

## **7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life – including your own!**

Businesses are made up of people! I know, it's obvious!

But sometimes we need to be reminded that all the individual 'spokes' are necessary in order to make the 'wheel' turn!

You, your organisation, and your colleagues can all benefit from reading and **IMPLEMENTING** the following information.

Just thinking about it is not enough. Do it!

OK. 7 Things to do – here we go.

## 1. STOP!

That's right, stop. Stop everything. Give yourself time to reflect.

Most people give more time to planning their next holiday than they do to planning their lives. Is that you? Could you tell me next year's holiday plans, but not your 3-year life plan?

Why? Maybe because it's easier to run away from the huge issues behind making yourself responsible for your life!

Maybe you do not really believe that you can control your life – not controlling what happens to you (because we are all going to have unwelcome things happen to us), but controlling how you react to whatever comes into your life. That's the real secret.

I remember once reading a useful definition of success which went something like this:

***"Success in life is when you get up one more time than you get knocked down"***

After all, if the holiday is a mess, we can arrange another one, but life is not a dress rehearsal. The good news is, you have more choice than you may think in how your life develops.

And it begins with reflection, "Who am I really, and is that who I wish to continue being?"

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

In the coaching profession (see [www.axnbiz.com](http://www.axnbiz.com) ), there is a very useful model called the "GROW" model. It is used, amongst other things, to establish the reality of the current situation, and it can be used as follows:

**G** – *Goals to be achieved*

**R** – *Reality of the situation*

**O** – *Opportunities available, however distant or unlikely, and*

**W** – *What next?*

Most people, when asked for their goals, will give some fuzzy, big-picture hype which is very short on detail; for example, "In three years, I want to be the CEO/Head of ....."

This was an actual 'goal' said to me by a senior executive in a major international bank when I put this question to him. When I asked him to give me some more detail, it took six visits over a period of three months before he could describe the touch, taste, smell, emotion, and reality of being a CEO/Head. And, only when he could give me the details I asked for was he able to begin to plot a realistic way to achieve this goal – because now he really knew what the destination looked like.

Oh! And he made it within two and a half years – he was promoted **AND** given the job in the country that he wanted.

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

Now, some people will tell you always to set 'achievable' goals. After all, what's the point in setting a target so high that you could not possibly achieve it? Others will say, "Set the largest, most stretching goals you can conceive. Hey! Even if you only get half-way there, it will be a lot further than that other person's small goals"

I have news for you – Stay Away from Little People (with apologies to Mark Twain). I am not talking here about short or physically underdeveloped people. No, stay away from people with small minds.

The ones who are only too happy to tell you how many ways you could fail. The ones who will smile to your face, while laughing behind your back and telling everyone else how silly you are about to look.

The ones who do not want you to succeed, because then they have no excuse for their own failure.

Sadly, many of these 'small people' are in your closest circle; part of your family, amongst your 'friends'. Your success is, they think, an unspoken accusation against their lack of the same. You try to share your efforts with them, and instead they tell you how 'lucky' you were.

As has been said:

***"Success is all luck – ask any failure"***

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

The following short questionnaire may help you to see where you are. Answer honestly, you are the only one looking at it!

Score the following questions on a scale of 1 – 5.

1 = low; needs lots of attention

3 = keep an eye on this; needs some attention

5 = OK; satisfactory

1	3	5
---	---	---

How clearly defined are your goals?

--	--	--

Do you know where you want to be and what you want from that place?

--	--	--

How would you rate your career flexibility?

--	--	--

Are you doing what interests you?

--	--	--

How motivated are you in your current position?

--	--	--

Does your current position support your career goals?

--	--	--

I admit, it isn't rocket science, but when was the last time you actually asked yourself these questions? More importantly, when was the last time you **DID** anything about them?

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

Something else to consider – if you are not thinking about or planning for yourself and your future, who do you think is?

## 2. Prioritise.

Ever heard of Stephen Covey? His "**7 Habits of Highly Effective People**"<sup>©</sup> is widely known, and has helped many people toward a clearer view of career, family, and personal life. He insists:

**"The key is not to prioritise what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities."**

What he is saying is the classic foundation of 'Time Management' (which, by the way, is impossible – everyone gets the same 24 hours each day, your only control is how you spend them). It's choice management, not time management.

Do not let other people tell you what your priorities are, and then try to fit them into your busy day. Work out what your priorities are, and then fit other people into your prioritised day – but only fit in the ones that serve your needs!

What? Tell my boss he has to fit in with my plans? Are you crazy?

Actually, No! I am not crazy. Look back to the short questionnaire in the first section – look at your answers, and if they are mainly in the 1 – 3 boxes, you may be in the wrong place. With the wrong boss. And the wrong attitude.

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

I am reasonably sure that, on their death-bed, no-one has ever said:

### **"I wish I had spent more time in the office"**

So, where do you put your efforts, your priorities? There are three areas of your life to which you must attend:

- Career – would you like to know the secret to giving up work? It's really simple – do only things that you love!
- Family – what do you need from them, and what do they need from you.
- Life – are you a spectator or a participant?

**First**, your career. Let me tell you a personal secret. I have actually retired twice – and I now put in longer hours, do more traveling and see more people, than I did when I was "working". Why? Simple. I decided to concentrate on what I really enjoyed doing, and refused to do anything that did not contribute 100% to that aim. Then it became fun, not work.

I do only what I wish to do, with the people I like and at a mutually-convenient time. If you think about it, that **is** like being retired – being in complete control of your daily schedule.

Some of you reading this will be saying, "Come on! I have bills to pay, kids to feed, places to go. I can't just decide to retire and do what I want!"

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

No? If someone gave you the chance to do exactly that, would you know immediately what it was that you wanted to do with the rest of your professional life? Do you have a plan, a route map? Or is it just a vision?

**“Vision without action is a dream, action without vision is a nightmare”**

*Manfred Kets de Vries*

You can continue to blame everyone else for the situation you find yourself in, or you can begin to do something about it. You can decide what it is that you enjoy, and then become very good at it.

**Second**, your family. You can, in many cases, pick your friends, but family is what you are born with – or what you later marry into! Every family has the ‘good news’ and the ‘bad news’, and you have to deal with it. You can try ignoring it, but it won’t go away (actually, that’s not strictly true, but it does depend on you outliving them!).

When you begin a family of your own, you will carry over to them all of the things that make you an individual, and your partner will do likewise. Between the two of you, the children that you raise will be a reflection of your views of the world, and of your definition of reality.

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

But what if there is no reality? What if every thing that you call 'truth' could be shown to be nothing more than your own, personal prejudices? And, if you wished, you could change your 'truth' at will?

Top quality Leadership workshops (see [www.axnbiz.com](http://www.axnbiz.com)) often include reference to something called the "Ladder of Inference". Fig 1 below is a copy of a slide taken from such a course designed and delivered by ABI to many middle and senior managers, worldwide.

**Fig 1. The Ladder of Inference**



Start at the bottom, and work your way up the ladder, step by step. You begin by observing (or have someone tell you their observations about) something.

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

As you ascend the ladder, you finally reach the point of taking actions based on your adopted beliefs (the arrow on the right). However, the arrow on the left is there to remind you that you are acting not on the **'truth'** but on what you **CHOSE** to accept/believe from the initial situation.

So, if your truth no longer serves your needs, you can choose to change it! This is simple, but it is not easy. It is as simple as the original climbing that you did, but it is not easy because now you may have to admit that you have been wrong about your life so far.

**"If you don't like it, change it; if you cannot change it, change your attitude to it"**

Maya Angelou

Either way, you will give yourself the possibility of becoming to yourself, your family, and the rest of the world something that you would be proud to leave as your legacy.

**Third**, your life. Can you remember what it is they say on the pre-flight safety briefing for just about every aircraft in the world? It's the bit when they are talking about the possible need for oxygen, but not to worry as the masks will drop automatically from the roof.

The important bit comes next. What is it that they tell you to do immediately?

### **PUT ON YOUR OWN MASK FIRST.**

Why? So that you are in a position to assist anyone else who may be having trouble, of course. If you are not able to help yourself, how can you help anyone else?

This is a good thing to keep in mind for those days when you think it may be 'selfish' to put your needs ahead of someone else. Do you have a place in your home/office/garden/neighbourhood where it is just for you? Somewhere for you to go and replenish your own 'oxygen'?

Maybe it is just a place in your head – a few moments just for you, inside your thoughts, working only for you. Do not feel guilty; you need to be able first to help yourself before you can offer to help me.

If you will take the time to prioritise the things in your world that you can control; to put in order the things that you see as being important to your future, there is a great chance that you will take a major leap forwards in achieving your true potential. In all areas of your life.

### **3. Delegate.**

You know, just like your boss does – always telling everyone else to do his work for him/her. That's what it feels like, sometimes, doesn't it?

Have you ever wondered how a Consultant or a self-employed person decides how much to charge his clients? The cynics amongst you will say that they charge as much as they can to rip you off, stopping just before you get to the point of wanting to rip something off them – preferably their head!

There is a much more scientific way, and it is so simple that it almost seems too easy. And the real beauty of it is that it can be modified by every single person to suit their own needs.

The process begins with the decision by the individual as to what level of income they require to meet their needs – and if this changes in the future, the figures can be changed instantly. This is another reason why prioritising your life is so important.

Then decide how many days are available to you to deliver or carry out your chosen profession. Many Consultants will take an average of 180 working days per year as being a useful start point (they need weekends, holidays, days for marketing and business development, possible illness, etc, from the 365 days we all have each year).

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

Then, you divide the 180 days into the total income you wish to achieve and the result is the daily rate you will have to charge to meet your target income.

For example, if you wanted an annual income of, say, \$54,000 and you chose 180 days as your availability, then \$54,000 divided by 180 gives a daily income of \$300. All you have to do now is work out how to deliver \$300 worth of service to your clients for each available day and you win! Break it down into hourly rates if you need to, or even to cost per 15 minutes of your day (as the legal profession does).

Of course, your personal targets, and the field in which you work, will impact your decisions, but the mathematics of the issue is very simple.

Need more income? Raise the hourly/daily rate or, if this is not possible, work more hours/days!

The reality soon comes home to self-employed people that being your own boss is great, but time is not 'free'. The idea that time has a cost becomes central to their world, and you should think in the same way, even if you are not self-employed.

What is an hour of your time worth to you? Are you doing things because 'it's easier to do it myself than to show them how to do it'? If you are – and who is not guilty of this at some time – then you are actually losing not once, but twice.

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

Firstly, you are losing the time that you could be giving to things of more importance (maybe to your family or your life?), and, secondly, you are preventing the other person from ever learning how to do the thing for themselves. You are ensuring that you will always have to do the task for them, and yet you will still complain about not having enough time in your day.

What follows is a 7-point check list to ensure that your delegation works. It is biased towards your working environment, but it can be adapted for all areas of your life. Use it.

### **Fig 2. Making Delegation Work for You.**

#### **Seven Ways to Make Delegation Work:**

##### **1. Find Opportunities**

Always be on the lookout for opportunities to guide staff and delegate tasks that will help them to develop and save time for you. In the beginning, you will have to think carefully about each step you are taking and devote time and effort to getting it right.

In time, as you become more skillful, the process will come more naturally. The ultimate aim is to be able to delegate automatically so that both you and your staff cease to think of delegation as anything special – it becomes “just the way we do things around here!”

##### **2. Total Understanding of Expectations**

Always try to ensure that there is complete understanding of what you are asking people to do; the expected outcomes, the limits you are imposing and the authority you are delegating. If they do not understand, you cannot expect them to do it correctly, and they will only understand if they know it is accepted to ask as many questions as it takes.

##### **3. Complete Tasks**

Delegate complete tasks, not pieces. If a project is large then break it down into self-contained, smaller elements. Delegate the elements to different individuals but as part of the larger team/project. Delegation is about giving them the

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

responsibility to complete the job successfully without you taking it back for a while!

### **4. Involve and Inform**

The process of change requires you to inform your staff and to keep them involved if you want their co-operation and commitment. Think of this as seeing 'eye-to-eye': 'I' for involvement and 'I' for information. But it is eye-to-eye co-operation, as in both looking together at the same distant goal, not eye-to-eye confrontation.

### **5. Let them do it**

Resist the temptation to interfere and do it yourself. If you are going to do it yourself after all then it is better not to delegate it in the first place. Taking back a delegated task leads to resentment and hurt pride. Only take back a task in an emergency or if you are delegating a bigger task, and then only to help them to free up enough time to complete the bigger task in the time permitted.

### **6. Allow mistakes to learn from, but prevent disasters**

People will make mistakes, but with good monitoring, including the safety net of preset limits, and with honest feedback, there need be no disasters. Build a culture that treats mistakes as an opportunity to learn, not an opportunity to blame. Remember the saying:

"Anyone who never made a mistake, never made anything".

### **7. Praise in public, reprimand in private**

Praise is one of the greatest rewards of all and it is a strong motivator. The positive effects of praise can be doubled if others are aware of it, so praise in public but reprimand in private. Better not to have to reprimand at all. If you are doing your monitoring job well there should be no call for reprimands, although there may well be times for mutual problem solving.

*(Adapted from: Leadership Essentials, ABI Leadership Series;  
[www.axnbiz.com](http://www.axnbiz.com))*

### **4. Focus.**

At first glance, this may seem similar to 'Prioritising', but there is a significant difference. When you focus - on yourself or anything else - you achieve a number of things.

Once focused on one thing, it is difficult to 'see' anything else. Providing your focus is in the correct place, you will remove time for doubt or second-guessing because you will be so busy doing whatever it is that you are focused on.

But how do you achieve that level of focus? It requires that you know yourself on a level more involved than you may ever have achieved before. It goes beyond your experience, your opinions, the thoughts of your friends or family, and even your beliefs.

Think back to what was said earlier about deciding what level of income you require in order to be free to do only what you wish to do. What is that level? Can you state a number which, if it were 'magically' to appear in your bank account every month, would free you from ever having to work again?

When asked to give this number, most people hide behind some made-up figure, typically \$10 Million, or \$100 Million, or some other fanciful amount that seems exciting to them.

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

In fact, there is another simple technique to decide what it would take to get you out of "The Rat Race". The Rat Race is the term given to the daily grind of having to go to work to be paid your salary. Then, at the end of the month, you can meet your bills and plan for that holiday we mentioned.

You are being paid only when you are at work (or on your contractual holidays). Basically, you are selling your time – no work, no pay! If you could find a way to produce a passive income that covered all of your bills, you could stop 'working' and do only those things that you loved to do.

So, in order to leave 'The Rat Race' you need to look at some way of producing a passive income. At this point, many people turn to the Internet, looking for quick ways to earn a fortune 'for only 5 minutes a week'. Some find it, the rest of us (about 99.99% of the population) quickly work out that the only way to earn more is to work smarter – we are already working harder.

How do you see the world? What is your natural way of dealing with issues like this? The answer may surprise you. There is a way in which you (or someone else) can look inside your head, and see what it is that you have taken from your own "Ladder of Inference", and how you can use that to your advantage.

The British Psychological Society (BPS) registers practitioners who have been professionally trained and certified to access and deliver psychometric test and

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

assessment tools. These tools can offer a tremendous insight into the individual and his or her way of seeing the world, and offer insight into how they think the world sees them.

This is one area where self-help is limited. The advice I offer here is simple – go and find a certified, registered, experienced practitioner who has direct experience of your world and ask them to profile you.

There are people in most regions who can do this (see [www.axnbiz.com](http://www.axnbiz.com)) and the investment you make will repay itself many times over. No sane person would ever set out on a journey into unknown territory without a good map or knowledge of the ground ahead. Also, it makes it very difficult to reach any destination if you do not know where you are starting from.

A word of caution here, do not go on-line looking for free 'tests' or 'assessments' upon which you are prepared to base your entire future. There is a reason that all valid and serious tools are kept under lock and key, and accessible only to licensed practitioners – messing around in your head can have serious consequences!

### **5. Communicate.**

I'm sure that you communicate every day. I'm not so sure that what you communicate is the message you actually meant to give. A great philosopher once remarked:

**"I never know what I have said until I hear your answer to it"**

Wittgenstein

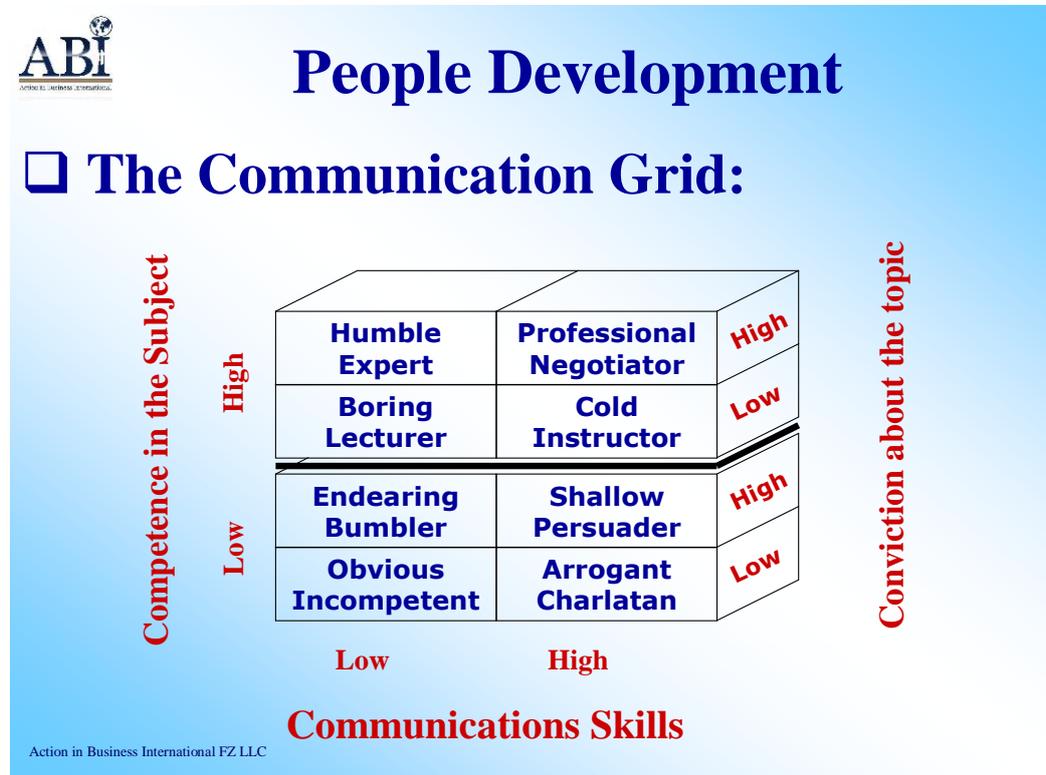
Just because you said it, does not mean that I understood it!

We use verbal communication more than most other forms, although it is well known that the human population is divided into four classes of communication preference (Visual, Auditory (verbal), Kinesthetic and Digital – for details see almost any work on Neuro-Linguistic-Programming).

Below is a diagram from a specialist communication workshop designed by ABI (see [www.axnbiz.com](http://www.axnbiz.com)). It outlines the various kinds of communication that can occur, concentrating on the verbal method, and I am sure that some of the examples given will be familiar to you.

## Fig 3. Communication.

The Communication Grid helps us to understand the different ways in which we can affect our audience.



Which box are you?

What should be clear from this is that, in order for us to be truly confident in our communications, we need three things:

- **Competence** – in the topic in which we are trying to communicate; it is not possible to pass on something that we do not understand ourselves.
- **Conviction** – enthusiasm for what we are communicating is infectious; people love to hear

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

enthusiastic people. After all, if you are not excited by it, why should anyone else be?

- **Communication Skills** – the most important message in the world will be ignored if the messenger is unable to correctly, clearly, communicate it. Not just the words/language being used, but the cultural and social context in which it is being offered.

For an overwhelming number of people their worst communications fear is the scenario where the boss walks in and informs them that they are going to be giving the office/department/group presentation next week!

This 'fear' is often listed amongst the top three fears of people in business, worldwide, and is reportedly greater than the fear of job-loss or even divorce!

Is that enthusiasm on your face, or sheer terror!

Face it; you are going to have to learn to deliver presentations, to communicate in the business world, if you are ever to achieve your full potential. And don't fool yourself by thinking that a few mumbles into your mirror will make the problem go away. Get help.

At the very least, find a friend or willing assistant who will be an audience for you, and then practice until you know the material by heart.

Better yet, find a local branch of "Toastmasters" © or its local equivalent (assuming that your training

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

department does not have an in-house solution) and sign up for however long it takes.

As with most things in life, the only thing to be feared is fear itself. We do not enjoy feeling foolish, or incompetent, and we often believe that we are the only people suffering from a particular issue.

Nothing could be further from the truth, and, as with all fears, conquering them can bring the most profound changes into our lives.

As a professional presenter, I actively seek opportunities to stand up in front of strangers and offer my thoughts and opinions. And I still (after 50+ years) get an adrenaline rush in my gut every time I do it. In fact, I have often stated that, the day I stand up to speak and I **DON'T** get that rush, is the day that I will stop presenting.

Some nervousness is a good thing, it stops you becoming complacent! Practice and professional support will take care of the rest.

### 6. Just Do It

This may be the shortest section in this report – whatever you decide to do, in whatever direction you decide to take your career, your family, your life - **JUST DO IT.**

I am not suggesting that you suddenly throw away all that you have been planning for in your life. In fact, I began this report by saying to you that you should **STOP** and give yourself some time for reflection.

That is still my first instruction, but once you (and by that I mean you and everyone else in your life that you feel has a right to be heard) have made a decision then take action on it.

Ever heard of the saying, “**Paralysis by Analysis**”? Some people take so long to cover all of the possible outcomes or factors that life has passed them by before anything gets done.

Go and read some of the work attributed to Wilfredo Pareto, the Italian economist from the early-1900s (see [www.axnbiz.com](http://www.axnbiz.com)). His work, known as the “Pareto Principle” but more often referred to as the ‘80/20’ Principle, is a clear indication that you will never have the time or the opportunity to learn ‘the whole truth and nothing but the truth’.

## 7 Things You Can Do **NOW** to Stop Wasting Everyone's Life

---

Basically, his work proves that 80% of your issues will come from 20% of your sources, and that the time needed to achieve 100% mastery over a subject stretches to infinity.

So, **JUST DO IT!**

### **7. Celebrate.**

Actually, I think this might be the shortest section in the report. 😊

Just as when we spoke earlier about making time for yourself – it isn't selfish, it's essential – then you also need to know when to celebrate.

I often tell my coaching clients that "it has taken all your life to get to this day, don't expect to change it by next Tuesday!" In fact, significant change rarely happens quickly; exceptions tend to be serious issues of health, family, and/or life situations.

However, if and when you achieve a measurable change in whatever it is that you are attempting to effect, then give yourself permission to recognise the effort you have put in. We like to be praised, and that extends to giving ourselves praise for a task well done.

In fact, every single day you should be celebrating the life you are creating, secure in the knowledge that you are taking as much control of it as it is possible to do.

It's your life, your career, your family – celebrate the opportunity to make it the best it can possibly be.

*Further reading, and more free reports, are available on: [www.axnbiz.com](http://www.axnbiz.com).*