



Self Management for Leaders

By Dr. Jim Beaubien

Leaders have to be self-managers. Without self-management, you can't manage others. The following suggestions will help you improve in this vital area.

Set your priorities: Operate on the assumption that leadership resources are extremely limited. All of us have far more things we can do than we have time to do. Effectiveness improves when we consistently concentrate on high value items. Unless you set your priorities, your risk developing a reactive approach to life and risk letting your circumstances set your priorities for you. Establishing priorities and setting limits is crucial to success.

Strive for balance

Consciously set goals that reflect a well thought out balance among all of your values and interests. If you don't set your goals with balance in mind, daily circumstances are likely to 'do your planning for you and throw you off course. Over time unbalanced lives tend to become lives in crisis. Effective self-management means finding time to do all of the right things in the right proportion. This is fundamental to achieving satisfaction, good relationships and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Do yearly plans

Calendars are where goals and time meet. Buy a fold out yearly calendar at office supply store and four or five high lighter pens. Divide your activities into major categories and assign a different color to each e.g., green for work time, yellow for personal growth, green for work days, pink for holidays and blue for planning. Block out your year and color in the days assigned to each activity. Work from photo copies initially because you are likely to go through several iterations before you are satisfied This activity attaches a critical resource, time, to you goals and gives you a powerful visual of how you intend to spend the next year. My wife and I high light our holidays and time together first. We then fit other key areas such as work and personal development around our personal time. We've learned the hard way that if we don't plan for time together, we never get it. Our calendars simple fill in and squeeze out our personal lives.

Quarterly reviews

Break your yearly plan into quarters. Take a day or two at the end of each quarter to review progress over the last 90 days and set direction for the next 90 days. Make your quarterly goals concrete and develop detail action plans outlining what is to be done, who is to do it and when it is to be done by. Achieve a balance between routine work and special projects.

Tracking Systems

Establish a system for closely tracking all of your action items on a daily/weekly basis. Make this comprehensive. Create a central repository for tracking everything you are responsible for. You will be amazed with how much you have to manage. My experience suggests that the average executive has 100 to 150 items under their stewardship at any given time. A tracking system allows you to keep a proactive focus while responding to the unexpected things that come up. Without a systematic approach to keep you on top of things, you risk your life being managed by circumstances.

Work Effectively

Find a work style that works for you. For some, the best style is 'slow and steady'. People at the other end of the scale work best under pressure. For this group, creative dead lining is often the best style. In this style, the key is to leave things long enough to build up pressure but not so long that quality suffers or stress results. If you have the right type of personality, creative dead lining can really improve your productivity and it can be a powerful self-management tool. You have to figure out what works for you.

Self-management is a key to leadership effectiveness. Try simple suggestions can help. Try them.