Leveraging Your Most Important Asset

As a leadership coach, over time I have noted several recurring themes in the lives of leaders. Truth be told, they are as predictable as meatballs at a smorgasbord. Unquestionably, one of those themes is TIME. Every leader is in a daily, sleeves-rolled-up, all-out battle to maximize this priceless and non-renewable commodity.

Several months ago, I read a book that I found particularly helpful for me personally and for those I coach concerning both the understanding and the practice of leveraging time. Best-selling author Todd Duncan, in his book *Time Traps: Proven Strategies for Swamped Professionals*, comes knocking at the door of every leader when he says: *Nearly every professional has a challenge with time. It is the most repetitive and pervasive problem I've come across in fifteen years of speaking and training, and it doesn't just go away.*

With a desire to elevate your capacity to make the most of your time, this post will spotlight a handful of Todd Duncan's insights. **More than likely, his insights will serve as an unanticipated invitation to slow down, step back, and revisit your time with fresh eyes.** Take a look.

- **Reality Check**

  Early on in a career it might seem like a winnable challenge to take on everything that comes your way. But the longer you work, the sooner you realize that the pace of a professional career doesn't slow down involuntarily. The more responsibility you assume, the faster the river travels; eventually it can drown you if you underestimate the force of its current. Usually it leaves you struggling just to keep your head above water. You must first acknowledge the life-sapping power of your river of responsibilities if you are to ever muster the courage to overcome its unforgiving current.

- **Boundaries**

  I've said this for years: if you don't put boundaries on your business, you won't have balance in your life. In other words, without boundaries on your work responsibilities you won't have free time for your life responsibilities and opportunities. On the other hand, with boundaries regulating your flow of tasks, your time for life has far greater potential.

- **Task Management**

  First, you have to understand that since you cannot manage your time, the only way to organize your day is by managing your daily tasks. Task management—not time management—is the foundation of organization. If you can learn to harness the tasks that crowd your days, you will realize more freedom with your time. Put another way: to free yourself from the traps that are monopolizing your time you must manage the things that occupy your time: tasks.

- **Failure**

  People with a healthy perspective on failure don't let their emotions go beyond disappointment. Once faced with the reality of a mistake, they adjust their attitude and, with resolve, take the necessary actions to learn from their error and move forward with improved action. Ultimately, such

people end up in a better position than when they started. The paradox of failure is that while it's not the most productive path we can take, it is often the most efficient teacher we can have. The most productive people understand this and, as a result, are willing to risk failure to succeed.

- **Your Identity**

Unfortunately, too often our job becomes more than part of our identity. It becomes all of our identity, and we rarely know it has happened. In the pursuit of success and significance, many of us begin selling our souls…Not only does an identity wrapped up in work sap our identities, it keeps us from realizing our dreams. In essence, it changes who we are now and who we will become.

- **Your Soul**

Your spiritual heart is the epicenter, the soul of your most desired life. And like your physical heart, if neglected your spiritual heart will eventually stop beating; and your life will seem a dismal existence, an ambivalent passing of time until death. On the outside, you might continue to live a life of quiet desperation—going through the motions—but on the inside you will have expired, having given up your once high hopes of a beautiful life.

You might want to read that last paragraph again. Slowly.

The author is on to something. Something big. **We live in a world that short sells the things in live that matter most.** Jesus—the wisest person who ever walked the earth—put it this way: "What good is it for you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul?"

As leaders committed to leading from the inside out, let's leverage the valuable gift of time. Not to produce more, but to become more.

Chuck Olson
Founder | Lead With Your Life

Related Posts
The Soul of a Leader
6 Things You Need to Know About Who You Are