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Life Changing Lessons for Increasing Personal and Professional Effectiveness **By Suzanne Updegraff**

Personal and professional effectiveness requires more than simply rolling out of bed every morning. It involves making a conscious effort and sound choices that will have a positive impact on your accomplishments and interactions with others. Personal effectiveness means caring about the difference you make as an individual. It is more than going through the motions, but rather, having a profound commitment to understanding *who* you are and *how* you can make a difference.

While personal and professional effectiveness training is rarely taught in school, more and more entrepreneurs, top executives and human resource professionals recognize the value of helping individuals to maximize their potential. These business leaders know if they're successful in that endeavor, they are more likely to achieve their management objectives, resolve issues and align corporate cultures to the company's defined vision, mission and values.

A Model for Increasing Effectiveness

Fortunately, there are well-established tools and programs to help individuals become stronger contributors to their organizations, establish better relationships and tap into their human potential. The following model outlines a six-step process to achieve those goals.

1. *Awareness*. Look inside and think about your habits, behaviors and the values that you hold dear.

Explore how your core goals either help or hinder your progress. Self-awareness is the most critical step in the model because without it, you won't recognize the need for change.

2. 2. *Desire*. Many individuals are aware that their behavior is ineffective, but they don't care. Self-awareness without a *desire* to change won't *result* in change. The goal of improving conditions or your situation at work or at home can be a strong motivation for change.
3. 3. *Knowledge*. You have access to vast amounts of information on how to change a behavior or habit. Gaining knowledge is an easy step if you know where to look. Explore the Internet, visit your local bookstore, take a college course or attend a seminar.
4. 4. *Practice*. This is the hard part. Only when you practice (day-in, day-out) does a new behavior replace an old one. Effective practice begins with setting a deadline for beginning a change that will increase effectiveness.
5. 5. *Success*. Develop an image or vision of what the change you are seeking looks like. Success often comes in small packages. Don't overlook quick compliments from co-workers when they begin to notice your changes in behavior.
6. 6. *Habit Integration*. It takes time and effort to integrate changes in behavior into your daily routine. Habits are born over time, and when practiced consistently, you'll begin to experience your behavioral change in a natural way.

Self-Awareness

Being effective begins with a keen sense of knowing *who* you are and understanding *why* you make the choices you make. Your core value system is something you don't often consciously consider. Exercises and training can help develop this self-awareness, which in turn can speak volumes about the other choices you make in your personal and professional life. Your success ultimately reflects the core of who you are. How do you see yourself? How do others see you? Your success ultimately reflects the core of who you are.

Desire, Knowledge and Practice

Personal values can be powerful motivators to influence your choices, your habits and your lifestyle. Desire is the second step in choosing new behaviors to create the self-image that you want. You gain knowledge about new behaviors by reading, observing people and interacting with role models or mentors that you admire or appreciate. Practice is the difficult part. New behaviors must be integrated into your day-to-day “package” of words and actions.

Behaviors are what others see and hear you do (or don't do). They include:

- • How you act
- • Your body language
- • How you speak
- • What you say

Your behavior directly affects how others see you. Inventory your current behaviors. Make a list of new behaviors to help create the self-image you seek. Wait and watch for others to see and appreciate these changes. There are several assessment tools to help you identify your personality style. Many of them also provide insight on how to change your behavior and/or improve your interactions with individuals whose styles and personalities are different from your own.

Success

The growth in your self-confidence will become apparent as you successfully integrate new behaviors into your daily work and personal life. You'll also command more respect from others, as they see you actively choosing to change your behaviors. Just as general behaviors should be elevated to a conscious level, likewise with your goals. Identify goals, and apply the attributes that make them “smart”:

Specific: How will you describe the “what” and the “when” of the desired end result?

Measurable: How will the desired result be measured? (For example quality, quantity, deadline or cost)

Achievable: Is the goal possible to attain?

Realistic: Is the goal practical and relevant?

Timely: Is the goal appropriate in terms of current needs and a timeline?

These same questions can be asked and answered if you think

the goals or expectations others have of you are inappropriate or unachievable. Better to be politely outspoken in advance, than to accept certain failure through silence or indifference.

Habit Integration

To achieve the maximum likelihood of achieving your goals, a tool called *visualization* helps. Visualization is simply imaging a picture of your self, living out your goals and dreams. Some examples of visual pictures include the following:

- Seeing the values you live by in action during the day.
- Taking the first step toward accomplishing an important goal.
- Visualizing your self, successfully giving a speech or presentation.
- Maintaining a calm composure during an important meeting.

But visualization has a short lifespan. Repeat the visualization process every day to keep a fresh image in your mind. Also, consider keeping a log of how well you are succeeding in making new habits a part of your daily life. Habit integration will follow.

The Circle of Life

In the national bestseller, *The Oz Principle*, the authors define accountability as asking, “what else can I do to rise above my circumstances and achieve the results I desire?”

Accountability is the process of, “seeing it, owning it, solving it, and doing it.” Effectiveness is achieved when you:

- • Become self-aware of your behavior and strengths.
- • Apply your core values to the choices you’re making.
- • Practice new behaviors to create the self-image you desire.
- • Make responsible choices for growth.
- • Become accountable for your words, actions, choices and behaviors.

Once you understand and apply this model for personal and professional growth and effectiveness, remember to keep your thoughts positive. Positive thoughts become your words, and positive thoughts lead to positive actions. Keep your actions positive because actions become your habits. And keep your

habits positive, because habits become your destiny.

Most importantly, understand that YOU are the most powerful person in your life. When you're making the appropriate *choices* to receive the *results* you're looking for, you'll then become *effective*. The Greek historian Herodotus perhaps said it first more than 2,000 years ago: "Character is destiny."

About the Author:

Suzanne Updegraff is president of Employee Development Systems, Inc., located in Denver, Colo. The firm specializes in training and development solutions that empower managers and staff to significantly improve their performance through behavioral change. For more information, call 1.800.282.3374 or visit the company's website at www.ediusa.com.

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