

First Things First

Set a few priorities in life.



by Jeff Davidson

YOU LIKELY COME TO WORK each day with goals in mind about what you want and need to accomplish, but your work doesn't always go as planned. Interruptions and distractions can throw you off.

If you are often distracted at work, you need to define or redefine your priorities. You may have *too many priorities* (some may have been imposed upon you). If so, note that, by definition, *they can't all be priorities. Have no more than seven priorities.* Having more is a clue that you've never identified what's truly important in your life and work.

Having too many, or ineffectively picking priorities means that you'll have no priorities, spend time and attention on everything, and not honor top priorities.

Set your priorities in these five ways:

1. *Write what's important to you in life, personally and professionally.*

2. *A week later, re-examine the list.* Cross out things that don't ring true, and add things if you forgot them earlier.

3. *Two weeks later, look at the list again.* See if any items can be grouped. Reword and re-label priorities. If you're uncertain about an item, drop it.

4. *Prepare a draft of your priority list.* Stay with it for six months. If the list has four to seven items, keep the list. If it has more, pare it down.

5. *Once you have a priority, identify supporting goals.* For instance, if *being healthy* is a priority, you might set several goals in support of this priority: take vitamins regularly, join a health club, or buy a treadmill.

Have specific metrics and timelines for your goals. If one goal is to be the top-selling salesperson, attach a time to it—*by October*, for instance. Or, "I will make 100 sales in the next 12 months." The more specific your goals, the better your odds of achieving them.

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, and always ineffectiveness concerning all acts of initiative (and creation). There is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and



meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would come his way. Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now. — Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

When people ask you to do more as a reward for the great work you've already done, you can show people your calendar. Then, if someone wants to add to your agenda, they'll do so more carefully and consciously. **PE**

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ACTION: Put first things first in life and work.