



## Conquering Difficult Tasks

by **Steven D Huff**

Years ago, author and diplomat Clare Booth Luce visited John F. Kennedy at the White House. During her visit she made an urgent plea asking President Kennedy to "get the Soviets out of this hemisphere." Their conversation was interrupted by a telephone call for the president. After the call, Kennedy showed great excitement as he said, "I got my textile bill passed!"

Luce, who was known for her straightforward manner, said, "Mr. President, there are many great men remembered in our civilization. Of one man, they said he went to a cross and died so that all men's sins may be forgiven. Of another man, they said he went in search of a new route to an old world and in doing so founded a new world. Of another it is said that he took up arms against his mother country and with a motley army of rebels defeated the greatest military power on earth to found a new nation. Mr. President, of none of these great men was it said, 'He got his textile bill passed.'"

Of course, most people would rather deal with easy tasks than difficult ones. Yet, as William Boetcker once observed, "The difficulties and struggles of today are but the price we must pay for the great accomplishments and victories of tomorrow."

Here are a few ideas to help you conquer difficult tasks:

- **Evaluate Your Priorities** - Some tasks and decisions are more urgent than others. Prioritizing becomes a valuable tool for helping you decide which difficult tasks are worth the challenge.
- **Weigh The Rewards & Consequences** - Most people spring into action, not when they see the light, but when they feel the heat. If potential rewards do not provide enough motivation, then stop to consider the consequences of failing to act. This step alone might make all the difference.
- **Determine The Desired Outcome** - Difficult situations have a way of clouding our vision. Be careful to specify your primary objective. Make yourself answer the important questions, like: What will success look like? and What result is desired?
- **Break The Task Into Smaller Steps** - Once you can clearly see your desired outcome, work backward to make a list of steps required to complete the task. Smaller steps make a difficult task more manageable. You may even find that some steps can be effectively delegated.
- **Go To Work On The Leading Step** - The list of small steps becomes your blueprint for action. Get started on the first or leading step right away. Capitalize on the momentum of getting started.
- **Overcome The Urge To "Do-It-Later"** - The greater the difficulty of the task, the more likely we are to procrastinate. Get to work right away and don't yield to the urge to deal with it later.
- **Stick To Your Principles** - Great challenges often result in great compromises. Bend where you can, but remember to be a person of principle. Doing what's right should always be the priority.