

# Accomplishing High Pay-Off Goals and Action Steps in the Face of Overwhelming Work and Activity

Success is our greatest adversity! This statement holds true for the company that is goal directed and moving forward towards the future.

As leaders, our task is to continue to accomplish goals even when daily work is overwhelming. To accomplish this, we must prioritize our day and week so that we are always accomplishing our high pay-off activity while continuing to please the customer and meet out employees needs and challenges. This skill is one of the absolute keys to continued growth and success. Obviously, it is easier said then done.

If we look at the full spectrum of what we do, we see that much of it is keeping the business going on a daily basis. For an example, an office manager in an insurance firm might have the responsibility of entering information for all commercial policies sold and all changes to these policies. As the company's sales force reaches their goals, the commercial work explodes and the office manager finds that more and more of her time must be spent just to keep up. This reduces time for coaching people, working on projects and monitoring work. Within the manager's job are constantly dual pressure points:

## *Deadline Work vs. High Pay-Off Action Steps*

**Deadline work** is work that can be measured since it needs to be done in a particular time frame due to the customer or legal expectations. The commercial changes must be entered so that the client is covered. If it is not entered, the company can face liability as well as a potential lost customer relationship. Other examples of deadline work would be a consultant that needs to type up a goal planning sheet due at a meeting or a manufacturing supervisor who must file a Quality report with a customer. This work is hard to say "no" to since it has a clearly defined deadline.

On the other hand, you have **High Pay-Off Action Steps** which comes with a much more sublime pressure – *while being infinitely valuable to the business, the business as it currently stands will not fall apart **short-term** if these steps are not accomplished.* High Pay-Off Action Steps have no legal or customer deadlines and their value in many cases cannot be measured. Examples of High Pay-Off Action Steps are:

1. Having a meeting one-on-one with each team member on a monthly basis.
2. Calling up a support person on a problem that might happen in the future
3. Putting together policies and procedures and
4. Studying your computer needs for the next couple years.

All these items are very important *and might well be the top goals of the organization* but do not have to happen in an immediate sense for the business to operate now or in the immediate future.

You can see there is no real **have to** here. Thus we see the beginnings of a problem that keeps small businesses small and large business like K-Mart, Highland Appliance and Apple Computer faltering or going out of business. That is – *it is extremely hard to take time for High Pay-off Action steps when you are overwhelmed with work that has deadlines.* And yet, every day, in Lenawee and Monroe county a small or large business goes out of business because *they are not focusing on what they need to do to improve and change.*

You see, these High Pay-Off Action steps ***are absolutely imperative, must happen and cannot be ignored*** since they are the keys to helping any business continually improve and in fact *are the main reason managers exist in a business.* High Pay-Off Action Steps helps the business to ***proactively*** avoid bad things happening to the company. For an example, every day small businesses across the country lose 100's of thousands of dollars in computer data because of failure to back up and update their computer systems. This is due to the managers deciding they “didn't have the time” to do these procedures. Another manger may get a hot sales recruit lead referred to him and fail to call this person (because they were to “busy”) and loose 1 million dollars in sales revenue over a period of the next 4 years. People in an organization might quit and go to another company because they were not challenged enough or a miscommunication took place. This

all because we did not sit down with them and ask them how things were going on a regular basis.

When we are doing daily tasks with a deadline, we are working **in** the business. When we are doing High Pay-Off Action Steps, we are working **on** the business. When you work in the business too much, you lose perspective on the big picture and you become blind sighted. Our role as managers is to not let this happen by making time for High Pay-Off Activities.

### ***How to do this...***

#### **The Systems Approach**

As a manager you control your entire system of time. The full spectrum of your time is yours to control. If your time system is to go after the piles of work on and around your desk first before all else - that is how you will focus your time. If your goal is to always be caught up first (before you do anything else) this is how you will manage your time.

To spend more time on High Pay-Off Action Steps simply adjust your time system. Your best time system is your time management calendar.

Say for an example you wish to meet with each team member monthly. The best thing to do is to block out time for this in your calendar (Franklin Planner) setting up the time as early as possible in the day. Make it a system by making it the same time with each person every month. This gets you **and the team member** in the habit of meeting at this time. For example, if Kelly knows that she meets with Tina on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at 3 p.m. every month she and Tina will make it a habit and both expect it to happen.

You are also using a principle here: **The best way to spend time on High Pay-Off Action Steps is to involve other people.** *People have a hard time making commitments to themselves, yet a much easier time making commitments to other people.* Whenever you can, involve other people in your commitment. It could be as simple as “Cindy, at the end of the day, could you ask me how I did on my call to Fred about this problem? That will help me make the call.” Cindy will most likely be willing to do

this and the fact that you've made a commitment to someone else it will help you remember to do this better (even if they forget to ask you).

**Let us decide what time we wish to block out and how we can involve other people in this commitment.**

List Out High Pay-Off Action Steps You Wish to Accomplish

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Block out the time in your time management calendar. Who can you involve in this commitment?

**Doing High Pay-Off Action Steps is a Choice that You Make in the Moment**

When it comes time for you to meet with someone or start research or a goal, we must understand that there will *always be a voice inside us that forces us to choose whether or not to do this action step.* The voice says “Yes, in five minutes it will be time to meet with Kelly, but you must right now get these two items done for Brian and Virgil and then call back this one customer and Dawn went home sick and Chuck....” *This voice will appear guaranteed.* The moment that Diane is ready to get started on a new goal, 3 customers will come in the door with emergencies. There is a part of us (and some might say outside forces) that do not want us to do these High Pay-Off Actions. In 95% of the cases, we can simply acknowledge what this part of us is saying. “Yes I do need to get these done for Brian and Virgil, but I can get them done after I meet with Kelly” Go ahead and get the High Pay-Off Action Steps done anyways. Expect that these kind of thing will happen, that your will be challenged in you attempt to start and accomplish these High Pay-Off Actions. **This is the moment when most people fail**

where they say, “Oh, Gosh, I just can’t do it.” They give up. Your role is to be smarter than that negative voice inside you and take charge of your situation.

### **Do the Difficult Things First**

Most High Pay-Off Actions begin with a phone call or some type of communication with someone. It is best to schedule High Pay-Off Action Steps at the beginning of the day since you can get them out of the way, handle them and move on. For an example, you may have an important phone call to make that makes you feel uncomfortable like Terry having to call an employee to ask them to go to the doctor since they have been sick for a week and you need them to get a doctor’s excuse. This person might be a long time friend of the family. Since you know the call will be uncomfortable, put it first on your list. This helps avoid procrastination. Do the same thing with counseling or discipline meetings. Take care of them now instead of later. Doing these action steps first are also important since it is less likely you will forget about them if they are at the top of your list and in front of your face.

### **List High Pay-Off Actions You Will Do Tomorrow At the Beginning of the Day:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The point of all this is to do the items you are not in the habit of doing first with a focus on getting them done.

### **Dealing with Time Pressure**

Accomplish your High Pay-Off Action Steps first with faith that the work with deadlines will naturally get accomplished. Have faith in this principle:

**The things that must get done will get done even if we take time for items that *don’t have to get done*.**

For an example let us say that Diane has 3 hours left in the day and as she looks at her Commercial work pile she has 3 ½ hours of work to do all of which must be done at the end of the day. At the same time, she needs 45 minutes – 1 hour to prepare for a class she will be giving the CSR's tomorrow morning at 8 a.m. Her goal is to not take the work home since that night is her child's birthday party. Here we have an example I'm sure you have all faced?

### **What can she do?**

The whole point here is that as leaders we have an *in the moment choice* to give up or have faith, restructure, re-plan and move forward. The things you are in the habit of doing will naturally get done.

### **Get Out Of Fear and Get In Control**

When we commit to someone to do something and then do not do it, we are breaking the closest bonds of faith and destroying our reputation as leaders. For a company to grow it must have their managers able to do what they say they are going to do. To accomplish this we must take very seriously our commitments to others and get out of the fear that causes us not to accomplish what we promise.

Keep your commitments to others in front of your face at all times. Put them at the top of your priority list. Focus on them first before all else.

### **3 Commitments to Others I Will Put First On My List**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

At the same time we must realize that in order for us to succeed as managers we must get out of fear.

1. The fear that something bad will happen if I don't get all the deadline work done now.

2. The fear that the work will not all get accomplished.
3. The fear that I am the only one who can accomplish this work.

Look at the fear and then sit back and decide what to do with it. In all cases, do not let fear control you.

### **Delegation**

The best way to accomplish High Pay-Off Action Steps is to multiply yourself through your people. Could you cross train someone in commercial work?

#### **List of 4 Items to Delegate, Simplify or Eliminate.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

### **Other Suggestions**

1. Set A Deadline for the High Pay-Off Action Steps
2. Control Your Own Time with Other People
3. Understand that all People Have Time Management problems and in many cases you will have to be their Time Manager for them.
4. Create a High Pay-Off Checklist