



What Is More Deserving of Your Attention – Money or Time?

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You might think of money as your most precious resource, but I suggest you think of something else – your time. If you are like most, you are focused on making money, but recognize that money is a resource of secondary importance. Time is your most important resource. How you spend your time determines how much money you have and much more. How you spend your time impacts everything in your life including your finances, career, family, and health. Time is also a more limited resource.

Take a few minutes to reflect on how you've spent your time over the last 12 months and how you might better spend your time the next 12 months. Ask yourself if you really think working harder or more hours is the best solution for you or your team. For some, working harder may be the solution.

Some clearly need to put more effort into their work, but for most to reach a higher level of performance, they need to get out of the comfort of doing the same thing they've been doing. They need to elevate their skills and knowledge. They need to change their approach. They need to change their mindset, get out of their own way, and employ new practices if they truly expect to be more productive and effective.

If you remain unconvinced, consider this simple test. How many people in your circle of influence would pick you to be on their “dream team” of top performers based on your current performance? Who would you pick to be on your dream team? Would you or others be first-round draft picks based on what you've been doing? If so, congratulations. Keep doing it. If not, let this be your wake-up call to focus on your and your team's professional development in coming 12 months.

As an executive coach who is privileged to work with many great leaders and successful people, I find few people who simply need to do more of what they've been doing in order to improve their performance. For most people, they need to step out of their current habits, adopt a new way of thinking, increase their knowledge in new areas, and develop their skills. They need to be more strategic and invest more time in themselves. To objectively assess how you spend your time, take this simple time allocation inventory: http://www.alpinelink.com/Docs/Alpine_Link_Time_Allocation_worksheet.pdf. The results will reveal how tactically versus strategically focused you are and where to adjust your time allocation.

If you and/or your team are ready to change how you spend your time, improve your approach, build new skills, and take your performance up a level, here are three steps to follow:

1. Identify the professional development areas you can work on to be the top performer you can be. Write them down. Ask people in your circle of influence to give you their honest feedback. Your development list might include areas like getting organized, better delegating tasks to others, listening more intently, being more decisive, working with increased urgency, improving interpersonal communications, asserting yourself constructively, delivering blockbuster presentations, gaining buy-in for your ideas, receiving unpretentious exposure, or facilitating more productive meetings. (If you are in a management position, take Alpine Link's free SCOPE of Leadership competency assessment at http://www.alpinelink.com/SCOPE_of_Leadership_Assessment.aspx to identify specific leadership competencies to work on.)
2. Prioritize your development goals and pick one to work on first. Establish a developmental roadmap of activities you expect to participate in that will enable development in your desired area. Research your area and identify books to read, seminars to attend, courses to take, people to talk with, mentors/coaches to engage, and/or special assignments to participate in. Focus on both types of developmental activities – what you need to start doing as well as stop doing. For a simple roadmap template you can complete yourself or have people on your team complete, visit http://www.alpinelink.com/docs/My_Delta_Roadmap.pptx.



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3. Solicit help from your boss, colleagues, friends, family, or outside professionals to assist you in your development. No one is successful on their own. Share your development roadmap with them. Involve them in validating and refining it. Ask them for help in holding you accountable. Meet with them bi-weekly or monthly to review your progress, make adjustments, and celebrate your accomplishments. Or create a peer group of like-minded people to meet with regularly to hold each other accountable. Or create your own team book club.

When you feel you've made the progress you need to make in your developmental area, pick another area to work on. Repeat the process again and again. Make your ongoing development a permanent part of what you do. The world, your career, and your life are not static. You never run out of skills to develop, knowledge to gain, and attitude adjustments to make. Your development is a journey, not a destination and your future success depends on making it an embedded part of who you are.

If you are not satisfied with the results you've been getting or feel you've been stuck on the *treadmill of busyness as usual*, make the decision to get off. As Albert Einstein said, merely doing what you've been doing is equivalent to insanity. Quit giving all your attention to tactical execution, especially if the urgent, fun, or convenient is displacing the important. Look in the mirror, get out of your comfort zone, invest in yourself, and make the most of your time. Money and the other accomplishments you seek in life will soon follow.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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