

Making Every Day A Million-Dollar Day

Hervé Da Costa

The future depends on what we do in the present.

– Mahatma Gandhi

- The following is an excerpt from the book "What Color Is Your Sky?"

One of the keys to controlling your life is to regain control of small chunks of it, one at a time, one after another. Trying to regain control of it all in one fell swoop is a seemingly impossible task. However, having a proactive day, one after another, is within reach. Consider the importance of managing your time, focusing your attention, and executing the actions you commit to do in order to have a successful day. We all have become frantically busy, incredibly multitask-oriented, and are perpetually interrupted by all type of things, such as emails, text messages, news reports, radio advertisements, and disorganized colleagues. Our attention is solicited in a growing number of ways. *Would you like to find out how to consistently end the day with a "Wow"?*

Most people approach and proceed through their day without any clear thought as to how to organize it to make it successful. They live a reactive day: things happen and they accommodate. For instance, the first thing many people do when they get to work is to read their email as if it dictates what is most important that day. Others walk about greeting colleagues and get ensnared in issues that pop up as they talk, showered with tales of the problems of their direct reports. Generously, these managers offer help so that other people's monkeys (annoying tasks) now become theirs. From that point on, they respond to other people urgencies and unspecific requests, and become distracted without ever noticing it. If that sounds familiar, planning and organizing your time becomes incredibly difficult. The day loses any sense of purpose and is run like a small, ailing boat, helpless to fight the current and unable to reach its true destination.

The solution is to learn to create time, to do fewer things and accomplish more. This chapter is about making every day a million-dollar day. This is about living deliberately and choosing how you live from now on, above how others make you live. The payoff for my clients is often incredible, sometimes life changing. It will require determination, courage, and focus.

Welcome to the DMP

The Deliberate Morning Practice (DMP)

Objectives:

To identify the key tasks to create a very successful day. To design your action plan from the mindset of looking at an already done deal. To live each day proactively.

End Results:

You become excited about your ability to walk the talk. You experience a sense of joy, profound satisfaction, and invigorating possibility.

Instructions:

Visualize the end of your very successful day and reverse-engineer it by asking yourself: *If I am at the end of today, what have I done to nail it?* As you go through your day, focus on nailing each task—doing the right thing and doing it right—and focus on only one task at a time. This strengthens your will and your ability to focus. Notice when you are being derailed from your initial plan and learn from it.

Specifically, together with your internal Voice of Success and your Voice of Doubt, take about twenty minutes to perform the following routine:

- Visualize yourself at the end of the day. Take out your *Blue Sky* notebook and write down, in order of importance, three key actions that you have taken and accomplished today. Please pick important but simple and realistic events.
- Ask your Voice of Doubt what obstacles have come up.
- Ask your Voice of Success the same thing, and write down how you structured things so that nothing got in the way of making it happen. Write down how you organized yourself to make sure that nothing—and no one—stopped you from doing it.
- Plan your day with specific short and simple actions. Jot down anything you need to keep in mind to help you stay on track. Anticipate obstacles, interruptions, distractions, and other challenges you will meet. Strategize on how you will manage to stay focused and get it done—*whatever it takes*.

- At the end of the day, take a short moment to debrief on how it went. Learn from both the good and bad. What behaviors of yours were helpful? Ask yourself how can you perform even better tomorrow.

Recommendations

Concerning the obstacles you encountered, your Voice of Doubt might say:

You lacked focus, you were distracted, disorganized, lazy, you didn't know how to say no, you let others interrupt, you spent too much time on email, you woke up too late, you missed the commuter train, you were drunk, unrealistic, totally undisciplined. (This Voice can be quite creative.)

Concerning the obstacles you encountered and overcame, your Voice of Success might say:

You decided consciously and firmly to nail it. You set out things clearly at the beginning of each meeting so that all participants knew you planned to leave at the agreed upon time. You chose to read email from your boss first, your peers second, and you did not look at your direct reports' emails until midday. You cancelled several tasks that seemed important to others but were not to you. You asked someone else to do some things for you, you avoided encountering that needy and talkative colleague of yours who seems to always pop up when you need to focus the most... (etc.)

You can choose to do the DMP before going to work, perhaps even before anybody else in the house wakes up, or you can devote your first twenty minutes at work to it, as soon as you sit down at your desk. Please, make no excuses here. Find a way to get this done. I often suggest to my clients that, when at home, they light a nice candle and let the warm glow inspire them as they prepare to do this.

Some of my clients jog, take a shower, cook their breakfast, and then perform this practice in a meditative mindset.

The DMP is simple: you visualize a great day where you accomplish things that are consistent with your Green Curve and a few others designed to take care of you.

Now comes the crucial test. If you cannot commit to respect the engagement you are taking with yourself here, or if your mind creates too many *Yes, buts...*, then the Green Curve process is not yet for you. It may become an exciting possibility in the future, but for now your level of determination and will needs to increase. It may take you weeks, even months, before you grasp how magical the process becomes when you experience

success on a daily basis. After a while, it actually becomes a way of life and you will find that not practicing your DMP becomes stressful! Not doing it is like choosing a harder, more uphill road. For now, if you are not yet ready for the Green Curve, your challenge is to read the book from the beginning again—observe your resistance, your excuses, your distractions, and the way you rationalize not trying, to prepare yourself to take the exciting next step.

On the other hand, if you are committed to do whatever it takes to accomplish this today, *Welcome to the Club!*

Advanced DMP

At this stage, you may be focusing primarily on addressing the reactive part of the day, particularly if you have a lot of catching up to do. You may need to add a few more items to your list every day until the backlog of things becomes manageable. Keep in mind that it is reasonable to expect that 20–30% of your time will be wasted, thanks to some of your colleagues. This is real life. Limit it to 20%, if you can.

Now, another 30% of your time should be allocated to reactive tasks: things that you cannot avoid, such as routine tasks or a boss's requests. Aim at having 40–50% of your remaining time allocated to proactive work, the important stuff.

Your DMP list of actions might include any of the following:

- Quiet yourself by taking a short nap after lunch or taking a walk
- Advance your plan by making a pertinent phone call to a client/colleague/friend/loved one/knowledgeable person
- Take care of your body and mind by making an appointment with your dentist/doctor/therapist/nutritionist/chiropractor to take care of a particular problem or pain
- Find information about a new job in your company
- Delegate or eliminate a task that belongs to the Red (reactive) Curve

I absolutely love this process. It has become so automatic that I don't even realize I'm doing it at the start of every single day.

Hervé Da Costa is the founder of Softlink International and the author of *"What Color Is Your Sky?"* He has been a senior executive at Xerox PARC, HP Labs, the University of California at Berkeley, and two successful startups in Silicon Valley.

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