



Live Your Strengths

Welcome to the November 2009 edition of *Live Your Strengths*, the monthly e-newsletter from In Search of Excellence.

In this Edition:

- The Power of Focus
- Jumpstart 2010! Goal Setting Event – only 2 spots left!
- *Live Your Strengths* Monthly Challenge: Focus, Focus, Focus

The Power of Focus

Consider this statement for a moment and reflect on its truth: *The amount of success you have in achieving any goal will be directly related to the extent that you make it a **focus** in your life.* And by *focus*, I mean devoting time, energy, money and attention to your goal.

In the business world, if you want to learn what an organization's real priorities are, just examine where it invests its time and money. The same can be said for individuals; despite what many say are their goals and priorities, you can learn where they are actually placing their focus by looking at how they invest their time, attention, and financial resources.

In this month's newsletter, I'm going to discuss the power of focus and how you can bring more of it into your own life.

Do you ever get to the end of your day and wonder where the time has gone? You may feel like you've been running all day but don't have anything productive to show for it. You're not alone!

More than ever, the many distractions in our lives can make it difficult to find the time and space necessary to produce anything of quality. This frenetic pace has led people to feel that the only way they can cope is to multitask.

However, the word 'multitasking' itself is misleading. Regardless of the appearance of doing two things at once, in reality, your attention is shifting rapidly back and forth between the activities at which you are working. Although it seems like we are adding time and efficiency to our days by multitasking, recent research is proving otherwise; it seems that the human mind was just not meant to switch tasks very rapidly.

For example, a study conducted in 2005 at the University of Michigan found that 40% of a worker's productivity is wasted on 'task-switching', which is the time it takes to mentally re-engage when changing from one task to the next. Similarly, another study conducted at the University of California found that when people were distracted at work, they took an average of 25 minutes to return and concentrate on their original task.

In reality, multitasking and attempting to split your focus is actually costing time, rather than

saving it. Furthermore, the work that is produced during these periods will be of lesser quality because it is not receiving your full concentration.

So how do you fit in everything that needs to be done without multitasking? First and most importantly, identify what are the most critical activities that need to be accomplished and give them your complete, uninterrupted focus.

To ensure your most valuable activities are getting your full attention, try using the Pareto Principle. This principle is based on an economic pattern discovered by an Italian economist, Vilfredo Pareto, in 1897.

Pareto found that a small minority of earners were consistently responsible for a large majority of the total wealth. Since then, this phenomenon has also become known as the '80/20 principle' and it can be applied to most areas of life, not just economic patterns.

The Pareto Principle predicts that 80% of the value you receive will come from 20% of your work. Think about this in your own life – it is likely that a large majority of your income and/or referrals will come from a small number of your clients.

Similarly, you can see this principle working even in volunteer situations; the vast majority of the work is typically done by a small core of people, even though there may be a number of others who belong to the committee.

Now take this concept and apply it to your own goals. For each of your goals, you can probably identify what the key activities are that will have the most impact on your success. Can you imagine the impact you could have by devoting just 20% of your work day to these key activities?

For example, if you work an eight-hour day, that means the majority of your crucial activities could be completed within about 1.5 hours. However, you must be willing to completely focus on these activities for that period of time.

Are you ready to completely focus your time, energy and attention to achieve your goals? If so, join me in this month's *Live Your Strengths* challenge and/or join me at the *Jumpstart 2010 Goal Setting Event* next week (see below).

Jumpstart 2010! Goal Setting Event – only 2 spots left!

Don't wait until the New Year to get clear about the goals that will bring you greater success in 2010!

We have only 2 spots left for this energizing event next Friday (November 27) from 11:00 am - 3:00 pm at the Cox Creek Winery, just North of Guelph.

You will learn how to:

- Master effective goal setting
- Document important goals and the relevant measures of success
- Define expected results when goals are kept alive and relevant

This event is exclusively for women in business and will be an opportunity for you to learn, network and have fun. Most importantly, you will leave with a clear plan for achieving your goals

in 2010!

The investment is \$200 and includes a winery tour/tasting, lunch, facilitation, and all program materials.

For more information or to secure your spot, please contact me at denise@insearchofexcellence.ca or 519-923-9968 by Friday, November 20.

Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge: Focus, Focus, Focus

- 1) What are your most valuable activities? For each of your goals, identify where and how you contribute the most value to your company/family/health/volunteer activities.
- 2) Find times to devote completely to these activities—this means no phone or email interruptions and no multitasking during these times. You may find it easier to begin slowly and find even 45 minutes in your work day to block out as your *focus time*. Then, increase the time as you begin to see how effective it is.
- 3) You may need to experiment a little with the times to find when they will work best for you. Pay attention to your physical energy and attentiveness and schedule your focus time when you are at your peak productivity.
- 4) Begin by scheduling these times into your dayplanner for the next week. Once you've found your preferred focus times, schedule them into your calendar for the next month.
- 5) Keep your focus time as faithfully as you would if it was an appointment with an important client. Start on time, be prepared, and if something critical does arise that you need to take care of, reschedule that time immediately.
- 6) Who do you need to notify about your focus time? For example, if you work with others, do you need to let them know that you cannot be interrupted during certain periods? Or if you are working on personal goals, do you need to speak with your family members to make sure they understand how important these times are to you?

Could you use some guidance on this challenge? Call Denise for a free 30-minute coaching session to make this your best year yet!

Cheers,

Denise Cornfield-Furlong
In Search of Excellence
www.insearchofexcellence.ca
Tel: 519.923.9968
Fax: 519.923.9997
"Creating the Path to Your Potential"

Subscription Information

Do you know someone who would be interested in receiving the *Live Your Strengths*

newsletter? Please feel free to pass it on to those in your network.

Privacy Policy: I never rent, trade or sell my email list to anyone for any reason whatsoever.

Want to subscribe to this newsletter? Visit www.insearchofexcellence.ca for an easy on-line registration page.

Creating the path to your potential

In Search of Excellence
RR#1 Proton Station, ON N0C 1L0
Email: denise@InSearchofExcellence.ca
Phone: (519) 923-9968

© 2009 In Search of Excellence. All rights reserved.
If you no longer wish to receive e-mails from
In Search of Excellence please [click here to unsubscribe](#).