

Attack Your Day - Introduction

IMPORTANT NOTE: This transcript may refer to some visuals in the video.



If I Could Just Get Organized - by Douglas Malloch

There may be nothing wrong with you,
The way you live, the work you do,
But I can very plainly see
Exactly what is wrong with me.
It isn't that I'm indolent,
Or dodging duty by intent;
I work as hard as anyone,
And yet I get so little done.
The morning goes, the noon is here,
And all around me I regret,
Are things I haven't finished yet.
If I could only just get organized!

With you, there may be nothing wrong
But here's my trouble right along;
I do things that don't amount
To very much, of no account,
They really seem important though
And I let a lot of matters go.

I nibble this, I nibble that,
But never finish what I'm at.
I work as hard as anyone
And yet, I get so little done,
I'd do so much you'd be surprised,
If I could just get organized!

What happens to you as an individual when you feel like this?

For many, we experience the feeling of being overwhelmed. When we get overwhelmed, we experience anxiety and we feel we can't get anything done. When this happens, our stress level goes through the roof!

I know a lot of people, including me, who have days like these. In my career, I've had days so bad that I have stood in my office and looked at the piles, projects, demands, and deadlines feeling so overwhelmed that I literally shut down.

Feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and anxious happens to every one of us, including me. This workshop focuses on five activity-management skills that work together, so we can avoid being overwhelmed and get things done.

The first skill is the skill of *choosing*. Choosing and refusing the kinds of activities we do directly effect our time, attitude, energy, and daily productivity.

The second skill is *arranging*. You've heard the old saying, "The hurrier I go the be-hinder I get." You are going to learn to think inside the time box.

The third skill is *flexicute*. You are a realist! You know that your day won't go exactly as planned, so you flexicute and prepare for the expected unexpected.

The fourth skill is *tracking*. At the completion of this workshop, you'll have a system to track all activity to ensure that nothing falls through the cracks.

Finally, the fifth skill is *focus*. Focusing is the ability to say no to interruptions and distractions. Focus, in my opinion, is the most important skill.

In our book *Attack Your Day Before It Attacks You*, we say that the new time management is activity management. We don't manage time; we manage activities.

An activity is anything we do. It is answering a phone call, responding to an email or a drop-in visitor, a work-related task, an unplanned meeting, exercising, or spending time with family or friends. It's eating, sleeping or feeling an emotion inside. We engage in an activity every second of every day; we are never neutral.

The activities we choose to do or choose not to do can either direct us towards our goals in life or drive our stress levels up to the point of being overwhelmed – where we can't get anything accomplished.

Well, you already know what the problem is. The problem is we have more events to manage in the same amount of time, and this is due in part to technology, the Internet, and the expectations of doing more with less.

The reality is that technology has created what we call *time compression* and some people handle it well, while some don't. This is Jack! (Refer to visual in video of Jack looking overwhelmed.)

It is true Jack that has all of the latest technology: Blackberry, email, voicemail, iPad, iPhone, and computer. Everything is working there, but look at him. He has an urgent request from a boss, a customer complaint, both phones are ringing off the hook and he doesn't know which way to turn.

He is up to his right armpit in alligators, but notice under his left elbow is a child. Whether we have children or not, Jack, like all of us, faces this classic balancing issue: "How do I do this?"

“How do I give my job the best shot I possibly can to ensure advancement within the company and still have time for a young family at home, outside interests, and other things I want to do?” The pressures are incredible.

For those of you who work in a corporate environment, you can just hear the corporate buzzwords banging around in Jack’s head right now. You know what they are: *Increase performance* while *managing events* in shorter periods of time with *fewer resources* in the *midst of uncertainty* while *continuously learning*, building *high performance teams*, and balancing work and personal life, taking *100% responsibility*, and doing it all with a smile! Then, he’ll be doing it again the next day, the next, and the next. Well, the question is how do we fix this?

How do we manage time so that we avoid becoming Jack? I think the starting point is to recognize that there has been a paradigm change. A paradigm is a patterned way of thinking.

The old way of thinking has us dividing our work and personal life in two with an imaginary line. For most people, that simply doesn’t work anymore. For some people, that never worked because life is too complicated.

When we separate work and personal life with an imaginary line, we set the two up in opposition to each other. That drives stress up and we begin to feel guilty – regardless of which side of the line is getting our attention.

The new paradigm is what we call *work-life integration*. That’s living our most important life activities as one whole – without artificial separation between work and personal life.

It’s alternating your work and personal-life activities around the clock in a way that you can fully experience both. Now, the differences between the old paradigm of *work-life separation* and new paradigm of *work-life integration* are subtle, but they are significant.

I am going to share a few with you.

Old way: Work could be caught up and finished.

New way: Work is continuously processed but seldom finished.

Old way: One time-management tool provided a complete system.

New way: Multiple tools are combined to create a complete system. This is what so many people are doing today. They use both paper and electronic tools to create a complete system.

Old way: Emphasis on multitasking.

New way: Emphasis on alternate tasking. Alternate tasking is being 100 percent where you are. It’s focusing your energy on one activity at a time.

Old way: Work is a marathon with long hard hours.

New way: Work is a series of sprints with adequate recovery time.

One of the best experts on this in our industry is Dr. James Loehr who wrote a book, *The Power of Full Engagement*. I highly recommend this book. Dr. Loehr emphasizes that energy management is critical to our performance and productivity. He talks about the fact that human beings oscillate. We breathe in, we breathe out, we work, we play, we eat, we digest, we sleep, and we are awake.

Unless we put a little bouncing ball-effect into our day to recover and manage our energy, we are not going to be very efficient. You will be amazed how you can maintain your energy and focus throughout the day when you do this.

Old way: Arranging activities primarily based upon the clock.

New way: Arranging activities based upon necessity, practicality, efficiency, and spontaneity. In other words, we do things at the best time of day to get things done – not necessarily due to what time it is.

Old way: Emphasis on the linear nature of time.

New way: Emphasis on time as space.

The old way of thinking has been to place emphasis on the linear nature of time. Digital clocks blink away our life from the past to the present to the future. Often we find ourselves racing against time lines.

However, what if we begin to think of time as space? Time is a space in which we live. Let me give you an example. A box is a space we fill with goods and I know that I can only pack so many goods into a certain size box.

Time is a space we fill with activities. In effect, we have 24 time boxes each day and the walls of our time boxes are minutes.

When we begin to look at an hour as a space in which we will execute activities, we are forced to be more realistic when we planning our day. A box, whether cardboard or time, can only hold so much.

Therefore, we have to be good choosers of the activities we decided to put in our time boxes and this is our first activity-management skill – the skill of *choosing*.

Attack Your Day - Skill of Choosing

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There has never been a time in history when the ability to choose effectively is more crucial than now.

Time management has always been about choice management, it is *option* management and it is *decision* management. We are always choosing between A and B, this or that, and deciding what we will do next. The best time managers are the best *choosers* of the activities they do and this is our first activity-management skill.

To help us make better choices, we're going to use the metaphor of a traffic light so we can color our choices.

We are going to let the color red stand for events and activities that are both vital and urgent. Red reminds us to STOP whatever it is we are doing and go do this new thing now!

There are generally human emotions connected with the activities we manage. In this case, when we are dealing with red activities, the human emotion is UPHEAVAL.

A good example of a red event is the system going down. I see this happen countless times inside organizations. When the system goes down, everybody scrambles. When "we've got to get the system up and running," that is a red event.

Other examples include an urgent request from a boss, unscheduled meetings, equipment breakdown, a customer complaint, a project deadline, an employee calling in sick, or a sick child at home.

I'd like to share with you a red event that happened to my uncle Paul. You would like my uncle. He is a good-looking man and dresses really well, as he grew up in the fashion business. He's a jeweler now and when you walk into his jewelry store, you are literally overcome with a feeling of elegance. This is a very fine jewelry store.

On this particular day, he's got a young couple sitting at the counter and he is showing them a \$9,500 diamond. They're interested in buying a stone for their engagement ring.

Now Paul is the consummate salesman and he is romancing that stone. He is doing all the things that the excellent jewelers do. He is talking about color, cut, and clarity. He has this couple just at a point where they are about ready to buy when he notices something not quite right with the diamond.

He is holding that diamond up under the light in a pair of tweezers and it's just sparkling. He notices a little speck of dust on the diamond so he inhales to blow the dust off the diamond. Just then, the tweezers snapped, shooting the diamond into the back of his throat like a bullet and he gagged and swallowed the \$9,500 diamond on the sales floor – in front of his customers! Now that was upheaval. It was vital and it was urgent.

There were all kinds of stories going around the store after that about how much his self-worth had just gone up, among other things.

Well, I think I know your next question.

Five days later. Five days of diamond in the rough, the stone was finally retrieved. It was a cute little story and was written up in the local newspaper. The last line in the newspaper said, “The customers decided on another stone.”

Why would I tell you that story? Well, my question is this. How many diamonds must you swallow in a day? I'm talking about true red events where you have no other choice but to stop whatever you are doing and go do this new thing right now. It happens!

We say that red stands for *activities that are vital and require immediate attention*.

I would like you to “pause” the program and spend the next few minutes writing down as many reds as you can think of in your job and in your personal life.

Remember, these are true urgencies where you have to stop whatever you are doing at that moment and go take care of a new thing right now. Pause the program and begin.

Welcome back! How did you do? What do you mean you didn't do it? If you didn't do the exercise, then stop the program and do it right now! It's a red event.

If you did the exercise, good job!

Here are some additional reds that our other workshop participants have listed:

- Request from the boss
- Unscheduled meeting
- Equipment breakdown
- Sick employee.
- Class assignment
- Customer complaint
- Project deadlines.

Now, reds are pretty easy to identify because they are truly urgent.

Let's move in to the second type of activity we manage. Green stands for *go*. Go do as many green activities as you can today because green is where the money is made and where relationships are nurtured.

Green activities help us balance our work and our personal life. Green activities have high payoffs and are value-added activities.

Green activities do not require an immediate response. In other words, they are vital to our job and to our life, but they are not urgent.

However, beware! Many green activities can become red activities if we procrastinate and don't do them when we should. Any guesses on the human connection to green activities? The human connection is HARMONY.

I know that when I am focused on green activities that are directing me towards the completion of a goal, I am experiencing harmony. Many people never make the connection with harmony.

I was working at a job for a number of years where I had a long commute, which gave me time every morning to think about the disharmony there was in the office among the employees.

As I walked through the door each day, I could feel the friction between employees. It was so thick I could have cut it with a knife.

This company used one color for everything: red! Being colorblind can destroy your business, the morale of employees, and even personal relationships.

Here are some examples of green activities:

- Family time
- Exercising
- Daily planning
- Building business relationships
- Writing goals
- Business research
- Team building
- Training
- Journaling
- Reading with a child

Virtually every activity that promotes our personal and professional well-being would be considered a green activity.

Now let's do another exercise.

Please pause the program and spend the next few minutes writing down as many green activities as you can in your job and in your personal life. Pause the program now and begin.

Welcome back! How did you do?

Here is a tip. Just remember that green activities promote our personal and professional well-being. Thus, a good activity manager learns to concentrate on the green activities as much as possible during the day.

Now, let's brighten things up with the color yellow.

Yellow stands for not *vital but of some value*. Yellow reminds us to use caution. Just as you do when you are driving in traffic, when a yellow traffic light pops up, you hesitate, stop, and then proceed on green.

When yellow activities popup, what we do is stop, reschedule, and proceed with the activity we are doing at that very moment.

If we don't, we're operating in a state of ILLUSION, which is the human emotion for yellow. Now we have a problem in time management today I call it artificial urgency.

Sometimes yellow activities come to us wrapped in the context of artificial urgency, as when an associate drops in and claims your help is needed right now, at that moment! You are interrupted! Your productivity is halted in its tracks! Technology creates counterfeit urgencies, too. For example, we may be focused on a project at work or engaged in a conversation with someone when, all of the sudden, we hear a ding or a beep alerting us of a new email or text message. It is very tempting to interrupt ourselves to check who it's from instead of proceeding with what we are doing.

What we have to do in today's environment is to be master editors of some voicemail and some email requests. When people interrupt you with things that could be rescheduled, learn to reschedule those things and stay focused on the green activities.

Here is a tip when choosing yellow: Remember that yellow activities are things that are not vital but have some value. In other words, they need to be done, but not today or tomorrow or maybe even this week.

Here are some examples of yellow activities:

- Marketing report that is due next week
- Scheduling a routine doctor appointment
- Expense report due at the end of the week
- Budget review
- Purging email
- Paying bills
- Making dinner reservations

Notice that they are all valued activities, but they don't necessarily need to be completed today or tomorrow.

We won't do an exercise for yellow. Just remember that they are activities that *have value but are not vital to day*.

Here is a tip: Close your email program down unless you are working on email and only check it at specific times during the day.

Here is another tip: Turn your phone ringer off if you are working on a project that requires a concentrated effort. You can also put a sign on your office door that simply notifies co-workers that you are working on a red or green project. This will limit your interruptions.

Okay, let's discuss the last color, which is gray.

We won't spend much time on this color because gray stands *for things that are not vital and not urgent*. Don't waste gray matter on gray events.

Say no to gray events and activities. If we fail to do that we are operating in a state of TRIVIA. It's interesting to me that some gray events, although they are an utter waste of time, can actually be devastating to an organization.

I submit to you just one: office gossip. This is stronger today than ever before because of instant messaging, email, and social networking. I have seen companies torn apart with office gossip. Gossip is definitely a total, complete, and utter waste of time.

There is no need to do an exercise on gray because I'm sure by now you already know what your grays are.

Here is a tip: Not all gray is bad because it could be considered down time or recovery time, which is necessary. Television and surfing the Internet are two big gray areas and I mean big! The average American watches approximately 153 hours of television every month, according to Nielsen. That's about five hours per day. According to IDC (International Data Corporation), 32.7 hours per week is spent online, and we wonder where are time goes? Gray matter consumes most of it..

Those are the colors and what they stand for. As you begin to color your choices:

- Know when to stop (RED)
- Know when to go (GREEN)
- When to use caution (YELLOW)
- And when to say no (GRAY)

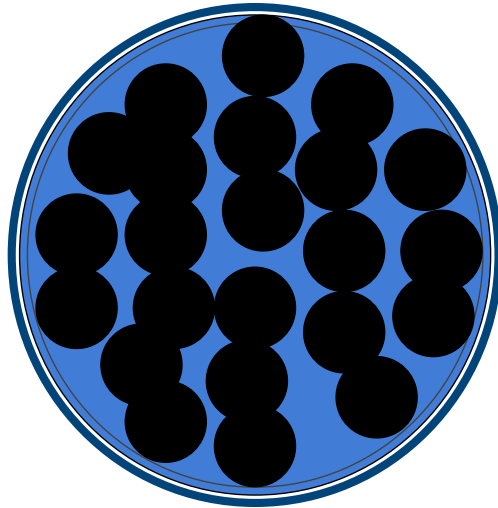
Attack Your Day - Skill of Arranging

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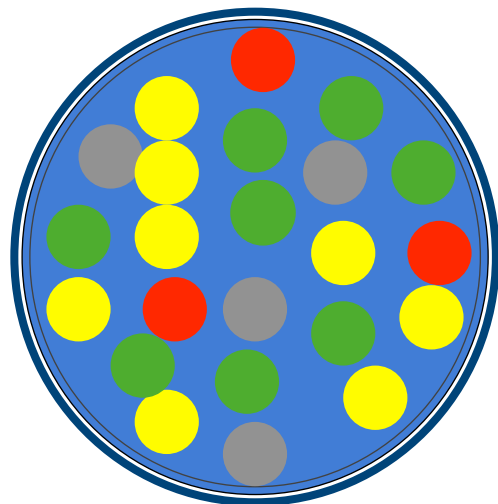


It's time to move in to the second skill of activity management, *arranging activities*. Now, the question becomes, what's on your plate today?

If you are looking at your plate like this, so every one of those black dots represents an activity you must perform, that's pretty intimidating.



Most people look at their plate that way, but you and I don't have that problem anymore. All we have to do now is color our choices. Now, we look at our plate like this. Now, it's simply a matter of attacking the reds first, then the green, then the yellows, and pushing the grays off the plate.



The next step is *arranging the day*, with which most people are familiar. They divide their plate in two. The right side represents what we call *non-discretionary time*; it's our scheduled events and activities.

These things are somewhat cast in concrete and can't be changed because they happen at a scheduled time. Obviously, the more non-discretionary time we have the fewer discretionary activities we will be able to execute during the day.

The left side of our plate is our discretionary time. That's simply our to-do list or some call it their action list, I call it my activity list. Once we make this list, then we prioritize each activity with color.

Now, let's put this attack plan into action! On a piece of paper, please list five activities that are on your plate right now at school, work, or in your personal life. Then color your choices.

Please pause the program and let's spend the next few minutes doing this exercise.

Ok, great! See how easy prioritizing your activities can be when you color your choices? It's a crucial skill and will make a huge difference if you choose to apply it.

You might have the perfect attack plan, but by 9:00 am, the reds begin to pop up and the interruptions occur, so here are three reasons to start each day with an attack plan:

1. It's a tool of navigation. It gives you a direction. If you turn off course because of an interruption, you can quickly get back on track.
2. It's a tool of concentration. It will help you to stay focused throughout the day because you know what you are doing and when you are doing it.
3. It's a tool of measurement. It is a great feeling at the end of the day, when you can look at your attack plan and identify all the activities you've completed.

When you create your daily attack plan you must be cognizant of the three deadly planning mistakes. Let's consider what those are.

1. People attempt too much. I see people put so much stuff on their plates that it would take a week to get some of those things accomplished. They are totally, out of touch with reality.
2. They don't allow for interruptions and that's the one thing you and I can depend upon every single day. Why should they surprise us? You should always reserve some time for the expected unexpected.
3. When people are arranging their day, they don't use planning guidelines.

Here are four essential planning guidelines:

1. *Necessity*. Once you have decided what to put on your plate, then stand back and take a look at everything that's facing you and ask yourself this question: What things on my plate today are absolute necessities?

Once you've identified those – they are primarily going to be green and red events – then, schedule a time to get those done.

2. The second planning guide is *practicality*. When thinking about practicality, take into consideration others you need to help you accomplish the project or task. When will they be available and what about your energy levels? When do they peak, when do they ebb, and when do they flow?

When you're doing activities that require extra mental effort, make sure you schedule those at a time when you'll be most alert. For me, it is before 10 am.

3. The third friendly planning guide is *efficiency*. Efficiency has to do with how we're going to combine our resources to get things done in the most efficient way. Studies have been done about the power of grouping like projects.

If you have a certain amount of corresponding to do by email, do it all at once. If you have a certain amount of telephone calling to do, do it all at once.

Here is a tip: Blocking gets more done. Schedule an appointment with yourself on your calendar to do these things. We schedule appointments with everyone else on the planet, but we rarely, if ever, schedule time to work on our most vital activities.

4. Finally, the fourth friendly planning guide is *spontaneity*. That means in this environment you have to be ready to turn on a dime and be able to adapt when things change. How much time should you reserve for being spontaneous? That totally depends upon you and your job!

In my own case, when I plan my time, I reserve about 20% of the day to respond to the expected unexpected.

Clearly, if you are going to take some time to arrange your plate each day, it's going to require an investment of your time, so I'm going to ask you a question. How much time do you spend each day in a quality, planning process arranging your day before it actually begins? It doesn't matter to me whether you do this the night before or the morning of that day.

By a "quality planning process," I mean going to a place of solitude where you can be completely alone and where you are free to think, free to plan, and free to write. Do you ever get any of that time?

Clearly, by this definition, it eliminates your shower time. The shower is a great place to think but it's a lousy place to write. Here is what people do: On their drive to the office, they hop in their car, grab a Starbucks, and begin to think about challenges they'll face at work that day.

Somebody said, "We tend to awfulize and catastrophize our time-management challenges!" If you will slow down the planning process long enough to catch your breath, think, and reflect in solitude, a wonderful thing will begin to happen.

Your subconscious will kick in and begin to assist you in the planning process, your subconscious will feed to you things that you might otherwise have forgotten, and your subconscious will assist you in the resolution of problems you will be facing during the day. However, it never happens if you resist the planning process!

Consequently, I would like to ask you the following question. How many minutes do you spend planning on average? Over 30 minutes, 20 to 30, 15 to 20, 5 to 15, 1 to 5. Maybe you are not planning your day at all.

Would you like to know what the national average is? It's one minute. One minute is all that many people take before they rush into the white water of their day without any plan at all. I think that's a big mistake!

The key to becoming a better activity manager is to set aside at least 15-20 minutes of solitude time every day to plan and arrange every single day. Many people ask me this question, "So, when is the best time to plan?"

There are a couple different thoughts about that. Many people prefer planning in the morning. That way, they are able to incubate their ideas overnight and they wake up refreshed can plan very quickly and clearly.

Other people, who I sometimes call night people, prefer to plan in the evening. They like to come home, let the dust settle, put tomorrow's plan together and then go to bed.

Which is better for you, morning or night? That is totally up to you, but there are advantages to both and, sometimes, it can depend on your job. I was once working with a general contractor who did both. He said, "This is what I do. I take 15 minutes at the end of each day to plan and then I go to bed and sleep on it. Then, I get up in the morning and take another 15 minutes to finish my planning. That way, I get the advantages of both evening and morning." I think it's a good idea. It's now what I like to do.

The important point is you decide what time is best for you, but you need to do it and do it constantly.

Never let a day pass without going through that planning process. You will discover that you'll get better and better at this whole process and you will never want to give it up.

Attack Your Day - Skill of Flexicute

IMPORTANT NOTE: This transcript may refer to some visuals in the video.



Now let's talk about the next skill in activity management, the skill of *flexicuting*.

Here's where we're headed with this one. You've arranged the order for accomplishing the day's activities and you begin to work your plan. However, because you are a realist, you know that your day will not go exactly as you planned it. On a typical day, you can expect to get caught in the crossfire of interruptions, the unexpected will bubble up and demands will fall out of the sky at inconvenient times.

Flexicuting will be required. In today's work environment, we have to change, adapt, and shift our focus all day long. Flexicuting involves the ability to:

- Be willing to leave your activity list when priorities shift.
- Be able to turn on a dime when an opportunity presents itself.
- Have the wisdom to modify your work style on the spot by understanding the two time-management work styles.
- Be wired 24/7 without letting it be a source of frustration.

Would you like to become a flexicuter? Here's how: *Flexicuting involves the skills of both multi-tasking activities and alternate-tasking activities.*

We will talk about multi-tasking first. In our society, the term multi-tasking is overused. Even worse, the skill has been elevated to the pinnacle of desirable abilities and we often find ourselves abused and sometimes abusing in the execution of multi-tasking.

The best advice I can give you is to BEWARE OF MULTI-TASKING! Here's why.

When you are executing multiple activities at the same time, none of these activities has your complete focus. If you must multi-task, it should be done only when you combine simple, mindless tasks, such as opening your mail and watching the news.

Beware of multi-tasking while engaging with another person. For example, reading your email while carrying on a business conversation with somebody in your office. Not only is this disrespectful and a put down of the other person, it's very easy to miss a point or to misinterpret the communication.

My personal rule of thumb is never, never, never multi-task while carrying on a conversation with another person. Multi-tasking, when abused, leads to time contamination.

An example of time contamination is taking your spouse out for dinner so you can have some quality one-on-one time together and then accepting a cellphone call while he/she stares into space for the next five minutes. Time contamination is working on your laptop while supposedly watching your child's soccer game or having family dinner with the television blaring in background. In other words, time contamination is not being fully present while we engage in activities and events.

I really learned about time contamination when I lost my father to cancer. When we learned he had cancer, he was already in stage four and they gave him six to twenty-four months to live.

We both had to demonstrate the ability to flexicute. During his last three months, I was with him almost every day; but, I wasn't always present and I often contaminated our time together. I had become an addict. I was addicted to my Blackberry and it never left my hand. I was always either checking my email or on Facebook. It had gotten so bad that I was checking every 5-10 minutes regardless of where I was or what I was doing. Yes, even in the movies.

We decided as a family to take my father out to dinner and a movie, and it was the last movie we saw together. While at dinner, he made a simple comment, really just a statement of fact. As I looked down at my Blackberry to check my email, he said, "Mark, you are contaminating time" followed with a long pause. At that very moment, that subtle comment gave me a gut check and I sank. I realized I was doing the very thing I teach others not to do.

I was contaminating our time together, the time I would go on to cherish as a memory for the rest of my life, so here is my advice to you. Beware of multi-tasking and contaminating time in both your work and personal life.

Now, let's talk about the other tasking. We call it alternate-tasking. While multi-tasking can contaminate time, alternate-tasking does not.

Alternate-tasking is being 100 percent where you are. Be 100 percent in the restaurant with your spouse and listen to the incoming phone call after dinner. Be 100 percent at the family dinner table by eliminating distractions like the television.

Simply put, alternate-tasking permits us to fully engage in all activities without the dilution or contamination of the experience. Furthermore, alternate-tasking can help you get more done in less time than multi-tasking because, when you are fully engaged, you are more efficient and more productive.

Flexicuting during the day is not only ridiculously easy. It can be fun, too! Give it a try tomorrow and see what happens!

The other part of flexicuting involves understanding both activity-management styles and then using the one that works for you to get things done.

What is your style? Let's find out right now. Download the exercise.

In this era of work-life integration, the key is that we have to understand each time-management style and then be able to walk the path of the person with whom we are dealing.

I would like to tell you a customer service story that really illustrates that point. Some years ago, when my father Trapper was working directly for the Day-Timer Corporation, they had an outlet in London, England. One day, they received a Day-Timer binder return from a very unhappy customer whose dog had chewed it up. That was not the company's fault, but what do you think they did?

That's right! They replaced the binder! We, in customer service, say, "When you're fixing a problem, fix it also with a perk." Not only did they send this customer a new binder, they also sent over a dog biscuit.

Two weeks later, a thank-you note appeared in the mail from the dog, thanking Day-Timer for excellence in customer service. All that information went into the computer. A year later, it was time to send over the new calendar, so they included a second dog biscuit. Like clockwork, two weeks later a thank-you note appeared from the dog. However, there was a P.S. at the bottom of the dog's letter. The P.S. simply said, "Got a problem; the cat is jealous."

You are going to think I'm embellishing the story, but every word is true!

At this point, the company sent over a can of cat food; and, a couple of weeks later, a thank-you note appeared from the owner of the animals thanking Day-Timer for their excellence in customer service. There was, however, a P.S. at the bottom of the owner's letter.

"P.S. By the way, the dog really didn't write those letters, the cat did."

Do you think that customer will ever buy another brand? I don't think so because when the adjustment was being made, the person making the adjustment used a "polychronic" style to deal with a polychronic customer.

That's powerful and it's a great time-management secret to be able to walk the path of both styles.

We have been talking about activity-management skills. We have talked about the skill of choosing, the skill of arranging activities and the skill of flexicuting activities.

Let's move in to the fourth skill, the skill of *tracking*.

Attack Your Day - Skill of Tracking

IMPORTANT NOTE: This transcript may refer to some visuals in the video.



We have been talking about activity-management skills; we have talked about the skill of choosing, the skill of arranging activities and the skill of flexicuting activities. Let's move in to the fourth skill, the skill of *tracking*.

The fourth skill is *documenting and tracking all activities so nothing falls through the cracks*. We use time-management tools for that purpose, so I would like to address how to use time-management tools in the most effective way.

Buckets are used to collect and carry things. Time-management tools are actually buckets and it doesn't matter whether we're using paper or electronic ones. I believe when we manage time, we should be using **SIX BUCKETS**.

BUCKET ONE: Bucket one, is the monthly calendar. The monthly calendar is for future events and activities that are scheduled.

You have been using a monthly calendar this way for years, but I believe that many people don't take the calendar as far as they could.

The monthly calendar is for A.D.D., an acronym for Appointments, Dates and Deadlines. Let me show you some typical entries on a calendar that should be helpful.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																										
			1	2	3 9-12 New Training 1 Lunch Joe (BO)	4																																										
5	6	7	8 10 Client Prop 3 Nancy Perf Rev	9 Mom's Birthday	10	11																																										
12	13	14	15 6 Staff Mtg 2 TA - R. Jones	16 6 Family Dinner	17 9 Exp Report Due 5 Mike's Game	18																																										
19	20 1-4 Cold Calls 5 Yoga Class	21	22	23	24	25																																										
26	27	28	29	30 BOSTON	31 CONVENTION																																											
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If you are looking at the calendar on your visual, you will notice this time manager has made an appointment with herself on the 3rd of the month from 9:00 am in the morning until lunch time or 12:00 to work on a new training program.

Please notice the technique, an appointment with oneself. She made an appointment with herself to work on her green activities! Also, notice on that same day at 1:00 pm, she has lunch with Joe; and, next to that entry is “9/3.”

When using paper calendars, a parenthesis with a date inside means “see” or “refer” to, and that says to us go back to our Day-Timer pages. On the 3rd of September, there is information there that will help us with what we are going to be talking about at lunch with Joe.

You can track all kinds of information in a paper planner using the parenthesis system.

The last entry I want to point out is on the 17th, 9 am, “expense report due.” This is a deadline.

The monthly calendar is bucket one. It is for all appointments, all dates and all deadlines. Many time managers fail to put deadlines on their calendars and it is important that they do, so that their calendar becomes a master control panel.

Your calendar is one place where you can go and see everything that you have committed to up to this point. What calendar tool do you use? Is it paper or electronic? Here is a tip: Choose just one to avoid duplicating entries.

Bucket number two is the *catch-all list*. The catch-all list is *for unscheduled future events and activities*. In other words, you know that, you are not going to do these things today or tomorrow or maybe not even next week, but you don’t want to forget these things.

That’s where the catch-all list comes into play. The catch-all list is for R.A.M. The R stands for Reminders. Let’s assume I am looking at my calendar and I notice that I have an anniversary coming up. I don’t want to forget to buy an anniversary gift, so I go to my catch-all list and just add it on there. “Buy anniversary gift.” Simple? Yes. Helpful? Tremendously.

The A stands for Avoiding Floating Paper. I think you know what I mean. We get caught without a planner or something to write on, so we grab any old piece of paper and we write a vital message on that piece of paper.



Then, for some unknown reason, and this often happens, we lose the paper. It floats away and up goes our anxiety because that message was critical to our success. The M stands for Master Task List.

If you are using a Day-Timer, very often the catch-all list is on the back of the monthly calendars. It usually says at the top: “To be done this month.”

PDA, Blackberry, and iPhone users keep a separate electronic file for their catch-all list; it’s as simple as keeping an electronic memo file.

Today, there are hundreds of apps you can download for your phone, too many to discuss. You can get more information about recommended apps on our website at attackyourday.com. Just remember, a catch-all list is no good at all unless you look at it. You should check it daily.

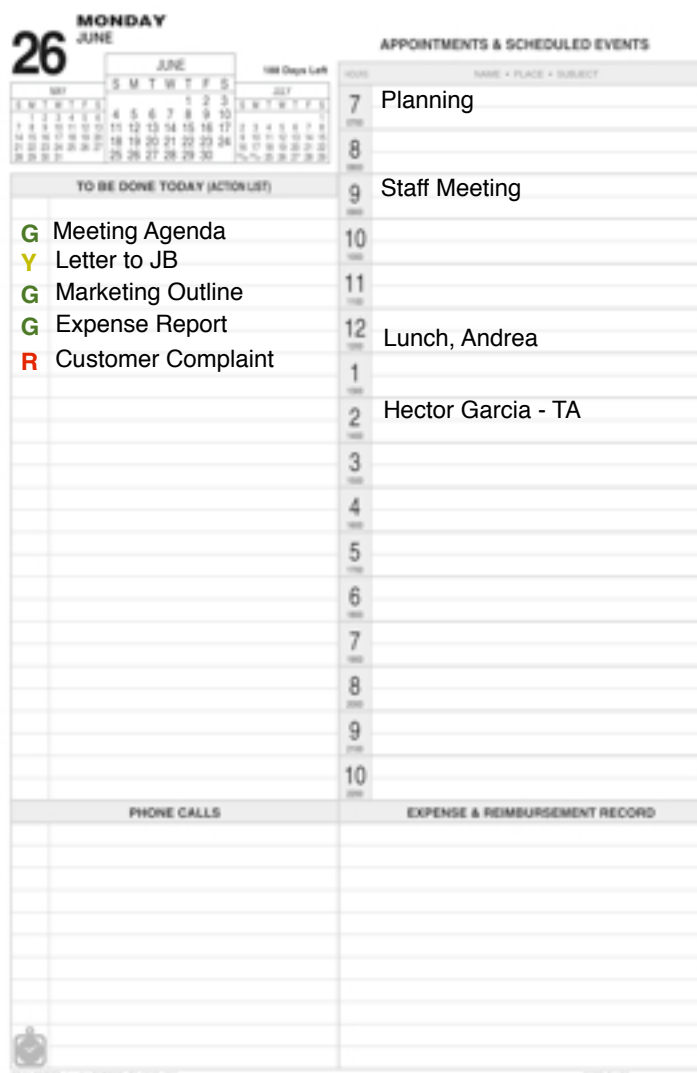
Bucket number three, is the *daily* bucket. This bucket is crucial and is *for today’s events and activities*. This is where we organize our thoughts and plan our ATTACK for the day. The daily bucket is for A.A.A. It’s all appointments for today. Our activity list for today and any additions for today, I will explain.

Here is an example of the daily bucket using a Day-Timer format. You will see there is a space for appointments and scheduled events.

If I am organizing my day, I am first going to transfer anything that’s posted on my monthly calendar (bucket 1) into today’s appointment section (bucket 2).

You’ll notice the entry at 9:00 am: “a planned staff meeting, then lunch with Andrea at 12:30, followed by a telephone appointment at 2:00.”

We referred to our appointments earlier as non-discretionary time, meaning we have to be there. We also said that the more non-discretionary time we have during the day, the fewer things we can add to our activity list, which you’ll see to the left. You’ll also notice that this time manager uses color to prioritize the activities.



Another feature of the memory bucket I would like to point out is that we record on a dated page, not on a loose yellow legal pad. This way, we can file all of these pages sequentially and, years from now, if we want to look up information, it can easily be found. Furthermore, an electronic memory bucket can be a note pad in your iPhone or Blackberry; and, if you use Outlook on your computer, there is a note section.

Tracking bucket five is the *fingertip data bucket*. This is where we keep vital information we need at our fingertips from time to time. It might include goals, projects, an address directory and fact sheets.

A major advantage of the modern PDA and Smartphones is that they become bucket five. Additionally, Google has tools where you can centralize all of your data, email, and projects. If you use a paper planner, this would be a tabbed index section in the back of your binder.

There is one more bucket; this is our *electronic communication* bucket – in other words, our voicemail and email. Voicemail is not a major problem for most people these days; but, on the other hand, email is a minefield of distractions, irrelevancies, and a great temptation for time wasting. It is, however, the biggest part of our communication bucket and an essential component of time management.

Based upon your style, pick paper or electronic tools you will really use. If you are a visual person, you may be most comfortable with paper. Don't let your peers intimidate you into going with an electronic tool if you know you won't use it.

To review, these are the six buckets:

1. The monthly calendar bucket for A.D.D. – all future appointments, dates, and deadlines.
2. The catch-all bucket for R.A.M. reminders, avoiding FPAA, and master task list.
3. The daily bucket for A.A.A. Today's appointments, activity list, and additions.
4. The memory bucket for D.D.T. for documenting, delegating, and attacking today's activities.
5. The fingertip bucket for information you access regularly.
6. The communication bucket.

Use the six buckets to ensure that nothing falls through the cracks.

Attack Your Day - Skill of Focus

IMPORTANT NOTE: This transcript may refer to some visuals in the video.



Interestingly, the first person we need to learn to say no to is ourself.

We are often our own worst enemy; we often break our focus for what are merely time-wasting activities. (We identified time-wasters earlier as *gray* activities.)

Developing the ability to say no to unnecessary interruptions and distraction activities is critical to being productive. Notice we said, “Unnecessary.” The last thing you would ever want to do is to get rid of all of your interrupting activities. Some interruptions are essential, job-related and necessary. We need to eliminate the ones that aren’t necessary – the ones that are the true time-wasters.

The inability to say no to interruptions and distractions breaks our focus. Therefore, to stay focused, all you need is the skill and will to say no and mean it.

Begin learning to focus by taking a personal inventory of the negative activities that cause you to break your focus. You can “pause” the program here so you can download and take this survey. Look carefully over the list of self-imposed, internally-motivated focus breakers, and put a checkmark by the ones you do that break your ability to stay focused.

Pause the program now.

Welcome back! Now that you’ve taken the survey, how did you do? Did you check a lot of focus-breaker activities? If so, we have good news for you.

All focus-breaker activities that are self-imposed are 100% controllable. Be like a magician. Use some hocus pocus and make them all disappear.

The first step is using your “NO muscle” on yourself. Here’s how you do that: Pick one focus breaker on the list that troubles you the most – for example, attempting too much. Attempting too much breaks our focus because we spread ourselves too thin.

In your time-management tool, write the positive version of your focus breaker to make it a focus *maker*. Instead of attempting too much, your goal is to be realistic about how much you attempt, so you could write, “I never attempt too much.”

However, because some people always prefer to state things positively, you could write, “I am realistic about my daily goals.”

Write this statement on your activity list every day. Practice it every day for the next three weeks. Practice it just as you would practice your golf swing, playing the piano, or any activity you want to improve.

At the end of three weeks, it will be part of your work style to avoid attempting too much.

Next, pick another focus breaker on the list and control that one. Do this on an ongoing basis and your ability to focus will get better and better. Don't try to control all of your focus breakers at once. Work on one at a time throughout the year. As you do so, your "NO muscle" will get stronger and stronger. It's not all that difficult and, in the end, it is highly rewarding.

Now, what about all the focus breaker activities that are system-imposed or externally motivated? These are the activities we are often sucked into that cause us to break our focus as well as make us feel irritated and frustrated.

Can we say no to all of them? Not really, but to many of them, we can.

Now, complete the system-imposed, external, focus-breakers assessment.

Pause the program now.

Welcome back! What did you learn from that survey? Are you letting a lot of system-imposed challenges destroy your ability to focus? The way you address this type of focus breaker is to pick one interruption, distraction, or irritation that breaks your focus. Then ask yourself, "Is it within my power to do something about this?" If not, change your mindset, adapt, suck it up, and stop worrying about it!

If you can do something about it, develop a plan and resolve it. Fix one focus breaker at a time, but work on a series of them throughout the year. That's the easy and most effective way.

In our book *Attack Your Day*, we concentrate upon our ability to say NO! Saying no to interruptions and distractions that are not necessary is a quick fix that pays huge dividends and it is the best way to protect our focus.

The most common activities that break our focus are interruptions and distractions by others. If we have a WIMPY NO muscle, we are going to be dominated by those things. Dealing with this is easy. All you really need to know is the *four response options* and the *three focus techniques* for saying NO! Here is how it works.

Let's assume that you have just been interrupted by another person. This is when you decide as you respond which of the options you are going to employ. The four response options are really very easy to use, but how do you decide? Simply color your choices, of course.

The four response options are:

- Respond. Do it now when it's red.
- Reschedule for a later time when it's green or yellow and the event can be postponed.
- Refer to someone else if it's not in your domain.
- Refuse to do it when it's gray. This is where you use your NO muscle.

Now, let's talk about the three techniques for refusing, or saying no.

Number one is the *immediate response method*. This is when you refuse a request on the spot immediately after it's made.

There are four elements you can include in your refusal statement to soften the response.

The elements are:

1. A desire to be helpful.
2. A singular reason you can't.
3. Regret.
4. A thank you for asking.

Here is an example of the refusal statement using those elements: "I'd love to, but I can't right now because I have too much on my plate. I'm really sorry, but thanks for asking." This is a classy approach most people will feel good about.

Caution! When giving a singular reason for saying no, such as "I've got too much on my plate," don't give details. The more specific reasons you give, the less persuasive you will sound. You are not obligated to give reasons.

The second method for saying no is number two, the *delay tactic*. This is when you are unsure and you want to think through the request. Often, people say yes when they should say no because they are under the pressure of the moment.

A sample statement is, "I'd like to, but I'm not sure I can. Give me some time to think about it and I'll get back to you." After thinking about it, if you decide you can't, then use a refusal statement with the elements previously described.

The next method, number three, is what we call *the helping hand approach*. This technique is driven by a sincere desire to be helpful, even though you must say, no. For example, recommend to the person someone else who might assist him/her or you could suggest alternative solutions. You might also agree to commit to a limited amount of time on the project. It's always good time management to lend a helping hand when you can.

Practice these techniques and your NO muscle will get stronger and stronger.

Attack Your Day - Conclusion

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You've probably noticed that the activity-management skills we have been discussing throughout this presentation are all intended to do one thing. They are intended to improve your ability to focus upon and execute your most crucial activities. Let's consider what they are one last time.

Activity choosing. This involves selecting the most important activities on which you should focus.

Activity arranging. This involves planning how, when, where and the order for focusing upon and executing the day's most vital activities.

Activity flexicuting. This involves the skill of shifting your focus throughout the day as priorities change.

Activity tracking. This involves the skillful use of time-management tools to ensure that nothing on which you should focus falls through the cracks.

Activity focus. Without focusing, nothing can get done.

I would like conclude with a story. It was probably the most amazing night my father Trapper ever had. He had flown in to Houston, Texas to dine with a friend who had just returned from the moon. His name was Jim Irwin. Jim was one of the Apollo 15 astronauts; my father had known Jim his whole life.

There Trapper was with the man on the moon and he could ask any question he wanted about this amazing lunar trip. He did ask questions, countless questions. Then he said, "Jim, stop a moment. I must ask you a singular question. Out of all those experiences you had up there on the moon, what was the single most compelling thing?"

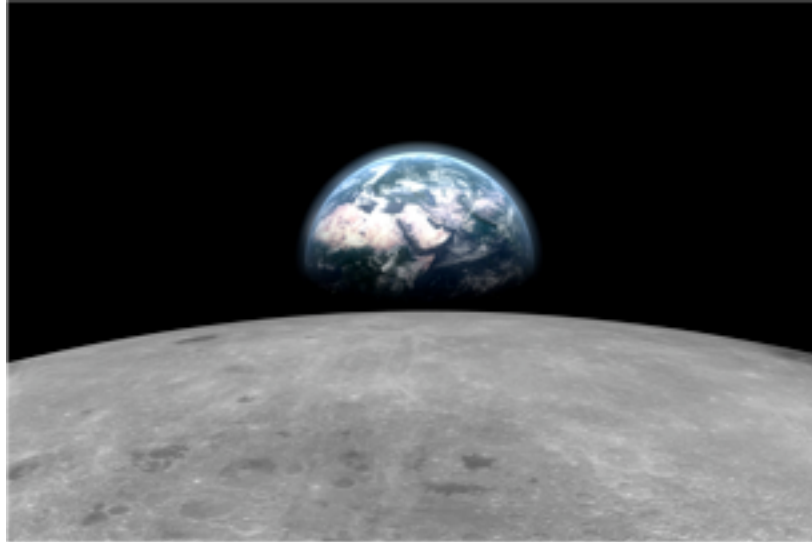
Jim paused in thought for a moment. Then his eyes opened a little wider, he got a big smile on his face and said, "I'll tell you what that one thing was. It was to orbit the moon and watch the earth rise. It was to see this magnificent planet of ours come up as a tiny blue and white marble, so small, in fact, that you can reach out and cover it with your thumbnail. There is something about that experience which is quite compelling."

Then, Jim added, "If you want to get life's challenges, life's frustrations in their proper perspective, why don't you give that a try? Orbit the moon and watch the earth rise. There is something about that which just shrinks life's problems down to size."

Trapper learned a valuable principle that night. He called it the *Principle of Perspective*. He said you and I can be so close to situations, conditions, and opportunities that we don't really see what's there. We are too close.

In Irwin's case, it was the planet. He lived here! However, when he was able to leave the planet and view it in a different perspective, it changed his life forever.

Trapper saw Jim Irwin come back from the moon changed as a life manager and changed as a time manager and Jim devoted the rest of his life to the service of humanity.



I am telling you this story because Jim Irwin attacked his life. He used these same principles to achieve his goal of going to the moon.

- He demonstrated the skill of *choosing*. He chose the activities necessary to become an astronaut.
- He then *arranged his activity plate*. He did the activities in the right sequence.
- He had to *make quick decisions* that were critical to his ability to become an astronaut.
- He *tracked all of his activities* to ensure that nothing fell through the cracks.
- He *focused on his ultimate goal* of going to the moon.

You, too, can accomplish anything you choose to do. Aim high, shoot for the moon and get what you want out of life by managing your daily-activity traffic with these five skills.

You can do it! It's easier than most people think. It all begins with these five skills.