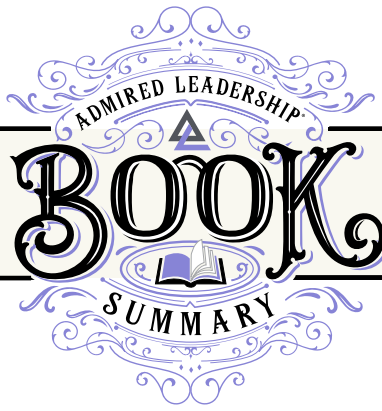




Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



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Procrastinate on Purpose

5 Permissions to Multiply Your Time

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In *Procrastinate on Purpose*, author Rory Vaden proposes a practical prescription to an increasingly complex and busy world. In our lives today, distraction is even more tempting, and “burnout” is more Googled than ever. The many options for how we spend our time and even the tools we use to help us can feel like too much to manage. Vaden asserts that we need to better manage ourselves, so we can continue enjoying work, creating with our teams, and being present for those we care about. The “five permissions” are Ignore, Invest, Imperfect, Incomplete, and Protect. These accompany five choices - Eliminate, Automate, Delegate, Procrastinate, and Concentrate - arranged in a “Focus Funnel” to help us better approach our work and the opportunities around us.

Key Quote

“There is no such thing as time management. There is only self-management.” — **Rory Vaden**

Key Concepts

What You Thought You Knew. People who produce results know: “Being busy is not a virtue. Balance is bogus. Leisure is not the ultimate finish line. And effectiveness isn’t what really matters” (p. 18).

Managing and Prioritizing Your Time. Prioritizing your time is an important skill but it has limits, as it “simply borrows from one area of your life to focus on another,” providing no strategy for what to do with remaining tasks (p. 39).

Multiplying Your Time. People who are skilled “Multipliers” consider not just urgency and importance, but long-term significance when weighing tasks.

Eliminate: The Permission to Ignore. Multipliers give themselves permission to say no. “As Peter Drucker once said, ‘There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all’” (p. 68).

Automate: The Permission to Invest. Consider the costs of every transaction and decide if it will cost you more to make the investment or cost more to not make the investment.

Delegate: The Permission of Imperfect. “It’s a service to allow people the natural process of making their own mistakes” (p. 145).

Procrastinate: The Permission of Incomplete. “Just as there is great power in the discipline of acting, there is also great power in the patience of waiting” (p. 184).

Concentrate: The Permission to Protect.


Multipliers make tasks of significance the primary focus. Protect those tasks above all else.

Multiplying Your Results. “We must invest our time because out of what’s been given to us, we should create for others” (p. 230).

WHAT YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW

Priority Dilution is delaying “the day’s most important activities by consciously or unconsciously allowing our attention to shift to less important tasks.” This is a common problem for high achievers who push for excellence and are asked to do more as a result (p. 6).

Vaden thought he was always so busy but realized the people he found successful never shared how busy they were or seemed overwhelmed. He asked one leader, and she said, “You reach a point where you realize how futile it is to expend energy sharing or even thinking about how ‘busy’ you are. Once you get to that place, you shift to focusing that energy productively into getting the things done rather than worrying about [doing them].” Vaden calls these people “Multipliers” (p. 8).



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There are irrefutable challenges brought on by our roles and work environments, but “any commitments you have were either made or allowed by you.” Owning your problem enables you to begin changing the situation (p. 8).

Balance means equal force in opposite directions. We often think of this as a metaphor for long-term health and effectiveness at work. It is more useful to think of it as “imbalancing” our efforts toward one priority and returning to other priorities after we accomplish the first, like working “in a short season of intense focus” (pp. 10-11).

To a Multiplier, “success isn’t so much about efficiency or effectiveness. It’s about efficacy.” Efficacy is “the quality of being successful in producing an intended result.” Efficiency serves to increase our speed, while effectiveness is merely the quality of the action involved in a task (pp. 16-17).

MANAGING AND PRIORITIZING YOUR TIME

Time management literature is mostly about being efficient, which only helps get work done faster. It suggests you should work faster with the time you have without much consideration for results or priorities. Time is fixed, so instead, it is better to think of yourself and your approach as the focus of your efforts. "There is no such thing as time management. There is only self-management" (p. 25).

The efficiency paradigm and simply managing time does not hold water because there is more work than you could ever do. There is always something to improve, something to add, and so on. Your focus is best placed on your own priorities (p. 24).

The popular book, **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People** by Dr. Stephen R. Covey, set forth the "Time-Management Matrix," which separates tasks into one of the following four designations: "Important and Urgent," "Important but Not Urgent," "Not Important but Urgent," and "Not Important and Not Urgent." Dr. Covey explained that results come from focusing on quadrant two - things like "planning your strategy, relationship building, and recognizing and investing in new opportunities" (p. 34).

MULTIPLYING YOUR TIME

Prioritizing is a worthwhile skill, but it does not create more time. Successfully juggling tasks might work for a while, but the tasks eventually seep into protected things like family time. Reprioritizing alone leaves you with only two options: juggle more balls or juggle faster - a sure path to burnout (p. 41-43).

"While most people are still making decisions based only on the two-dimensional model of factoring in Importance and Urgency, Multipliers make a third calculation that is based on **Significance**." These calculations are discussed on pages 45-46.


- Urgency: How soon does this matter?
- Importance: How much does this matter?
- Significance: How long is this going to matter?

Those making the Significance calculation are engaging in "three-dimensional thinking" (p. 46). "They are considering not only what matters **now** but also what matters **later**. Therefore, that person is better able to resist the temptation of the tyranny of the urgent - which is exactly what ultra-performers do" (p. 48).


Vaden highlights how Significance reinforces the importance of adapting yourself over trying to manage time. Multipliers "have given themselves five permissions that the rest of us have not. It is those five permissions and the frameworks they use to determine when to employ them that enable them to do what no one else can: multiply time" (p. 60).

ELIMINATE: THE PERMISSION TO IGNORE

Each permission begins with a question, and when we Eliminate, we ask ourselves, "What are all the things I can just eliminate?" The best things to just stop doing do not require explanation, apology, or warning. Of the five permissions, what we choose to ignore presents the most immediate opportunity for saving time (p. 67).



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Once we reduce the volume of insignificant tasks, more time and headspace are available for Significant tasks. Some common things to eliminate include re-thinking things you've already decided, favoring long email messages over phone calls, overthinking what you'll do next, and more (pp. 71-75).

Get better at saying no. "You cannot say yes without also implicitly saying no." Multipliers ask themselves, "Am I saying yes to the things that create more time tomorrow, and am I saying no to the things that don't?" (pp. 78-79).

Vaden describes a series of interactions with his favorite author who turned him down repeatedly "in the best way possible." He wanted to discuss writing his own book with the author and reached out while in town. An assistant replied with a friendly rejection. A few years later, he tried again and received a personal response from the author apologizing for his loaded calendar and saying his family had asked him to commit the remainder to more time with them. Several years later, Vaden was rejected yet again, but this time by an assistant sent to meet him in person with flowers. The point: "You can say no and still be nice!" (pp. 79-83).

AUTOMATE: THE PERMISSION TO INVEST

Each decision to do something comes with an opportunity cost - losing a chance at doing one thing by picking another. Vaden describes a more detrimental hidden cost: the loss of potential benefits from long-term investment. Buying a five-dollar coffee rather than investing it is the opportunity cost, while the hidden cost is the potential 45 dollars gained in interest (pp. 91-92).

Choosing to do things you can Automate is one of the most common wastes of time in each workday. "How many things are you doing that are completely regimented and routine, yet you are spending your precious time doing something that a simple computer program could do?" (p. 97).


Identifying problems is the easy part. Investing in their solutions is how we make real progress. "A company can never outgrow the strength of its systems." Automating repetitive tasks allows us to return our attention to that second quadrant: Important but Not Urgent (pp. 99, 111).

Calendars can become a source of distraction and frustration.


Using category blocks such as family, client-work, or discretionary reading instead of loading it with singular events can help reduce the back-and-forth drudgery that comes with tools we let harm us more than help us (p. 108).

DELEGATE: THE PERMISSION OF IMPERFECT

The next best thing to Automating a task is Delegating it. The critical question here is: "Does what I'm doing right now require my unique skill set, or is it possible there are other people capable of doing this?" The most dangerous idea is: "In the time [I've taken to teach you] this, I could've already done it" (pp. 119-120).



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The thirty-to-one rule is a helpful way of deciding what's worth delegating. Generally, if something takes you five minutes, it should take you 150 minutes to teach someone else. Compare that to the 1,250 minutes you would spend across business days in a year doing the task yourself (pp. 121-122).

The real reason we have a problem delegating is perfectionism. "Perfectionism isn't a logical issue. It's another emotional one." We have to grant ourselves permission to be imperfect and see the service in allowing others to make mistakes. "Things turn out never to be as bad as they feel or as good as they sound" (pp. 128-131).

PROCRASTINATE: THE PERMISSION OF INCOMPLETE

As the Focus Funnel progresses, our options for handling a task decrease, and we are left asking, "Can this wait until later?" Our natural response to urgency is to drop everything and act now, but Vaden encourages procrastinating on those things we answer "yes" to (pp. 149-150).

"There is a big difference between inaction that results from indulgence, and inaction that results from intention. One is procrastination and one is patience" (p. 151).

Waiting until the last minute (within reason) allows you to account for unexpected changes. "Doing something early is not the same as creating more time. It is just taking time from tomorrow and moving it into today and adding the risk of unexpected change cost" (pp. 155, 157).


Rory refers to the archetypes on either extreme of acting too late or too early as "Gun Slingers" and "Worry Warts." Gun Slingers risk acting too late and often come in rowdy after the last minute and drive co-workers crazy. Worry Warts never wait until the last minute and risk creating re-work for everyone later on because plans changed halfway (pp. 158-159).

CONCENTRATE: THE PERMISSION TO PROTECT


Concentration is the antithesis of Priority Dilution, requiring all "efforts, faculties, activities, etc. to bear on one thing or activity." You should only use it if the answer to the previous four questions from the Focus Funnel is "no" - that's what makes a priority (pp. 187-190).

If it's not a priority, Eliminate it, Automate it, Delegate it, Procrastinate it, or leave it Incomplete so you can Concentrate on what you know you should be doing. If something comes to mind while you're focused on a priority, "procrastinate on purpose" and be present. The most critical question to have in mind: "Is what I'm doing right now the next most Significant use of my time?" (pp. 191, 193).

Concentrating is about protecting yourself from the chaos around you and elevating your best self and therefore your team. Multipliers feel obligated to spend time on Significant things today that create more opportunities for themselves and their teams (pp. 196-197).



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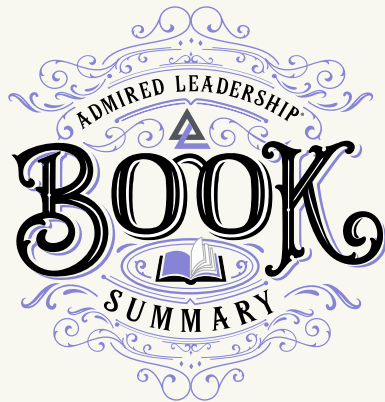


MULTIPLYING YOUR RESULTS

“As Individuals, we regularly think about how we can be more efficient - sure. But as teams, companies, and organizations, we never talk about all the things we are doing that are a complete waste of time.” Unintentional procrastination, turnover, indecision, interpersonal conflict, and change are all common costs of time (pp. 209, 211).

Getting whole teams to do the most Significant thing at once takes patience in applying the Focus Funnel to incoming tasks. Set the foundations by clarifying differences between one, two, and three-dimensional thinking, and reinforce the value of saving on hidden costs (pp. 212-213).

Vaden, R. (2015). *Procrastinate on Purpose: 5 Permissions to Multiply Your Time*. New York: Perigree, Penguin Random House LLC.



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