excellent fashion, would have the greatest positive impact on my career?"

You should use this question to guide your career for the rest of your life. Look into yourself for the answer. You usually know what it is.

Ask your boss this question. Ask your coworkers. Ask your friends and your family. Whatever it is, find out and then go to work to bring up your performance in this area.

The good news is that all business skills are *learnable*. If anyone else is excellent in that particular key result area, this is proof that you can become excellent as well, if you decide to.

One of the fastest and best ways to stop procrastinating and get more things done faster is for you to become absolutely excellent in your key result areas. This can be as important as anything else you do in your life or your career.

Eat That Frog!

1. Identify the key result areas of your work. What are they? Write down the key results you have to get to do your job in an excellent fashion. Give yourself a grade from 1-10 on each one. And then determine the one key skill that, if you did it in an excellent manner, would help you the most in your work.

2. Take this list to your boss and discuss it with him or her. Invite honest feedback and appraisal. You can only get better when you are open to the constructive inputs of other people. Discuss your results with your staff and coworkers. Talk them over with your spouse.

Make a habit of doing this analysis regularly for the rest of your career. Never stop improving. This decision alone can change your life.