

Quarterly Letter



MANAGE

Organize and direct people to reach specific, measurable goals. I must manage me.

I cannot *manage* what I do not *measure*.

CONTROL

Monitor, adjust as needed, predetermined, measurable resources as you get to your goals.

"You cannot direct the wind but you can adjust the sails." (Unknown)

ACCOUNT

Report on performance against plans as you move to predetermined goals.

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Today will be tomorrow's "good old days," are you creating healthy memories? Doing personal and household projects

It's summer; time for a break from work to relax, slow down, change focus ... but will you? What about projects you've been deferring? When will you read that book, sort personal files, clean the basement, the garage, the attic? Perhaps you have been thinking about writing a song, a book, a poem, a magazine article?

Probably you won't finish, or even start, any of these projects. Other people's agenda, seductive toys, *helpful tools* like the Internet, or other stuff might grab your attention and fill available time! Meanwhile, summer ends and you wonder: "where did the time go?"

You can choose to control your *attitude, behaviour* and *choices*, or by default, let events, gadgets, and stuff direct you. Let me share an approach that might help you get through your summer projects.

Identify projects and then choose one Summer project list

What's a project? A discrete job, big or small, costly or inexpensive. Usually, outside normal tasks, it needs clear definition, specific goal, plan, resources, responsibilities, and timeframe. Each deferred task is a project to which you can apply project management principles.

Be realistic, accept you can't do everything you want to do. If you have a family, reserve time for family members. And remember, you need *down time* to recharge.

List projects in order of importance *to you*. Then, if relevant and different, list them in your spouse's priority sequence. This could be the first challenge! How to choose the first project! Still, with your spouse, you must decide. Choosing a simple, short time-span job could give your first victory, and encourage you to move to the next project.

Prepare a GPS project analysis

Goal, plan, spending plan

Next, identify the *goal, plan*, and *spending plan* for the chosen project.

Goal

To help define clearly *what* you plan to do, visualize the project's end. *Start writing your book* is a poor goal definition. Why? You could achieve it by writing one word! What do you want to see at the *end of the project's life*? A complete draft? The book's thesis? A draft foreword, the book's outline, research needed? Each is a project you will need to analyze.

Often we overlook the project's preconditions and related parts. Write a GPS for each. If the project's goal is to draft the book's foreword, have you outlined the book? Written its thesis? Before tackling the foreword, you might do a specific GPS for each of these activities. Specific research too, could call for its own GPS. So, the first item on the GPS analysis would be a *clear, complete, concise, measurable* goal for the main project and its discrete phases.

Goal statement example: *By 31 July, develop a system to allow family members to retrieve household expenses documents immediately when needed.*

Plan

After describing the goal, write the plan, which seeks to answer the question: "*how* do I reach the goal?" During eight years working in Japan, my colleagues' emphasis on planning, impressed me. Always, we devoted much time to this part of the GPS. The result? Smooth project implementation!

Investing time to understand the goal, and then to look at alternatives to carry out the project, will increase significantly your chance to reach the goal.

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To the right, under *GPS Project Example, Goal*, notice “end state definition” calls for seven file folders. This requirement, file folders’ storage location, and volume of items to be filed could affect retrieval speed. So, the plan must address these matters specifically. The chosen plan should give a high probability to achieve this goal regularly.

At the office, goals you get from your boss don’t change. Your job is to find plans that work. Still, if while developing a plan in the office or at home, you see flaws in the end state definition, stop; validate the goal.

Spending Plan

The spending plan shows effort and resources you will need to do the plan. So, for each step in the plan, estimate resources needed: cost, time, and talents (help you might need).

Next, look at the *opportunity cost*—tasks you won’t be able to do, places you won’t be able to go, relationship that might be affected, as you carry out the plan. The opportunity cost could be significant. Usually overlooked, when identified, it will help you see clearly if you should “contract out,” “delegate,” or defer home projects.

When I worked at Alcan, because of the high opportunity cost, I chose to pay third parties to do many simple household jobs. On weekends and holidays when I was home, I chose to spend time with my wife, and to unwind, rather than work on projects, even a small one. This option is not available always, but, where feasible, consider it. It could be a stress reducer!

Start doing and reviewing the project PEACE Effectiveness

The GPS analysis represents the *P* and *E* in the PEACE Effectiveness process. We leave many projects on shelves because we do not invest time in this vital GPS stage. But time and cost invested here will give great returns.

After you finish this stage, it’s time to act. Sounds simple, but many folks have difficulty starting anything new.

Act on the plan

As a previous *Nike* commercial said, *just do it!* Don’t be a slave to the plan. Don’t ignore it. You are in charge, the plan is your guide. Regularly, review it, keep the goal in focus, and use the spending plan to help track resources’ use.

Compare what you are doing with what you said you would do

Pause regularly to compare what you are doing with what you planned. But beware; early in my business career, I learned that time and again, plans don’t work as conceived. After all, no human knows the future! I learned too that when the plan isn’t working, I shouldn’t try changing the goal! Rather, I need to look at my *behaviour* and the *assumptions* I have been using.

Often, I recall God’s interactions with Moses in the Book of Exodus. God’s plan challenged Moses, but His goal in Exodus 3:10 stood. And by God’s grace, Moses led the Israelites from Egypt!

Execute changes to your attitude and behaviour as needed

Another major learning I picked up along the way is this: My *attitude* to doing the goal is critical. If I don’t believe in the goal, I won’t commit to it, and I won’t work with a realistic plan. If I believe but I am not enthusiastic, I won’t apply myself fully. So, during this review, before I modify the plan, I check my attitude.

Many times, this review stage leads to tweaking, sometimes redoing, the plan. Seldom does it show a need to change the goal. Still, after checking my attitude, I change where I *see and confirm* a need.

GPS PROJECT EXAMPLE

Goal

By 31 July, develop a system to allow family members to retrieve household expenses documents immediately when needed

End State Definition

Seven file folders for housing, transport, taxes, warranties, medical and dental, education, and other. Folders to accommodate information to which family members might need to refer in the future.

(Often you don’t have a clear end state view, so the first project would be to define such a view)

Plan

Identify where to keep files, how to store files, and who will file documents in future. After, look through existing documents, sort in seven groups, and indicate issues that might prevent getting to the desired state, the goal.

Spending Plan

Identify likely time needed, likely costs (buying a filing cabinet, folders), and likely help, and sacrifices needed.

Before starting the project, decide if the goal, plan and spending plans are realistic. If any part isn’t, review and change as needed. Start only when you believe you have dealt with potential challenges in each segment of the GPS.

Managing God’s Money

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