

Priorities - The Key to Success

by Peter Lowe

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There are two things that are most difficult to get people to do: to think and to do things in order of importance. When you are 70 years old, and you look back on your life, will you be satisfied with the kind of person you've become and what you've accomplished in life? The discipline to prioritize and the ability to work toward goals are essential to success in life. I've developed an acrostic, using the letters of the word PRIORITY, to give you some simple guidelines to begin to get hold of your life and keep it focused on those things that will yield a fruitful investment.

- **P - People over things.**

We all work and spend a lot of time pursuing our vocational goals. But the danger comes when a "job" always takes precedence over people and our relationships with them. Are you working primarily for job recognition, financial rewards, or power? In your pursuit of your vocational goals, people and their needs must always be kept in mind. Working 10-12 hour days and just tossing crumbs of time to your spouse, children, close friends and employees will achieve nothing but alienation and loneliness.

- **R - Realistic Attitude.**

There are very few people who achieve everything they set out to. Making a list of all the things you consider important, the tasks you want to perform (daily, weekly, long term) will inevitably result in some things not being attained. William James once said that being wise is "the art of knowing what to overlook." Refuse the little "power sappers"

- **I - Ideals.**

Make room for your ideals and dreams. It was probably some part of your youthful dreams that brought you into your current profession. You still have those dreams inside of you. Keep them alive. A person who has dreams is filled with expectation, and no obstacle seems insurmountable. He has a positive attitude, is excited and is never bored.

- **O - Order your life.**

Forty years ago, a time management consultant was asked by a steel company president to share his best one idea for time management. The consultant thought for awhile and replied, "I will do that on one condition: that you will pay me after one month of implementing the idea what you honestly think it is worth." One month later the steel company president sent the consultant a check for \$25,000. The idea? Start working each day on your top priority and keep at it until you're done. Always be doing your top priority! Robert J. McKain has said, "The reason most major goals are not achieved is that we spend our time doing second things first."

- **R - Risk**

It's difficult to achieve greatness in life without occasionally taking a risk. Most great leaders throughout history were never men and women who "played it safe" all, or even some of the time. For example, think of people like George Washington,, Florence Nightingale or Martin Luther King, Jr. Risk taking was a way of life for them. A study was once done in which 50 people over the age of 95 were asked one question: "If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently?" Three answers constantly emerged from their answers.

- If I had it to do over again, I would risk more.
- If I had it to do over again, I would reflect more.
- If I had it to do over again, I would do more things that would live on after I die.

Don't worry about failure. He who does not attempt a task because of the possibility of failure has failed already. We should fear stagnation, laziness and boredom much more than we fear failure. Teddy



Priority

Developing Leaders from the Inside Out

Roosevelt once said, "The credit belongs to the man...who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause--who, at best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

- **I - Initiative.**

Take it! True leaders push on with ambition and drive. You know what needs to be done and you must have the confidence that you are the best person to do it. Also realize that there are some things on your list which can be best achieved by someone else (a co-worker, etc) who has the expertise to do it faster, better, and with more enthusiasm. Take the initiative and ask!

- **T - Take Control.**

Always keep in mind that you are the "Master of the List" and not the other way around. A young concert violinist was asked the secret of her success. She replied, "Planned neglect." Then she explained, "When I was in school, there were many things that demanded my time. When I went to my room after breakfast, I made my bed, straightened the room, dusted the floor, and did whatever else came to my attention. Then I hurried to my violin practice. I found I wasn't progressing so I reversed things. Until my practice period was completed, I deliberately neglected everything else. That program of planned neglect, I believe, accounts for my success."

- **Y - You.**

Your priorities must reflect you - who you are, what you want to achieve in life, your dreams, your goals, your investment of all that you are. Invest in yourself daily and try to live a balanced life-- physically, spiritually, mentally and socially. Stephen Covey observes, "The spiritual dimension is your core, your center, your commitment to your value system." Take time to pray and read the Bible, for as Dwight Eisenhower said, "In no other book is there such a collection of inspired wisdom, reality and hope."

Some years ago a newspaper story told of 300 whales that suddenly died. The whales were pursuing sardines and found themselves marooned in a bay. Frederick Broan Harris commented, "The small fish lured the sea giants to their death....They came to their violent demise by chasing small ends, by prostituting vast powers for insignificant goals."

Remember these principles and you'll come to the end of your life with very few regrets.

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