



RICK HOUCEK
SOAR WITH EAGLES

Create The Life



7 Keys To Thriving Every Day!

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Intro

Welcome to the video book, audio book, and E-book,
“Create The Life You Crave: 7 Keys To Thriving Every
Day”.

Have you ever wondered why some people seem to have
all the success you only dream about?

You wonder if there's something in their water that's not
in yours? Or if they were born with advantages or silver
spoons you weren't.

Nonsense. The vast majority of highly successful people
- did it on their own - grinding it out every day, picking
themselves up from defeat, taking initiatives most won't,
living by a code others don't.

Would you like to know their secrets? Sure you would.
Who wouldn't?

Hi, I'm Rick Houcek, president of Soar With Eagles. I
help ambitious leaders and teams to be successful self-
motivated achievers. And today, I'd like to share with
you in this video and audio book, 7 keys to thriving
every day, so you can create and live the life you crave,
the life you hunger for.

I'll break it down into 7 chapters, each discussing one
success point... with examples and illustrations... AND
lessons and actions you can put into practice today. Right
now.

Are you ready? Let's get moving.

CHAPTER 1

*Are You Willing To Put In Every
Ounce Of Effort To Achieve
Mastery?*

There's a story about a
world-famous violinist who had
just completed a concert to the
thunderous applause of an adoring
audience.

Backstage, a very nice lady -- an admirer from the audience -- approached the violinist and said, "Your concert tonight was so inspiring to me. I'd give anything to play like that."

He thought for a brief moment, smiled at the woman and said, "No you wouldn't."

He wasn't being arrogant or rude. Just truthful.

You might feel he could have been more cordial to a worshipping fan. Perhaps you're right.

But for a moment, let's get inside his head. To understand his response. And his frustration.

The fact is, this accomplished violinist who, on this night, in this hall, played to the delight of more than a thousand, spent much of his life getting to that point... to that moment.

to that very instant when the notes leapt from his strings with a staggering raw power. With warm, rich inflections.

And a melodious sound that brought all to their feet in several standing ovations.

No one would foolishly argue that the violin played itself.

Nor that he picked up the violin for the first time last week.

No. He was a master violinist. A musician of elite status.

A title and position earned with years, perhaps decades, of solitary practice when other kids were playing in the street, watching TV, or laughing at parties.

99 would not make all the sacrifices he made to play like he played.

No. They want his success. Without the work.

The lady was merely being complimentary to her idol. But truthfully, had she known everything he went through to master his instrument, would she REALLY have been willing to do it?

There's a 99 in 100 chance the answer is no. And he knew it.

Psychologists and social scientists have long claimed it takes 10,000 hours to achieve mastery in any endeavor.

In his book, "Outliers: The Story of Success", author and sociologist Malcolm Gladwell talks at length about the 10,000-hour rule, and how it applies virtually anywhere.

To become a chess grand master. A Wimbledon tennis champion. Or a musician dazzling the throngs at Carnegie Hall.

In his exceptional book "Mastery", author George Leonard discusses his findings as an instructor of aikido, generally considered the most difficult of the martial arts to master.

Leonard debunks the thinking that success evolves over time in an ever-increasing straight line. It comes instead, in spurts.

He diagrams it like this. In your early days of new learning, when your knowledge and skill is zero, and you apply a small amount of teaching, your progress is dramatic.

It leaps. It has to. Because you're going from nothing to something. And it creates high levels of excitement.

But you'll reach a point very soon where a continued increase in knowledge and skill does not reap the same impressive jolt in growth.

It flattens into a plateau. Nothing seems to happen. Frustration ensues.

But if you stick with it long enough, continuing to work hard to gain new knowledge and added skill -- though it appears to be having no positive effect -- you'll eventually reach a point when everything seems to "click", and another gratifying spurt occurs.

And more excitement. Followed again by another long plateau.

This cycle continues ad infinitum ... spurt followed by long plateau ... spurt followed by long plateau.

Leonard made two profound observations about his aikido classes:

(1) When his students quit, they always quit on the plateau, succumbing to the frustration.

(2) But his students who gutted it out through the extended maddening plateaus, believing the next

acceleration of growth was right around the corner, became champions.

His message: Learn to love the plateau. It's your friend, not your enemy. It's on the plateau that all of your growth really happens.

You can't become a champion without it. It's an inevitable element of success.

Admittedly, 10,000 hours can be daunting. It breaks down to 40 hours a week for five years. Or 20 hours a week for 10 years.

But those who stick it out enjoy rewards most only dream about.

LESSONS & ACTIONS FOR YOU:

So it boils down to this...

Whatever it is you want, how badly do you want it? What are you willing to do -- and to sacrifice -- to get it?

Those are the million dollar questions.

Author, speaker, and personal development coach Earl Nightingale once said, "Success is unusual. So it takes unusual behaviors to achieve it."

Would-be authors don't really want to write. They want to have written.

They want the instant success, fame, glory, perks,

and interview with Oprah that comes from the completed task. Without the effort.

Employees want promotions, exalted titles, and more money -- while doing little to earn it.

Our culture has become one that grabs for immediate gratification. And shuns activities that take extended time to learn, master, and profit from.

But there are exceptions. They are the 1. Some examples

After every match, world champion tennis player Rafael Nadal practices for 45 minutes hitting 135 mph serves. In the rain, if he must. You read it right ... after the match.

No one sees him do it. ESPN's Scott Van Pelt called it: the training of the elite.

Nadal's result: Mastery.

I read recently that Koreans are the ethnic group enjoying the most success in the United States, per capita. More so than natural born Americans.

Why? Because they come here with one purpose: to open a business and make a new life for themselves. Focused and clear.

And you don't see them on the nightly news torching the flag, complaining about unfair practices and discrimination, and how no one is looking out for them.

Nope. They just put their head down and quietly go about their business, working long hours, creating the life they dreamed of that was impossible in Korea.

The result: Mastery.

Former NFL star and future Hall of Famer Jerry Rice was known for his grueling, legendary off-season workouts -- not forced upon him by the team. They were self-created, self-imposed.

When most players showed up at pre-season training camp to get in shape, Rice was already in tip-top, mid-season condition.

In a Men's Fitness magazine interview, he said, "A lot of guys came to train with me over the course of my career, and a lot of guys fell by the wayside." They couldn't hack it.

And because these workouts happened in the off-season -- not on game day -- no one saw them.

Jerry Rice's result: Mastery.

Personally, I've always been fine with people who make non-success choices. It's their life, their right, their privilege. I respect that.

But where I draw the line -- what I won't stand for -- what irritates me beyond comprehension -- what boils my blood until steam jettisons out of my ears -

-- is when they whine and moan and complain: "It's

not fair so-and-so has more than me."

Cry me a river.

So, back to you...

If you want to be a brilliant leader, an accomplished master, an elite craftsman, a world-class performer in anything, here's the 3-part formula:

(1) Put in 10,000 hours when no one's looking. (As a favorite baseball coach once told me, "Success is determined by what you do between games.")

(2) Be willing to sacrifice other things you'd like to do or have. (You'll be tempted by friends and family, but you must resist if you truly want mastery.)

(3) Learn to love the plateau. (That grueling time when no progress seems to occur and others are throwing in the towel, is when the greatest gains are made.)

And if you won't do those three, that's fine. Your choice. No ill judgment from me. As long as you don't bellyache to me about how you deserve it anyway. I'm not listening.

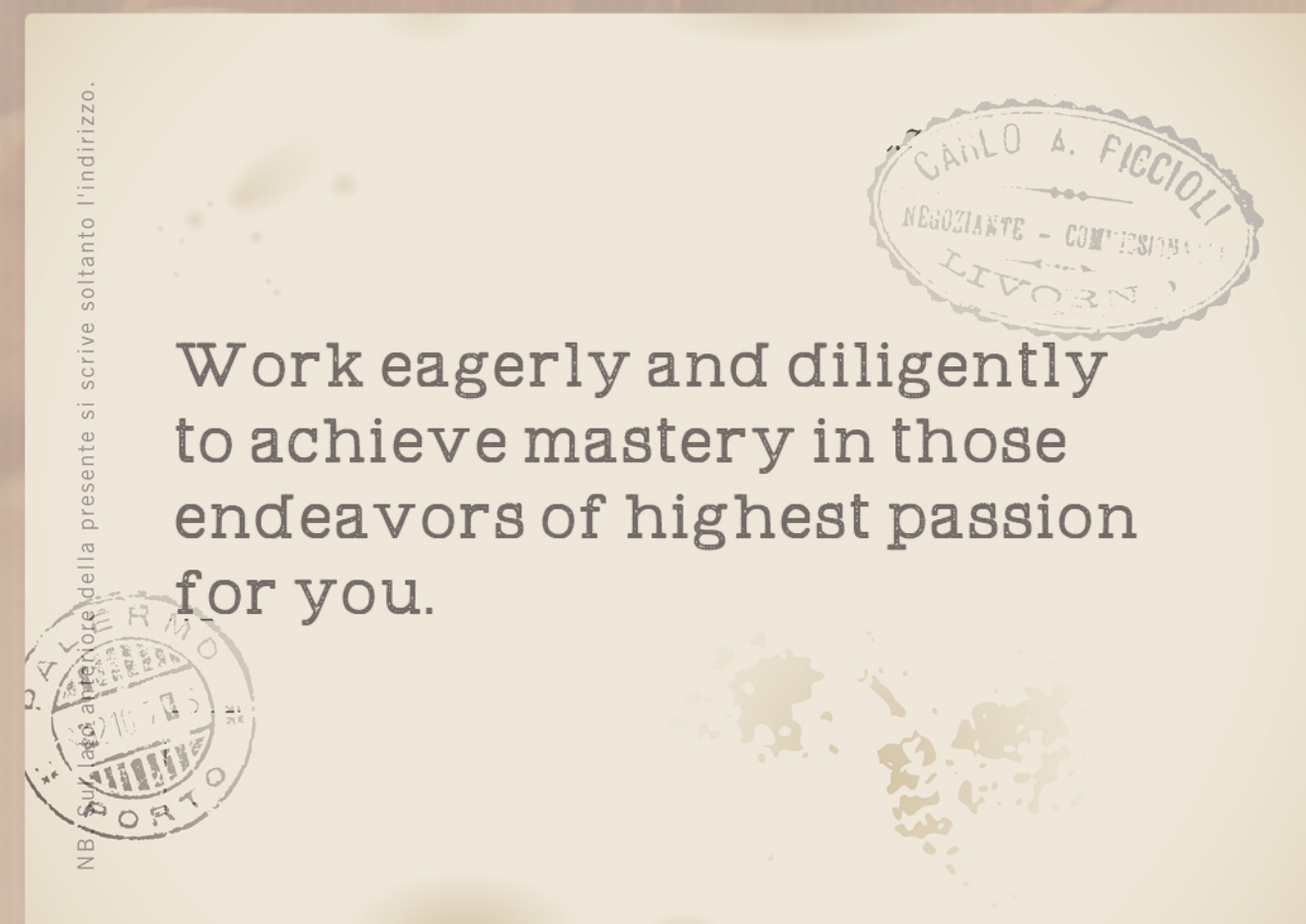
Oh, and in your leadership role, if you cave in to the cry baby who works for you, who expects the accolades, the jump in pay, the respect, the grand title, the bigger bonus, the corner office -- when you know it's undeserved, unearned, and unworthy -- then rip the stripes off your sleeve and demote yourself until the day you can look him in the eye and proclaim this

with confidence:

"No privileges, no merits, and no honors will come to anyone on my watch who doesn't master every step necessary to earn it. Period."

That's what a high achieving, high-integrity leader would say.

Life & Leadership Success Key #1





Are You A Whatever-It-Takes Performer?

Listen to this: Business consultant Dan Kennedy tells this impressive story:

Early in his sales career when he didn't have a pot to you-know-what in, he wanted to get an appointment with a prospective customer, but despite several attempts, couldn't. He was stalled.

So he sent the prospect a letter via FedEx on a Tuesday morning telling him he was flying to his city that Wednesday morning for an important meeting. (Not true, this was fabricated.)

The letter said his meeting was at the airport and his schedule was so tight, he didn't have time to come into the city, but he really wanted to talk with him in person, so (the letter read)...

"I've arranged for a limo to pick you up in front of your office at 1 pm, bring you to the airport hotel where I have a conference room.

We can meet for just 45 minutes, and the limo will have you back at your office by 3:30 pm.

And there will be a nice sandwich and beverages in the limo, in case this forces you to skip lunch. If this isn't okay, please call by noon to cancel."

The prospect came. And they met.

I'd call that doing whatever it takes.

Question for you: If you had wanted that appointment as badly as Kennedy, would you have gone to the lengths he did to get it? Be honest.

Then there's Thomas Edison, inventor and original patent-holder on more than 1000 useful devices.

He had more than 10,000 recorded failures (or tries) on the road to inventing the first commercially practical incandescent electric light.

But that's not all. He also tried more than 3000 filaments before settling on his practical version of the light bulb.

Holy cow... 10,000 failed attempts??? And then... 3000 more???

I think we could agree, that too is doing whatever it takes.

Again, a question for you: Would you have stuck with it to that extreme? Or given up long before?

Diet guru Jenny Craig said: "It's not what you do once in a while. It's what you do day in and day out that makes the difference."

Amen. A weight loss expert would know.

Roger Bannister, first person to run a 4-minute mile, said it this way: "The man who can drive himself further once the effort gets painful is the man who will win."

Double amen.

A few years ago, I sat in on a how-to sales training presentation. The trainer showed empirical evidence that salespeople who don't get the order often make two or three or four attempts with a prospect, then give up.

But those who do get the order, stayed with it for, on average, 12 contacts.

That's why there are so few salespeople in the upper echelon of money earners. Most give up way too soon.

But those more determined stick with it longer and enjoy a lifestyle the others only dream about.

A key point to remember about determination is illustrated in the words of photographer and journalist Jacob Riis...

"When nothing seems to help, I go and look at the stonecutter hammering away at his rock, perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing on it.

Yet at the hundred and first blow, it will split in two. And I know it was not that blow that did it, but all that had gone before."

His point? Persistence. Doing whatever it takes.

I tried to fix a leaky kitchen faucet last week. After a few minutes of tinkering, my inept fumbling turned a weak, slow drip into a jet spray across the room.

I picked up the phone and called a plumber.

For those keeping score at home... that's one attempt, one failure, then I waved the white flag.

Not real impressive, but I admit unashamedly, a Mr. Fix-It, I'm not. On home repair projects, Thomas Edison is in no danger of losing his persistence record to me.

On other things though... things I'm wildly passionate about... I'm proud to say my wife calls me a Cat 5 Hurricane.

"I just move out of your way, because I know nothing will stop you," she says, plastered against the wall as I steam by.

"Not a company policy, not a difficult or unwilling person, not a 102° fever, not a brick wall. Nothing will stop you."

Yes, I'm very proud of that.

Fact is, I never cease to be amazed and impressed at the length some people will go to accomplish their goal.

Accent on 'some'. In actuality, very very few people.

Just what is it that drives that small percentage of determined people to stick with it and grind it out through failure after frustrating failure...

... disappointment after grueling disappointment... many times through the ridicule, criticism and point-and-laugh mockery of colleagues, friends and family?

I'm not sure I know. It's some intangible, invisible quality.

This I do know: If I could bottle and sell it, I'd be a bazillionaire.

This I also know. Market-driving entrepreneurs, category leaders, successful inventors, repeatedly-winning teams,...

... triumphant armies, and others at the 'top of their game' in sports, business, entertainment, families, military, education...

...all have it.

Or they wouldn't be standing at the peak of the pyramid.

I'm certain passion plays a key role. The things we're intensely passionate about, we're also deeply stubborn about, and willing to go to most any length to get what we want.

LESSONS & ACTIONS FOR YOU:

Are you one of these people who will stop at virtually nothing, marshal every resource you can muster, use every tool at your disposal (including some you have to manufacture on the spot), to accomplish what you want done?

Said another way, can you channel your 'inner MacGyver' when you need to?

I hope so. If you can, you're a leader people will follow into battle.

Edison once said, "Many of life's failures are people who did not realize just how close they were to success when they gave up."

I remember a movie I saw when I was a young kid, maybe 8 or 9. A plane crashed in a snow-covered area. One of the survivors trekked out looking for food when a horrendous blizzard hit.

In his snow-blindness, he got

disoriented, wandered aimlessly, and couldn't see his way back to the plane. Night fell, he grew weary, the frigid temperatures overtook him, and he died in his tracks.

The camera slowly pulled back to reveal he was only a few feet from the wing tip, but couldn't see it through the blinding blizzard.

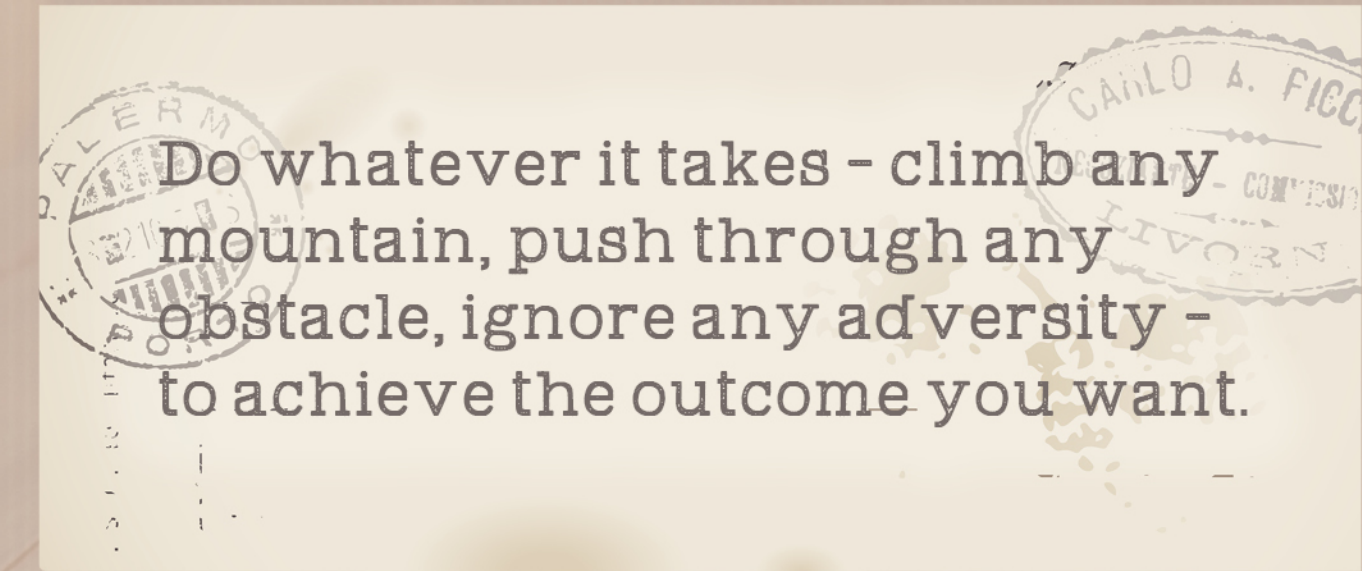
The other survivors were no more than 50 yards away, on the other side of the plane, with a roaring fire.

Just a few more steps to safety. That image is forever etched in my mind.

This trait this do-whatever-it-takes attitude is one it would behoove every leader, every high achiever, anyone who wants to thrive including you to fully develop.

Require it of yourself. And expect it of those you lead too.

Life & Leadership Success Key #2



Do whatever it takes - climb any mountain, push through any obstacle, ignore any adversity - to achieve the outcome you want.

A man in a dark suit, red shirt, and dark tie is shown from the chest up. Instead of a head, there is a large, intense fire coming out of his neck area. He is holding his right hand near the base of the fire. The background is a dark, textured wall with a collage of newspaper clippings on the left side.

ARE YOU AN ABUSER?

Are You An Abuser?

One day not long ago, I was angry. I mean vein-popping angry.

The day in question was an office day -- I don't get many -- and I had a very important list of calls, appointments, and tasks that were all time-blocked in.

I use time-blocking to pre-set all activities into projected amounts of time, then do my bloody well best to stick to each block. It helps me stay focused and not distracted, so I meet my deadlines, and can be compliant with promises I've made to others.

So, what had me seeing red that day? Well, three other people missed their scheduled appointments with me.

The first was an 8:30 call. He said he'd call me, and didn't. A call I had prepared for extensively, to fulfill a promise of help I had offered him. He was a colleague, not a client, and I was happy to help him on a project.

He accepted my offer, we set a time for him to call me -- and he didn't. Rude at best. Ungrateful at worst. Not the kind of client I seek, not colleague or friend I want.

The second, also a call, was a vendor handling a project of critical importance to me. He missed our pre-agreed 11:00 update meeting. Wasn't in when I called.

His assistant didn't know where he was and said he didn't have our call on his calendar. By now, smoke is coming out of my ears.

And the third was my cable provider - don't get me started - whose technician missed his second consecutive appointment for the second consecutive day, to install new cable wiring. They give you what I call a '4-hour window of inconvenience'. But this time, no call, no show.

Three, count 'em, three. Not one of them had the decency to advance-call to say a problem came up and could we re-schedule. Never heard a peep from any of them. Nothin'. Nada. Zilch.

This makes me sick. The first two are business owners. Good grief, do they not know the meaning of "commitment". People actually follow their lead. If they treat meetings and appointments inside their own companies with the same neglect, they won't keep their star performers long.

And the cable provider is a company that claims to be a communications LEADER. They've proven to me, time and again, that the left hand has no clue what the right hand is doing.

Commitment is an ugly 4-letter word to them. And I'm being kind. They've broken promises to me more times than Larry the Cable Guy says "git-r-done" in a 15-minute stand-up routine.

I consider "time" to be one of the greatest gifts we are all granted on this planet. And in my view, no one has the right to abuse another's.

Missing a pre-planned appointment with no advance warning -- or at least a call to say you're stuck in traffic -- with a sincere apology -- is bad for a reason much greater than tardiness. It's an abuse of trust.

In business, that's a cardinal sin and a reputation killer. As a consultant, if I did this to any client, I would be overjoyed to get a second chance, but frankly, it wouldn't surprise me to be terminated. And I would deserve it.

I'm not a saint -- yes, I've stupidly missed a handful of appointments over the years. But as soon as I realized my oversight, I was on the phone bending over backwards with an apology. Not with a fake excuse, but an honest "I screwed up and I take full responsibility."

People can tell when you're lying. Body language and voice inflection give it away. I treat appointments and meetings -- and other time commitments -- as sacred because I'm playing with someone else's precious minutes. They deserve respect.

Some people treat phone appointments more casually than face-to-face. I don't. When booking them, I often say, "I'm writing our 4:30 phone call into my calendar and will treat it as if it were a face-to-face meeting in your office. Please do the same. I'll be on time with my call."

So, back to my original 3 stories, what did I do about each abuse? Well, the first guy would have gotten a second chance, if I had heard from him within a few hours with a sincere apology. Never did. So, no second chance. (Remember, I was doing him a favor.)

The second, the vendor, had just used his second chance, and didn't get a third. He had messed up other details too. I still had to conclude the project with him - but once done, so was he.

I sure would love to have gotten a reference call from someone inquiring about his services. That would be karma.

And the third, the cable company? Well, I'm stuck. Because cable companies have exclusive geographies that eliminate competition, I can only work with one. Them.

But because they offer multiple services, and because they are repetitive abusers, I long ago terminated them from all other services they don't have exclusive rights to. I'm not one of their fans.

LESSONS & ACTIONS FOR YOU:

As frustrating as all this is, it's also very instructive. For two reasons.

First, it's time to take a long, hard look in the mirror, and ask yourself: Am I an abuser?

You're a leader ... people look to you for direction, follow your example, and see you as a role model. If you have a casual attitude toward keeping appointments and meeting times, you are a time abuser. And your trust will be questioned in ALL areas.

So how you treat time and deadlines is paramount to the message you send your followers. If you abuse it, you give everyone else permission to abuse it by default.

The worst time-abuser of all ... is that ego-driven leader who thinks he's royalty, is intentionally late, and thrives on "making an entrance" into the meeting with everyone else already in place, ears perked, pens poised to write, waiting with baited breath for his or her arrival and golden words. Please, don't be THAT leader.

By the way, you may not be the best judge of yourself as a time complier or time abuser. Better ask someone else who will tell you the truth.

One more note on this: In the strategic planning work I do with companies, I have confidential conversations with top executives and senior staff about "company goings-on".

Can't count the number of times I'm told the CEO has a habitual problem meeting time constraints. Missing deadlines, late for meetings, breaking commitments.

If this describes you, you're an abuser. Time to clean up your act. Yesterday!

And second, you have to decide how much "time abuse" you're willing to accept from other people in your life. We get what we tolerate.

If you're running a business that's constantly a day late and a dollar short, you won't keep your customers very long. Nor your star performers. If you're running a department or team or family, you'll have problems too.

Some people have a short fuse about time abuse and terminate relationships after one or two or, at most, three violations. I'm one of them. I understand humans are flawed (I'm flawed too), and I'm plenty forgiving when called for. But multiple abuses of the same kind signifies a pattern of behavior that will repeat itself ad nauseum until or unless you stop it.

How many of those are you willing to allow? When

does your forgiveness end and the consequences begin?

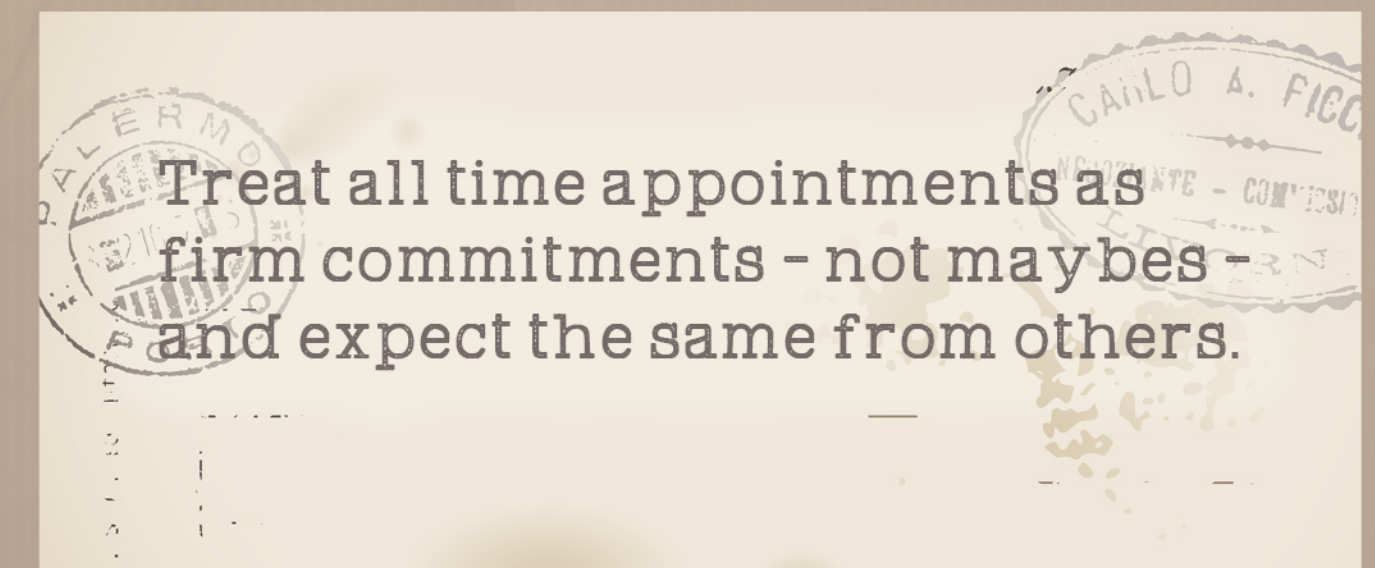
If you think I'm being too harsh about this, then chances are, you place a low value on keeping time commitments. Over the long haul, this won't just mildly hurt you, it will virtually destroy your ability to lead effectively.

Yes, some people will forgive you ... they won't care ... and you'll be lulled into a false sense of security that time abuses are no big deal. Well, they ARE a big deal. A huge deal.

Repeat offenders trumpet their own unreliability to the world with each minute they're late. Don't join their ranks. And if you're already IN their ranks, get out today.

You're a leader. It's incumbent upon you to be a stellar role model. And tolerate no less from others.

Life & Leadership Success Key #3



CHAPTER 4

Look Around You. Who's There?

Ever wonder why our justice system, when paroling an inmate, requires that he have no contact with ex-convicts, wanted fugitives, or shady characters?

Simple. Because statistics show a high likelihood of becoming re-involved with crime if hanging around other criminals. We allow ourselves to be influenced by our peers. But you knew that -- it's hardly rocket science.

It's why smart parents pay attention to who their kids run with, get to know their parents, and ask "who else will be there?" when kids are headed to parties.

It's why smart employers do background checks on job candidates, and why police ask who's in a victim's circle of influence when investigating a crime.

It's one reason private schools do in-depth parental interviews before admitting a child, and why many country clubs restrict new membership to individuals nominated by current members.

Is all of this short-sightedness, being overly cautious, or downright snobbery? Hardly. The old axiom is true: we're judged by the company we keep.

Here's my point: Who you associate with says as much about you, your ethics, your integrity, your beliefs, your tendencies, your value system and your future intentions ... as your own actual behavior does.

And because you're a leader, you're under a 24/7 microscope. Relentlessly being scrutinized, watched, listened to, modeled, and copied -- by those who you influence. The sun never sets on the leader.

If you run with an honorable crowd during business hours -- but thugs after 5:30 -- guess what

your followers will think? The judgments and rumors will fly.

But it's not just association with criminals that does the leader in. It's negative influences of any kind. A CEO client told me one of her best friends is a chronic complainer whose life is a mess, can't hold a relationship, blames others for all her misfortune, frequently seeks advice she won't use, then moans that the world is turning against her.

After years of listening to the incessant whining, she finally said, "Enough!" and terminated the friendship. Good move. Not soon enough.

Yes, it's difficult and painful to break off relationships -- especially long-standing ones -- with friends, colleagues, and employees who have played a significant role in our life.

And yet, effective leaders, relentless winners, and high achievers get to those exalted positions, in part, by rigorous selection of who they associate with. Pick losers ... and loser attitudes will rub off on you because loser language is all you'll hear.

The harsh reality is, as you progress up the ladder of success, many of your childhood friends, college buddies and closest business associates will not make the upward journey with you. They'll fall away.

The "masses" are stuck in a time warp of their own choosing, refusing to learn, grow and improve. Their stagnancy will infect you -- the high achiever -- if you continually fraternize.

And you now have a difficult choice to make: maintain the friendships and sabotage your own growth ... or move on from the relationships and leap-frog your progress. Only you can choose. But you can't have it both ways.

LESSONS & ACTIONS FOR YOU:

So, stop and look around you. Who's there? Are you surrounded by any losers, malcontents, complainers, blamers, whiners, gripers, low achievers?

Maybe it's time to take stock of your forward movement and ask if these people are helpers or hindrances, builders or destroyers, accelerators or roadblocks.

The older I get, the more selective I become at who I allow into my inner circle. Life's too short, and I wish I'd learned this lesson younger -- like my teens or twenties.

It's your life too. And you get to choose. Are you making wise choices or dumb ones? If you don't take control of the words and ideas that enter your mind, the world will select them for you and not even ask your permission.

So, pick your life friends and associates much like you'd hire an employee... with careful, thorough attention to detail... and a bias toward the positive.

As a leader, you can't afford to de-value one nanosecond of your precious time with anyone else.

Life & Leadership Success Key #4

To get ahead, surround yourself with winners, encouragers, and positive can-do influences... and let go of negative whiners, moaners, and complainers.

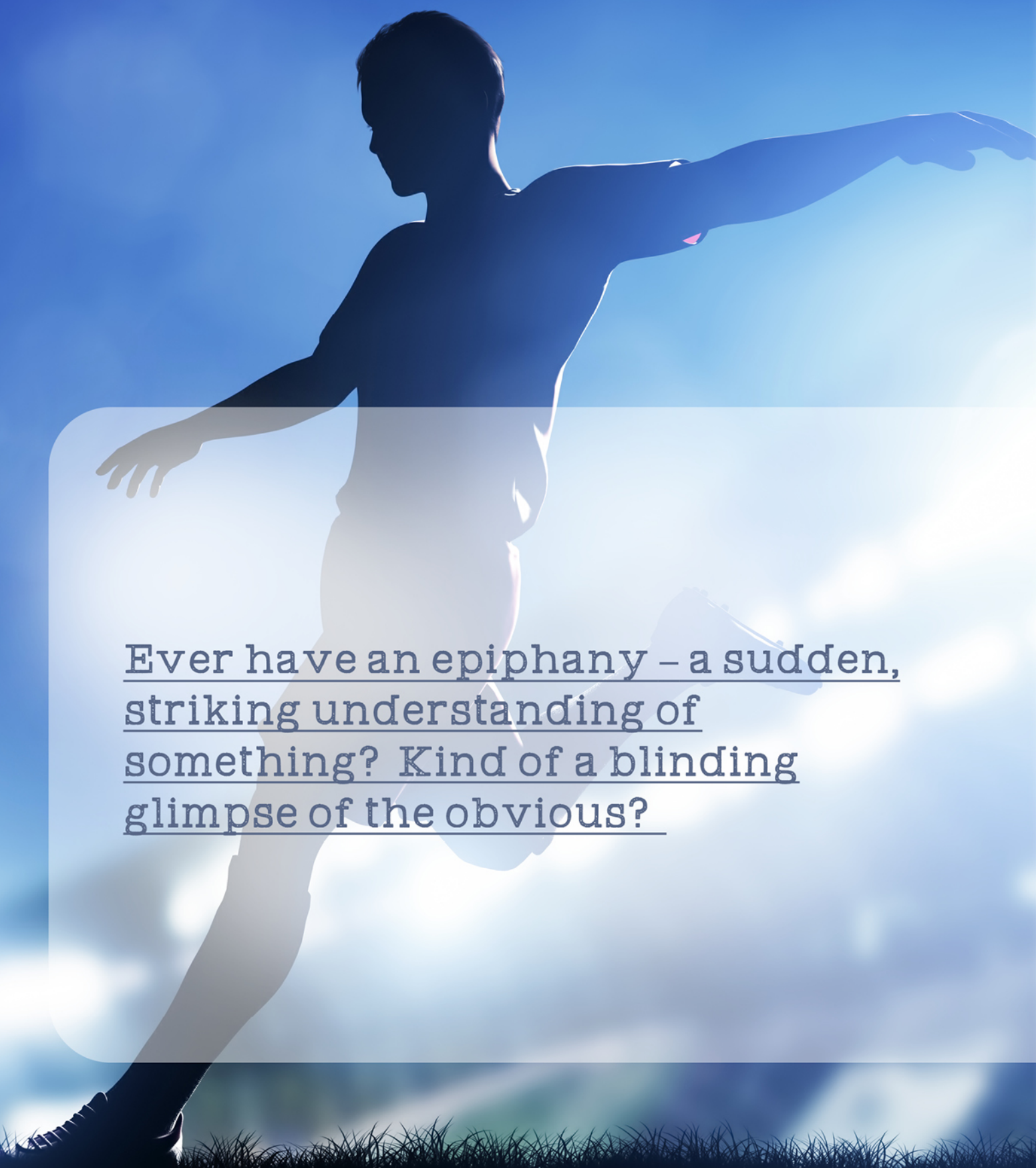
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CHAPTER 5

Do You Set Your Goals Too Low?

Ever have an epiphany – a sudden, striking understanding of something? Kind of a blinding glimpse of the obvious?



In the late 1980s, I had a monstrous one. It came through a riveting story that forever shaped my thinking about the proper way to set goals. A story I've re-told often. Its lessons can benefit you and every leader and high achiever.

I was attending the annual franchise conference of one of my company's best clients.

At the podium was one of the client company's most successful and respected franchisees who owned several stores in Oklahoma.

He was also a former professional football player who had been part of the Miami Dolphins' three consecutive Super Bowl teams in 1971, '72, and '73.

His story was about goal setting -- and how the Dolphins completely blew it.

A young team in only their sixth NFL season, the 1971 Dolphins compiled an impressive 10-3-1 record and earned a berth in the Super Bowl, the sport's crown jewel -- but suffered a humiliating loss to the Dallas Cowboys.

He said in the locker room after the game, they realized their mistake. At the beginning of the season, they all had unified around the team goal: to make it to the Super Bowl.

But now, with the season complete and in shock over an embarrassing loss in the premier game, they sat at their lockers dazed and confused. Then...it hit them like a lightening bolt from the heavens: the problem was the goal they set. It wasn't high enough.

By merely qualifying for the Super Bowl -- not winning it -- they had reached their pre-stated goal. Inadvertently and unintentionally, they had caused their own "mental melt-down." Consciously, of course, they played the game to win. But unconsciously, their minds had already uncorked the champagne before the opening kickoff.

Wait... is that possible? Does the human brain actually have the power to override and "derail" physical effort? Answer: you better believe it.

When the subconscious mind must choose between a deeply-rooted belief and logic, the belief will almost always win.

You see, the Dolphin players believed subconsciously they had already fulfilled their goal, even though logic told them the game had yet to be played.

And because belief and emotion can trump logic, YOU need to make sure YOU are setting YOUR goals properly. Doing it wrong can take you down the Dolphins' path.

Fortunately for them, they realized their mistake and, as the story was told to us, they corrected it immediately. In the misery of the locker room that same day, they mustered their resolve to set next season's goal: to win the Super Bowl.

Now, it was properly worded, and there would be no "mental celebrations" before the final game was over. And win it they did, in stellar fashion.

The 1972 Miami Dolphins finished with an unblemished 17-0 record -- no losses, no ties -- and a

Super Bowl victory. In fact, to this day, they are the only NFL team in history to have an undefeated season.

Oh...and for good measure, they won the Super Bowl again in 1973.

LESSONS & ACTIONS FOR YOU:

Does this sound unfathomable to you? That the human mind is such a dominating force that if it believes the goal already has been reached, it will allow a slide in further performance? Well, believe it.

The subconscious mind has incredible power over the conscious mind -- in fact it's the king and queen rolled into one -- and therefore it controls our outward choices and behaviors.

So it's time for a quick tutorial on proper goal-setting. Make sure your goals are specific, measurable...and not set too low! Don't wimp out -- you're a leader, a high achiever -- so be ambitious and go for the gusto.

It was Michelangelo who said: "The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it. But that it is too low and we reach it."

So, let's start with business. Here are some examples of poorly-worded business goals, followed by the same goal worded properly -- specific, time-dated and ambitious as all get-out.

Poor Goal: To increase sales by 7% next year.

Good Goal: By 12-31-XX, we will have achieved minimum year-end gross sales of \$32 million, with minimum pre-tax profit of \$1.8 million after bonus and contribution to profit-sharing.

Poor Goal: To add new products to our line.

Good Goal: By 12-31-XX, we will have successfully rolled out one new Thing-A-Ma-Jig in the Health Care vertical as evidenced by closing one major contract, and successfully rolled out one new Razz-Ma-Tazz in the Manufacturing vertical, as evidenced by installation at 3 major customers.

Poor Goal: To improve our financial planning and analysis area.

Good Goal: By 6-30-XX, we will have successfully installed a new financial software system, fully trained all appropriate staff, and will be producing rolling 3-year financial forecasts, by division, by product, on a quarterly basis.

See the vast difference? It's night and day. Now let's turn to personal life goals. Again, lousy first; better ones follow.

Poor Goal: To learn to play piano.

Good Goal: By 12-31-XX, I will have mastered 3 jazz piano pieces of my choice and performed them at our family Christmas gathering.

Poor Goal: To vacation more with the family.

Good Goal: By 9-30-XX, we will have taken 6 major, week-long family vacations (2 per year) -- 2 out of the country, 2 in the continental U.S., and 2 to the coast.

Poor Goal: To spend quality time with my kids.

Good Goal: By 12-31-XX, I will have been involved in 3 major activities (of their choice) for each of my kids that require us to spend considerable one-on-one time together.

Okay, you get the gist. There's research that says over 90% of people don't set goals of any kind. (Applies to companies too.) And of the less-then-10% who do, the lion's share of those written goals suck. (I know. I teach this stuff and see it all the time.)

Don't feel too bad if you plead guilty to authoring some stinkers -- at least you're in the top 10 who set goals of some kind. But don't light the applause sign just yet either. First you need to adopt proper technique. And be willing to stretch. Like the goals just mentioned.

By the way, it may have occurred to you that well-written goals can be frightening -- because they allow no wiggle room. You either make it or you don't. Very little is left to interpretation. High achievers already know this and welcome the challenge. It's what makes them high achievers.

Bottom line: effective leaders set lofty, high-quality goals that are specific, measurable, and downright scary.

Your palms ought to sweat. In so doing, you'll push other people into their "zone of discomfort."

But hey, that's what leadership is all about. If it were easy, everybody'd be doing it.

Life & Leadership Success Key #5

Set specific, measurable,
time-dated goals - realistic
yes, but big and bold
enough to make you sweat.
Go for the gold.

NB/ Sul lato anteriore della presente si scrive soltanto l'indirizzo.



CHAPTER 6

*Who Do You Take Advice From?
And Who Don't You?*

For starters, there are no English teachers lined up at my door begging for grammar advice, given my cardinal sin in the chapter title – Who Do You Take Advice From? – ending a sentence with a preposition.



And yet, having fully-authored and co-authored more than 10 books, self-publishing 2 newsletters, and written hundreds of advertisements, wannabe authors and writers seek me out with questions on everything from:

how do you get the inspiration to write? ... and when do you find time? ... and how do you structure your writing? ... to what's the proper use of humor? ... and what are the merits of self-publishing vs. traditional methods?

Kind of funny actually. The same person gets asked for advice by some. And refused by others. On essentially the same subject.

Go figure. And it begs the question...

How do you determine who is a reliable source of wisdom ... and who isn't?

It's an important decision every leader and high achiever must make.

And it's paramount in the quest for success in any of life's arenas: in business, with family and friends, when buying a car, investing your money, hitting a golf ball, and cooking a souffle'.

Even to learn the proper wedding dress and tuxedo attire for outdoor morning nuptials after Labor Day. In the south. On a weekday.

Or frankly, anything about which you are unsure. Face it, you've taken bad advice before, acted on it,

and failed. You know how it feels. Me too.

Leaders have to get this right. We cannot operate successfully -- for very long -- without sound, pragmatic, intelligent advice.

In business, leaders make lofty decisions that impact markets, create success or failure for products, and affect the livelihoods of employees and their families.

The question is ... who should a leader take advice from? And who not?

Parents are leaders of the family -- and make important decisions daily that impact the health, intelligence, social skills, behavior, and well-being of their children.

Who should parents take advice from? And who not?

Coaches are leaders of teams. Teachers are leaders of students. Generals are leaders of soldiers. Governors are leaders of their states. And film directors are leaders on the set.

Who should all these people take advice from?

And ... how about you? From whom do YOU take advice?

LESSONS & ACTIONS FOR YOU:

Opinions are a dime a dozen. Everybody has one. But as a leader -- whose decisions weigh heavy and impact many -- you better have very clear and selective criteria for determining who you allow to influence you.

Do you? Or are you winging it?

My criteria are simple. I have one primary criterion. With two sub-points. And it has served me well for many years.

It's simply this...

On any subject on which I seek advice, with only minor exceptions, I listen only to someone who has **ACTUALLY DONE IT**. With equal weighting going to (here are the two sub-points) those who have succeeded and those who have failed. (Because failure provides so many valuable lessons.)

And I try to drill down as deeply as I can. Let me be more specific.

For athletic injuries, I will only go to a doctor who is a specialist in that particular injury or body part. And drilling down further, a doctor who is an athlete himself, preferably in the same sport...

(Non-athletes may be excellent doctors, but they don't understand what mentally drives me. Another athlete does.)

For CEO advice, I go to other CEOs who've been there, done that. Not to a tenured college professor in B-school who's never had a job outside academia. Nor to an executive who's never 'run the show' and never had CEO-level pressure, vision, or experience.

For investments, I frequently ask my advisor, "Do

you have your money where you're suggesting I put mine?" If not, I seldom do it.

For marketing issues, I seek out only other highly successful marketers who have done exactly what I intend to try. And preferably have favorable results to prove it.

For legal advice, I only go to specialists in the kind of matter I'm involved, not a generalist. And preferably one who has dealt with the same issue on a personal level, or has special "insider knowledge" others don't.

(In my divorce many years ago, I intentionally chose a woman lawyer. She did fine, but in retrospect, I wish I had drilled down even deeper and selected one who herself had been through a divorce. Would have enhanced her 'been there myself' perspective.)

Concerned parents talk to their young children about the dangers of drug use. But let's face it, there's an even better source.

If they hear it from an ex-addict whose life was destroyed by drugs -- who lost family, friends, jobs, and maybe even did prison time -- it packs tons more wallop than even a loving mom and dad can.

For fitness, I take health/workout/nutrition advice only from gurus who take the same advice they preach. And most importantly, who look like I want to look. That seems so logical, but have you ever seen people in gyms taking private instruction from frumpy, overweight personal trainers?

I have... and I wonder exactly which screw is loose in their decision-making thought process. (That's not a knock on overweight people... but for a personal trainer, let's face it, it's the death knell.)

For writing books and newsletters, I seek out only accomplished authors who have done one or both.

For parental advice, if you're going to ask a friend or neighbor, wouldn't you go to someone who has kids vs. someone who doesn't? And if it's a problem with your daughter, don't you ask someone who has a girl? Digging deeper still, if the issue is about dating, do you ask someone whose daughter is 6? Or 18?

And for marital advice -- and I apologize in advance for stepping on religious toes here -- that's truly not my intent -- but I just don't see the logic in seeking wisdom from someone who's never been married. I may listen, and I'll be polite, but in the end, I want someone who's been there.

It has always struck me as odd that people will allow themselves to be influenced by others who have never walked a mile in their shoes. Or in the shoes they wish to walk.

Quiz time...

If you want to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, who's a better source of wise counsel: (a) your plumber, (b) a high school track coach, or (c) someone who's actually scaled that mountain, or tried to?

Is that really such a tough question?

Would you take wealth-building advice from someone who dresses sloppily, lives in a seedy, run-down neighborhood, and drives a beat-up car?

I'm not slamming them if that's the best they can do at the moment, but c'mon ... wealth advice? Don't you want someone who, at minimum, looks financially astute and successful?

If you Google the biographies of sportscasters and commentators, you'll find most have never played -- in either the pros or college -- the sport they cover, despite their criticism of, and advice for, players.

What they've got is a broadcast journalism degree and a microphone. Neither of which qualifies them to be an expert in the sport. Yet foolish listeners often take their critiques as gospel. Why?

Contrast that with an ex or current pro player who's doing game analysis -- and you have instant credibility, actual game experience, and real stories they were a part of. Much better.

Same with theater critics. Many have never acted professionally or directed a movie or play, or even attended acting school. Yet some actors go into a blue funk when they get a bad review from one of these critics. Huh? Consider the source, folks.

Then there's the deception factor you've got to watch out for.

Bernie Madoff appeared to have the necessary credentials to give sound financial advice. Maybe he even did. It's just that his integrity tank was on "empty".

Cult leaders claim brilliance ... usually in the form of a direct hot line to a divine higher power. Some even claim to BE that power. Yet in the end, they often lead their followers to grisly deaths or prison. Like in Jonestown. Or Waco. And remember Charles Manson.

The wackos aren't always easy to spot. Many "deceivers" dress impeccably well, speak articulately, and fool many.

So beware. My point in all this is simple ...

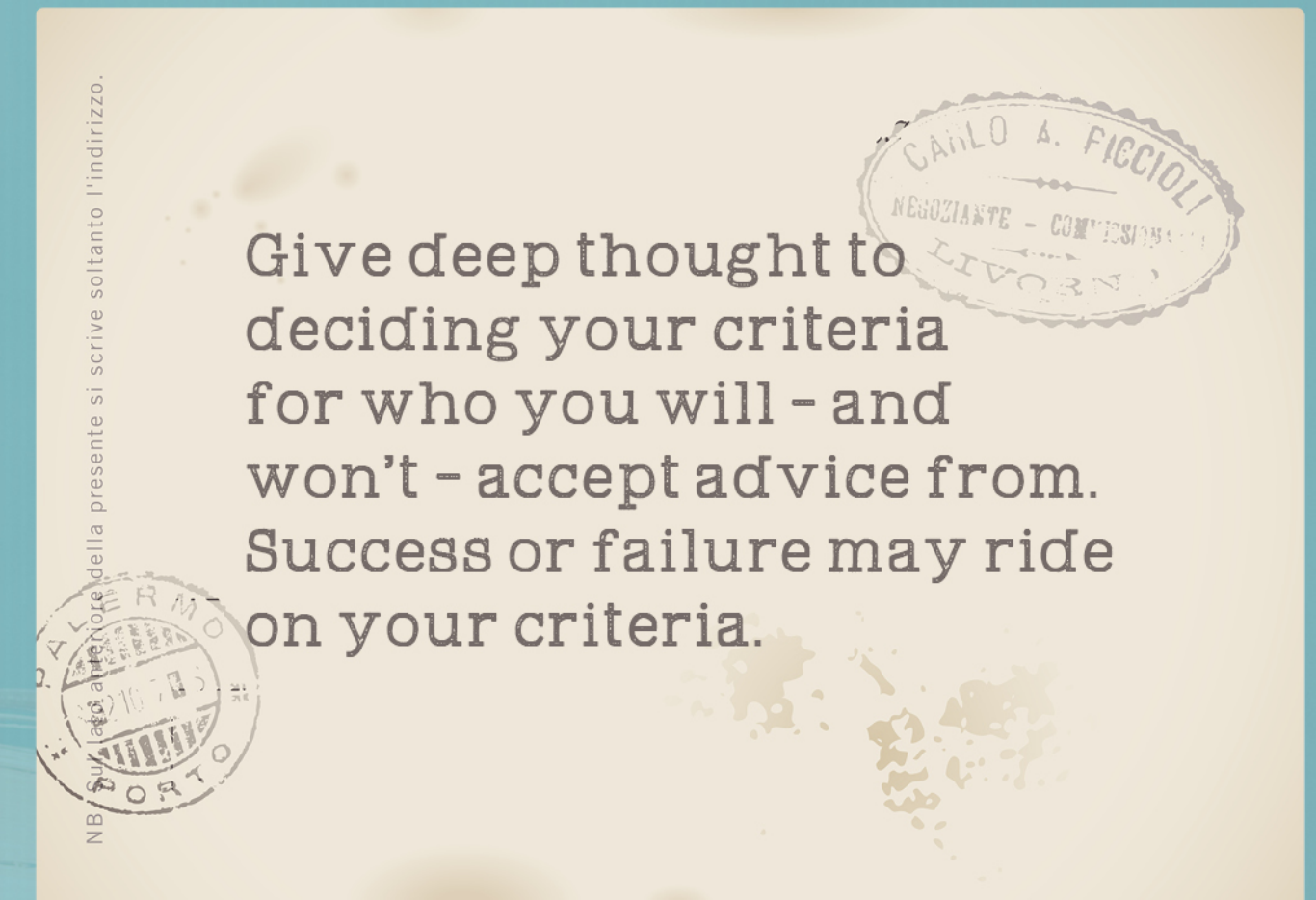
Decide YOUR criteria for accepting advice. And for turning it away. It's worth deep thought.

Always remember... many of history's most brilliant and inspiring achievements came from someone acting on the advice of another...

...and so did many of the most tragic and horrific blunders.

Which ones do YOU want to be remembered for?

Life & Leadership Success Key #6



Those are the words of oilman entrepreneur T. Boone Pickens in his book, "The First Billion Is The Hardest." He said it was advice his dad gave him as a kid.

DRESSES
SUA
CHOPS
SUIT
ADE
Bedding
URED
HEETS
2nd Floor
TAILORED
FOLD

6' Sidewalk Bl
Camp 21
11
19
18
80
FOLD

CHILPS
DECK
CHA
1.49
CLAMP
SUN
UMBRE
Camp 21

ou Keep 7
100 in a
ou get 1
ODAY!

GR
W
THE
PALACE
FORE

Voices In Your Head.
Which Ones Drive You?

As a result, Pickens grew up to be a planner, thinking important decisions through in advance and mapping out a course of action before jumping in willy-nilly. It has served him well.

In Delta's flight magazine some time back, CNN's Wolf Blitzer was quoted: "For inspiration and political perspective, I visit the Jefferson Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial to reflect on the words in the historical speeches and writings."

It helps him think...sort...decide.

A personal friend of mine has had trouble building positive relationships. She invites weepy losers into her circle of influence that ultimately bring her down. She found inspiration in the words of Oprah Winfrey: "Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo. But what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down."

Armed with that as her new mantra, my friend is now much more discerning in her people choices. She created high-integrity selection criteria and has become adept at identifying winners.

What I've just described in these three quick vignettes is nothing new. People being inspired by the words of others. And improving their lives as a result.

I call them... voices in your head.

They give us inspiration. Hope. A guiding light. And a path to follow.

Often they are words spoken by someone important to us. Like parents or other family members. Sometimes a famous person you admire but have never met. Could be a long-lost grammar school teacher. Or athletic coach. Maybe even a fictional character in a book with whom you identified.

We all have them. You. Me. Everyone.

The voices in our head are best, of course, when the words are positive, electrifying, and success-oriented. Or the person was a heroic role model. Those help lead us in the right direction.

Unfortunately, words can have just as much impact -- though negative -- when they are destructive, degrading, and hurtful of others. Or the person who spoke them a monster.

Who you let into your head tells a lot about you. As a leader, it may even define you.

The late newsman Tim Russert was so moved by the life lessons from his father, he wrote the book "Big Russ", that deified his dad. Russert anchored "Meet The Press" for many years before his death, and often told stories of his dad on air that punctuated whatever integrity point he was making.

Big Russ is a voice in his head.

My good client Dave Boivin, CEO of Sto Corp., world leader in cladding, coating and restoration systems for buildings, told me...

"Someday I will be judged by my two fathers. My Father, God, and my father, dad, who died in 1986. If I cannot justify what I think, do or say to those two, I better not be doing it. That has stood me well.

I teach my children the same. I have been called names because of it, nearly been fired because of it, and maybe missed out on a few good times because of it. But I won't ever have trouble sleeping at night because of it."

Voices in his head.

Dr. Robert Schuller, speaker, author and minister of the Crystal Cathedral, talks of having "walks with God" when facing a difficult problem. These introspective conversations create spiritual partnerships. Life's thorniest issues seem less daunting, less debilitating when you have words of wisdom to guide you.

A voice in his head.

In her TV commercials, actress Jane Seymour has introduced a jewelry line inspired by her mother who told her as a little girl, "Keep your heart open and love will find its way in."

A voice in her head.

Sometimes the filter, the screen, the words that guide you come not from others, but from personal experience... your very own college of hard knocks.

My wife Robbie says, for years, she overcomplicated things in her life. One day she had had enough and came to this personal realization:

Easy is not just an option. It's a chosen attitude and intentional approach."

Simplification is now her order of the day. It was reinforced recently, when she heard a colleague say: "Just because something is difficult to do doesn't mean it's intrinsically more valuable. Simple is often better." Validation.

Athletic coaches have a tremendous opportunity to influence young people. Two in particular are Pat Summit, former head coach of the University of Tennessee women's basketball team, and John Wooden, former UCLA men's basketball coach.

Student-athletes too numerous to mention by name, who were lucky to play under these legends, say they learned as much about life off the court as they did about improving their jump shot percentage. They hear the coach talking in their ear, decades later.

Voices in their heads.

A business colleague of mine lives by "Always take the high road", words she says her grandmother drilled into her as a little girl. They guide her decisions and actions to this day.

A voice in her head.

LESSONS & ACTIONS FOR YOU:

Inspirational words from others can only be useful to you... here's the catch... if you remember the words at the precise moment you need them.

Makes sense, right? Forget them and they're useless.

So it's important you employ memorization techniques. This requires going to a bit of trouble, but the result is worth the work. I never said it would be easy. But it IS worth it.

I've been a collector of powerful quotes for decades (and proudly proclaim the volume of my quote library would rival any). In my line of work, I need and rely on them.

As an author of books and newsletters, a frequent speaker to audiences, a husband, father and leader in business...

I collect, catalog, retrieve and use quotes from famous people often. I post favorites on my office

wall. I carry a file in my briefcase for travel. I re-read them often -- like immediately before a speech -- so they are "top of mind" when I need them.

Nothing new about that method of memorization. It's likely you've been using it for years yourself, even if modified.

You do (or did) something similar to study for tests. Write term papers. Prepare for business presentations. Give speeches. Author memos. Inspire the troops. Have difficult talks with a child or employee.

Once memorized, the words become... well, voices in your head. Ready to swing into action at a moments notice.

What words drive me? Lots. But in particular, these inspirational quotes from four iconic leaders are on my office wall and have guided my thinking and actions for years...

"To get what you want, first help enough other people get what they want." Zig Ziglar.

"You can't strengthen the weak by weakening the strong." Abraham Lincoln.

"Improve the process constantly and forever." W. Edwards Deming, founder of the Total Quality Management movement.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Margaret Meade, anthropologist.

And one of my own, learned through personal experience... "Find your passion and live it every day. And never miss a day."

Those are just a few of the voices in MY head. Invigorating me virtually on command.

How about you? Are you clear or fuzzy on what voices light your fire? Can you recall them in the heat of the moment?

Here's an action plan. Spend the next seven days collecting, organizing, writing, editing, and cataloging. Post your final selections in multiple visible places. (Hey, it's okay if you only have one or two.) Then memorize, memorize, memorize.

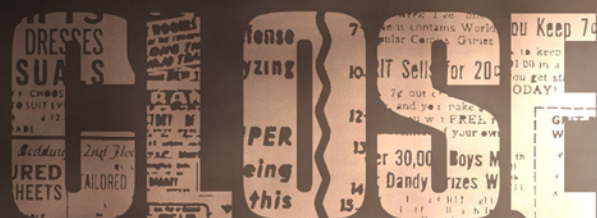
And before you know it... the voices in YOUR head will be there when YOU need them.

Life & Leadership Success Key #7

Make note of motivational quotes from people who inspire you. Post them, memorize them, see them often. So the electrifying words will be voices in your head when you need a jolt.

NB: Sul lato anteriore della presente si scrive soltanto l'indirizzo.





Well, there they are: 7 Keys to Thriving Every Day, So You Can Create The Life You Crave.

To close, let's do a quick review. Here they are again – all 7 – rapid fire – in the order discussed:

Life & Leadership Success Key #1

Work eagerly and diligently to achieve mastery in those endeavors of highest passion for you.

Life & Leadership Success Key #2

Do whatever it takes - climb any mountain, push through any obstacle, ignore any adversity - to achieve the outcome you want.

Life & Leadership Success Key #3

Treat all time appointments as firm commitments - not maybes - and expect the same from others.

Life & Leadership Success Key #4

To get ahead, surround yourself with winners, encouragers, and positive can-do influences... and let go of negative whiners, moaners, and complainers.

Life & Leadership Success Key #5

Set specific, measurable, time-dated goals - realistic yes, but big and bold enough to make you sweat. Go for the gold.

Life & Leadership Success Key #6

Give deep thought to deciding your criteria for who you will - and won't - accept advice from. Success or failure may ride on your criteria.

Life & Leadership Success Key #7

Make note of motivational quotes from people who inspire you. Post them, memorize them, see them often. So the electrifying words will be voices in your head when you need a jolt.

Now... go put all 7 into play today, and you'll be the creator of your own destiny... the architect of your own masterpiece life.

Resolve to be the very best you can be.

What in the world is author Rick Houcek up to?

Here's some of what he's done... and is still doing...

- Has led nearly 300 high-stakes strategic planning retreats for small and mid-size companies with his proprietary Power Planning™ Strategic Retreat process
- Delivered more than 600 live keynote and workshop presentations to audiences of all sizes in the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland on high achievement and peak performance themes
- Led/participated in more than 610 CEO and senior executive peer group meetings over 25 years
- Runs his Leadership Excellence Academy for people in charge
- Served more than 460 advertising clients in an 18-year ad agency career
- Authored 11 audio/ebooks
- Co-authored 7 print books
- Writes an ongoing e-newsletter for growth-driven leaders, change agents, and high achievers
- Was president of Ross Roy Advertising, an Atlanta ad agency and division of the \$700 million Ross Roy Group
- Is member of National Speakers Association
- Recognized in Who's Who Among U.S. Executives
- Recognized in Who's Who in Georgia
- Recognized in Who's Who Among American Student Leaders

Attention CEOs:

Are You Operating Without A Strategic Plan?

You're playing blind archery if you are. Worse, there's debilitating confusion among your staff and it's doubtful anyone's telling you. How can they perform in a fog? How can your desired results be achieved when your leadership team isn't bought into a common vision? Here's how to fix it: Rick Houcek leads strategy retreats for small & mid-size businesses using his dynamic Power Planning™ process. His Escape-Proof Accountability™ system overcomes the crippling effects of lousy execution – the single biggest cause of plan failure. Everyone leaves on the same page. For details, visit www.SoarWithEagles.com. Be sure to read the priceless praise from prestigious CEO clients about value they gained.

Attention Managers:

Looking For An Innovative Way To Grow Your People?

Consider bringing in Rick Houcek's dynamic "Self-Motivation For Winners" personal goal workshop for your employees. This is 'life planning' at its best – not business goal setting – and it assures staff members you care about them, their families, their lives. Invite spouses too. For details, go to www.SoarWithEagles.com.

Attention Meeting Planners:

Need a High-Energy Speaker For Your Next Conference?

Could your team use a jolt of inspiration? How about content-rich, battle-tested ideas on leadership excellence, self-motivation, winner behavior, or personal goal setting? Why not bring in Rick Houcek to speak at your annual meeting, team offsite, or industry conference? For topics and information, go to www.SoarWithEagles.com. Read what clients have said about value they gained — their words are gold!

A WEE BIT MORE ABOUT RICK...

Rick Houcek's singular company purpose is: To provide high-octane, world-class strategic planning systems for business and life, helping top gun leaders, teams and individuals to succeed 'on purpose, most of the time,' rather than 'by accident, some of the time.'

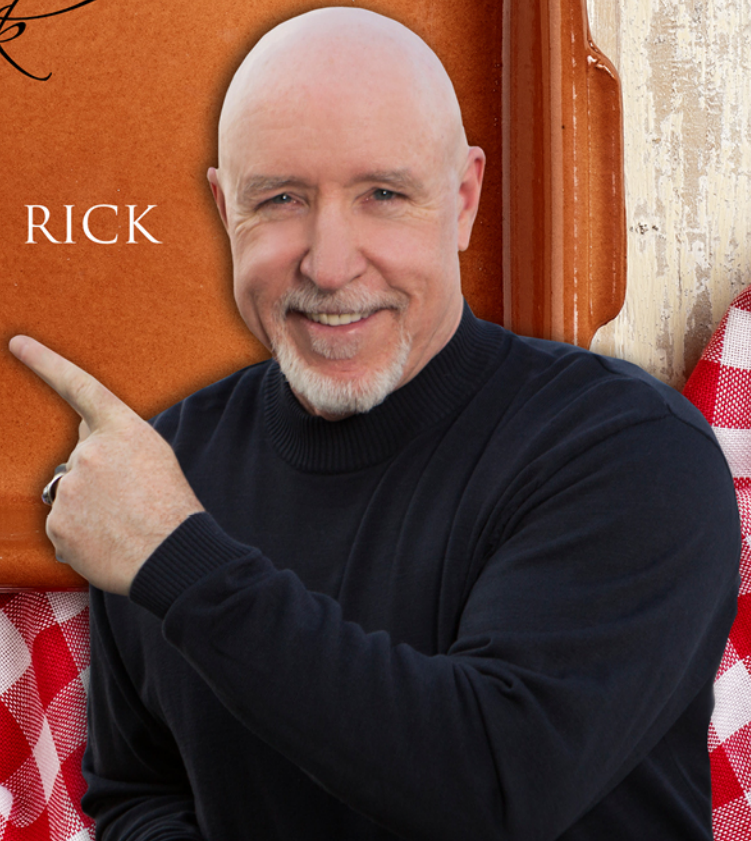
A University of Missouri graduate, Rick has 4 fanatical life passions: family, health/fitness, helping others prosper through his business and friendships, and playing competitive baseball.

Rick Houcek

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