

What is the Best and Highest Use of Your Time?

By Mark Matteson

If you try to teach a pig to sing, two things happen:

1. You annoy the pig.
2. You waste your time—and your money!

Each of us gets paid for our contribution to the marketplace, whether we have our own company or we work for someone else. It is the quality and quantity of our contribution that determines our value to the organization and the corresponding income we earn. Want to earn more money? Find a way to improve your service to others.

Years ago I came across a formula—more like a natural law—that has stuck with me. You and I are paid in direct proportion to:

1. the demand for what we do,
2. our ability to do that job,
3. the difficulty of replacing us.

The most powerful asset you have is your earning ability. By applying your knowledge and skills to your work, you bring value to the customer, value to your employer, and value to yourself. You could lose everything (and I have a couple of times): your house, your car, your job, and your bank account. But as long as you still have your earning ability, you can make it all back and more besides.

Hey, I know times are tough for many of my readers. Many a 401k has become a 201k. Clients are asking for more and for less money. What CAN you do? Well, one strategy is to go to work on your skills and knowledge; go to work on what you bring to the table. Be honest with yourself. Take stock of your unique talents and abilities.

Would you say you are world class at what you do? Are you best in the country, best in the state, best in the county, best in the city, best in your community, or even best in your house? Pick one and be honest. Then go to work.

A question I have been asking myself for over 20 years might just be the very thing that allows you to keep your job in tough times. It might be the very thing that creates the idea for a new product or service. Here it is: How can I increase my service to others? This question is simple, powerful, and rarely asked or answered.

Here are some additional questions for you to ask yourself early in the morning or on the next long drive or commute. Keep a pen or tape recorder handy; they are powerful questions:

- What is the best and highest use of my time?
- What is it I do especially well that few people can match?
- What am I really good at?
- What comes easy to me?
- What has been responsible for past success AND was fun?
- What have I received praise and compliments for?
- If I could do any part of my job, what aspects would I choose that are high-leverage?
- What is my contribution to this organization and how can I increase it?

Once you know the answers to these questions, chances are you have identified your bliss. When you are following your bliss, you “time distort” and lose track of time. It’s naturally fun and easy.

When I am speaking, facilitating, writing, and consulting, time flies. They are the four elements of my work that represent my bliss. If I invest 80 percent of my time in these activities, they are the best and highest use of my time. My most successful clients are the ones who have identified what they do well and most enjoy.

You cannot do everything. Expectations keep changing; we are being asked to do more with less. When you leverage the magical 20 percent that dramatically improves your contribution, you have more energy, more peace of mind, and more security. Now is not the time to take it easy. I dislike the phrase *Take it easy*. NO! Show up early, stay late, and work smarter. Ever notice that people who say it are not at the top of their game? They tend to be on the bottom rung of the socio-economic ladder. Innovate. THINK! Bring some new ideas to your boss that will lower operating costs or increase sales. Let *everyone else* take it easy.

Consider delegating those tasks that waste your time, don't bring you joy, you loathe, and, hey, you are not good at! Invest that time in improving your knowledge and skills in high-leverage activities. Invest in yourself. Twenty years ago, in the midst of a recession, I started attending seminars on my own dime. I began poring through every sales book I could find. I went to work on my skills and service to others. This is the key to unlocking your personal and professional potential. Forget trying to teach a pig to sing. He will only get madder than he already is.

Father's Day is June 21. My father passed away almost four years ago. I think about him almost every day. When I received the news he had Alzheimer's, the manuscript for *Freedom from Fear FOREVER* was half complete. The news affected the finished product. If you have not read the sequel to *Freedom from Fear*, perhaps now is the time to order it. It's the perfect father/son gift. If you order during the next 72 hours, I will add as a bonus the following digital gifts:

- two uncommon children's stories dealing with grief, one on Alzheimer's, that you can forward to loved ones suffering from the effects of that disease,
- two e-books, *Customer Service Excellence* and *Sales Success Strategies*,
- a *Special Report* on humor.

I will even pick up the cost of shipping and handling...Happy Father's Day.

Postscript

A successful life is a paradox. While we increase our service to others, we also need to take better care of ourselves. Below is a list of activities that make certain you lower your stress levels and increase your energy. You will need to have extra energy; more coffee is not the answer. Try any or all of the following simple and easy-to-integrate ways to RE-Create. They come from some of the finest minds in wellness and health.

1. Drink twice the water you do now. Drink a big glass upon awakening and a glass ten minutes before every meal. You will eat less. Most people are dehydrated and it manifests itself in lethargy and weakened muscles.
2. Sleep with the window open. Fresh air matters. It will detoxify.
3. Stretch more. Upon awakening, invest a couple of minutes reaching for the ceiling and touching your toes. Watch your cat after a nap.
4. Go for a twenty-minute walk every day. If you can walk in the woods, all the better.
5. Eat fruit for breakfast and skip the bagel or donut.
6. Carve out five to ten minutes for quiet time. Sit in a chair, close your eyes, and simply BE. Empty your mind.
7. Take a hot bath. Light a candle, put on some music, and lock the door. It is 20 minutes for you.

Nah, you'd better not. You don't want to be too wonderful!

Book of the Month

Eat That Frog!: 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time by Brian Tracy

I was in Kinko's the other day and the title grabbed my attention. Brian has been a mentor and inspiration to me for over 15 years. This little book has sold over 500,000 copies. It's a great little bathroom book with short chapters that are primers for success, simple ideas to change your life.

Here are some quotes from this little gem to tease you:

Do your work, not just your work and no more, but a little more for the lavishing sake—that little more which is worth all the rest.

—Dean Briggs

The only certain means of success is to render more and better service than is expected of you, no matter what that task may be.

—Og Mandino

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.

—Teddy Roosevelt

Every great man or woman has become great in proportion to confining his or her powers to one channel.

—Orison Swett Marden

We always have enough time, if we but use it aright.

—Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.

—Alan Lakein

And herein lies the secret of true power. Learn by constant practice, how to husband your resources; concentrate them at any give moment upon a given point.

—James Allen
