

IN THIS
EDITION:

- The Power of Focus
- Live Your Strengths monthly challenge

“Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun’s rays do not burn until brought to a focus.”

**~ Alexander
Graham Bell**

The Power of Focus

Consider this statement for a moment and reflect on its truth: *The amount of success you have in achieving any goal will be directly related to the extent that you make it a focus in your life.* And by *focus*, I mean devoting time, energy, money and attention to your goal.

In the business world, if you want to learn what an organization’s *real* priorities are, just examine where it invests its time and money. The same can be said for individuals; despite what many say are their goals and priorities, you can learn where they are *actually* placing their focus by looking at how they invest their time, attention, and financial resources.

In this month’s newsletter, I’m going to discuss the power of focus and how you can bring more of it into your own life.

Do you ever get to the end of your day and wonder where the time has gone? You may feel like you’ve been running all day but don’t have anything productive to show for it. You’re not alone! More than ever, the many

distractions in our lives can make it difficult to find the time and space necessary to produce anything of quality. This frenetic pace has led people to feel that the only way they can cope is to multitask.



However, the word ‘multitasking’ itself is misleading. Regardless of the appearance of doing two things at once, in reality, your attention is shifting rapidly back and forth between the activities at which you are working. Although it seems like we are adding time and efficiency to our days by multitasking, recent research is proving otherwise; it seems that the human mind was just not meant to switch tasks very rapidly.

For example, a study conducted in 2005 at the University of Michigan found that 40% of a worker’s productivity is wasted on ‘task-switching’, which is the time it takes to mentally re-engage when changing from one task to the next. Similarly, another study conducted at the University of California found that when people were distracted at work, they took an average of 25 minutes to return and concentrate on their original task.

In reality, multitasking and attempting to split your focus is actually costing time, rather than saving it. Furthermore, the work that *is* produced during these periods will be of lesser quality because it is not receiving your full concentration.

So how do you fit in everything that needs to be done without multitasking? First and most importantly, identify what are the most critical activities that need to be accomplished and give them your complete, uninterrupted focus.

(Continued on page 2)



The Power of Focus

(cont'd from page 1)

To ensure your most valuable activities are getting your full attention, try using *the Pareto Principle*. This principle is based on an economic pattern discovered by an Italian economist, Vilfredo Pareto, in 1897.

Pareto found that a small minority of earners were consistently responsible for a large majority of the total wealth. Since then, this phenomenon has also become known as the '80/20 principle' and it can be applied to most areas of life, not just economic patterns.

The Pareto Principle predicts that 80% of the value you receive will come from 20%

of your work. Think about this in your own life – it is likely that a large majority of your income and/or referrals will come from a small number of your clients.

Similarly, you can see this principle working even in volunteer situations; the vast majority of the work is typically done by a small core of people, even though there may be a number of others who belong to the committee.

Now take this concept and apply it to your own goals. For each of your goals, you can probably identify what the key activities are that

will have the most impact on your success. Can you imagine the impact you could have by devoting just 20% of your work day to these key activities? For example, if you work an eight-hour day, that means the majority of your crucial activities could be completed within about 1.5 hours. However, you must be willing to completely focus on these activities for that period of time.

Are you ready to *completely focus* your time, energy and attention to achieve your goals? If so, join me in this month's *Live Your Strengths challenge* (see below).

“Do whatever you
do intensely.”

~ Robert Henri

“When walking, walk.
When eating, eat.”

~ Zen Proverb

Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge

1) What are your most valuable activities? For each of your goals, identify where and how you contribute the most value to your company/family/health/volunteer activities.

2) Find times to devote completely to these activities—this means no phone or email interruptions and no multitasking during these times. You may find it easier to begin slowly and find even 45 minutes in your work day to block out as your *focus time*. Then, increase the time as you begin to see how effective it is.

3) You may need to experiment a little with the times to find when they will

work best for you. Pay attention to your physical energy and attentiveness and schedule your focus time when you are at your peak productivity.

4) Begin by scheduling these times into your day-planner for the next week. Once you've found your preferred focus times, schedule them into your calendar for the next quarter.

5) Keep your focus time as faithfully as you would if it was an appointment with an important client. Start on time, be prepared, and if something critical does arise that you need to take

care of, reschedule that time immediately.

6) Who do you need to notify about your focus time? For example, if you work with others, do you need to let them know that you cannot be interrupted during certain periods? Or if you are working on personal goals, do you need to speak with your family members to make sure they understand how important these times are to you?

Could you use some guidance with this challenge? Call Denise for a free 30-minute coaching session. Start living *your* strengths!

Do you have suggestions for upcoming newsletters or success stories you want to share?

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