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Gaining the Most Value for Your Time

By Paul J. Meyer

How are some professionals able to get better results and to make more money, but put in the same or fewer hours than others? The answer is the slight edge. When you put into practice the principles of the slight edge, you will enjoy positive results almost immediately.

Doubling your knowledge, hours on the job, or personal skills is not necessary to double your effectiveness and your value to the organization. The sports world provides a clear example of the slight edge. A baseball player with a .350 batting average often commands a salary many times that of a player who bats only .250. Yet the difference between the two is only one hit in every 10 times at bat. Even a small improvement in performance may increase your effectiveness, value, and return many times over.

Seriously consider changes you can make in these areas where the slight edge increases your value as a leader:

1. *Human Relations and Communication.* Since a manager's job is to work with and through people to accomplish desired results, good human relations are vital to your success. Communication takes on many faces and is an integral component of good human relations. Maintaining

a climate of open communication and a spirit of cooperation enables you to maximize the interests and strengths of each team member. Good human relations and open, skillful communication also help you to anticipate pitfalls or problems and to take corrective action before they become serious. Not only do good human relations skills help you prevent problems, they can help you transform potential troublemakers into team players who are personally productive and exert a positive influence on other members of the group. The ability to communicate effectively and build solid human relations can determine your overall success.



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2. *Planning and Scheduling.* Making sure that the work is done on time is one of your most important functions. Sometimes a 24-hour delay is serious enough to cause the loss of a valuable client for the organization. In such a case being just a little bit late

is as disastrous as being two weeks late. A relatively small improvement in planning and scheduling could enable you to meet every deadline, prevent overtime, unjam bottlenecks, and reduce the frustration from working from a crisis position.

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3. *Time Management.* Controlling your time frees the critical hours required for planning and scheduling. Effective time management allows you to target your number one priority, enhances performance, increases productivity, and adds momentum to your pursuit of long-term goals.

4. *Decision Making and Problem Solving.* Improve decision-making and problem-solving skills and you gain a slight edge that pays enormous dividends. A decision correctly made at the right time or a problem solved when it first surfaces is far more valuable than trying to put the pieces back together after a crisis. Preventing a fire requires far less time and effort than fighting a blaze raging out of control.

5. *Team Building.* The members of your work group, department, or division bring a variety of talents, training, interests, and commitment to the goals of your organization. Learn to meld your team into a smoothly functioning unit and to focus the resulting synergistic force on the accomplishment of organizational goals. As your team members gain an identity as a smoothly operating team, rather than just a group of different individuals, the work accomplished will be greater, and so will the satisfaction of a job well done.

6. *The Big Picture.* When you improve your ability to think of the potential of the organization as a whole, you enhance relationships with people at every level of the organization. You make more effective decisions and increase the value of your contribution to the overall objectives of the organization. An important part of your contribution is your ability to train others and get them to accept responsibility so they become increasingly effective team members. Thinking more in terms of the whole organization is essential whether you want to move higher in the organizational structure or to continue sharpening your skills and increasing your effectiveness in your present position.

7. *An Attitude of Ownership.* Demonstrate in your words and actions an “attitude of ownership” toward your work. With an attitude of ownership, you act as if you are an owner of the business rather than just an employee. You become even more concerned with matters like client satisfaction and the profitability of the organization. When

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you encourage an attitude of ownership among employees, they gain a sense of belonging and importance, and the quality of their work reflects this. An attitude of ownership causes you and your staff to take pride in every aspect of your work.

Tap Into Your Creative Side

The crowning trait of personal leadership is creativity. Creativity is an even finer art than pure inventive genius. It is a conceptual skill, the willingness to innovate, to try the untried, and to see the usual in unusual ways, and to relate the normally unrelated.

Creativity abounds when your attitudes are uninhibited by conditioning and convention. Creativity allows you to face a changing world and an uncertain future without fear. You are competitive. You are comparatively at ease in unstructured situations and unperturbed even when conditions around you are out of control. You are never awed by mystery. You are a good person to have around during a crisis.

As a creative person, you can listen to others with understanding – not only for facts, but to absorb the emotional overtones of what is said. You evaluate what you hear with calmness and self-confidence; you trust your competence to decide when it is time to act.

Creativity operates not as a flash of light, but as the logical result of your ability to restructure previously unrelated bits of information. You investigate new relationships between facts, ignoring “the way it has always been done.” Creativity builds on a strong, mature personality and is expressed through self-respect, self-confidence and positive expectancy. It is the natural outgrowth of personal leadership.

