

ACHIEVEMENT SOLUTIONS

Moving Individuals and organizations from Activity to Achievement



CHARTING YOUR COURSE FOR IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

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About this Book

The chapters in this book are not very long. I chose this format not because I don't have much to say in the field of performance improvement, but because getting better, or Charting Your Course for Improving Performance, is not a complicated, difficult process. The second reason I chose this "cut to the chase" format is that I know you don't have a lot of extra time to spend learning yet another way to improve performance.

Charting Your Course for Improving Performance is based on one ancient principle and five simple steps. The ancient principle is that belief manifests itself in behavior. What we say we believe should manifest itself in what we do. So, clarifying your belief system, and then linking that belief system to performance (behavior) is the gist of this entire program. In fact, linking belief and behavior is the underlying principle of all of my programs.

In this book, you'll be introduced to a simple five-step process that, when applied to your life or business, will all but guarantee success. I can confidently guarantee the process works, what I can't guarantee is that you'll put the process to work as I've suggested.

There's a popular self-help book out right now that has almost 500 pages. It begins with six pages of endorsements, has eleven divisions and sixty-four chapters.

With all due respect to the author, self-improvement isn't that difficult. Getting better is about doing a few simple things a few simple ways – every day and a little simplicity is a welcome change in our chaotic and complex world.

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Lessons From 1965

In 1965 I quit high school. This was not a good decision. But I joined the United States Navy, and that turned out to be a pretty good decision.

After graduating from boot camp I was assigned to the USS Ranger, one of the largest aircraft carriers in existence at that time. The Ranger was a thousand feet long, had a wartime compliment of five thousand men, (no women onboard back then) and served as a floating platform for dozens of fighter aircraft. It was literally a floating city.

To my good fortune, I was assigned to the Navigation Division. Over the next several months I learned the fundamental principles of navigation, which taught me not just how to chart a course from San Diego to the South China Sea, but I found that those same fundamental principles could be used to chart a course for improving my performance and productivity as well.

Here are the five principles we will use to chart your course to help you get from where you are now to where you want to be.

Look Ahead – *Determine Your Destination*

Look Around – *Get Your Bearings*

Chart Your Course – *Develop a Plan*

Set the Sails – *Execute Your Plan*

Adjust Your Course – *Evaluate Your Progress*

Look Ahead – *Determine Your Destination*

Obviously, getting from where you are now to a different place, personally or professionally, will require that you have some sense for where you want to go. Charting a course for improved performance and productivity begins by having a clear purpose (mission) and a clear vision for where you want to go.

Look Around – *Get Your Bearings*

Knowing where you want to go is critical, but before you can set your course you must also have a clear understanding of where you are now. In chapter two we'll discuss exactly how you go about getting your bearings, personally, professionally or organizationally.

Chart Your Course – *Develop a Plan*

Developing a plan for improving performance and productivity is not as difficult as you may think. Planning, according to the model we'll use in this book, really only involves two things; developing strategies that are linked to your vision for change and setting a few measurable goals that help turn vision and strategy into reality.

Set the Sails – *Execute your Plan*

Achievement is about doing, not about dreaming. Setting the sails involves making strategic decisions, on a daily basis, that will move you in the direction you want go. Jim Rohn, America's Business Philosopher says: "Failure is the result of a few errors in judgment, *repeated* every day, and success is the result of a few simple disciplines *practiced*, every day." Your success and achievement will result from making a few strategic decisions and taking a few strategic actions – every day.

Adjust Your Course – *Evaluate Your Progress*

As the USS Ranger pushed away from the pier in San Diego to begin our journey to points west, one thing was absolutely certain. We knew that we would have to adjust our course – almost immediately – and certainly before we were out of the harbor. Why? Because...things change. Winds change, sea swells change, there were other ships coming in or going out of the harbor that would cause us to have to temporarily alter our original course.

Course adjustments are just a reality of good navigation. Course adjustments are a fact of life for you and me as well. Lots of things change between the time we chart our course and the time we set sail. The issue isn't will things change, the issue is when will change? We need to expect change and be ready to deal with it.

Chapter I

Look Ahead – *Determine Your Destination*

“A pile of rocks ceases to be a rock pile when somebody contemplates it with the idea of a cathedral in mind.”

Saint Exupery

Look Ahead – Determine Your Destination

As I said earlier, getting from where you are now to a different place, personally or professionally, will require that you have a sense for where you want to go. Charting a course for improving performance and productivity begins by having a clear mission or purpose and a vision for where you want to go or what you want to accomplish.

So, where do you want to go? What do you want to accomplish? Without a sense of mission or purpose you will be tossed about from one crisis to another or from activity to another and never get where you want to go.

Rick Warren, the founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California and best-selling author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, identifies five benefits of having a clear purpose.

1. Knowing your purpose *gives meaning* to your life.
2. Knowing your purpose *simplifies* your life.
3. Knowing your purpose *focuses* your life.
4. Knowing your purpose *motivates* your life.
5. Knowing your purpose *prepares you for eternity*.

Can you imagine beginning a journey without having any idea of where you intended to go? As the old saying goes, if you don't know where you're going, any road will do.

Notice what having an identified purpose for your life will do for you. A clear purpose ***gives meaning*** to what you do. Instead of just doing what everyone else is doing, or what others in your industry are doing, you are *focused* and on a specific course.

Secondly, having a clear understanding of where you're headed ***simplifies*** your life. My guess is your life could use a little simplification, no? Instead of just getting up in the morning and going through the motions, you're on a mission. You know what you want and you have a plan to get it.

Thirdly, looking ahead serves to ***focus*** your activities and your relationships. You have a map in front of you that provides a clear perspective for life. You are now in the enviable position of making better choices during the course of the day because you're focused.

Fourth, a clear purpose ***motivates you*** to face the challenges of the day ahead. I heard someone say: "Motivation doesn't last." Well, neither does bathing, that's why we do it every day. Looking ahead and knowing exactly where you're going is not only motivating, it's inspiring. How many people do you know who could tell you exactly where they're going or what they intend to accomplish with their life? Answer? Hardly any!

Lastly, having a clear purpose prepares you for the long haul, or, as Rick Warren says, it ***prepares you for eternity***. I know there are some who read this and would all too quickly dismiss the whole idea of life after this life. Personally, now that I'm about to celebrate my 60th birthday, the realization that I'm beginning the fourth quarter in the game of life is sobering. I want my life to count for something. I want to leave a legacy. Having a clear purpose for what I do is one way to make sure my legacy is fulfilled.

The Power of Purpose

With an identified purpose you are able to channel your activities. Your life becomes *deliberate*. Your actions become *intentional*. You are no longer drifting. You are now focused on an intended outcome and the things you do are moving you in a specific direction.

I used to tell my daughter and son not to just look for a job but instead find out what they loved to do and see if they could get paid for it.

I enjoyed a wonderful career in law enforcement. I spent twenty-two years in local law enforcement, retiring as Assistant Police Chief of an agency of four hundred commissioned police officers and civilian employees. After leaving law enforcement I served another five years as Executive Director for the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police.

As a Command Officer and Executive Director, I inherited administrative responsibilities. Planning, organizing, staffing and directing were the duties of my day and I was good at it. After being promoted to Captain, I quickly realized that my days on the street were over. I joked to colleagues on the department that the only way I could get hurt now, was to fall on a sharp pencil.

During this same time period I also taught an adult Sunday school class at my local church. Initially the class was small but it began to quickly grow and soon the room was full to overflowing.

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed studying and preparing those lessons each Sunday. But what I really enjoyed, was delivering those messages each week to a waiting and anxious audience.

Speaking and teaching became a passion for me. Not just teaching the practical application of scripture, but rather in understanding that I had been wired to effectively communicate ideas and concepts to others.

Early in my police career I attended a time management seminar and became hooked on personal life management. Over the years I have read dozens of books, and attended many workshops and seminars on personal growth and development.

In January of 2001 I did what I had encouraged my children to do. I determined to do what I loved to do, and see if I could get paid for it. I started Achievement Solutions, LLC. A professional speaking and training business dedicated to helping individuals and organizations improve performance, productivity and profitability.

What I quickly found out was that there are a lot of people who want to become more productive, personally and professionally. They want to lead a life of meaning and purpose. They want to experience more than just “random acts of progress.” They want focus and direction and they want their lives to count for something.

Leading a purposeful, focused life begins by developing perspective. It begins by asking questions like: Why do I do what I do? What is my purpose in life? What do I love to do? How could I get paid for doing what I love to do?

If you own a business or manage someone else's, your starting point for improved performance and productivity is the same. You start by defining your purpose.

The Magic of Mission

Think of mission and purpose as the same thing. It describes the big picture, the primary reason you are doing what you do. Mission defines your reason for existence; it reflects the idealism for why you do what do. Mission serves as your north star. Your mission will keep you on track, and headed in the direction you want to go. And, one more thing, mission is something that is always *pursued*, but never fully realized.

Your mission is NOT a destination. Your mission is NOT a description of what you intend to achieve or become. Mission describes why you do what you do in the broadest terms.

Here are some corporate mission statements that will help you see the value of being idealistic in defining your purpose.

The Disney Corporation's mission is to: "Use Imagination to Make People Happy." Yep, that's it.

Notice it doesn't say anything about theme parks, cartoons, cartoon characters, movies or any of that. It just simply describes that the *final outcome* of their efforts must make people happy.

The Ritz Carlton's mission statement is: "Ladies and Gentlemen – Serving Ladies and Gentlemen."

I think the reason I like that mission statement so much is because it accomplishes two things; it defines the culture of the organization, and it describes the way their clientele will be treated. Ladies and gentlemen, serving ladies and gentlemen.

Hewlett-Packard's mission is: To make technical contributions for the advancement and welfare of society. Again, no talk about calculators or computers, just a statement describing the *outcome* or *result* of what they produce.

See what I mean? Your mission statement should tell you and everyone else *WHY* you exist.

My Mission

Give some thought to drafting YOUR OWN mission statement. Remember, mission should be *intentionally vague*. Mission describes the grand purpose for which you exist. Think in terms of *end result or outcome*. Here are some questions that might help you think through the issue of why you do what you do.

What gives meaning to your life?

How could you simplify your life?

How could you better focus your life/activities?

What motivates and inspires you?

What legacy do you want to leave family and friends?

Let me share with you both the purpose statement for my company and my personal mission statement. Use these two formats to help you think through and draft your own mission or purpose statement.

Achievement Solutions exists for the purpose of helping individuals and organizations improve performance, productivity and profitability.

My personal mission is *to glorify God in all I do and enjoy Him forever.*

As you can see from both examples, there are no specifics as to “how” I will move toward the fulfillment of my mission or purpose. My mission simply serves to focus *why* I do *what* I do.

Based on your answers to these questions above and/or the examples I cited, take a run at drafting a sentence or two that will define your purpose in life. I know this may be difficult for you to define but give it your best effort. Don’t worry that you may not get it right the first time. You’re not looking for *perfection*; you’re looking for *direction*.

My Purpose

Chapter II

Look around – *Get Your Bearings*

“When an archer misses the mark he looks for the fault within himself. Failure to hit the bull’s eye is never the fault of the target. If you want to improve your aim, you have to improve yourself”

Gilbert Orland

Look Around – Get Your Bearings

As important as it is to know where you’re going, it is equally important to know where you are now. Getting your bearings is all about self-assessment or, if you’re looking at this process as a means of improving your company’s performance and productivity, it’s about doing an internal audit. The purpose of conducting a personal or organizational audit is to clarify your starting point for change.

One of the most effective ways I know to *get your bearings* is to answer these four simple questions:

What do I need to **START DOING** - that I’m not doing now - that will move me in the direction I want to go?

What do I need to **STOP DOING** – that I am doing now - that is hindering me from moving in the direction I want to go?

What should I be doing MORE OF – to increase my probabilities of success? This category represents those things you may already be doing – you’re just not doing enough of them.

What should I be doing LESS OF? These things usually represent those destructive little habits that sabotage our personal or professional performance or productivity. (i.e. anger, lying, blaming)

You will see this quote again in chapter four but it speaks so well to these four questions that I’m compelled to use it here as well.

“The only measure of what you believe is what you do. If you want to know what people believe, don’t read what they write, don’t ask what they believe, just observe what they do.”

Ashley Montagu

You get the point. Achievement is about doing, not dreaming. In order to get from where you are now to where you want to be, you’ll need clarity in terms of what needs to get done.

See *What You Want to Do*

When you clarify your vision for improvement and articulate what you need to *START* doing, *STOP* doing, *DO MORE OF* and *DO LESS OF* – you take a giant step in clarifying what you’ll actually need to *DO* to improve performance and productivity.

More importantly, you begin to clarify those areas that need to change in order for real improvement to take place. As I said at the beginning of this book, improving performance and productivity really isn’t all that difficult. Just do a few simple things with purpose and consistency.

Since we agree that belief manifests itself in behavior it’s critically important to be able to see those things that need to be done to take you to the next level of performance.

The adage “seeing is believing” should be replaced with “seeing leads to believing.” Once we see what needs to be done, or what needs to be improved, we are able to develop the performance strategies that will guide and govern our activity.

Now we’ll link our vision for improved performance and productivity with a plan to make it happen.

Chapter III

Chart Your Course – *Develop a Plan*

“If you can’t describe what you’re doing as a process, you don’t know what you’re doing”

W. Edwards Deming

Chart Your Course – *Develop a Plan*

Performance and productivity describe, “what comes out the end of the tube.” Performance is all about making it happen – whatever “it” may be.

In order to link your performance with your vision for what you want to accomplish, you’ll need to develop PLANS, set GOALS and make STRATEGIC DECISIONS to bring your vision to fruition.

PLANNING is essential to improving performance and productivity. You can try to improve your current situation without a plan but your progress will be very sporadic. The bottom line is – no plan – no progress. Planning starts with strategy. Strategy involves *outcome* thinking.

GOALS provide the power to make plans a reality. There is no substitute for goal setting. Without a strategic plan and achievable goals, an individual or an organization will simply become a slave to the pressing and the proximate – at the mercy of crisis de jour.

ACTIONS (strategic decisions) are based on the plans you have made and the goals you have set. If your actions are in alignment with your plans and goals, you will make phenomenal progress. If your actions are subject to the pressing and the proximate you will make no real progress at all. But...you will be busy!

Activity vs. Productivity

When we talk about activity and productivity we are not talking about synonymous terms. It would be a huge mistake to believe that there is a direct correlation between activity and productivity.

These are in fact clear contrasts between the two.

Activity	Productivity
Energetic Movement	Planned Movement
Situational	Principle Based
Short Term	Long Term / Enduring
Random Acts of Progress	Strategic, Sustained Progress

Activity produces *energetic movement*. You and I might refer to this as *being busy*. The fact is most of our day is committed to being busy. The problem however is that being busy and being productive are, more often than not, mutually exclusive.

Productivity results from *planned movement*. Being busy is a fact of life. What we need to be able to do is carve out time from our busy schedules doing the few things that matter most. Planned activity results in productivity.

Activity is *situational*. It's subject to the pressing and the proximate. Common terms for this malady are "putting out fires" or "crisis management. Both of which result from getting caught up in the craziness of the day. It's the ringing phone, the knock on the door and the fateful question "do you have just a moment?"

Productivity is *principle based*. To be productive you'll need to start working from a plan – a plan that's predicated on principles. More about principles a little later.

Activity is *short term*. Most of the activity of the day results in very little sustained productivity. Oh, we might make a little progress but, when all the feathers hit the floor, the progress will be short term and our level of productivity will be limited indeed.

When our focus is on productivity however, we can plan for those daily interruptions. We expect the crisis de jour but we're not thrown off course because of it. As a result, our production and performance are long term and enduring.

Activity produces what I refer to as *random acts of progress*. We may make a few strides and enjoy a limited amount of success but it will not be strategic or sustained. Unfocused activity can only produce random progress.

Achievement produces *strategic and sustained progress* - because our activity is focused, process driven and planned.

There are clear differences between activity and productivity.

Beginning with the End in Mind

Thinking strategically simply means thinking about the results we want to achieve. As we discuss *strategy* it is important to understand the difference between vision and strategy. Vision is *seeing* the preferred changes for improvement in your mind's eye. Changes like STARTING, STOPPING, doing MORE OF and doing LESS OF. Strategy involves making specific *plans* to bring your vision to reality.

Thinking strategically is *outcome* thinking. Increasing sales by twenty percent is a strategy. How you achieve that strategic objective will involve *process* thinking. Process thinking requires *goal setting*. For now however, let's just think in terms of strategy. Let's develop a few strategic plans that will serve as the first action steps in turning our vision for improved performance into reality.

Strategic thinking is critical to the process of improving performance and productivity. Strategic thinking leads to goal setting which, in turn leads to making strategic (daily) decisions.

Beginning With the End in Mind Worksheet

Strategies are “big picture” plans for making your vision(s) a reality. You have already clarified your vision for things you want to start, stop, do more of and do less of. Now it’s time to state those visions in terms of *outcomes*. It’s time to create the strategic objectives that will form the basis for our goals and strategic decisions.

Strategy #1: START... (*Loose 20 lbs. – Increase customer contacts – daily planning*)

Strategy #2: STOP... (*Procrastination – being late for meetings – blaming others*)

Strategy #3: MORE... (*Exercising – targeted cold calls – personal responsibly*)

Strategy #4: LESS... (*Complaining – visiting – time surfing the net*)

The Power of Process and Principles

The process used in Charting Your Course is powerful because it is both simple and fundamentally sound. Each step in the process builds on the other and answers the fundamental questions that need to be asked in any process for improvement.

This process answers *what* and *why* questions. What is my/our reason for existence and *why* are we doing what we are doing?

This process answers the *who*, *how* and *when* questions. *Who* needs to be involved? *How* will I/we move toward fulfilling our purpose? *When* will I/we take necessary action?

This process follows a logical progression. It begins with our purpose and vision. It points us in the direction we intend to go. It forces us to clarify *why* we're doing *what* we're doing.

Once our beliefs are clarified, our process helps us develop the plans necessary to get where we want to go or produce what we want to produce.

The principles that govern the process, serve as points of focus that guide and govern daily actions.

Why do we need principles to drive our time-tested process for improved performance and productivity?

The answer is because of what principles are and what they do. A principle, by definition is the root cause or origin of any process.

A principle is based on a fundamental truth and is essential for achieving a specific result. Think of the principle of *cause and effect* for example. This principle states that in order for something to take place, the Civil War for example, or Hurricane Katrina, some casual action or activity brought them about.

In the same way, the level of your performance or productivity

will be predicted on certain casual factors. The way you think and what you deeply believe will cause you to behave in a particular way.

Principles, both govern and guide. They govern certain segments of the process and they serve as guides for linking our dream for improved performance and productivity with our actions for achieving our dreams.

Strategic thinking is a principle you must use and master in order to improve performance and productivity.

There's Gold in Your Goals

Strategy is the catalyst for change but goals are the fuel. When it comes to moving from activity to achievement, your success or failure will be determined by how seriously you take goal setting.

I never cease to be amazed at how everyone agrees on the value of goal setting, but year in and year out, statistics show that less than 5% of people or businesses have written goals.

Goals direct activity. Goals provide the criteria by which we monitor progress. Goals provide clarity and focus for activities.

If we agree we would make more progress if set we goals, then why don't we?

Here are *five* reasons why we don't set goals.

Procrastination – choosing not to choose. Procrastination is nothing more than a bad habit and, one that must be broken in order for performance to improve and production to increase.

Fear of failure – we don't set goals because we don't believe we can achieve them. Past failures limit future victories. We tried goal setting before, and it didn't work. So we just don't set them any more. Bad Plan!

Lack of commitment to succeed

Achievement is about DOING. Not about DREAMING or wishing or hoping our way to success. No achievement of any kind is possible without doing unpleasant or difficult things. Goals, taken seriously, help motivate us to get the job done.

Lack of responsibility – Not taking *personal responsibility* for our own success and achievement. Convincing ourselves that someone else is going to ride in on a white horse and help us improve our performance and productivity. Bad mistake!

Lack of belief – that we can perform at a much higher level. We may have a personal history of average performance and limited accomplishments and simply lack the self-belief in our ability to become anything other than what we are. Stink'n think'n!

Regardless of the reasons for not setting goals the fact remains that the rich treasures a life of success and achievement will not happen unless goals are set and met. It's that simple!

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

“The value of the goal lies in the goal itself; and therefore the goal cannot be attained unless it is pursued for its own sake.”

Arnold J. Toynbee

We have made the case for the importance of goal setting and why most folks don't set goals. Now its time to walk your talk and set some meaningful goals that are in alignment with our strategies.

Before you being, here are few thoughts on goal setting that might prove helpful.

When you set goals, make sure they are **SMART goals**:

Specific

Measurable

Aligned with Strategy

Realistic

Time-sensitive

Eight Goals for Your Goals

You want to make sure your goal is *aligned* with your strategy. You clarified your vision for change, you developed a plan to bring your vision to reality, now it's time to establish the goals that will guide your actions.

Your goals must be *realistic*. If a goal is not really attainable your subconscious will not accept it as doable and this will quickly lead to giving up.

The goal must be *time-sensitive*. You must have a starting point and a finish line. And, as with the previous point, be realistic. Don't shoot yourself in the foot before the race begins. Make sure your time frames are realistic. Take a measured pace. Small successes lead to great results.

See your goal as a reality. Remember the *value of vision*. As Stephen Covey would say "*begin with the end in mind.*" See what you want to accomplish as if it were finished. And, begin to act like it! State your goals in the first-person and state them in positive terms.

Identify the obstacles. You know there are going to be obstacles, so why not deal with them up front. Obstacles can be people, locations, systems or structures, funding and so on. It doesn't matter what they are, what does matter is that you acknowledge they are out there and you're ready to deal with them.

See the benefits. You have developed strategies and set goals for one reason *to improve performance and productivity*. Write the benefits down. Make the benefit part of the goal itself.

Commit to a plan of action. Remember what we said earlier, achievement is about DOING not DREAMING. Make a personal commitment to work on your goals daily.

Be flexible. Hey, things change. Expect the unexpected. We know that regardless of how meticulously we plan our day – stuff happens! Expect the unexpected and keep moving forward!

Enjoy the journey! Charting a Course for Improving Performance is a journey, not a race. We didn't get the way we are overnight and we aren't going to change things for the better overnight either. Accept life's ups and downs and learn from adversity.

There you have it. The readers digest version for goal setting. We probably could have tried to make each point a stand-alone chapter but why bother. You already know the value of goal setting and you already know most of what I just condensed into two pages.

Here's the challenge, it's not what we *know* that matters – it's what we *do* with what we know that matters. You know that setting and achieving goals are proven realities for improving performance and productivity. But, it's not what you know that matters; it's what you do with what you know that counts.

Time to set some goals!

Goal Setting Worksheet

Goal: _____

Start date: _____ Completion date: _____

Benefits:

Obstacles/Risks:

Resources Needed:

Support Team:

1st step to achieving this goal:

Follow Up: _____ Weekly _ Monthly

Accountability Partner: _____

Chapter IV

Set the Sails – *Execute Your Plan*

“The only measure of what you believe is what you do. If you want to know what people believe, don’t read what they write, don’t ask what they believe, just observe what they do.”

Ashley Montagu

Set the Sails – Execute Your Plan

This step in the process of charting your course for improving performance is, without question, the most important step of all. A bold statement I know but *achievement is about doing, not about dreaming.*

You have developed your strategies; you have set your goals. The only thing that remains for you to do is a *commit to action.*

Here are a few thoughts on action that may prove helpful:

Actions stimulate learning and growth. As you move forward on your journey of achievement you will soon find that taking specific actions to achieve your goals will stimulate learning and growth. We learn by doing.

Action leads to solutions. You’re about to make a very interesting discovery. The more you do, the more you learn to do and the better you get at doing it. Taking action leads to finding out what works and what doesn’t. Ask Thomas Edison, it took over ten thousand experiments to create the incandescent light.

Action builds confidence. Becoming a person of action will build the confidence you need to keep going, or to try something new. Success breeds success. One little victory and you start to believe in yourself and in the process.

Action takes courage. It takes courage to step out of those little comfort zones we've created. Remember, almost everything you do – you do because of habit. Changing a well-established habit is never easy. We find ourselves much more interested decorating the little ruts we've created for ourselves than climbing out of them.

Mark Twain said: "*Courage is the resistance to fear...not the absence of fear.*" Taking action in the face of difficulty or when the possibility of failure exists speaks to character. People of achievement are people of character.

Remember, for actions to be effective they need to be congruent with purpose. What we say we believe will be manifest in what we do. Every action will require a conscious decision. Our decisions will need to be made in light of our purpose and our vision.

Belief drives behavior. That concept is foundational to Charting Your Course.

A word of caution though, don't confuse *activity* and *productivity*. Do those things that move you forward. Carve out time each day for the things that lead to accomplishing your goals.

Taking Action – Making Strategic Decisions

“...the only measure of what you believe is what you do.”

The only measure of what we believe is what we do – on a daily basis. We can talk all day long about what we believe, we can develop strategies and set goals but when all the feathers hit the floor, the only thing that matter is what we *do*.

Achievement is about *doing*. While imagination is important to be sure, taking *strategic action* is what will determine your level of success and achievement.

Execution is all that matters. Putting in the time, making the calls, doing the research, getting up early, staying up late is what will separate you from those who just talk about improving their performance and productivity.

Strategic decisions are not based on circumstance, they are congruent with your purpose, they are powered by personal values, they capitalize on strengths, they take advantage of opportunities and utilize the power of Pareto (80/20) rule to maximize effectiveness.

As you can see, there are several considerations to make as you take those actions necessary for improved performance. Let your values guide your decisions, utilize your strengths, seize opportunities and set time aside daily to work on the things that matter most.

The Power of Pareto

The Pareto principle, also known as the 80/20 rule, is a powerful partner as you make strategic daily decisions.

19th century economist, Vilfredo Pareto, developed what would come to be known as the Pareto principle. Mr. Pareto created a mathematical formula based on an unequal distribution of wealth in his native country of Italy. Pareto realized that twenty percent of the people owned eighty percent of the country's wealth. Pareto began to work with that ratio and realized it had universal implications.

Years later, quality management pioneer Dr. Joseph Juran, working in the US and Japan in the 1930's and 1940's developed the concept of "the vital few and the trivial many." This concept stated that twenty percent of something almost is always responsible for eighty percent of the results.

For example:

20% of products result in 80% of a company's profitability
20% of defects result in 80% of production problems
80% of sales will come from 20% of the sales staff
20% of a congregation provide 80% of church giving

How does the Pareto Principle relate to improving your performance and productivity? Very simply, twenty percent of your daily activities will result in eighty percent of your productivity.

Dedicate twenty percent of your day to those activities that will accomplish your goals and fulfill your strategies.

Most of us work a minimum of eight hours each day. Eight hours translates into 480 minutes. If you want to see almost immediate improvement in your performance and productivity, dedicate a minimum of *ninety minutes* a day to working on your performance improvement strategies.

An hour and a half a day, focused on your highest priorities for getting better, will produce immediate positive results and more importantly, prove to you this process works.

Getting better, personally, professionally, physically, spiritually – is not difficult to do. Improvement in any area of life is just a matter of developing the proper perspective (belief system) and defining performance (behavior)

Do the Most Important Things First

We made the case earlier that most of what we do, we do because of habit. So, why not become intentional in developing a habit of doing the most important things on your to do list first.

Important does not necessarily mean urgent. One of the habits we develop that us keep us from being more productive is allowing the ringing phone or the drop in visit from a coworker to take us away from staying focused on the project at hand and finishing what we've started.

Utilizing the Pareto Principle is a great first step to doing those things that really matter before allowing ourselves to get caught up in less meaningful activity.

Only you know those things that matter most in your personal life. Your boss can certainly set your priorities at the office. If you are in business for yourself there are three priorities that must garner significant time each day, those priorities are developing products and services, selling those products or services and then getting paid for what you sell.

Establishing priorities, doing those things that matter most before you doing the things that are easy or pleasurable, create a sense of well being and accomplishment.

Accomplishment breeds accomplishment. The more you do those important things first, the faster you develop the habit of setting and accomplishing those things that will move you or your company forward.

Emergency Room Mentality

As a police officer working the street I had the opportunity to spend a fair amount of time in hospital emergency rooms. It didn't take long to observe this interesting phenomenon. There were patients with obvious injury or wounds that didn't seem to be getting much attention at all and there were patients who showed no signs injury getting the full attention of the emergency room staff.

I soon learned that the determining factor in receiving the full attention of the doctors and nurses was the status of the patient's *vital signs*. While a head wound can bleed profusely, it usually poses no serious threat. A small amount of pressure applied to the wound will prevent further blood loss and buy time for more thorough treatment. Failing blood pressure, on the other hand, may show no outward signs urgency but requires immediate attention.

Improving performance and productivity will require developing an understanding of the “vitals” of your position or your company. Develop an emergency room mentality toward your own performance and productivity. Focus on performance vitals – focus on your goals!

Chapter V

Adjust Your Course – *Evaluate Your Progress*

“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”

Anonymous

Adjust Your Course – *Evaluate your progress*

This step in the process of Charting Your Course for Improving Performance is also critically important.

You’ll not make sustained progress without adjusting your course or maintaining alignment between your purpose and your production. Alignment involves making sure that what we say we believe, in terms of purpose and vision is manifest in what we do – the products we produce or the services we provide.

Even hear the old adage “what you do speaks so loudly I can’t hear what you say?” That’s exactly what I mean when I talk about alignment. One of the most important aspects of charting your course is to make sure that your purpose is being played out in what you do.

What does alignment look like? Alignment looks like a *written* purpose statement. A clear vision for what you want to accomplish. Alignment looks like a *written* strategy for accomplishing those things you need to START, STOP, DO MORE OF or DO LESS OF.

Alignment looks like *written* goals and objectives. Alignment looks like a *daily schedule* where a specific amount of time is carved out to work on priority projects.

Alignment is about setting up individual or organizational *measurement devices* that will help you keep your fingers on the pulse of your improvement strategy. Those devices typically take the form of reports or meetings but the underlying idea is that you need to know when to make course adjustments.

Alignment is also about establishing *accountability mechanisms* that will hold you and/or members of your work team accountable for desired progress.

It's my opinion that one of the primary causes for failing (or giving up) in any endeavor is lack of accountability. People and organizations fail to accomplish desired results because they fail to build *accountability mechanisms* into their plans for improvement. It's all too easy to get caught up in the "activity" that will keep us from meaningful "accomplishment." A good accountability partner or a good accountability system helps prevent this from happening.

Lastly, alignment means taking *personal responsibility* for your success and achievement. No one else is and no one else should be responsible for your personal or professional success.

Life does get better when you get better and your business gets better when you get better. *Take personal responsibility for achievement.* Doing those things that need to be done will change your life in the most dramatic way. What you say you believe will manifest itself in what you do.

Review the Game Tape

One Monday night I was listening to John Madden, the Hall of Fame Oakland Raiders football coach, talk about what made Peyton Manning of the Indiana Colts such an effective quarterback. Aside from being a phenomenal talent and gifted athlete, Madden mentioned that Peyton spent hours each week in the film room. He would review his personal performance as well as the performance of his teammates and he would spend significant time watching film of the team he would face the following week.

I immediately thought of how the film room related to the issue of alignment in my model for moving from activity to achievement. In the film room, Peyton Manning and his coaches seized the opportunity to review what had just taken place the week before in order to build on strengths and work around weaknesses. They also used film of the opposition to develop a game strategy for the coming on-field battle.

In a sense, we have the same opportunity. While we don't have the luxury of game tape, we do have memories of experiences, good and bad, that we can reflect on that enable us build on strengths and eliminate weaknesses.

Setting time aside at the end of the day, or the end of the week to reflect on what worked or what didn't work, is a prescription for improved performance and productivity. Paying attention to life by *reviewing* and *learning* will do the same thing for us that reviewing film does for an outstanding professional athlete. As a colleague of mine in the performance improvement business, Mr. Jim Rohn says: "Let life teach you."

Alignment is about learning from life and making the necessary adjustments to keep doing those things that work to our advantage and eliminate those things that don't.

Review the tape. Let life teach you.

Conclusion

Charting Your Course for Improving Performance and Productivity is one of many methods you could use to improve the quality of your life and the caliber of your performance.

What makes this process so unique is that it's simple. I make no apologies for it's simplicity because the process is easy to understand, easy to apply and easy to evaluate. As I said earlier, a little simplicity is much needed in today's chaotic and complex world.

The concepts presented in this e-book work because they are predicated on an ancient principle; Belief manifests itself in behavior. What we truly believe will be demonstrated in what we do.

I teach these in many other life-changing principles in my speaking engagements, workshops and seminars. If you would like more information on how I might be able to help you personally or help your organization move from activity to achievement, please call or contact me through my web site www.achievement-solutions.com.

Thank you for purchasing Charting Your Course for Improving Performance. I know if you apply the process and principles you learned in this e-book you will see almost immediate improvement in your personal performance. It all depends on your level personal accountability.

I wish you well!

If you would like to receive a copy of my bi-weekly eCARD titled "Getting Better!" just go to my web site and register. It's filled with helpful, practical information for improving performance and productivity. www.achievement-solutions.com