

Introduction

“Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time.” –Jim Rohn

I’m sort a bit OCD when it comes to time management, so I’m excited to be sharing this book with you—my top habits for getting your priorities done every day. I have my computer calendar color-coded and scheduled to the 15-minute increments. All my tasks have been made into appointments with myself so my calendar looks completely booked every day. The Type-A part of me finds it hard to relax and enjoy down-time. I can be over the top when I don’t swivel my chair around to face an interrupting person, because it may throw me off-track from productivity. Shame on me, huh?

Here’s my experience: What all my coaching clients have in common is something in their life needs better priority management and a plan for improvement.

By the way, I don’t even like the term “time management” because time is an equal opportunity employer. The issue is priority management. I believe everyone makes time for what they want to, what they believe is important to them. If you have a favorite television show, you will find a way somehow to watch or record it so you don’t miss it.

The issue is lack of direction/intentionality. The wave of busyness we all experience could dictate every moment of your work and personal life if you aren’t intentional about where you dedicate your limited time. And another day goes by with the dirge: “I didn’t get anything done today.”

Parkinson’s Law:

“Work expands to fill the time allotted.”



Sure, there are crises to deal with and unexpected time drains (a.k.a. “the whirlwind”), but you have control over your calendar for the most part. Don’t get overwhelmed with all the tips I offer you in this book because odds are, you aren’t wired exactly like me (thank goodness for you!). It’s important to spend 80% of your time doing the work and only about 20% of your time making plans to do your work.

Think through your current system: what is getting you closer to your goals and peace of mind, and what seems to be a black hole of unproductivity that is in need of fixing. As Dr. Phil would say, “How’s that workin’ for you?”

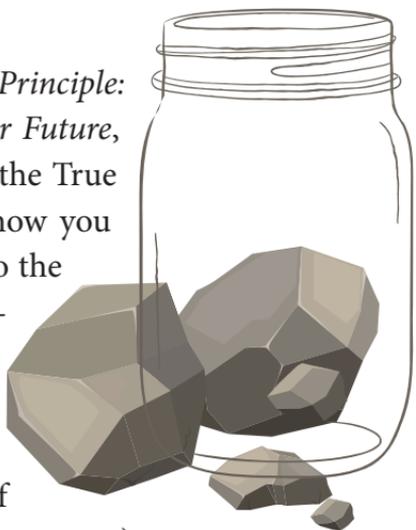
Just read them through, and apply one or two strategies that have the potential to truly change your life—maybe in just a little way—that will lead to you achieving your work goals and personal dreams that will enhance the quality of your life, without too much effort. A slight edge that makes a big difference.

Section A: Implementing Intentionality

“Random actions produce random results.”

Values Are Your Guide

In my first book *The Static Cling Principle: What You Attach to Your Life Alters Your Future*, I talked about how one’s core values are the True North for one’s behaviors. You behave how you believe. Thus, it would behoove you to do the values identification exercise, and get re-acquainted with your top 3-5 values, since they are your DNA and will be the driving force behind your priority management planning. (Obtain a list of values and pick up the book at www.paulcasey.org.)



“Values are the beliefs or feelings that are important enough to drive our decisions about how we behave.” –Gordon Patterson

If you live in alignment with your values, it’s accelerating, as if you are hitting “turbo boost” on your goals. And if you live out of alignment with your values, you are in a state called dissonance: the feeling you are off-kilter, never hitting full stride, as if you had an anchor strapped to your legs.

For instance, if “family” is one of your top three values, your calendar should reflect marriage date nights with your spouse, attending parent-teacher conferences and ballgames to enjoy your kids’ progress, and blocking out family vacations to simply enjoy each other. You begin to feel out-of-sorts when your calendar displays all your discretionary time at work,

separated from your family—and that disconnected feeling eats at you until your priorities get back into alignment with your values.

“Find out from the people you trust whether your behavior matches your values.” –Joan Gurvis

Look at it this way: *you are constantly determining what gets your focus and what gets your leftovers.* I don't know about your family, but mine doesn't especially like food leftovers that are stored in containers in the refrigerator. Nor do they tend to appreciate my time leftovers, when I only have little crumbs of energy for them. The word “leftover” runs contrary to making someone feel valued. If I show them they are my “focus”, they know they have my full attention, and quality time will more likely occur between us. But even if “family” isn't one of your top 3-5 values, some of your values most likely involve relating to other people—so, keep this concept of “focus vs. leftovers” emblazoned in your mind as we talk about making every minute count.

Living life according to your values doesn't happen on autopilot. Technically, you only coast one direction: downhill, and away from intentional living. Since we are human, our default mode is typically selfish and the path of least resistance. To insert your values into your life at home and work takes strategic scheduling; and one of the best ways to do that is to put your “Big Rocks” into your schedule first.

“Big Rocks” comes from the experiment Stephen Covey used to do in front of a live audience when he would teach on *First Things First*. On a table, he would have some water, sand, pebbles, and a few larger rocks sitting next to a glass jar. Upon calling someone up from the audience, Covey would ask the person to make all those items fit in the jar. Most of the

time, the person started with pouring the water in the jar, then the sand, and then the pebbles, which filled it up two-thirds of the way to the top, with three large rocks to go. Maybe the volunteer got two of them in, but never all three big rocks.

Covey then demonstrated that by reversing the order, by putting the big rocks in the jar first, everything would indeed fit. The pebbles, sand, and water filtered into the jar and filled in all the empty space! He then turned to the audience to teach if you put your Big Rocks, or *most important priorities* (usually based on your top core values), *into your calendar first* before the more insignificant tasks, it's amazing how you will become most productive—and the little tasks end up getting done most of the time, too.

“There is never enough time to do everything, but there is always enough time to do the most important thing.” –Brian Tracy

But what do most of us tend to do? We like checking off the “easier” tasks at home and work, or slide the more complicated tasks to the afternoon, and then get to the end of the day realizing our Big Rocks, the ones with the most impact on our goals and vision, again got bumped to another day—and we remain stuck in our current situation. We moan about how we can't get anything done, and life loses its gusto.

Force-rank to Determine Big Rocks

Here's an activity to help you figure out what is truly the biggest of the big rocks, or said another way, the most important priorities that stand-out from the rest of your many tasks. It's called Forced Ranking, and it's a great way to sort from a list of brainstormed options.



First, make a list of your top ten tasks, either at home or at work, that are the core things for which you are responsible. Be as specific as possible: what is your boss or family counting on you to take care of, in order to make them and the mission successful?

Next, make three columns next to that top-ten list of tasks. Title the first column *Urgent*, the second column *Important*, and the third column *Total*. Now, look at the first task you wrote down and rank it on a scale of 1-10 (10 being high) on how urgently it must get done—how soon it has to be accomplished—and put it in the first column. Then rank that first task on a scale of 1-10 on how important it is—how much weight is put on its accomplishment—and put it in the second column. Finally, multiply the two numbers together, and write the product in the final column. Do this for all ten tasks.

What this exercise reveals, as you look at the Total column, is some of your tasks are truly more significant than others in priority. Re-rank them by high score, and you have sifted what your biggest rocks are (those closest to 100) for inclusion in your schedule first.

Recently, I was leading this exercise with a company, and several people in the room had a bunch of 100s, asking me how the forced ranking was even helpful to them. The answer to that is the Pareto Principle, often called the 80-20 Rule. How it applies here is you must determine the 20% of those top tasks that produce 80% of your results. Only you know what your job description results are defined as (e.g. revenue-generating).

Getting these top tasks done each day allows you to rest as you go to bed at night, knowing how intentional you were in accomplishing the most vital priorities for the day.