

Set Priorities

And contract with yourself.



by Jeff Davidson

THE KEY TO WINNING BACK your time is to decide what is important to you. If you don't set priorities, anything can compete for your time. Once you set your priorities and identify goals to support them, use some reinforcement techniques to stay on course:

1. **Join with others who have similar priorities and goals**, perhaps a professional, civic, or social organization.
2. **Surround yourself with reinforcing statements, reminders**, and post-it pads so that you don't lose sight of what you said was important.
3. **Create a cassette tape of your priorities and supporting goals in the form of affirmations**, "I choose to visit the health club four times per week for a minimum workout of 30 minutes."
4. **Prepare a budget**. List what it will cost to honor your priorities and the goals you've chosen to support them.
5. **Develop rituals that support your quest**. If your goal is to lose six pounds by the end of June, begin taking the stairs instead of the elevator.
6. **Keep your action steps bite-size**. There's no value in choosing goals that are so difficult to achieve that you can't honor the associated priority.
7. **Report to someone**. Have a coach or watchdog to ensure that you do what you said you would (Don't think that this ploy is for the weak-willed. High achievers also do this!).
8. **Visualize the goal everyday**. Imagine achieving your goal while you're waiting in line, in the bathroom, or stuck in traffic. You'll improve your performance by visualizing your performance in advance.
9. **Set up a series of small rewards** so that you're naturally reinforcing the behavior you've chosen to engage.
10. **Make a contract with yourself**. Carefully select three goals in support of your priorities and sign a contract to reach these goals. You either succeed by a deadline date, or you face the consequences of defaulting. Make three copies of your contract: Keep the original and give copies to your spouse, co-worker, and friend. This contract should take precedence. Review your contract whenever you become dis-

tracted by details, or if you think you're not moving in the right direction.

11. **Plot your campaign on the calendar, starting from the ending date—the goal deadline**. Then work back to the present, plotting tasks to meet the goal. Use a monthly calendar to set realistic, interim dates that reflect available resources, vacations, holidays, weekends, off hours, and output levels. Give yourself flexibility and build in some down-time and vacation time.

When you get off course, revisit this list and initiate a new strategy. Here are four signs that you're not moving along the path you said you would:

- **You pay lip-service to yourself**. You say that your goal is important, but you

don't schedule any time, budget any funds, or give it much thought.

- **You run late**. You say that working out four times a week is important and that you need to get to the gym by 6:30, but you're not there until 7 (if at all).
- **You let piles stack up**. Although you've chosen a few priorities, you still assemble piles of stuff—things that are not aligned with your priorities.
- **You decide that your priorities and goals are not the same**, although you gave much thought to your goals.

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ACTION: Set priorities and goals.

SERVICE • EXAMPLES

Service Heroes

Recognize those who serve.



by George Bush

WE COME TOGETHER AT A defining hour—when decisions are hard and courage is tested. Much is asked of us. We must have the will to face difficult challenges and determined enemies.

Our work is based on a timeless truth: To whom much is given, much is required. We hear the call to take on the challenges of hunger, poverty, and disease—and that is precisely what we are doing.

When America serves others in this way, we show the strength and generosity of our country. The greatest strength we have is heroic kindness, courage, and self-sacrifice. You see this spirit often if you know where to look. Here I cite four examples:

- **Dikembe Mutombo** grew up in Africa, amid great poverty and disease. He came to Georgetown University on a scholarship to study medicine, but Coach John Thompson had a different idea. Dikembe became a star in the NBA, and a citizen of the United States. But he never forgot the land of his birth or the duty to share his blessings with others. He has built a new hospital in his hometown. A friend has said: "Mutombo believes that God has given him this opportunity to do great things."
- **Julie Aigner-Clark** searched for ways to share her love of music and art with her new-born daughter. So she borrowed some equipment, and began filming chil-

dren's videos. The Baby Einstein Company was born. In November 2001, Julie sold Baby Einstein to the Walt Disney Company. Julie represents the great enterprising spirit of America. And she is using her success to help others—producing child safety videos—because, she says, "I believe that children have the right to live in a world that is safe."

- **Wesley Autrey** was waiting at a Harlem subway station with his two little girls, when he saw a man fall into the path of a train. In seconds, Wesley jumped onto the tracks, pulled the man into a space between the rails, and held him as the train passed right above their heads. He insists he's not a hero: "We got guys and girls overseas dying

for us to have our freedoms," he says. "We got to show each other some love." There is something wonderful about a country that produces such a brave and humble man.

- **Tommy Rieman** was a teenager pumping gas in Kentucky when he enlisted in the United States Army. In December 2003, he was on a reconnaissance mission in Iraq when his team came under heavy enemy fire. From his Humvee, Sergeant Rieman returned fire and used his body as a shield to protect his gunner. He was shot in the chest and arm, and received shrapnel wounds to his legs—yet he refused medical attention and stayed in the fight. He helped to repel a second attack, firing grenades at the enemy's position.

In such courage and compassion, we see the spirit and character of America. **PE**

George Bush is president of the United States of America. This article is adapted from his *State of the Union Address*, delivered January 23, 2007.

ACTION: Emulate these examples.