Making More While Working Less

Jeffrey J. Mayer

Learn how to apply the 80/20 rule so you can achieve superior results with minimal effort.

From the author of *Opening Doors with a Brilliant Elevator Speech, Winning The Fight Between You and Your Desk, Creating Opportunities by Networking,* and *Overcoming the Fear of Cold Calling,*

Making More While Working Less

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Dave Boekholder, Sales Manager, Digital Canal

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Creating Opportunities by Networking

Overcoming The Fear of Cold Calling

Making More While Working Less

Winning The Fight Between You and Your Desk

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Success is a Journey

If You Haven't Got the Time to Do It Right,
When Will You Find the Time to Do It Over?

Time Management For Dummies

Winning the Fight Between You and Your Desk

How Did This Training Manual Help You?

What are the BEST useable ideas you gained from this Training Manual?

How do you plan to apply them? How will they help you close more sales, make more money, and grow your business?

Please send your thoughts/comments to Jeff Mayer at Jeff@SucceedingInBusiness.com.

Making More While Working Less

Have you ever asked yourself this question:

Why is it that I'm putting in so many hours at work, trying my best to get ahead, but seem to be standing still?

- *I've read dozens of inspirational and motivational books.*
- *I've spent hundreds of hours listening to time management tapes, or watching how-to 'become a success' videos.*
- *I've attended numerous meetings, conferences, conventions and workshops that were supposed to teach me how to become a huge success and make lots of money.*

But nothing seems to work.

I still come in early, stay late, work weekends, but my career — and my earnings — have stalled. Where do I go from here? What do I do next?

These are questions I've been grappling with for the past thirty years. I've often wondered why do bright, smart, and talented people seem to hit a plateau and stay there?

Why do bright, smart, and talented people fail to reach their full potential?

The answer is:

1. They have lost focus. They don't know what is important and what isn't.
2. They do lots of work, tasks and projects that keep them busy. The more *successful* they become, the busier they are. The less time they have. But being busy isn't the same as being productive.
3. They do lots of things that take up their time, energy and resources. But that's not the same as getting results.

4. They spend the majority of their time doing low priority — low payoff — work; and never get to the high priority, H-U-G-E payoff work.

They are looking for success in the wrong place.

The goal isn't to work harder. The goal isn't to work smarter.

The goal is to Work Less, and Make More.

The goal is to get raises, promotions and bonuses.

The goal is to spend more time playing, and less time at your desk.

Making More While Working Less is about generating leverage, getting results, having more time for yourself, your family, and your friends, and having more money in the bank.

Give Yourself Leverage

The concept of using leverage is that a little bit of one thing generates a lot of something else.

In business, when you think of leverage, you think of the 80/20 Rule.

- Eighty percent of your sales come from 20 percent of your customers.
- Eighty percent of your profits come from 20 percent of your products.
- Eighty percent of your headaches come from 20 percent of your customers.

And 80 percent of your results come from 20 percent of your efforts.

But if 80 percent of your results come from 20 percent of your efforts, than 80 percent of your time is wasted.

That's
NEGATIVE LEVERAGE!

If 80 percent of your time, energy, effort and resources — and the time, energy, effort and resources of your colleagues, co-workers and staff — is used unproductively, is it any wonder why you feel as if you're running in place. (Or that you've been run over by a truck.)

Convert the 80 percent of your time that's being wasted into time that's used more effectively and efficiently, and you will see a dramatic increase in your output and your results.

Put the 80/20 Rule to work for you and you will eliminate waste, save time and increase your productivity. Turn low-productivity activity into high-productivity activities and you will experience geometric growth in your career, your business, your income and your profits.

Here are three things to think about:

- Don't look for the hard. Look for the easy.
- Look for the simple. Not the complex.
- You are paid for results. Not for the time it took to create the results.

Making More While Working Less will teach you how to

1. Discover the 20 percent of your activities that generate the 80 percent of your results,
2. Eliminate the 80 percent of your activities that generate 20 percent of your results, so you can
3. Use your newly found time — and focus — to generate **H-U-G-E RESULTS**!

The History Of The 80/20 Rule

The concept behind the 80/20 Rule — also called The Pareto Principal — is that a little bit of one thing generates a great deal of something else.

The Pareto Principal was created by Dr. Joseph M. Juran, a pioneer in the development of quality control programs in the 1920s and 1930s.

Juran observed that quality defects were unequal in their frequency, i.e. when a long list of defects was arranged in the order of frequency, a relative few of the defects accounted for the majority of the defectiveness.

This same phenomenon — which Juran called *The Vital Few and Trivial Many* — also existed with respect to employee absenteeism, causes of accidents, and so on.

Juran named his principal after Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), an Italian economist who studied the distribution of wealth in nineteenth century England. Pareto's research showed that most of the wealth (80 percent) was concentrated in a few families (20 percent) while the great majority of people were poor.

A Short Questionnaire

Look over the following questions and put a check mark next to the ones that apply to you:

- ❑ Do hours of your time disappear each day? If so, Study Strategies #1, 2 and 3. They will help you learn where your time goes.
- ❑ Do you spend a lot of time doing things that have no value, no payoff, and no reward. If so, start applying *Strategy #6: Keep a "Things NOT To-Do" List*
- ❑ Do you squander your lead time, and find you start your important projects at the last minute? If so, embrace *Strategy #11: Use Your Lead Time.*
- ❑ Do you have trouble making decisions? Are you suffering from *Paralysis By Analysis?* If so, memorize *Strategy #13: Improve Your Decision Making Skills.*
- ❑ Do you feel overwhelmed because everything is too

complicated? If so, you'll learn that simple is beautiful in *Think Small: Simple, Not Complex*.

- ❑ Do you have too much to do and not enough time? If so, devour *Delegating Work.*
- ❑ Do you have people in your life who waste your time? If so, run to *Avoid People Who Waste Your Time.*
- ❑ Do you need a quick, easy, and efficient way to keep in touch with the important people in your business and personal life? If so, check out *Keep Names, Addresses, And Phone Numbers In Your Computer.*
- ❑ Do you need a more effective way to organize your thoughts and ideas? If so, go to *Mind Mapping.*
- ❑ Do you get bogged down with reading materials? If so, study *Improve Your Reading Speed And Comprehension.*

Not Another Time Management Book

Making More While Working Less isn't just another book time management. Lord knows I've read enough of them, and have written a whole bunch myself.

This training manual is different from the other time management books you've read because the focus isn't to tell you how to manage your time.

Making More While Working Less gives you strategies you can use to **LEVERAGE** your time so you can get greater results with less effort.

How many times have you come into the office with the best of intentions, and before you know it, you were distracted by phone calls, interruptions, e-mail messages and knocks on the door from colleagues or coworkers who ask, *"Have you got a moment?"*

In the blink of an eye your morning, afternoon, or entire day is gone.

After you've studied *Making More While Working Less,* and put these strategies to use, your wasted days will be a thing of the past.

Getting The Most Out Of This Training Manual

Making More While Working Less is filled with powerful information that will help you become much more successful. But it's going to take you a bit of time to make these time-saving, productivity improving ideas, concepts, techniques, and strategies your own.

This is going to take some work on your part. You will have to change the way you spend your time. You will have to unlearn old habits, and learn some new ones. Have faith. This works.

These productivity improving strategies have worked for me for more than 20 years and have worked for my consulting clients, who have paid thousands of dollars to learn them. Put them to use, and they'll work for you too. Guaranteed!

Print This Training Manual

I know you can read this on your computer, but it's my recommendation that you print it out so you can highlight important information and write notes to yourself in the margin. Every once in a while I'm going to ask you some questions, and I want you to take a few moments to think about and answer them.

You can write your answers in the space provided, or on the back of one of the pages of this training manual.

Review The Training Manual From Beginning To End

Before you dive into this training manual, take a few minutes to review it from front to back, so you can get an overview of all the material that's being covered.

Study the table of contents, look at the headings and sub-headings. Look at the sections that interest you the most. If you like, read them first.

If you become engrossed in specific sections of the training manual, it's okay to read them first. Then go back and start reading the training manual from the beginning.

As you are reading the training manual, begin to put the information to work... IMMEDIATELY. Pick one or two strategies and start using them. Then pick a third or fourth idea and begin applying them.

After you've completed reading this training manual the first time, I would also suggest that you reread it a second time, and even a third time. You'll be amazed at how much *new* information you'll pick up with each additional reading.

Within weeks — or maybe a few days — you'll see dramatic changes in your results as you begin to put these powerful ideas, techniques, strategies and concepts into action. In no time at all you'll be focusing attention on your high-impact, big payoff work, tasks and projects; and will no longer be wasting your energy on anything that doesn't add value to your job, career, business or life.

Leverage Your Time

You have no shortage of time. You have the same 24 hours in a day that I do. You have the same 24 hours that Bill Gates and Warren Buffett have.

The primary difference between successful and non-successful people is how they leverage their time. How the get maximum results with minimum effort.

The goal isn't:

- To work 60-70 hours per week.
- To wear your dedication to your job as a badge of honor.
- To tell the whole world how *busy* you are.

The goal is to work less and make more.

It's my belief that everybody — including you — should have an M.B.A.:

A Massive Bank Account!

If you're putting in lots of hours at work, chances are you're squandering your time doing low priority, non-productive tasks.

Making More While Working Less will teach you to:

1. **Search for new ways to get dramatic increases in performance and productivity.** The goal is to leverage your time, knowledge, experience, and wisdom so you focus on the work, tasks, projects, and activities where you add five times more value.

   Then capture this value for yourself.

2. **Spend Time In Quality Ways.** Stop spending your time in low-quality — chickenfeed — ways and start spending your time in high-quality ways, big-payoff ways. Do things that give you huge rewards. Look for ways to double, triple or quadruple your results.

3. **Stay Focused.** You achieve maximum effectiveness when you concentrate 100 percent of your energies on the 20 percent of your activities at which you are the best. Do them as quickly, efficiently and effectively as you can so you achieve maximum results.

Remember: Leverage comes when you generate big results with little effort.

The next 16 strategies will show you how to leverage your time.

Strategy #1: Study How You Spend Your Time

For most people, 80 percent of their results comes from 20 percent of their efforts. Does that apply to you?

If so, take a good look at — study — how you spend your time each day. You'll quickly see that the majority of your time is spent doing work, tasks, projects and other miscellaneous things that

- Keep you busy,
- Take up your valuable time,
- Don't make you productive, and

DON'T GENERATE RESULTS.

Does 80 percent of your results come from 20 percent of your activities?

If so, then 80 percent of your time is wasted.

Convert that wasted time into productive time and your productivity will increase three, four, or five fold.

From my own experience, I don't think 80/20 fits when it comes to using your time productively. I think it's closer to 95/5. Five percent of your daily activities are accounting for 95 percent of your results.

Here is a list of big time wasters, which ones apply to you?

- ❑ You attend staff and/or sales meetings, that accomplish nothing.
- ❑ You put out fires, that are usually the result of arson.
- ❑ You are constantly interrupted by colleagues and coworkers.
- ❑ You check, read, and respond to your incoming e-mail.
- ❑ You answer the phone — which never stops ringing — all day long.
- ❑ You answer your cell phone every time it rings, no matter what you're doing or who you're with.

Remember: You're not suffering from a shortage of time, your problem is that you're spending the majority of your time in unproductive — low-quality — ways. Spend your time in productive — high-quality — ways and your productivity will soar.

Strategy #2: Identify Your Low Priority — Least Productive — Activities

Before you can begin getting better utilization of your time, you must identify where it is being spent. Let's discover and identify your least productive activities, those activities that take up lots of your time, but generate very little results.

Once you discover what they are, you've three choices:

- Eliminate them,
- Delegate them to someone else, or
- Streamline the activities. (If you must do them yourself.)

The best way to discover how you spend your time is to keep a log of everything you do.

For the next two days I would like you to do the following:

1. Keep a pad of paper on your desk. (You can also use your word processor or a spreadsheet if you prefer.)
2. Draw a line down the center.
3. On the left side write: **Things I Did That Are Really Important.** These would be the work, tasks and projects you worked on that added value to your business and your life.
4. On the right side write: **Things I Did That Wasted My Time.** Here you record everything you did that was a non-productive use of your time. Write down what you did, who you did it for, why you did it, and how much time it took.
5. Record the beginning and ending times of everything you did throughout the day. This would include work you're doing at your desk. Interruptions from colleagues and coworkers, incoming and outgoing phone calls, and so on.
6. Write down the length of time each activity took with a red pen.
7. Next to each entry write on a scale of 1 - 10 the level of

importance of everything you did. Ten being very important and 1 being of little importance.

8. Study your time log at the end of each day. How much time was spent doing things that were important, things that added value? How much time was spent doing unimportant, non-productive work?

You'll probably find that 80 percent of your wasted time was spent doing the same 20 percent of your activities. Eliminate those activities and you've more time for important tasks.

If you would like to take your results and put them on a Pareto Graph, read the information on Creating A Pareto Graph in the Appendix at the end of this training manual.

Here are six questions you can ask yourself about each item on your time log:

- Was this a good use of my time?
- Was this the most important task I should have been working on at the time I was doing it?
- What would have happened if I hadn't done these tasks. Would anybody have cared? If not, don't do them again.
- Could the work have been delegated to others?
- Could the work have been done at a different time, or on a different day, so I wouldn't have interrupted myself from the task I was working on?
- How could I have completed this task quicker? If this is work that must be done, study the processes you are using to complete the work. Challenge yourself to find ways to complete the work faster.

Your goal is to discover ways to leverage your time so that a little bit of work on your part can be transformed into big results and huge returns.

Strategy #3: Focus On Your High Priority Activities

Study the log you created in Strategy #2 and look at how much time you spent doing high priority, big payoff, activities.

If your results are like most people's, this will be a real eye opener for more than 80 percent of your time has been spent doing low payoff, low priority, work. Less than 20 percent of your time is spent doing work that is of any *real* value or importance.

(And you wonder why you're working so hard, but not going any place?)

Here are six techniques you can use to maximize your time:

1. Strive for exceptional productivity. Spend your time only on high-value tasks and activities that generate exceptional results. Eliminate your low-value activities. Be Ruthless!

2. Look for shortcuts. Streamline your work/activities.

3. Don't give "everybody" a fair share of your time. Some people are more important to you than others. Maximize the time you give to important people. Minimize — or eliminate — the time spent with people who aren't important to you. (Please remember to be polite.)

4. Strive to eliminate the 80 percent of your activities that only give you 20 percent of your results. If you can't eliminate it, try to delegate it to someone else.

   Spend your time doing the things that have the biggest payoff.

5. Identify the types of work or activities you do extremely well. The areas in which you are very knowledgeable. Where you have expertise. Try to spend 80 percent of your time doing these types of activities.

   Minimize the time spent doing activities where your comparative skill is nowhere as great. You dilute your effectiveness when you spend your time doing things that you're not *great* at.

6. It's okay to say NO when you're asked to do something. Just because a friend, colleague, coworker — or even your boss — asks you to do something, doesn't mean that you have to do it.

It's may even be appropriate, from time to time, to ask your boss if it's *really* necessary to do this task, as another project is being dumped on your desk.

Three Things To Remember:

- Spend your time doing work, tasks, projects and activities that you have fun doing, things that are easy for you to do, and things where you can get a huge payoff.
- Spend your time on the important work, tasks, projects and activities. Not the urgent things.
- It is not the shortage of time that should worry you, but the tendency for the majority of your time to be spent in low quality ways

Strategy #4: Keep A Master List

For the past twenty years I've been writing about the need to keep a Master List: A very detailed list of everything you need to do. You can keep your Master List on a pad of paper, in your word processor, inside Outlook, ACT!, your Palm or Pocket PC, or any other program you may like.

What is most important is that you keep a list so you don't forget

- What you need to do,
- Who you need to do it for, and
- When it's got to be done.

Here are four Master List tips:

1. Write everything down on your Master List. Don't be afraid of a long list. Your goal isn't to complete everything that is on the list by the end of the day. You record the items on the list so you won't forget what needs to be done.
2. Review your Master List frequently throughout the day and ask yourself what is the most important task that needs to be done next. Then set aside some time and do it.
3. Review your Master List at the end of the day and ask yourself these three questions:
   - What is the most important work I must complete tomorrow?
   - What are the 5 percent of my tasks that will get me 95 percent of my results?
   - What is the #1 task that, if completed tomorrow, will get me the biggest results?

   Schedule time to complete these tasks first. (See Strategy #7.)
4. Study your Master List so you know what needs to be done within the next few days, or weeks. This way you can start on these projects while you've plenty of lead time.

SecretToSuccess: You will get 80 percent of your results by accomplishing the most important 20 percent of the items on your Master List. Focus your time on that important 20 percent.

Strategy #6: Keep A "Things NOT To-Do" List

If 80 percent of your results are coming from 20 percent of your activities, than you're doing a lot of things everyday that you shouldn't be doing.

The flip side of keeping a to-do list is to keep a Things NOT To-Do List.

It's very easy to get sucked into doing things that have no value, no payoff, and no reward. By having a Things Not To-Do list you have a constant reminder of the things you shouldn't be doing.

This is what you do:

1. Create a word processing document.
2. Create a list of all the things you should **STOP** doing.
3. Keep the list in a convenient — highly visible— place and continue to ad items to the list that you shouldn't be doing, and/or the people you shouldn't be doing them with.
4. Resort the list every few days so the things you need to be reminded NOT to do are at the top of the list.

You'll save yourself hours of time when you eliminate the work, tasks, activities, projects — and people — that keep you busy but don't add to your productivity or generate results.

You will quickly discover that 80 percent of the time you previously wasted doing tasks that are on your Things NOT To-Do list came from less than 20 percent of the items on your list.

Strategy #7: Block Out Time For You

When I was in college a bunch of us were trying to come up with a definition for "spare change." After hours of debate — I guess we didn't have much to do that afternoon — we finally concluded that "spare change" was the money you would throw into a fountain.

With that thought in mind, there is no such thing as Free Time.

In order to achieve maximum results with minimum effort, you must schedule blocks of uninterrupted time for yourself. Otherwise you'll find yourself spending 80 percent of your time doing things for other people, and 20 percent of your time doing the things you want to be doing.

This is how you block out time for you:

1. Look at your Master List.
2. Identify the most important task(s) you must complete.
3. Pull out your calendar.

4. Block out time on the calendar to tackle this project. Schedule no more than 60 to 90 minutes of uninterrupted time, for each of your projects. That is about the maximum time you can maintain a high concentration level before you become tired and lose your focus.

5. Keep your appointment. Allow no interruptions. Take no phone calls. Don't allow yourself to get distracted.

SuccessTip: Most projects take longer than expected, so give yourself 50 percent more time than you think you'll need.

Strategy #8: Use Your Most Productive Time

Think about this for a moment:

**In less than 20 percent of your workday,
you will complete 80 percent of your work.**

We all have certain times of day when we do our best work. Some people are morning people, others are afternoon people. A third group may do their best work in the middle of the night.

Though you may be working an eight, ten, or twelve hour day, the quality of your output throughout the day is not equal.

So I ask you: When are you the most productive?

Use the

- Twenty percent of your workday when you are most productive,
- To tackle the 5 percent of your tasks that will,
- Give you 95 percent of your results.

Now you're giving yourself leverage.

SuccessTip: Schedule appointments with yourself to do your most important work at the time of day you're most productive. Your productivity will increase two- or three-fold.

Strategy #9: Eliminate Unnecessary Tasks

On everybody's desk — your's included — is a pile of *stuff* that they just haven't gotten to. This burden of unfinished work weighs on them. But the majority of it sits for days, weeks, or months without ever being done.

Instead of worrying about all these unfinished tasks, make a decision that you're not going to do them. Chances are that 80, maybe 90, percent of things you're *supposed* to do aren't very important. If nobody cares whether the work is done today, tomorrow, next week, or next month,

STOP WORRYING ABOUT IT!

This is how you can quickly go through the piles on your desk and eliminate the low level — low priority — tasks:

1. Go through every piece of paper on your desk, one piece at a time, and make three piles A, B and C. A items are very important. B items are less so. C items are things you're *supposed* to do, but nobody cares if they get done or not.

2. Place the B and C pile in a file drawer and on the top of the stack write today's date.

3 If nobody asks for any of the work that is in the B and C piles in the next 30, 60 or 90 days, (you decide), then you can throw the papers away. (Or file them if they must be kept.)

Now focus all of your time, effort, attention and energies on getting the A items done.

When you've finished all of the A items, you can work on the B items. Chances are you'll never get to the C items.

Strategy #10: Eliminate Unproductive Activities

It's very easy to get into the habit of doing things that keep you busy, but don't make you any money.

Let me give you a few examples.

Steve The Financial Planner

Steve is a financial planner. When he started in the business he had been told that he should prepare free financial analysis for prospective clients because this would build trust and show his competence. Once he had developed a relationship the prospect would buy from him.

Unfortunately, it didn't quite work out this way. Steve would have a meeting with the prospect. Gather his insurance policies, stocks, bonds, mutual funds reports, and wills and trusts. Go back to his office and write up a detailed analysis of the person's current situation.

When the report was completed another meeting would be scheduled where Steve would review the client's situation and make recommendations.

More often than not, the client said thank you and never moved forward with Steve's recommendations. Occasionally the client would graciously accept Steve's analysis and then say,

> *"Steve, we sure appreciate the work you did. We're going to get some other quotes. Would you like to quote on this?"*

This made Steve feel *real* good. Very seldom did Steve get the order.

At my urging, Steve stopped doing free consultations and analysis. He's now charging for his services. By his own estimation this has saved him 500 hours a year.

Sharon The Banker

Sharon is a banker. She had gotten into the habit of wanting to have face-to-face meetings with anybody who would meet with her. Almost everybody she spoke with would give her an appointment, frequently over lunch.

Unfortunately, very few of these meetings ever turned into banking customers.

To improve Sharon's results, we created two key requirements that must be met before she would schedule a face-to-face meeting.

1. She must be speaking with the president, CEO or CFO.
2. They must provide her with a financial statement, before their meeting.

Once Sharon put these two requirements into action her life changed. She was pre-qualifying her prospects before meeting with them. This has enabled her to convert two to three hours of wasted time each day into productive time.

From Mark and Sharon's stories you can see that it's easy to spend hours of time doing things that generate little or no results. If you haven't already done so, go back to strategy #1, Study How You Spend Your Time, and keep a diary of how you spend your time.

Eliminate the 80 percent of the activities that generate only 20 percent of your results and you've more time to spend on high productivity, big payoff activities.

Strategy #11: Use Your Lead Time

When you were in school, did you know anybody who stayed up all night cramming for a test or final exam? I tried it a few times myself, but found that I preferred getting a good night's sleep. And... I didn't do very well on the tests.

I discovered that by doing a little bit of homework every day I was able to prepare for my exams — and even learn something — along the way.

When you've an important project, don't put it aside until the last minute. Start on it immediately while you've got plenty of lead time.

Your goal isn't to say you got the project done. Your goal is to get GREAT results to keep your boss, or your best customer, happy.

This is what you do:

- Review the project and determine what needs to be done.
- Estimate the amount of time it will take.
- Determine what additional resources, or people, you will need to complete the project.

- Make a list of all the things that need to be done to properly complete the project. Some tasks need to be completed before others can begin. Other tasks can be done concurrently.
- Start working on each of the individual tasks immediately.

The goal isn't to have a great first draft, it's to have a great finished project.

When I'm writing an essay, eBook, or training manual — like this one — I get the raw information into the word processor and then start editing it.

The more time you have to think about — and edit — your work, the better it becomes.

SecretToSuccess: Start on your important projects while you've plenty of lead time. You remove all the pressure and get much better results. Don't put things off till the last minute — squandering 90 percent of your lead time.

Strategy #12: Stop Being A Perfectionist

Perfectionism causes paralysis. I've often felt that it's more important to get it done than to get it perfect. Once you've got it done, than you can edit it to make it better. (See Strategy #11.)

When you're working on a project, ask yourself how good does it have to be? Is 80 percent OK? 85 percent? 90 percent? You decide.

Oftentimes the amount of additional time it takes to improve something from 80 to 90 percent is as much or greater than the time spent getting it to 80 percent. In economics it's called *The Law Of Diminishing Returns,* i.e. A great deal of additional work generates a very small incremental gain. Negative Leverage!

Here are five tips to help you overcome the desire to become a perfectionist:

1. Start on your project early, while you've plenty of lead time.

2. Give yourself lots of time to think about what you're trying to accomplish.
3. Have a good idea of what percentage of perfection would be acceptable.
4. Make sure you have the necessary resources and support to complete your project.
5. Plan to edit, analyze, write, and rewrite your work, for it is in the editing process that your work improves and gets better.

Remember: The goal is to have a great finished product. You don't have to have a great first draft.

Strategy #13: Improve Your Decision Making Skills

Closely related to the problem of being a perfectionist is the agony of making a decision.

Don't be one of the many people who are suffering from ***Paralysis By Analysis.*** Don't analyze your problems to death and then end up doing nothing, while wasting hours, days, weeks, or months thinking about it.

Here are three things you should ask yourself whenever you're confronted with a problem:

1. What is the worst thing that can happen?
2. What is the best thing that can happen?
3. What is the most likely thing that can happen?

Take out a piece of paper and write out the answers to each of these three scenarios. Then study your list and make a decision. If you're still stumped, go back and identify the #1 reason why you can't make a decision.

- What are the best/worst/probable things that will happen if you do A or B?
- What happens if you decide to do nothing and walk away

from your problem?

- What happens if you decide to put off the decision to a future time?

Remember: Either way you're making a decision, even if it is to do nothing.

Here's where 80/20 fits in. But in this case it's probably 20/1. Of every 20 decisions you must make, maybe one of them is important. The rest really don't matter.

Only a few decisions matter. There are BIG — important, meaningful, life-impacting — decisions, and there's everything else. Make the important decisions, and don't agonize over the rest.

Strategy #14: Give Yourself More Time To Think

As businessmen and women, we are always busy. We have to be doing something. We can't sit still. Unfortunately, when you're busy, you don't have time for *creative* thinking.

The person who is sitting at a desk — that is piled with papers — for 8 hours a day is considered to be a hard-working, dedicated employee.

On the other hand, the person who is organized, efficient and effective who is sitting back in her chair, with her hands clasped behind her head and her eyes closed — THINKING — isn't considered to be working.

When you give yourself adequate time to think about, and ponder, the problems confronting you, you can usually come up with an acceptable solution.

Even though you are bombarded with information from

- E-mail,
- The Internet,

- Faxes,
- Snail mail,
- Phone calls, and
- Face to face meetings,

It still doesn't mean that you have to make instant decisions.

There's nothing wrong with saying, *"Let me think about it, and I'll call you tomorrow."* Or, *"I need to do a bit more research before I make a final decision, can we talk on Friday."*

Then schedule time on your calendar to deal with — and think about — the specific issues. Then make a decision.

Strategy #15: Do Things That Are Important

There is a huge difference between being busy and being productive. As you look at your Master List, identify the #1 task, project, activity or assignment that must be done. Then do it.

On your to-do list there is one task that if completed would generate 60 - 70 percent of your daily results. Do it first.

Here are three things to remember:

1. Do tasks that have a big payoff.
2. Work on activities and projects that add value.
3. Focus on a few clear priorities — singularity of purpose — that you and everybody in your organization can grasp.

Remember: When you get things done, you establish credibility and show that you are dependable.

Strategy #16: Setting Your Priorities

Take a look at your Master List. Chances are that more than 80 percent of the items on your list aren't very meaningful or important.

Nobody will much care if you get them done today, tomorrow, next week or maybe even never.

But what about the important 20 percent? The tendency is to push them off until they can't be pushed off any further. And of those important tasks there is usually one or two of them — the crucial 5 percent — that really need your time and attention. Get those done and you're a hero.

This is how you set your priorities and get your most important work done:

1. Review your Master List before you go home at the end of the day.
2. Identify the single most important task you must do. (Don't worry about numbers two or three.)
3. Pull out your daily calendar.
4. Schedule time on your calendar to do this task. It would be my recommendation that you do it first thing in the morning, while you are fresh, alert, and have a high concentration level.
5. Give yourself more time than you think you'll need. If you think the task will take 30 minutes. Give yourself an hour. If it will take an hour, give yourself two.

If this is a large project, ask yourself how long will it take you to complete? How many hours? Days? Weeks? Months?

Then work backwards and determine how much time you need to allocate to it on a daily basis so you can complete it on time.

SecretToSuccess: Spend 80+ percent of your time, effort and energies on the work, tasks, and projects that have the greatest payoff. You, your business, and your career will flourish.

Think Small: Simple, Not Complex

Everybody does complex. Simple is hard. Your biggest challenge will be to make everything you do simpler.

Here are four questions to ask yourself:

- How can I simplify everything I do?
- How can I standardize all of my processes and procedures?
- How can I do each task a little bit faster, a little bit better, a little less expensively?
- How can I streamline all of my business processes?

> The president of Sony was talking with his engineers about a new video camera. He told them he wanted it smaller. They said it can't be done. He told them to put it in a bucket of water. If air bubbles came out they could make it smaller. They made it smaller!

Refine everything you do until you've made each task as simple as you possibly can.

SecretToSuccess: The way to create something great is to create something simple. If you are serious about delivering better value to your customers, reduce complexity. If you're having trouble simplifying something, try looking at the process from a different angle or perspective. Then try to simplify a part of it.

SecretToSuccess: Generate the most amount of money with the least expenditure of assets, effort and time. This is the secret to becoming wealthy.

The next four strategies will help you make everything simpler.

Strategy #17: Strive For Simplicity

You've probably heard of the KISS principal: **Keep It Simple... Sweetheart.**

Anybody can do complex. Simple is hard!

We all have things that need to be done day-in and day-out. Your challenge is to first identify the things you do repeatedly and then devise ways to make them faster, simpler, and easier to do.

That should be easy because 20 percent of the things you do take up 80 percent of your time. The majority of those tasks are performed day-in and day-out.

For example, I want to give my eBook customers great service. Unfortunately there are times when things don't work as they're supposed to. For example,

- The customer made a purchase but didn't get the download. Or,
- The customer downloaded the file, but can't find it. Or,
- The customer was unable to open the file because they've got a Mac and the file was in Windows format.

So I devised a system where I can send the customer their eBook in about 15 seconds time. This is what I do:

1. Click the reply button on their e-mail message.
2. Drag and drop the eBook onto the e-mail message. (I've an open folder that has all of my eBooks in it.)
3. Press Alt+Ctrl+I, which runs a macro that creates a form letter in the e-mail message:
4. I type the person's name.
5. Click the Send button.

Forty-five seconds later, the eBook is in their Inbox.

This has enabled me to automate a time-consuming process that is repeated several times each day.

Another example of a time consuming task is my daily eBook bookkeeping. When I first started selling eBooks I didn't have an automated way of tracking my daily sales by product type, so

I used pencil and paper to tabulate how many of each product was sold. The results were then entered into QuickBooks.

The more eBooks I sold, the more transactions I had, the longer it took. Some days I was spending 15 to 20 minutes doing bookkeeping. Not a good use of my time.

One day a thought crossed my mind: Would it be possible to have my shopping cart create a daily sales report showing how many of each product I had sold?

I called my friend Rob Bell, president of 1ShoppingCart.com, told him what I wanted, and found that for a modest fee they would create my report. Today I'm able to create my daily sales reports in 30 to 60 seconds. It also saved me the expense of hiring a bookkeeper.

To put 80/20 to work for you, you must make your life simpler. It's easy to do complex, but when you can streamline everything you do you're able to complete more work in less time with less effort.

This is what I want you to do:

1. Keep a log for a week of all the repetitive things you do. These are the tasks you do day-in and day-out.
2. Calculate the amount of time spent doing each task. (Record the number of times you do that specific task and multiply it by the amount of time it takes.)
3. Study your list and note which tasks take the largest amount of your time to complete. You'll find that 20 percent of your tasks take up 80 percent of your time.
4. Analyze the steps you take to complete each of those tasks and work on ways to streamline, automate, or eliminate them.

If you would like to take your results and put them on a Pareto Graph, read the information on Creating A Pareto Graph in the

Appendix at the end of this training manual.

Here are five examples of things I've helped my clients with:

- Joan sends out dozens of letters each day. We created form letter templates that she runs as a mail merge from her database.
- John sends out twenty packages each day. He used to write each label by hand. We created templates for the different labels he needs to print. Now he prints them from his computer.
- Ellen didn't have any telephone scripts. She never said the same thing in the same way when she spoke with customers on the phone. As a result, she didn't know what phrases worked, or didn't. We created scripts for her and her effectiveness has increased dramatically.
- Paul looked at the way his plant moved raw materials through the manufacturing process. He changed the order in which his machines do the work, and where the supplies/materials are located. He cut his manufacturing costs by 20 percent, and dramatically improved his daily output.
- Cheryl owns a piping installation company. She devised a new method for her measurers in the field to calculate the length of pipe needed for each section prior to cutting.

They are taking more accurate measurements, there is less rework and on-site productivity has greatly improved. Her jobs are coming in under budget and generating greater than expected profits.

SecretToSuccess: In every process there is always one step that causes a bottleneck. Eliminate the bottleneck and you'll save yourself substantial amounts of time and money.

Strategy #18: Look For Shortcuts

Your goal in life shouldn't be to work harder. It shouldn't be to work smarter. It should be to work less.

The difference between very successful people and everybody else is that they've found shortcuts that help them get great results with minimal effort. Once they have figured out what works best, they do more of it.

Look at everything that you do and ask yourself — challenge yourself — how can I get it done

- Quicker,
- Better,
- Less expensively.

Spend your time on high value, high quality, big payoff activities. Everything else should be

- Eliminated, if possible,
- Delegated to others, or
- If you've got to do it yourself, do it as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The best way to learn shortcuts is to hang around smart people and learn from them. Spend time with the top people in your company, your business, and your industry. Ask your colleagues, coworkers and associates how things could be done better. Ask lots of questions about what they do and how they do it.

Read books, newspapers, magazines and trade journals.

Everybody has *shortcuts*. Start a journal of the tips, techniques, and strategies that other people are using, and before you know it, you'll have a detailed list of the *experts'* best practices.

Use the list to create a step-by-step plan that will take you to the pinnacle of success.

When looking for shortcuts, search for ways to get small —

incremental — increases in productivity, saving of time, or reductions in cost. Try to increase your effectiveness 1/4 percent a day, 1 percent each week. At the end of the year you're 50 percent better.

Strategy #19: Automate Repetitive Tasks

At least 80 percent of the things you do are repetitive, meaning you do the same task over, and over, and over. Look at the tasks you do most frequently and search for ways to automate or simplify the way you do those tasks.

Here are five examples:

- **Create Form Letter Templates.** Look at every piece of correspondence you send out — including proposals, contracts, and letters of introduction — and analyze how much time it takes to create each document.

  Don't create each letter from scratch, create form letter templates so you don't have to reinvent the wheel each time you send out a letter or proposal.

  If you create documents where you use the same boiler plate language, create a library of frequently used phrases or paragraphs. Then drop them into your documents.

  Here's a perfect example of how to waste time. My wife received this hand written note from her doctor's office, it said:

  > *Please review the enclosed form regarding patient privacy and complete the bottom portion on the second page. Mail the completed form back to us so that we may bill your insurance.*

  The doctor's office should have this as a form letter template in their word processor or as a pre-printed form.

- **Typing Postcards, Envelopes And Labels.** One thing I *still* see many people doing is addressing letters by hand.

I think this is a huge time-waster! Learn how to do a mail merge from your contact manager or word processor.

A program that I couldn't live without is DAZzle, from Envelope Manager Software.

DAZzle makes the process of printing a single label or 250 envelopes a breeze.

DAZzle takes your address information from your contact manager and inserts it into an envelope or label template. All you've got to do is put it into your printer. It's a huge time saver.

For more information visit www.EnvMgr.com.

- **Learn How To Use Your Favorite Software Programs.** Here's a perfect example of negative leverage.

  Studies have shown that most people use less than 10 percent of the features in their word processor, spreadsheet, and contact management programs.

  Look at the programs you're using and learn how to make them work for you. You'll save yourself hours of time while improving your productivity.

- **Learn How To Write Macros.** A macro is a built-in feature of most word processor, spreadsheet, and contact management programs. It enables you to record keystrokes and play them back.

  Macros enable you to automate a task that you perform repeatedly or on a regular basis.

  A macro can be very simple, such as having the computer dial the phone for you, check your e-mail, or insert your name and address into a letter. Or they can be more complex, such as launching a program, copying data from it, activating a second program, pasting the data into it and repeating these steps several times.

Macro Express is a program I've been using for several years. It's great. I've used it to create numerous macros that have enabled me to convert a long series of keystrokes into a single keystroke. Press a hot-key, like Shift+F9 or Alt+Ctrl+9 and the macro runs.

Learn how to write macros, you'll save yourself an enormous amount of time and make your life a great deal easier. For more information about Macro Express, visit www.Macros.com.

- **Get Anti-Spam Software.** Deleting unwanted e-mails — spam — is a huge time-waster. Buy anti-spam software or subscribe to a service that can rid you of unwanted e-mail.

  Though it only takes a second, or two, to delete an unwanted e-mail message, those seconds add up. Especially when you receive the same piece of spam many times each day. Get a spam filter and you'll have more time to spend on activities that will move you ahead in your work and your life.

With a little bit of study on your part, you can dramatically shorten the amount of time you spend doing repetitive tasks. Use this newly found time on your high payoff projects and you'll reap huge rewards.

Strategy #20: Solve Problems

In every business there are problems, and when faced with a host of them it's often difficult to determine which one(s) should be dealt with first, second, third, or last. This is another way that 80/20 can help you maintain your focus.

Shirley, the company president, had a meeting with all of her senior managers to discuss ways to improve their business. Before she knew it it had turned into a gripe session.

Each person was describing his problems, and saying that they were so much worse than the other manager's problems.

Shirley had a better idea. This is what she did:

1. She went around the room and asked each manager to state what he felt his most serious problems were.
2. She wrote down each problem on a white board.
3. She analyzed the types of problems.

80/20 states that the 80 percent of your recurring problems will come from the 20 percent of your sources.

Sure enough, as she asked about the frequency that these problems occurred, the group discovered that only a few of them happened with a great deal of regularity. These problems were tackled first.

If you want to view your list of problems as a graph, create a Pareto Graph in Excel. Creating A Pareto Graph is described in the Appendix at the end of this training manual.

Here are two additional ways to look at problems:

- **The cost of fixing them.** Look at a list of problems from the perspective of the cost of repairing or fixing them. Which problems cost you the most money to fix?

  You'll find that 80 percent of the cost of fixing the problems are associated with only 20 percent of the problems on the list.

- **The time it takes to fix a problem.** Look at a list of problems from the perspective of the time it takes to repair or fix them. Which problems take the most time to fix?

You'll find that 80 percent of the time spent fixing the problems are associated with only 20 percent of the problems on the list.

Fix the problems that happen most often, cost you the most money, or take the most time out of your day. Your life will be much easier.

Strategy #21: Find The Source Of The Problem

When you've got a problem, look to the source of the problem, and then fix it.

For example, Tom, the plant manager, was walking through the widget plant, slipped on an oil slick, and landed flat on his back. Fortunately he wasn't hurt. When he picked himself up he asked Dan, one of his employees, why there was oil on the floor.

Dan didn't know, but said he would clean it up.

Tom came by the next day and found another oil puddle in the same spot. Again he asked Dan why the oil was there.

This time Dan said that he would try to find the source of the oil spill.

After a few minutes of searching he discovered that one of the overhead pipes was leaking at the joint. He got out a ladder, grabbed a wrench, tightened the joint and the oil leak stopped.

> One day my wife Mitzi got mad at me because I had left the refrigerator door open. I reminded her that the spring that closes the door had broken several weeks earlier, and asked if she would be kind enough to call GE to get it repaired. Now the door closes all by itself and I don't get yelled at.

More than 80 percent of the problems that you must deal with every day come from less than 20 percent of the sources. Fix — or eliminate — the problem at the source and you'll have much more time to deal with the more important and pressing issues in your business and your life.

Strategy #22: Mistakes Cost Money

80/20 is about reducing the number of mistakes. 80/20 is about improving quality. 80/20 is about keeping costs down and profits up.

When a mistake is made the costs incurred are at least triple. Here are two examples:

A Goofed Up Order

Ajax Manufacturing built and shipped 5000 blue widgets for their customer. Unfortunately, the customer wanted red widgets. Now Ajax must redo the order.

The time spent building 5000 red widgets is time *not* spent building widgets for another customer. Then there is the cost of shipping the order out a second time, usually on an expedited basis, and the original order must be returned.

The customer isn't happy, a lot of time has been spent trying to straighten out the problem with phone calls, faxes, e-mails and/or face-to-face meetings. All because someone didn't put a check in the right box on the order form.

Ajax loses money on this order.

The Order Came Out Wrong

Have you ever ordered a meal in a fancy restaurant and it came out wrong? How did you feel? How long did it take for the chef to prepare it to your liking? Did you want to come back a 2nd time?

Look at what the mistake cost the restaurant:

1. The food was thrown away.
2. A new meal was prepared.
3. The chef spent more of his time on your order, while other orders where pushed back.

It doesn't take too many goofed up orders for a restaurant to lose its best customers and for its expenses to skyrocket. They're giving the customer two meals for the price of one.

And... they probably gave the customer a complimentary glass of wine or desert, or maybe didn't charge them for the meal.

Mistakes are costly.

If you haven't got the time to do it right,
when will you find the time to do it over?

How often are things done wrong in your office, company, or manufacturing plant? Strive to eliminate the errors and mistakes and you'll have more time, less stress and greater profits.

Delegating Work

You don't have to do everything yourself. If it can't be eliminated, perhaps you can have someone else do it for you. The following three strategies will help improve your delegation skills.

Strategy #23: Delegate Work To Others

What percentage of the work that you are responsible for doing could be — should be — done by someone else? Apply 80/20. You'll find that 80 percent of your work could be either eliminated or delegated.

Look at the items on your Master List. Ask yourself this question:

Could some of this work be done by someone else?

You leverage your time — enabling you to focus on high priority, big payoff activities — by having others do your less important work.

SuccessTip: If you work from home, or have a small office, consider hiring people on an hourly basis to do some of these non-essential activities for you.

Here are nine tips on how to approach the business of delegating:

- Ask for help, don't demand.
- Make sure the person has a clear picture of the purpose of any delegated work and knows what kind of results you expect.
- Set a realistic deadline that's agreeable and workable for both of you.
- Give the person all the information and other resources needed to complete the project.

- Be available to answer questions.
- Ask for periodic progress reports.
- Provide the person with all the necessary resources needed to complete the task.
- Take the time to teach the person how to do the job.
- Give lots of praise and credit for a job well done when the project has been completed.

Delegating a job to someone else doesn't mean you can forget about it. Since it was your job in the first place, it's your responsibility to make sure it gets done.

Schedule the delegated work as a task on your Master List, in Outlook, inside ACT! or your PDA. Then follow-up to make sure it's done correctly and on time.

Remember: You don't have to do everything yourself.

Strategy #24: Hire A Virtual Assistant

Another way to leverage your time and your resources is to hire a virtual assistant, free-lancers, or part-time employees. There are many people who are available — as needed — who you can hire on an hourly or per-project basis.

SecretToSuccess: Spend 80 percent of your time working on the projects that will give you 80 percent of your results. This generates HUGE leverage.

Visit Google and type in VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS. There are dozens of organizations that have people who can help you with clerical, word processing, secretarial services, desk top publishing, accounting, bookkeeping, Internet research, data processing, Web site design and other projects.

Resource: eLance is a Web site specializing in support services for small business. You post a project and several service providers bid for the job. For more information, visit www.elance.com.

Strategy #25: Work With Your Staff, Colleagues And Coworkers

If your organization is like most others, you'll find that your staff, colleagues, coworkers and associates are spending 80 percent of their time doing work that generates 20 percent — at best — of their results. Negative leverage.

It's your job to make sure that everybody is doing work that has a big — huge — payoff.

Here are four things you can do to improve the productivity of every member of your team:

1. Schedule time at the end of each day — not the beginning — to meet with your administrative assistant, colleagues, coworkers, and/or associates.
2. Give them specific instructions of what you want them to do and when you want them to complete it.
3. Explain, in step-by-step detail, how you want the work done, if necessary.
4. Give them specific deadlines, completion or due dates.

This will insure that they are spending 80 percent of their time working on the 20 percent of your projects that have the biggest payoff and greatest impact.

SuccessTip: Spend a few minutes at the end of the day reviewing the major things that have transpired and to go over the specific work, tasks and/or projects you want each of them to do the following day.

This enables them to plan tomorrow's workflow before they leave for the evening. When they arrive in the morning they know exactly what it is they should do.

Avoid People Who Waste Your Time

In the previous sections we have discussed strategies you can use to leverage your time. Another way to leverage your time is to avoid work, tasks, projects — and people — that take up lots of time but don't generate any results. The following five strategies will help you to stay away from people who are time-wasters.

Strategy #26: When Someone Says "Send Me Something" *DON'T!*

Have you ever spoken with a prospect on the phone, who wouldn't schedule a meeting with you, but said, *"Just send me something so I can look at it."* And ended the phone call.

So you, being the good soldier that you are, did the following:

1. Entered the person into your database,
2. Collected your material,
3. Wrote a letter and printed an envelope,
4. Stuffed the materials into the envelope. Sealed it. Put a stamp on it, and mailed it out.
5. Scheduled a follow-up call in your database.
6. Started calling the person a week or so later to see if they received your package and wanted to discuss it further.

But you weren't able get the person on the phone. You called and called. You left voice mail messages. Sent e-mail. Sent faxes. And never got a return call or a response.

Finally, you reached the person and were told that they're not interested. Sadly, you've wasted 30, 60 or 90 days of your life chasing him.

It gets depressing when you're spending 80 percent of your time chasing people who you can't reach and who have no interest in doing business with you. And you wonder why you feel as if you've been run over by a truck.

Remember: Your goal is to find people who want to do business with you. Not people who ask you to send something so they can get you off of the phone.

When someone says, *"Send me something."* Say,

> *"I'll be happy to put something in the mail [or send an e-mail or fax] to you this afternoon, can we schedule a phone call to discuss this on Monday of next week [insert appropriate day or date]. Would you be available for a conference call at 10:00am or would 3:00pm in the afternoon work better for you."*

If the person will schedule a call with you, you may have yourself a live one.

If the response is,

> *"I don't want to schedule an appointment at this time, let me look at your material and I'll call you if I'm interested."*

You have just gotten your answer. You don't have a prospect so end the call. Don't send out any materials. And look for a better prospect.

Strategy #27: Don't Respond To Rush Quotes

Sharon is in the contracting business. In the past she's received calls from companies that urgently need a quote on a job. The caller gives her some preliminary information, and then faxes, e-mails or overnights the drawings and additional information to her.

Sharon would then have her design team drop everything they were doing and start working on this *important* opportunity.

When the quote was finished it would be faxed or e-mailed to the contact person, per the contact person's instructions. Once the quote was sent, Sharon would never hear from the prospect again.

Though she called, sent faxes and e-mails, she never got a response. More often than not, the quote was put into a file and promptly forgotten about.

Rush quotes are huge time wasters!

When you receive a request for a "rush quote," what percentage of them do you sell? This is 80/20 in reverse. You're spending a lot of effort for no reward.

Remember: The person asking for the rush quote doesn't care how much time, effort, energy or money you spend — or waste — in creating the quote.

When someone asks for a rush quote it is usually for one of two reasons:

1. The person needs to get competitive pricing so they can justify giving the business to their present — and preferred — vendor.
2. The prospect needs to have a 2nd or 3rd quote to show their boss/supervisor that they've shopped the marketplace and have the best offer.

When you get a call requesting a rush quote ask the following seven questions:

- Why do you need it so fast?
- How did you happen to call me? Or my company?
- What is your position title within the company?
- How do you make your decision as to who gets the order?
- Who else, in addition to yourself, gets involved in the decision making process?
- What are the most important criteria you are going to use to make your selection?
- Can we setup an appointment — either in person or by phone — to discuss the quote once it has been prepared?

If you're not talking with the final decision maker, if they won't schedule an appointment, or if the answers to your questions don't measure up, take a pass on this *opportunity*. You'll save yourself hours of wasted and unproductive time.

Strategy #28: Stop Creating Proposals

Proposals are another time-wasting black hole. What percentage of your proposals do you close? What happens to the rest? Wasted time. Wasted effort.

Here's one important thing to remember:

You're not in the proposal business,
you're in the signed contract business.

Before you create a proposal you should have a pretty good idea as to whether or not they're going to buy. Read the list of questions in the previous strategy. Here are five additional questions you must have answers to before you decide to put a quote together:

- Who are the decision makers?
- What is their decision making process?
- Why do they need to purchase your product/service?
- What will happen if they don't buy your product/service?
- Why should they buy from you and not someone else?

Be more selective as to who you create your proposals for. You'll make 80/20 work for you when you spend more time looking for better customers and less time following up with people who ask for proposals but never buy.

Strategy #29: Don't Respond To Requests For Proposals

It's one thing to be meeting with a prospect and she asks you to create a proposal. It's another to receive blind Requests For Proposals (RFPs) that are being sent to you and dozens of other firms. From my perspective, an RFP is a request for you to waste your time.

Responding to RFPs is negative leverage. Ninety-five percent of the time you spend creating and responding to RFPs will be wasted.

Many times an organization, especially governmental agencies, will send out a spec sheet asking a company, i.e. yours, to put together a proposal for something they want you to bid on.

Unless you know

- The project details,
- Who the decision makers are,
- Their decision making process, and
- The criteria that is most important to them in awarding a contract,

you are going to waste your time. (See the previous two strategies.)

To get maximum leverage from your time you must spend it doing things that have a high probability of success. Responding to RFPs isn't one of them.

Strategy #30: Dealing With Requests For Information

Another big time-waster is responding to people who ask you for information, but do nothing with it once the information has been delivered to them.

For example, you receive an e-mail from a colleague who is asking you for the status on a project. Or a voice mail message asking for a report on your activity for the past week.

It's easy to get sucked into spending so much of your valuable and precious time serving other people, that you don't have enough time left to do your own work.

Then you're forced to come in early, stay late, and work weekends. This is not the best way to get ahead in life. Doing these tasks for other people will ruin your day and sabotage your career.

Here is how you can use 80/20 to cope with these people:

1. On a piece of paper, or in a spreadsheet, record the names of the people who are making these requests and the nature of those requests.
2. Keep track of the frequency of the requests that are being made of you.
3. You will find that 80 percent of these requests are coming from only one or two people.

If you would like to create a chart so you can see a picture of this, create a Pareto Graph. Creating A Pareto Graph is described in the Appendix at the end of this training manual.

Who Is Asking For The Information?

Depending upon who is asking for the information you may want to respond immediately or put them off till later. The requests will come from one of three groups of people:

- **Upstream:** Is the person above you in the organizational chart? If it's your boss, or your boss' boss, do everything you can to keep them happy.
- **Downstream:** If the request is coming from someone who is at a lower level, it may not be necessary for you to respond to them immediately.
- **Same level:** If the request is coming from someone who is at the same level, it may not be necessary for you to respond to them immediately.

Consequences Of Not Responding

In my more than 30 years in business, the one thing I've discovered is that most people have terrible follow-up systems. They often ask for something because a thought crosses their mind, then they promptly forget about it after they've sent an e-mail or left a voice mail message.

What are the consequences of not responding to their request. What would happen if you ignored it and continued doing the things you were paid to do? Probably nothing.

If it comes up again, which it probably won't, deal with it at that time.

Four Questions To Ask

When you are speaking with the person who is asking for the additional information, or the status on certain things, here are four questions you should ask:

1. Why do you need information?
2. What are you going to do with it?
3. How soon do you need it?
4. On a scale of 1 - 10, how would you rate the importance that you receive this information quickly?

You can even go so far as to itemize all the work, tasks and projects you are presently working on, and ask which of these tasks or projects should be preempted so you can provide him with the things that are being requested.

Keep Names, Addresses, And Phone Numbers In Your Computer

Eighty percent of your time is spent dealing with people. You must have an easy way to keep in touch with them, an effective way of keeping track of what you must do for them, and a simple way to maintain their name, address, phone number, e-mail address and other important contact information.

Whenever you speak with a person, both inside and outside of your organization, if you think there will be any reason for the two of you to talk with each other again, put their name, address and phone number into your computer.

If you're still using a paper-based follow-up system or a daily planner with a fancy leather-bound binder, I suggest that you start putting your all of your names, addresses and phone numbers into your computer using either a database, contact manager or a Personal Information Manager (PIM).

A contact manager handles information differently than a PIM. Each has separate modules for:

- Contact name and address information,
- Notes of meetings and conversations, and
- Scheduled meetings, things to-do, and people to call.

The primary difference between a Contact manager and a Personal Information Manager is that in a Contact manager these separate modules are automatically linked together. In a PIM, you must manually link a note, meeting, or to-do with a contact.

For example, ACT! is a true contact manager, it is designed to help you manage your relationships, and keep track of your things to do.

Outlook and Palm-type devices are PIMs. They are designed to store name and address information, keep your list of things to-do, and your appointment calendar. They are great productivity improving tools, but because the separate modules aren't automatically linked together, they make managing relationships a bit more challenging.

Now I must offer this disclaimer — and confession — I'm a long-time ACT! user. I've written numerous *ACT!.for Dummies* books and ACT! eBooks. So I'm not unbiased.

The reason I use ACT!, and have recommended it over the years is because it makes the process of staying in touch with customers, prospects and business associates easy.

That said, you should know that ACT! can be used with both Outlook and Palm-type devices so it's easy to use these programs together.

Here are five strategies you can use to keep in touch with the important people in your business and personal life. If the system you're using is working for you, by all means continue using it.

If leads, opportunities and important relationships are slipping through the cracks, you should definitely make a change.

For convenience, I'm going to refer to contact managers and PIMs as a database.

Strategy #31: Put Everybody You Speak With Into Your Database

When you're speaking with a prospect over the phone, and they indicate that they've an interest in having further discussions with you about your products, immediately add them to your database.

When you enter a person's contact information, you should record their

- Name,
- Company,
- Position/Title,
- Direct Phone, cell phone and fax number,
- Mailing address,
- E-mail address, and
- Web site.

You can also customize your database so you can store additional information, as desired or needed.

When you're speaking with a prospect, you can say something like:

> *"Let me make sure that I have the correct spelling of your name. Your first name is [ ], and I've your last name spelled [ ], and do you use a middle name or initial? And what is the full name of your company?"* And so on.

Strategy #32: Finding People In Your Database

Once you've added your prospects and customers to your database, you find them by utilizing the lookup feature. You can locate people by

- First or Last Name,
- Company,
- City, State or ZIP Code,
- Phone Number,

or almost any other criteria.

Being able to find people is important, because when you want to reach someone, it's got to be easy to locate their name and phone number. When you want to send a letter or e-mail you can use the database's mail merge feature to automatically insert the name and address into the letter, saving you time, effort and energy.

Strategy #33: Write Notes of Meetings And Conversations

To aid your memory, always record a brief note to yourself about the details of your meeting or conversation each time you speak with someone.

This enables you to keep track of everything that has gone on between you and hundreds — or thousands — of people, because the notes of every meeting and phone conversation are at your fingertips.

Remember: The more detailed your notes, the easier it will be for you to identify, and separate, the people who you should be spending more time with, from those who are time-wasters. The people who want to do business with you, and those that don't.

Strategy #34: Schedule Follow-Up Calls And Things To Do

To be successful in business and sales, you must stay on top of all your opportunities, and keep in touch with the people that want you to keep in touch. The easiest way to do this is to religiously schedule your follow-up calls and things to-do in your database.

By scheduling your calls, meetings and to-dos in your database nothing will ever slip through the cracks. You'll stay on top of all your things to do and people to call so that you capture all of your opportunities.

I can't stress this enough, if you want to be successful, you must have a great follow-up system.

Strategy #35: No Naked Records

If you fail to schedule follow-up calls or to-dos you have **Naked Records,** people who are in your database that you've no scheduled follow-up for. Naked records are bad!

If you haven't scheduled a future follow-up call, you'll quickly forget about the people who you should be keeping in touch with. Keep in touch with everybody who could do business with you, or are in a position to refer business to you.

You may want to call some people once a week, others once a month. A third group you call quarterly.

You'll probably have people in your database who may not be real good prospects today, but have the potential of becoming a good customer in the future. Schedule a follow-up call once every six months, or maybe just once a year. This guarantees that you won't forget about them.

Write It Down

The single most important timesaving technique to learn is to ***WRITE IT DOWN!*** You may have a very good memory, but why burden yourself with trying to remember more than you have to.

Thanks to the invention of the pencil and paper, there really isn't any reason to remember anything. Think with a pencil in your hand. Put your thoughts on paper — or in your computer — and you'll eliminate the need to remember them.

Strategy #36: Take Detailed Notes Of Meetings And Telephone Calls

It is particularly important to write down your thoughts, observations, and comments after a meeting or telephone call. With the passage of time, memories tend to blur. It's tough trying to remember conversations or discussions that took place months ago.

Write down

- What was said, and by whom,
- What is to be done,
- Who is going to do it. and
- When it will be completed,

and you've a complete record.

This makes it easy for you to stay on top of everything.

By writing everything down you'll find your memory improves because you're keeping more accurate and thorough notes on paper, or inside your computer, instead of inside your head.

Strategy #37: Date Your Papers

Every time you make a note on a piece of paper, put a date on it. Sometimes the chronology of events can be very important and meaningful.

When you date your notes and papers, you can see how things have changed or progressed over time. It also enables you to follow the evolution of your thinking and see how your ideas have grown and developed.

Strategy #38: Only One Note Per Piece Of Paper

When you take notes of a meeting or telephone conversation, only take one note per piece of paper. When you've notes on multiple subjects on the same piece of paper it creates confusion because you don't know where to put them.

With one subject on each piece of paper it's easy to place the notes in the appropriate files.

Strategy #39: Enter Telephone Numbers Into Your Database

When you speak with someone and jot down their phone number, don't write it on a piece of scratch paper. Take a moment and enter the person's name and number into your database. This makes it easy for you to find it again when you need it.

You don't want to waste your valuable time searching for phone numbers, or calling directory assistance, when it could be at your fingertips with a quick database lookup.

Strategy #40: Don't Curl The Pages Of Your Notepad Over The Top

Have you ever been in a person's office and seen piles of notepads that had the pages curled over the top of the pad?

I've seen this many times throughout my career and this is what it tells me:

1. The person took detailed and meticulous notes of meetings and conversations, but
2. They never got into the appropriate file.

They just stayed on the pad of paper.

The next time a note was taken, the previous page was curled over the top and a new note was made.

When you take notes, only put one note per page. If there's work to do, note it on your Master List or schedule it in your database, and then file it away.

Strategy #41: Use The Outline Feature Of Your Word Processor

As an alternative to writing notes on a piece of paper by hand, you can use your word processor. I like using the computer because once you've recorded your notes it's easy to edit or revise them, and to share them with others.

It also eliminates the need to rewrite them, which is another time-wasting activity.

Most word processors have an outline feature that enables you to organize your thoughts and ideas in different levels. This makes it easy to organize your thoughts and to move items from one category or outline level to another.

As you get deeper and deeper into the planning process, the outline feature becomes even more valuable.

If you're using Microsoft Word, you can activate the Outline feature by selecting View, Outline. To go from a Level 1 heading to Level 2 press the Tab key. To go back a level, from Level 2 to Level 1, hold down the Shift key and press the Tab key.

Mind Mapping

As an alternative to creating outlines, you should consider Mind Mapping. The following two strategies give a brief explanation as to how you can get better results with less effort.

Strategy #42: Mind Mapping Is A Great Strategic Planning Tool

My whole life I've been a detailed note taker. I would make lists of things to do, always writing my notes on the next line on the piece of paper.

As I discovered the powers of the word processor, I began organizing my thoughts using the outline feature.

I liked this because I could organize everything by levels. With different levels being indented from the margin.

Unfortunately, when it came to reviewing my plans, they didn't make much sense to me. The words were written on a piece of paper, but I often had difficulty seeing the connections between the thoughts, ideas and concepts.

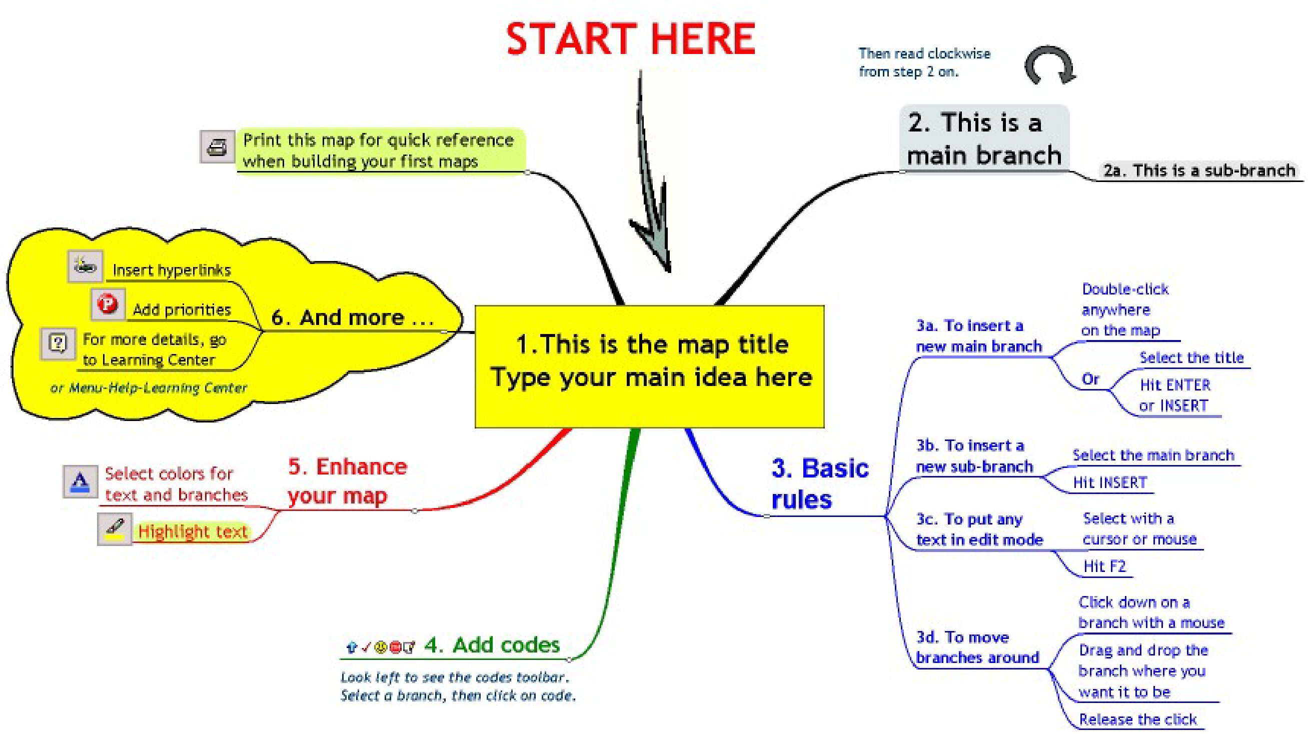
Mind Mapping is a different methodology of note taking. Instead of writing notes on single lines of paper you draw a circle in the center of the page and in the circle you write the theme or topic on which you are taking notes.

From the center you draw lines — like branches growing out from the center of a tree — that you write the key concepts or ideas on. As you add more detail to each theme, you draw lines coming off the branch.

These become your level 2 or level 3 ideas.

As a side note, Mind Maps are great for kids to use as well. My daughter makes them regularly.

And when a new idea comes that may pertain to one of your



earlier branches, you know exactly where to place it. (Unlike old fashioned paper notes, where you place this great idea on the next blank line on the page.)

This enables you to think from the center outward.

Before you know it, you've a beautiful picture of your notes.

If you want to read more about Mind Mapping, here are two very good books Mindmapping, by Joyce Wycoff; and The Mind Map Book, by Tony Buzon.

Strategy #43: Create Mind Maps Inside Your Computer

Mind Mapping is a very powerful methodology. When you integrate it with the power of the computer, your productivity soars.

Several years ago I was introduced to MindManager Software From Mindjet. It changed my life. With MindManager you can capture your ideas, thoughts, and concepts in seconds, and have a detailed picture of your meetings, projects, or even your things to-do list.

I now Mind Map all of my meetings and phone conversations, and even take my computer to conventions so I can Mind Map each speaker's presentation.

MindManager has become one of my favorite pieces of software. I Mind Map everything I do. From writing my weekly Success essays, to organizing the material in my eBooks, to taking notes in meetings.

Mind Mapping enables me to do in minutes what used to take me hours, sometimes even days. For me it has become the ultimate tool for increasing leverage. I'm now getting 90 percent of my results from less than 10 percent of my activities.

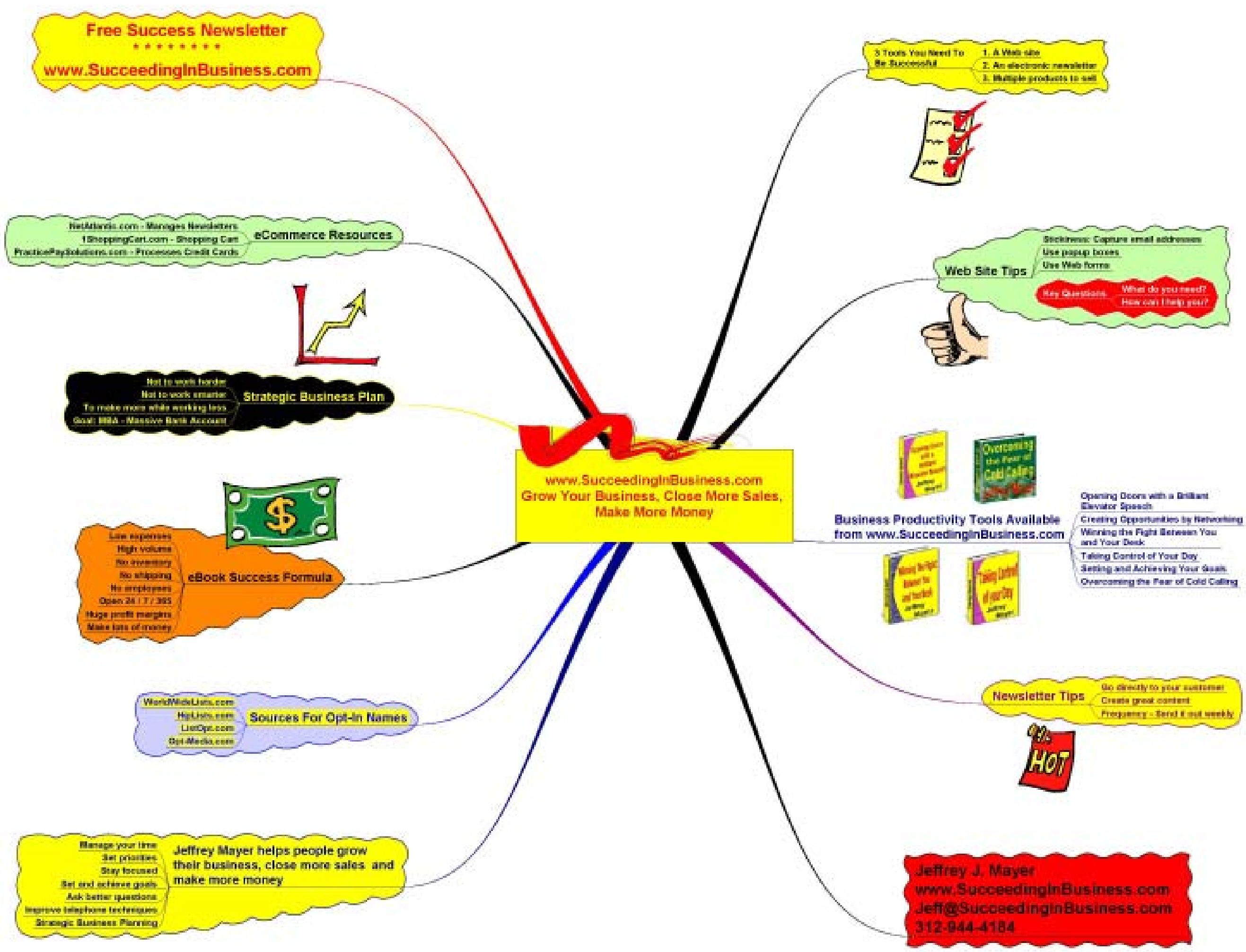
I would recommend that you download a free trial version and put Mind Mapping to work for you. If you like the way the software works, purchase a copy. This is an investment that will pay for itself in just a matter of days.

Here's the link to get more information and to download a free trial version.

http://www.succeedinginbusiness.com/MindManager.htm

[When the MindJet shopping cart opens, click Products, Product Overview. From this page you can download a free trial version.]

Here's a copy of the Mind Map I created as a handout for a speech I did at the National Speakers Association's Annual Meeting on "How To Make A $100,000 A Year Selling eBooks."



Improve Your Reading Speed And Comprehension

Jim was inundated with reading materials — newspapers, magazines, trade journals, lots of company reports and other information — that accumulates in piles on his desk?

He felt guilty because he didn't read it all?

He was afraid he may be missing something important?

But if he took the time to read *everything* he wouldn't have time left for anything else. What to do?

Sound familiar? This is a conundrum we all face.

How do we sift through the mountains of information that crosses our desks each day so we can mine the nuggets of valuable information that is buried inside and use them to gain a competitive advantage?

Of the huge volume of reading material that crosses your desk, maybe one percent is meaningful. Ninety-nine percent isn't. And within that valuable one percent are the nuggets you're searching for.

Your objective is to create a process where you can quickly identify the important one percent and then efficiently find the nuggets of valuable information within those articles — and put them good use — while dramatically reducing the time spent reading this huge volume of material.

There are three two ways to approach this:

1. Learn to read better by eliminating reading habits that slow you down.
2. Learn to read faster so that you can process more information in less time and with less effort.
3. Learn how to quickly locate the important material within the article so you can put it to good use, giving yourself a competitive advantage.

Here are four strategies that will help you change the way you read so you can identify and extract the important information you need in a fraction of the time.

Strategy #44: Eliminate Reading Habits That Slow You Down

The first step in learning to read faster comes when you become aware of reading habits that may be slowing you down.

The following is a list of four things people do that dramatically reduce their reading speed. Once you become aware of them — if they apply to you — you can work to break these habits.

- **Don't Mouth Words.** Some people mouth the words while they are reading, as if they were speaking to themselves. This limits their reading speed to the rate at which they speak. (Which is considerably faster than the rate at which they are capable of reading.)
- **Don't Speak The Words In Your Mind**. When you speak the words to yourself in your mind as you're reading them, you are *vocalizing*. By reading silently you can double or triple your reading speed.

  See the words. Don't read them to yourself one by one.
- **Don't Back Skip.** Back Skipping is the rereading of words you have just read. Many people do this unconsciously. Once you become aware of this habit, it should be easy to break.
- **Don't Regress.** Regression is the habit of rereading words because you think you may have misunderstood the text you have just read. Instead of rereading the previous passage, continue reading. The text that follows will often give you the explanation you were looking for.

Strategy #45: Faster Reading Techniques

When you read, your eyes focus on one word at a time as the move across the page. After they *grab* a word, they then jump to the next word and focus on it. This is called fixation. The following three techniques will help you to read faster.

Read Groups of Words

If you're reading only one or two words at a time, and then jumping to the next word or two, you aren't reading efficiently. The more words you can group together, the faster your reading speed.

By reading a group of words, i.e. three to five words at a time, and then jumping to the next group of three to five words, you can easily double or triple your reading speed.

Push yourself to read faster. Don't allow yourself to linger on a word or phrase. Search for the important information or key words within the phrase. Let your eyes pass over the connectors.

ReadingTip: Hold the material a bit further away from your eyes so you can take in more words.

Point With Your Finger

Another way to learn to read faster is to point at the lines of text with your finger.

Do the following when reading a newspaper or magazine:

1. Run your finger down the center of the newspaper or magazine column. Most newspaper and magazines have narrow columns containing five to seven words.
2. Try to view — grab with your eye — an entire line of text at a time.
3. Search for the key words in each sentence.
4. Increase your finger's speed as it moves down the page and your reading speed will increase.

You can also practice reading faster by holding an index card on the page and moving it down one line at a time.

For written reports, newsletters, or business correspondence, which have a wider margin, you can run your finger in a zig-zag pattern, moving it left to right across the page, a few lines at a time.

Train your eyes to search for the key words/phrases — important information — as they quickly pass over the unimportant words.

Practice Reading Faster

In order to get better at reading, you've got to practice. Set aside three to five minutes each day to practice reading faster. Pick up a newspaper, magazine, or book. Try to increase your reading speed.

Don't be concerned with comprehension. Improved comprehension comes with time.

With a bit of practice you'll be able to process larger amounts of information in a much shorter period of time.

Strategy #46: Highlight Important Information

Read with a pen, pencil or highlighter in your hand. When you find a nugget of valuable information, highlight it, underline it, or draw a circle around it. Capture that valuable information as you're reading the material the first time through.

If you want to take this further, write notes, comments, or thoughts in the margins. (If you don't want to write on the document or article, slap on a sticky note and write on it.)

I know this may sound contradictory with reading faster, but you need to quickly locate valuable information once you've read it.

Highlighting important information saves you large amounts of time, because whenever you look at the material you'll quickly locate the information that you found to be important.

Strategy #47: Reading Newspapers, Magazines, And Reports

Everyday useful information crosses your desk. However, if you aren't able to read — and put it to use — it becomes stale very quickly. The following four techniques will help you put this useful information to work.

Reading Newspapers

How do you read a newspaper? Front to back? Page by page? The sports, business, or features sections first, and then the rest?

Try this:

- Scan the newspaper from front to back. Get an overview of what's inside. Flip through the entire paper page by page. Glance at each story. Look at the headlines and sub-heads. Read the first sentence or two of the first few paragraphs.
- Look at the pictures, tables and charts.
- Ask yourself, *"Is this something I want to read? How can I use this information?"* If so, pull our your pen (A red pen will make the story jump out at you) and draw a big circle around the headline.
- Write the page number on the front of the newspaper. Now you won't have to hunt through the paper to find the article later.

Within about sixty seconds you should be able to go through the entire newspaper, scanning each and every page. Circle the things you want to look at or read.

Read the most important articles first, and the others later.

Highlight the words, sentences and paragraphs that have information you would like to quickly find later.

Tear out the pages or cut out the articles that you can't get to now. Then throw the rest of the paper away.

ReadingTip: Create a Things To Read file where you can put your unread articles.

Reading Magazines And Trade Journals

Nothing accumulates faster than unread magazines. And with the exception of newspapers, nothing goes out of date faster.

By clipping articles you want to read, you'll keep the information that has importance and value to you.

When you receive a magazine do the following:

1. Study the table of contents. Which of the articles interest you? Take out a pen and circle the article's page number, or turn to the article and tear it out of the magazine.
2. Skim the entire magazine page by page. Look at the article titles and the sub-heads. Read the first few sentences of the opening paragraphs. Look for bulleted or numbered lists. Study graphs and charts. Read the concluding paragraphs. Try to get an overview of what the writer is trying to say.
3. Rip out the articles you want to read— if appropriate — and staple the pages together. Then throw the magazine away. If you can't remove the pages, slap on a sticky note so you can quickly locate the articles them later.
4. Put the article(s) into your reading folder and look at it when you have a chance.

Reading Reports And Newsletters

When you receive a report, newsletter trade journal or some other important office communication, don't just put it aside in the "I'll Get To It Later" pile. Do this:

1. Scan the report quickly to get an overview of what the information means and how important it is.
2. Look at the headings and sub-headings. Read the first few paragraphs, quickly skim the entire article looking for the most important themes and ideas.
3. Read the last few paragraphs. Look for a summary or conclusion to the report.

4. Ask yourself: Is there anything here that needs to be addressed immediately? Or Can it wait a while?

If it's important, write it on your Master List as a thing to do and schedule time to read it.

If it doesn't need your prompt attention, put it in your reading file and get to it at a more opportune time.

Reading Business Books

When reading business books, you want to locate the important information and then put it to use.

As an alternative to sitting down and reading a book from front to back, try the following:

1. Study the table of contents, the index, and the appendixes.
2. Look for material that you think will be most important. Read that first.
3. Before you begin reading a chapter, skim it from front to back. Run your finger down the center of the page to get an overview of the theme of the chapter. Look for key ideas and important pieces of information.

   Read the conclusion, which oftentimes has a summary of the entire chapter.
4. If you're reading a text book, look at the questions at the end of the chapter. When you go back and read the chapter search for the questions, and their answers, within the text.
5. Highlight important information so it will be easy for you to locate it at a later date.
6. Mind Map your books. After I've read a book, I'll often go back and look for the text that I've highlighted. I then Mind Map the material for easy reference. If you're not familiar with Mind Mapping, take a few minutes to read this section of the training manual.

Getting More From Your E-Mail

E-mail has become the medium of choice for hundreds of millions — billions — of people who use it to share information with someone down the hall, or halfway across the world, in a moment's time.

Unfortunately, only 5 percent of the e-mail you receive is meaningful. The other 95 percent is junk or spam. The challenge is to spend the majority of your time on the important 5 percent, and no time on the rest.

If you are spending one, two, or even three hours per day responding to your e-mail messages, it has become an enormous time waster. It's taking away from the time you should be spending on your most important work.

Here are nine strategies you can use to save you lots of time so you can focus on important projects and not waste hours each day dealing with e-mail.

Strategy #48: Use A Spam Filter

Deleting unwanted e-mails — spam — is a huge time-waster. Buy anti-spam software or subscribe to a service that can rid you of unwanted e-mail.

Though it only takes a second, or two, to delete an unwanted e-mail message, those seconds add up. Especially when you receive the same piece of spam many times each day. Get a spam filter — and learn how to use it! You'll have more time to spend on activities that will move you ahead in your work and your life.

Visit Google and search for SPAM FILTERS. You'll have many services and products to choose from.

With a spam filter you can select senders, subject lines, message text and more to determine which criteria you consider to be spam. The filter then places the e-mail into a special folder where you can review it prior to deleting it.

You can also create a friends list — a white list — of e-mail you want to accept from friends, family and business associates.

Strategy #49: Get Anti-Virus Software

A computer virus can ruin your day, or ruin your life. If your computer should become infected the virus may do nothing more than display a cute, or not-so-cute, message. Or worse, destroys system and data files — and maybe the entire contents of your hard drive — and then clones itself and sends messages to everyone in your address book.

If you do any of the following you could be at risk of contracting a computer virus:

- Download files from Web sites.
- Exchange files with people over the Internet.
- Open e-mail from people you don't know.
- Open attachments from people you don't know.

And even when you receive e-mail from people you *do* know, it is not a guarantee that it isn't infected with a virus.

To protect yourself, you should get a copy of Norton AntiVirus from Symantec, www.Symantec.com. Norton runs in the background scaning every incoming and outgoing e-mail message for viruses while monitoring your computer for any activity that might indicate the work of a virus in action.

Should a virus be detected, Norton AntiVirus can quickly repair or quarantine infected files.

These are the things you should do to keep your system free of viruses:

- Update your antivirus definitions weekly.
- Back up your files regularly. (If your computer is infected with a virus, you must remember to disinfect the restored files.)

- Never boot your computer with a floppy disk that you haven't scanned and disinfected first. (When you scan your computer with an anti-virus program, you search your computer's memory and program files for viruses. If a virus is found, the anti-virus program will removed the virus from your computer.)
- Always disinfect every file you download from the Internet, copy from a floppy disk, or copy from a network drive — before running it on your computer.

Strategy #50: Use Message Rules

Microsoft Outlook and Outlook Express, along with many other e-mail programs, have a Message Rules feature. Message Rules enable you to place incoming e-mail into selected folders based upon certain criteria, i.e. the sender, the subject line, or words or phrases in the message body.

When a message is received the Message Rule places the e-mail into a specific folder.

You can also have your message rules delete unwanted messages, or spam, that sneak past your spam filter.

This is how you create Message Rules in Outlook and Outlook Express:

Outlook: In Outlook, select Tools, Rules Wizard from the pulldown menu. Then follow the Wizard's instructions.

Outlook Express: In Outlook Express, select Tools, Message Rules, Mail from the pulldown menu. From the Message Rules dialog box, click the New button.

Strategy #51: Create Folders To Store Your Messages

As an alternative to storing all of your incoming e-mail in your Inbox, create additional folders within Outlook or Outlook Express, or the e-mail system you use.

You can then place your incoming e-mail in their respective folders when you receive them, or have your e-mail program place them in specific folders by using the Message Rules feature.

Strategy #52: Create A Signature File

Do you find yourself repeatedly typing your name, company name, address, e-mail address, and/or other information — like your Elevator Speech — at the end of each e-mail message? If so, here is an easy way to save yourself some typing: Create a signature file.

Most e-mail programs offer a feature that enables you to automatically add some text at the bottom of your e-mail message. (Think of a signature file as the footer in a word processing document.)

You can also use a signature file for frequently used phrases, answers to questions, or standardized replies.

Signature files can be used to respond to frequently asked questions or as a form letter template.

Strategy #53: Writing Better E-Mail Messages

Because you're spending the majority of your time communicating with coworkers, colleagues, clients, business associates, and friends via e-mail, the following six tips will help you write better e-mail messages.

Maintain Good Writing Standards

For most people, electronic mail is a very informal method of communication. The whole concept behind using e-mail is that it's fast, short, and sweet. The majority of messages you receive will have typos, utilize poor grammar, and have other mistakes you would never see in a formal business letter.

For many people, that's OK. But when you are creating your e-mail messages, ask yourself this question: Do you want to be writing this e-mail message in such an informal style?

When you're drafting an e-mail message, think about how you want the recipient to react to your message. With that thought in mind, it's my suggestion that you take a moment to run your spell checker and proofread your e-mail message for punctuation and grammatical errors before you click the Send button.

Remember: Always re-read your e-mail message before sending it. Oftentimes a bit of editing will be in order because what you wrote isn't exactly what you wanted to say.

Grab The Reader's Attention With The Subject Line

The subject line is the most important part of your e-mail message. It's the first thing the recipient sees when he or she opens the inbox. Here are two tips:

- Always write a subject line that is short, concise, descriptive, and informative.
- If action is required on the part of the reader, put it in the subject line — for example, "attend Tues. meeting at 9:30 in Jim's office" or "Attend Fri. meeting to discuss ABC project. 10:15 my office. Yes/No?" or "Need Reply by Wed. morning."

Make your subject line so descriptive that it grabs your readers' attention, and they'll probably read your message first.

Remember: You often have room for 60 or even 80 characters on a subject line. Make the most of them.

Make The First Line Of The First Paragraph Count

Today, most people receive so many e-mail messages that they don't ever get around to reading them. With this in mind, here are a three tips that will help to get your e-mail messages read:

- Put your most important information in the first sentence of the first paragraph and your background or supporting information in the following paragraphs.

- Keep the length of the e-mail message to less than three paragraphs.
- For messages that are more than three paragraphs, make it an attachment, and write a one paragraph message summary. Better yet, rewrite your message so that it's less than three paragraphs.

Keep The Message Simple

When you write your e-mail message, write short, easy to read sentences and paragraphs. Put the most important information in the first few sentences of the first paragraph. Here are three tips:

- Try to keep your e-mail messages on one screen so the reader doesn't have to scroll through the message. If a message takes more than one screen, try to shorten it.
- If you're including a list of items, use a bulleted or numbered list. It's easier to read (like this list).
- If you must send a long message, attach the file as an enclosure. Write a brief description of the message in the subject line. The e-mail message itself should be a more detailed description of the enclosed file.

Write E-Mail Messages That Are Easy To Respond To

Make it easy for people to respond to your e-mail messages. When you write your message, be sure to include enough information so the recipient(s) can give you a quick answer or response.

Phrase your messages so that readers can reply with a "Yes" or "No." If you're going to ask for a reply, mention it in your subject line.

Attaching Documents

When you attach a document to an e-mail message do the following:

- Write a brief but thorough description about the document you're sending.
- Explain the purpose of the document.
- Include detailed instructions regarding what the recipient is supposed to do with the document.
- State the date you need a response.

Strategy #54: Responding To Incoming E-Mail

If you're getting too much e-mail or it's taking too many hours of your day to respond to it, maybe somebody isn't using the e-mail system in the manner in which it was intended.

So let me ask you two questions:

1. How much time would you spend reading and responding to these messages if they had been sent to you the old fashioned way, on paper?
2. Would you be in such a hurry to respond to them and get them off your desk? Would you drop everything and deal with them immediately? Of course not!

In the old days, these types of paper memos could sit in your inbox for days, if not weeks, before you got around to them, and the world didn't come to an end. But because the same message is now being sent to you electronically, you feel this primal urge to read and respond to it immediately.

Why are you in such a hurry to read your e-mail messages? Because they're so very important, or because you know that if you don't get to them regularly, they will just back up on you and eventually overwhelm you?

Here are some six tips on how to cope with the e-mail onslaught:

- Set aside specific times during the day to go through your e-mail to see what's arrived and what's important. Don't interrupt yourself every time an e-mail message arrives.

- If it's not necessary for you to respond to each and every e-mail message that you receive, DON'T!
- When you must respond to an e-mail message, make your response short and sweet. Give "Yes" and "No" answers when possible. If you have to write a few sentences or paragraphs, make them concise and to the point.
- If you're getting copied (cc) or blind copied (bcc) e-mail messages that don't specifically apply to your job or daily responsibilities, ask the people who have been sending these messages to take you off their lists.
- Delete unnecessary e-mail immediately.
- If an e-mail message becomes a to-do item, immediately note it on your Master List.
- If an e-mail message has important information that you want to keep, do one of these three things:
  1. Print it out and put it into a file.
  2. Save the e-mail message in a specific folder.
  3. Copy the important parts of the e-mail message and paste them into your contact manager, database, Palm, or a word processing document.

Remember: Don't allow the arrival of e-mail to interrupt your important work. If your computer beeps or sounds a trumpet to announce the arrival of each new e-mail message, then turn this feature off. And if your computer's hard drive starts making all sorts of whirring noises whenever you get an e-mail message, you may want to turn off your e-mail as well.

Strategy #55: E-Mail Do's And Don'ts

Here are 14 things to keep in mind when you're sending e-mail to your colleagues and coworkers:

- Be careful about the message's tone of voice. It's easy for someone to misinterpret it.
- Don't send copies (cc) of messages to people who don't need to see the message.
- Don't send out blind copies (bcc) casually. They can imply that you're going behind someone's back.
- Don't ask for a receipt unless it's really necessary. If you do, you may be insulting the recipients by implying that they don't read their e-mail.
- Beware of crying wolf. Use the Urgent Message notation sparingly. If you use that option too often, your future messages may be ignored.
- Don't write e-mail messages using all capital letters! WHEN YOU TYPE YOUR MESSAGE IN ALL CAPS, IT'S KNOWN AS SHOUTING, and people don't like to be shouted at. Use uppercase and lowercase letters just as you would when you type an old fashioned letter.
- Put addresses in the To, Copies (cc), and Blind Copies (bcc) lines in alphabetical order by the recipients' last names. Doing so keeps you from accidentally insulting people — such as your boss, supervisor, or manager — because you listed them in the wrong place. (If you're going to go out of your way to insult someone, do it on purpose!)
- Only send your messages to people who need to receive them.
- Send only those messages that are work-related to your colleagues and coworkers.
- Be very careful with jokes or sarcasm. What you may perceive as being funny may be taken as obnoxious and offensive. Subtle sarcasm is almost impossible to use on e-mail and usually comes across as annoying or irritating.

Messages such as jokes or invitations to non-work related events are best handled outside of the corporate e-mail system.

- Type positive messages so that the recipient will look forward to reading them.
- When you must communicate a negative message, try your best to say it in a positive way. Better yet, pick up the telephone or schedule a face-to-face meeting.
- If your message is very important, controversial, confidential, or could easily be misunderstood, use the telephone or set up a face to face meeting.
- And finally, delete e-mail messages you no longer need.

Remember: E-mail messages are not private!

Never write anything in your e-mail message that you wouldn't want to become public, or appear on the front page of your local newspaper. Your message can be easily forwarded to others and could reappear months or years after you wrote it.

Don't send confidential information by e-mail .

When replying to an e-mail message, check to see who received copies of the original message. The message header usually displays a list of all the e-mail addresses that received the message. You may choose to reply only to the sender of the message or to all recipients.

And when you receive an e-mail message, don't assume that it is private. It may have been copied, or blind copied, to others.

Strategy #56: Be Careful With The Freedom Of E-Mail

Just because e-mail's supposed to be an unstructured environment, you shouldn't allow yourself to get carried away. There's just too big a difference between writing e-mail messages to your boss, colleagues, and coworkers, and writing anonymous messages on the Internet.

When writing e-mail messages to the people within your own company or organization, use the same diction and common sense that you would use if you were writing a letter, having a conversation on the phone, or having a face to face meeting.

Don't Flame Out

If you're feeling hurt, angry, or insulted about something, don't write out your thoughts as an e-mail message and send it off, especially if you're upset with your boss, manager, or supervisor. In e-mail lingo, there is a term for this use of e-mail ; it's called flaming.

When people let their emotions flare up and then send blistering e-mail messages, they're flaming. (It's sort of like throwing a temper tantrum.) And when the person who received the message fires off a fiery response, you've got yourself a flame war. (We used to have these kinds of fights — food fights — in the high school cafeteria, but we're more civilized now. Right?)

Try your best not to become a participant in a flame war, especially at the office. You've certainly got more important things to do. In most instances, the sender just sent a message that you misinterpreted, or vice versa.

Or maybe the sender wrote something stupid, or vice versa. If you have a problem with someone, pick up the phone or schedule a face to face meeting so that you can talk things out.

And when you receive an e-mail message that is offensive or makes you feel angry, resist the temptation to respond immediately. If you do feel a need for an instant response, wait a while before sending it out. Read it later that day, or the next, and then determine if you want to send it as is, or make changes.

Remember: Once your message is sent, there is no way to retrieve it.

Spend Less Time On The Phone

The telephone is our #1 communication tool. But it's also the #1 black hole for lost productivity.

The following five strategies will help you shorten your phone time so you can focus on the work, tasks, projects and activities that give you the greatest rewards.

Strategy #56: Getting More Out Of Your Phone Calls

How many hours a day do you spend on the phone? But what are your results?

How many five minute calls do you have that go on for 10, 20, 30 minutes, or longer. What would you be doing if you weren't tied up on the phone. Because your phone time isn't being used properly you're wasting time.

Here's something to think about, more than 80 percent of the time you spend on the phone is non-productive time. Meaning... less than 20 percent of the time spent is beneficial.

You'll have more time for important work when you're able to shorten the length of each of your calls.

Here are three techniques you can use to shorten the length of your phone calls:

- **Time your calls.** If your telephone doesn't have a built-in timer, go to a sporting goods store and buy a stop watch.

  Each time you get on the phone start the timer and pay attention to how long you have been on the phone. After the call has gone five, ten or fifteen minutes, ask yourself how much longer should the call go before you've completed your conversation.

  When the call ends ask yourself how you could have shortened the length of the call. What did you talk about that wasn't necessary or important.

Some callers are long winded. I've some friends who will talk forever. How about you? Try to limit your phone time with them, otherwise you'll never get anything done.

- **Purpose.** Know what the purpose of your call is, before you make it. Before you dial someone's number, know what it is that you want to talk with them about.

  If you're not prepared, the call will probably take twice as long as necessary.

- **Results.** Know what results you want to achieve, prior to making the call. What is the outcome you're looking for with each call. Are you trying to schedule an appointment? Close a sale? Obtain or share information?

When you know what results you want from the call, then you know when it is over.

Strategy #57: Dealing With Long Winded Callers

Long winded callers are huge time-wasters. Before you know it 30, 45 or 60 minutes of your day are gone.

Here are four techniques you can use to shorten your phone time:

- Use your stop watch. (See previous strategy.)
- Say to the long-winded speaker, *"Is there anything more to talk about?"* If they say no, then end the call. You can also say, *"I've only got a few more moments, Is there anything more to talk about?"* Cover those few points and end the call.
- Another technique you can use is to say, *"Can I put you on hold for a moment."* Put the caller on hold for five to ten seconds and return to the call. Then say, *"I've a long distance call on the other line. We've been playing tag for two days. [Or, I've a customer on the other line who has a problem.] Is there anything more to talk about?"*

- When you realize that the call has taken too long, say, *"I've got to go to a meeting"* or *"I've got two people standing outside my door waiting for me. Is there anything more to talk about?"* The caller will say no, and you end the call.

Strategy #58: Returning Calls From Voice Mail Messages

How many voice mail messages do you receive every day? If you're like most business people it's probably a couple of dozen. But all voice mail messages are not created equal.

You don't have to return every phone call. Eighty to 90 percent of your phone calls don't have to be returned immediately and 30 to 40 percent don't have to be returned at all.

Some callers are more important than others.

When someone calls whose name you don't recognize and leaves just a name and phone number, without a message, it's probably a sales call. You don't have to return it.

Don't feel guilty about not returning phone calls. Your goal is to spend 80 percent of your time doing the things that generate 95 percent of your results. Eliminate unnecessary phone calls and you've more time for yourself and your business.

Here are six steps you should follow when listening to your voice mail messages:

1. Take out a pad of paper to write your messages on.
2. Listen to the message. Who is the caller? What is their phone number? Why are they calling? What do they want? What do you need to do?

   On a scale of 1 - 10, how would you rate the level of importance that you return the call.
3. Write the important information on the pad.
4. Listen to every message and repeat steps 2 and 3.

5. Delete unnecessary or unimportant messages.
6. If someone called to leave you with the answer to a question you had previously asked, write the information on a piece of paper and file it appropriately or enter the information in the persons' record in your contact management program.

After you've written your list of callers, ask yourself

- Which of these calls need to be responded to immediately?
- Which calls could be returned later?
- Which ones shouldn't be returned at all?
- Which calls could be delegated to others?

Return the calls that need your immediate attention, and get to the others when you've time.

Strategy #59: Don't Take Calls When You're In A Meeting

How many times have you called someone and right after you introduce yourself they say, *"I can't talk to you now, I'm in a meeting."* What thoughts go through your mind?

When I hear this I always think to myself, *"If you're in a meeting, why did you pick up the phone?"* Then, I wonder... *"Would they have taken the call if I were someone else."*

The single biggest reason why people don't get the important things done is because they're interrupted, and a ringing phone is an interruption.

When you're in a meeting, let the call go to voice mail. Stay focused on the subject at hand, and try to complete your meeting as quickly as possible.

You're not being productive when 80 percent of your meeting time is spent on the telephone while the other meeting participants sit around waiting for your call to end.

Stop taking phone calls. You'll complete your meeting(s) in a fraction of the time it would otherwise take.

Strategy #60: Don't Answer Your Cell Phone When You're Not Available To Talk

Just because you own a cell phone doesn't mean you have to be accessible at every moment of the business day. You don't have to be available 24/7/365. It's OK to let a call go to voice mail.

It's more important that you focus on the person (people) you're with, than to answer a call.

How many times have you seen people talking on their cell phone while sitting with a group of people in a restaurant? That's not quality time.

Remember: You build relationships by giving a person your full attention and undivided attention.

Get More Out of Your Meetings

Meetings are notorious time wasters. Not only can they cut into your most productive hours, they can also sap your energy and enthusiasm and throw your entire day off schedule.

But for some strange reason, meetings are a kind of status symbol, even a badge of honor. The more meetings you attend, the more important you are — or so it's thought. In fact, almost every meeting is too long, and a lot of them shouldn't be held at all.

Here are two important things to remember:

- Eighty percent of the meetings you attend could probably have been taken care of with a phone call, or shouldn't have been scheduled in the first place. And of the 20 percent of the meetings that are important, they take longer than is necessary.

- Eighty percent of the time spent in meetings are wasted. Only 20 percent of the time spent in a meeting is valuable.

Meetings are an unavoidable fact of everyday life. But as important as they are, they're always time-consuming. If no clear course of action results or decisions aren't made, they're a complete waste of everybody's time.

My approach boils down to two essentials:

1. If you think a meeting will be a waste of your time. DON'T GO.
2. If you must go, make sure the meeting *won't* be a waste of your time.

Here are eight strategies you can use to get maximum value from the meetings you must attend:

Strategy #61: Eliminate Routine Meetings

Many times companies will have sales and staff meetings every week. Is yours one of them?

But meetings that are held just because *"We always have a Monday morning meeting."* become little more than a social gathering. People sit around trying to think of a reason why they're there, keeping them from doing more productive work.

Eliminate the routine meetings and everybody's got more time to complete their important tasks and projects.

Here are three great questions to ask:

- Why is this meeting being held?
- How will we know when this meeting is over?
- What are we trying to accomplish during this meeting?

If you don't get great answers, the meeting shouldn't be held.

Strategy #62: Avoid Impromptu Meetings

When an impromptu meeting is called, everyone is expected to drop whatever they are doing and attend. Unless there's a real crisis, this is a terrible way to run a business.

You're forced to interrupt your work flow and disrupt your schedule. You aren't prepared for the meeting and may not have the slightest idea of what's expected of you.

Before you know it, an hour has been wasted without any tangible results. By the time you get back to your desk, the flow and momentum that had developed earlier is gone. You may even be forced to restart your project from the beginning because you're unable to regain your lost momentum.

The quality of your work isn't nearly as good as it could have been, the amount of work you're producing has been dramatically reduced, and you're spending considerably more time at the office than you need to. This is NOT the secret to success.

Your career is being sabotaged.

Here are five things to remember when someone calls an impromptu meeting:

- Almost all impromptu meetings can be scheduled for later in the day or even the next day.
- It's counter productive to make people stop what they're doing and rush to a meeting.
- It's much better to know what the meeting's purpose is. Then you'll have at least a brief time to think about the problem and gather the necessary documents, reports and information, so that you'll be prepared to participate effectively.
- A considered and thoughtful response — even in a crisis situation — is better than impulsive actions.
- As a rule, the only decision that's reached at an impromptu meeting is the decision to schedule another meeting... when everyone will be better prepared to discuss and handle the situation.

When someone calls and says that they want to see you, you don't have to drop everything. It's OK to ask why they want to get together with you, what it is that they want to discuss, and what they want to accomplish.

In many instances, a face to face meeting can be replaced by a few telephone calls and some e-mail between the two of you.

Strategy #63: Mind Map Your Meetings

When you attend a meeting, one of the tools you can use to make it much more productive is Mind Mapping. If you're not familiar with Mind Mapping read the section on Mind Mapping for more details.

This is how you would Mind Map the problem being discussed at a meeting.

1. On a white board, or on a piece of paper, draw a circle.
2. In the center of the circle write the name of the problem.
3. Draw lines from the circle like spokes on a wheel.
4. On each line write a brief description of the issue that is part of the problem.

As you study the problems/issues confronting you, you will find that 80 percent of your problems comes from only 20 percent of the issues that are causing the problems. Solve the 20 percent and the majority of your problems goes away.

Strategy #64: Don't Schedule Early Morning Staff or Sales Meetings

An early morning meeting — particularly on a Monday — can ruin the rest of your day. It can slow down the momentum of the entire day or even the whole week.

Staff or sales meetings are often held first thing Monday morning, with the ostensible prupose of determining what should be done during the coming week. But if you wait till Monday to make those decisions, it's already too late. The race has started, everyone else is off and running, and you're still planning.

Monday morning staff and sales meetings can take the life, heart, and enthusiasm out of the organization. If the meeting ends after 11:00am, the entire morning may be wasted.

Everybody will kill time until they go to lunch. This isn't a very productive way to start a week.

Furthermore, for many people the morning hours are the most productive time of day. If you're a morning person, that's when you should be doing your most important work, not sitting around and talking about it.

Here are three things for you to think about regarding morning staff and sales meetings:

- Schedule your sales and staff meetings for Thursday afternoon, or Friday morning at the latest. Perhaps Wednesday afternoon would even be appropriate.
- By moving the meetings to later in the week you can discuss what has taken place so far, and still have the opportunity to change your focus for the balance of the week, if necessary.
- You can begin to plan your schedule for the coming week by discussing upcoming projects, meetings, or your out of town travel schedule.

Strategy #65: Do You Really Have To Be There?

Eighty percent of the meetings you're invited to — or told to — attend are a waste of your time. If so, why go?

You don't have to go to every meeting you're asked to attend. If you don't think your presence is necessary, or if the meeting would disrupt your schedule, or interfere with your productive work time, say no.

> John lives and works in Boston. His boss asked him to come to a sales meeting that was being held in NYC. John asked

why the meeting was being held and what was the expected outcome. The boss didn't give him a good answer.

John respectively declined the invitation explaining that he wasn't about to waste an entire day traveling to attend a one-hour meeting, when he could spend the same eight hours selling and making money.

Here are three ways you can tactfully turn down a meeting invitation:

- Suggest that someone else attend in your place.
- Propose an alternative. Perhaps some informal conversations or a few phone calls would serve the same purpose as the meeting and save everybody time.
- If the time — or place — is inconvenient for you, ask that the meeting be rescheduled or be held in your office instead of someone else's.

Strategy #66: What's The Purpose? Why Is This Meeting Being Held?

Eighty percent of the meetings you attend, run too long because they have no clear-cut purpose. When everyone knows in advance

- What issues will be discussed, and
- What decisions need to be made,

the length of the meeting can be cut in half.

Whenever you're asked to attend a meeting, ask these five questions:

1. What's the purpose of this meeting?
2. Why have I been asked to attend?
3. Who else will be there?
4. What will be expected of me? Will you be expected to make a decision, to share information, or to receive status

updates from others?

5. Is the meeting being called in order to solve a problem, plan for the future, bring everyone up-to-date on the status of a project, discuss new business, or something else?

When you as a meeting participant know what's expected of you, you're better able to prepare yourself for the meeting.

Strategy #67: Insist Upon A Written Agenda

A meeting without a specific agenda is a time waster. Try to get a written outline in advance.

If you're the one calling the meeting, prepare the agenda and circulate it among the participants well in advance.

Keep the agenda short. Place the most important items at the top of the list. Determine the amount of time that will be spent on each agenda item.

After the agenda has been distributed it may be possible that some of the items can be handled before hand. That way the length of the meeting can be shortened.

MeetingTip: If handouts will be distributed, ask that this be done prior to the meeting.

A sample Agenda form is displayed on the following page.

Sample Agenda Form

Date of Meeting ______________________________

Place ______________________________

Starting Time ______________________________

Ending Time ______________________________

Person Calling Meeting ______________________________

Purpose of the Meeting ______________________________

Desired Outcome of the Meeting ______________________________

Meeting Participants

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________
4. ______________________________

Agenda Items/Time Allotted for Discussion on Each Item

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________
4. ______________________________
5. ______________________________

(Note: The most important items should be listed at the top of the agenda and should be discussed first. The person who prepares the agenda should also include the amount of time that will be allowed for discussion of each of these points.)

Strategy #68: Schedule A Telephone Conference, Video Conference, Or Webinar

Once it's been determined that a meeting *must* be held, why not ask if it could be done over a telephone conference call or a Web-based conference. (A Webinar is a powerpoint presentation that's presented via the Internet.)

This can save travel and/or commuting time for everybody.

If you were to include in your meeting time the

- Time spent commuting to and from the meeting place,
- Time spent waiting in the reception area until the person you're meeting with is available to see you,
- Time spent waiting in the meeting room for all the other meeting participants to arrive, or
- Time spent making small talk, instead of discussing the relevant topic for which the meeting was called in the first place,

you would find that 95 percent of the time allocated to the meeting is wasted time, and only five percent of that time is spent productively.

We've all been trained that face-to-face is the only way to conduct meetings, but many meetings could be conducted over the phone, saving you hours of time. So when you want to schedule a meeting, ask if you could schedule a conference call, video conference or Webinar instead.

Then pull out your calendars and choose a specific date and time. Before you end the call make sure that you know who will call whom. And finally, make sure you've taken different time zones into consideration.

Keep Your Meetings On Time And On Track

Here are seven strategies you can use to keep your meetings on time and on track.

Strategy #69: You Need To Know Where The Meeting's Being Held

To insure that nobody comes in late with some lame excuse about going to the wrong office or conference room always state where the meeting will be held.

If you're holding a meeting at an off site location, be sure to give the street address of the building along with the name and location of the meeting room as well as a telephone number.

You may even want to include a map so that everyone knows how to get there.

Strategy #70: Meetings Should Have Specific Starting And Ending Times

It's unfortunate, but some people just don't take meetings seriously. They come in late, they leave early, they talk during the meeting, and even take telephone calls.

It's rather easy to get people to change their previous pattern of behavior, however, if you let them know that you want your meetings to become more productive and meaningful. You start by insisting that everyone arrive on time.

MeetingTip: The next time you're in charge of an office meeting, close and lock the door so that late arrivals will have to knock to get in. You can then use their late arrival as an opportunity to inform them that they're expected to be on time in the future.

Latecomers also need to know that

- You're planning to stick to your agenda,
- There is only a limited amount of time available for discussion of each point, and
- That you plan to adjourn at the designated time.

Strategy #71: Insist That The Meeting Start On Time

Don't wait for latecomers to arrive; start without them. It's OK to insist that the meeting start on time, even if every participant hasn't arrived.

When they see that the meeting has already begun, they'll get the point and be on time for the next one.

Strategy #72: Keep The Meeting Focused

The discussion should follow the topics on the agenda. If the discussion seems to be going in a different direction it's OK to point out that the discussion has strayed too far from the items on the agenda.

There should be a time limit set for the discussion of each topic and how long each participant will be allowed to speak. (This should be spelled out in the agenda.)

MeetingTip: Ask each participant to stand when it's their turn to speak, they'll be quick and to the point.

If the person who called the meeting isn't going to take control of it, then you should speak up and remind him or her that time is running short and you've got other things to do, or another meeting to attend, as soon as this meeting is over.

Strategy #73: Do You Have To Attend The Entire Meeting?

Occasionally, the situation arises in which a person's presence is needed for only a small portion of a meeting.

Should that be the case, when you're asked to attend a meeting, pick up the phone and ask the person who scheduled the meeting if you could attend only the portion that applies to you.

This way, you don't have to waste hours of time listening to others discuss things that aren't of immediate concern to you.

Strategy #74: Determine What Needs To Be Done Next

At the conclusion of the meeting, the person who called the meeting should take a few minutes to summarize the points that were discussed and determine what is to be done next.

If additional work needs to be done, those tasks should be assigned, and the people who are doing the work should be told when the tasks need to be completed. So there will be no misunderstanding, the following should be clarified:

- What will the follow-through be?
- Who will do it?
- When will it be done?
- How will it be done?
- What resources will be used?
- What happens next? If another meeting needs to be scheduled, a date and time should be set before everyone walks out the door.

Remember: If you're the person to whom the work is being assigned, you should ask some questions — and take detailed notes on what you're being instructed to do — so there can be no misunderstandings about the format in which it's supposed to be done and the due date for completion.

Strategy #75: Keep Minutes Of The Meeting

The person who called the meeting, or a meeting participant should keep minutes of the meeting so that everyone will know what was discussed, what decisions were made, and what is to be done next, by whom, and when.

These minutes should be distributed within a few days of the conclusion of the meeting.

I've found Mind Mapping to be an effective tool for taking minutes of meetings. If you're not familiar with Mind Mapping read the section on Mind Mapping for more details.

Strategy #76: Be On Time For Your Meetings

Here are two techniques you can use to help you be on time for your meetings.

The Fifteen Minute Hedge

A famous football coach had a very simple rule: Everybody was expected to be present at team meetings *fifteen minutes* before the scheduled time. That meant the players had to arrive for a 1:00pm meeting at 12:45pm.

Use this concept when you've any scheduled meeting or appointment. Give yourself a cushion and take the pressure off.

- Plan to be at all your meetings fifteen minutes early. Then you can take that last-minute phone call and still be on time.
- Set your watch five or ten minutes fast. That way you'll have a few extra minutes before you run late.

The fifteen-minute hedge is a great way to stay on schedule, not only for meetings, but throughout your workday.

Confirm Your Meetings

Try as you may, meetings do have a tendency of starting late and running long, in spite of your best intentions. With that in mind, you should always confirm your meetings — even if it's with a colleague down the hall — before you leave your office.

Pick up the phone and call to find out if they're going to be available to meet with you at the appointed time. If they're running late, then you can get another ten or fifteen minutes of work done before you leave your office.

Create A Plan For Your Success

Success comes from giving yourself leverage. Success comes when you get maximum results with minimum effort. Success is achieved when you discover the things that work, and do more of them; while at the same time, identifying the things that *don't* work, and doing less of them.

This is how you gain maximum advantage from the 80/20 rule. A little bit of effort generates huge results and enormous returns.

Now that you've read through *Making More While Working Less,* I would suggest that you go back and read it once again.

Look for the subtle nuances within each strategy. Think about how you can apply them.

Push yourself to achieve greater results with less effort.

The goal isn't to work harder. It's not to work smarter. It's to work less.

Put the 80/20 rule to work for you, and you'll have your MBA...

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Jeffrey Mayer really understands the essentials of running a successful and profitable business. He knows how to focus in on the key business issues to generate maximum profitability.
Norman R. Bobins, Chairman, President & CEO, LaSalle Bank, N.A. Chicago IL

Every month is my best month. Since I began working with Jeffrey Mayer, my sales are up four-fold, and my profits are even higher. Jeff's the Dr. Laura of business.
Kim Camarella, President, Kiyonna Klothing, Los Angeles

My sales have doubled, my profits have tripled, and I'm working fewer hours, since I started working with Jeffrey Mayer
Gregg Russell, Owner, Hopps Colonial Pharmacy, Homer MI

I booked more than $1,000,000 in new business - with higher profit margins - since I started working with Jeffrey Mayer. The last quarter was the quarter we've ever had in our history!
Pauline Lally, President, Piping Systems, Inc.

My monthly profits have increased 50 percent since I began working with Jeffrey Mayer. He showed me how to reach decision makers faster.
Eric Manting, President, Find IT Corporation

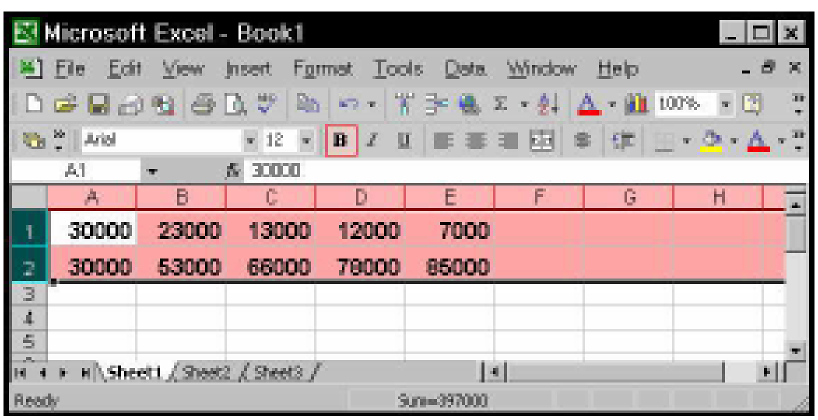
My monthly sales doubled from $20,000 to $40,000 after working with Jeffrey Mayer. His up-selling techniques helped me increase the average size of my sales from $2200 to $3200. This was a great return on my investment.
Dave Boekholder, Sales Manager, Digital Canal

Appendix: Creating An 80/20 Graph

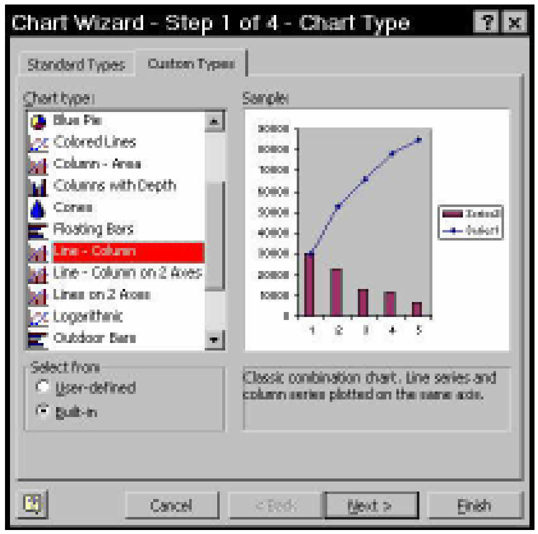
The entire focus of this training manual has been to give yourself leverage, putting the 80/20 Rule, to use. When you see your information as an 80/20 graph, it's a real eye opener.

Let's assume that sales were the following: Customer A - 30,000, Customer B - 23,000, Customer C - 13,000, Customer D - 12,000 and Customer E - 7,000. Here's a step-by-step example of how you create an 80/20 in Excel.

1. Open a blank workbook in Excel.
2. In the first row enter your data from highest to lowest, i.e. 30,000, 23,000, 13,000, 12,000and 7,000.
3. Place the value from cell 1A into 2A i.e. 30,000.
4. In the second row enter the sum of the items in the first row. You can do this by creating a formula. In cell 2B enter **=SUM(A2,B1)**.
5. Copy the formula into the all the cells in row 2. Excel will do the calculations for you. It should look like this: 30,000,53,000, 66,000, 78,000, 85,000.
6. Highlight the data that is in rows 1 and 2. This is shown in the following figure.



7. Select Insert, Chart, or click the Chart Wizard icon.
8. Select Column as your chart type.
9. Click on the Custom Types tab.
10. Select Line Column from the Chart Type list. See next Figure.



11. Click Next a couple of times and Finish, and you've created your 80/20 Graph. See final Figure.