

INTRODUCTION

This is a wonderful time to be alive. There have never been more possibilities and opportunities for you to achieve more of your goals than exist today. And as perhaps never before in human history, you are actually drowning in options. In fact, there are so many good things that you can do that your ability to decide among them maybe the critical determinant of what you accomplish in life.

If you are like most people today, you are overwhelmed with too much to do and too little time. As you struggle to get caught up, new tasks and responsibilities just keep rolling in, like the waves of the ocean. Because of this, **you will never be able to do everything you have to do**. You will never be caught up. You will always be behind in some of your tasks and responsibilities, and probably in many of them.

The Need to Be Selective

For this reason, and perhaps more than ever before, your ability to select your most important task at each moment, and then to get started on that task and to get it done both quickly and well, will probably have more of an impact on your success than any other quality or skill you can develop.

An average person who develops the habit of setting clear priorities and getting important tasks completed quickly will run circles

around a genius who talks a lot and makes wonderful plans but who gets very little done.

The Truth about Frogs

Mark Twain once said that if the first thing you do each morning is to eat a live frog, you can go through the day with the satisfaction of knowing that that is probably the *worst* thing that is going to happen to you all day long.

Your "frog" is your biggest, most important task, the one you are most likely to procrastinate on if you don't do something about it. It is also the one task that can have the greatest positive impact on your life and results at the moment.

The first rule of frog-eating is: "If you have to eat two frogs, eat the ugliest one first."

This is another way of saying that, if you have two important tasks before you, start with the biggest, hardest and most important task first. Discipline yourself to begin immediately and then to persist until the task is complete before you go on to something else.

Think of this as a "test." Treat it like a personal challenge. Resist the temptation to start with the easier task. Continually remind yourself that one of the most important decisions you make each day is your choice of what you will do immediately and what you will do later, if you do it at all.

The second rule of frog-eating is: "If you have to eat a live frog at all, it doesn't pay to sit and look at it for very long."

The key to reaching high levels of performance and productivity is for you to develop the lifelong habit of tackling your major task first thing each morning. You must develop the routine of "Eating your frog" before you do anything else, and without taking too much time to think about it.

Take Action Immediately

In study after study of men and women who get paid more and promoted faster, the quality of "action orientation," stands out as the most observable and consistent behavior they demonstrate in everything they do. Successful, effective people are those who launch directly into their major tasks and then discipline themselves to work steadily and single mindedly until those tasks are complete.

In our world, and especially in our business world, you are paid and promoted for getting specific, measurable *results*. You are paid for making a valuable contribution and especially, for making the most important contribution that is expected of you.

"Failure to execute" is one of the biggest problems in organizations today. Many people confuse activity with accomplishment. They talk continually, hold endless meetings and make wonderful plans, but, in the final analysis, no one does the job and gets the results required.

Develop the Habits of Success

Your success in life and work will be determined by the kinds of habits that you develop over time. The habit of setting priorities, overcoming procrastination and getting on with your most important task is a mental and physical skill. As such, this habit is learnable through practice and repetition, over and over again, until it locks into your subconscious mind and becomes a permanent part of your behavior. Once it becomes a habit, it becomes both automatic and easy to do.

This habit of starting and completing important tasks has immediate and continuous payoff. You are designed mentally and emotionally in such a way that task completion gives you a positive feeling. It makes you happy. It makes you feel like a winner.

Whenever you complete a task, of any size or importance, you feel a surge of energy, enthusiasm and self-esteem. The more important the completed task, the happier, more confident and powerful you feel about yourself and your world.

Important task completion triggers the release of *endorphins* in your brain. These endorphins give you a natural “high.” The endorphin rush that follows successful completion of any task makes you feel more positive, personable, creative and confident.

Develop a Positive Addiction

Here is one of the most important of the so-called "secrets of success." It is that you can actually develop a "positive addiction" to endorphins and to the feeling of enhanced clarity, confidence and competence that they trigger. When you develop this "addiction," you will, at an unconscious level, begin to organize your life in such a way that you are continually starting and completing ever more important tasks and projects. You actually become addicted, in a very positive sense, to success and contribution.

One of the keys to your living a wonderful life, having a successful career and feeling terrific about yourself is for you to develop the habit of starting and finishing important jobs. At that point, this behavior takes on a power of its own and you find it easier to complete important tasks than not to complete them.

No Short Cuts

You remember the story of the man who stops a musician on a street in New York and asks how he can get to Carnegie Hall. The musician replies, "Practice, man, practice."

Practice is the key to mastering any skill. Fortunately, your mind is like a muscle. It grows stronger and more capable with use. With practice, you can learn any behavior or develop any habit that you consider either desirable or necessary.

The Three D's of New Habit Formation

You need *three* key qualities to develop the habits of focus and concentration. They are all learnable. They are decision, discipline, and determination.

First, make a **decision** to develop the habit of task completion. Second, **discipline** yourself to practice the principles you are about to learn over and over until they become automatic. And third, back everything you do with **determination** until the habit is locked in and becomes a permanent part of your personality.

Visualize Yourself As You Want to Be

There is a special way that you can accelerate your progress toward becoming the highly productive, effective, efficient person that you want to be. It consists of your thinking continually about the rewards and benefits of being an action oriented, fast moving, and focused person. *See yourself* as the kind of person who gets important jobs done quickly and well on a consistent basis.

Your mental picture of yourself has a powerful effect on your behavior. Visualize yourself as the person you intend to be in the future. Your self-image, the way you see yourself on the inside, largely determines your performance on the outside. All improvement in your *outer* life begins with improvements in your mental pictures, on the *inside*.

You have a virtually unlimited ability to learn and develop new skills, habits and abilities. When you train yourself, through repetition and practice, to overcome procrastination and get your most important tasks completed quickly, you will move yourself onto the fast track in your life and career and step on the accelerator.

Eat That Frog!