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# Work / Life

## The Boundaries of Time and Space

### NAVIGATOR

What one thing, more than any other, would you say is the most important key to success? Over the years, I've come to appreciate the importance of skills—it helps to be very good at what you do! Certainly, the discipline to set and achieve goals is helpful, and I've always admired people for whom leadership and charisma come easily.

Obviously, all of those areas are important. For most of us, however, the real key to success is much closer to home. I believe, the most important and the most universal key to success is the ability to control the "time-space continuum" in your world!

Too often we fall for the lie that success requires special abilities or "luck." We get tricked because we look at sports or entertainment, where success does seem to require unusual gifts. Those examples stand out, however, because they are exceptions. We notice them not because they are normal, but precisely because they are abnormal!

**The key to success is the ability to control time and space, and we can all do that.**

Highly successful people control their time and they control their personal environment. They do the things that are important, and they rarely waste time. They do not permit clutter, chaos, or interruptions to distract them from their "prime objective," and they are very clear about their priorities.

Controlling your environment is the absolute and essential key to achievement in any area.

As a student, if you are unwilling to lock your door and study, you are unlikely to graduate. As a business owner, if you cannot delegate and focus, you are unlikely to make a profit. As a spouse, parent, friend, or neighbor, if you cannot take time to build the relationship, you are less likely to be successful.

Controlling your environment is the key to success.

We live in a culture that constantly tempts us to do too much, that "demands" too much of us. Take weekends, for example. They are referred to as a time of rest. Hah! On the weekends we run errands, do the shopping, visit with friends, go to parties, are expected to watch the "big game," clean the house, sleep in, perhaps attend our house of worship, and by the way, be sure to relax, refresh, and do a little reading so you are ready to work hard on Monday. That's crazy!

Take a moment to think about the most successful people you know—the ones you admire and want to copy. Think about their lives. Are they cluttered and chaotic, or not? How easy is it to interrupt their schedule? Will they stop what they are doing and spend 30 minutes chatting, or do you get their voice mail most of the time?

Now think about the examples you see on television or in the movies. Think about our image of the President. How many interrup-

tions are permitted? How much chaos and stress and noise is allowed in their world? The answer is: Not much!

Success requires that you control your environment. It means controlling distractions. It may mean having your favorite music on the stereo or closing your office door. It means saying no to interruptions. Controlling your environment is far more important than having a to-do list, because if other people are running the show, your priorities will go out the window every time.

If you must, start very small. Clean your closet, set breakfast out before you go to bed. If you can, take larger steps and set aside time when you cannot be interrupted. The eventual goal is to develop this muscle until it is clear that you are in charge of your world and your destiny.

(Source: Copyright (c) 2001, all rights reserved. U.S. Library of Congress ISSN: 1529-059X. Dr. Philip E. Humbert at [www.philiphumbert.com](http://www.philiphumbert.com))

### WEB SITE PICKS

[www.jumptv.com](http://www.jumptv.com)

At this site you can watch the latest TV programming from around the world—Paris, Mexico, Italy, Portugal, and more.

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe."—*Anatole France*

## HEALTHY FOOD TIP

### Facts about Oils and Vinegars

We all use oils and vinegars for cooking and flavor. However, with all the choices on the supermarket shelves are you choosing the right one? Follow these suggestions for which oils and vinegars are right for your family and get the most nutritional and best-tasting products.

Always buy organic oils whenever possible. Go with the unrefined oils, which retain high vitamin content and are more aromatic, flavorful, and deeper in color. When purchasing olive oil, you should choose the extra-virgin, organic, cold-pressed oil.

When purchasing vinegars, avoid distilled types, for these are nothing more than acetic acid and water. Go with naturally fermented vinegars for their unique color and their taste. More importantly, naturally fermented vinegars contain amino acids and other nutrients beneficial for our bodies.

Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.  
—Leo Tolstoy 1828-1910, *Russian Novelist, Philosopher*

## HUMOR

The following are odd medical record statements that were supposedly found on the charts of patients.

- The skin was moist and dry.
- The patient lives at home with his mother, father, and pet turtle, who is presently enrolled in day care three times a week.
- The patient was in his usual state of good health until his airplane ran out of gas and crashed.
- On the second day the knee was better, and on the third day it disappeared.
- I saw your patient today who is still under our car for physical therapy.
- While in the emergency room, she was examined, X-rated, and sent home.
- She stated that she had been constipated for most of her life until 1989 when she got a divorce.
- When she fainted, her eyes rolled around the room.
- She is numb from her toes down.
- The baby was delivered, the cord clamped and cut, and handed to the pediatrician, who

breathed and cried immediately.

- Patient has chest pain if she lies on her left side for over a year.
- The patient has been depressed since she began seeing me in 1993.
- Discharge status: Alive but without my permission.
- The patient has no previous history of suicides.
- Patient has left white blood cells at another hospital.
- Patient had waffles for breakfast and anorexia for lunch.
- Healthy-appearing, decrepit 69-year-old male, mentally alert but forgetful.
- Skin: Somewhat pale but present.
- Patient has two teenage children, but no other abnormalities.

A common mistake that people make when trying to design something foolproof is to underestimate the ingenuity of complete fools.—Douglas Adams

## HEALTH IN THE HOME

### Benefits of Spray Furniture Polish

Using spray polish dramatically reduces the amount of dust and allergens that become airborne, providing a significant benefit of less allergic stimulation in the home environment.

A side-by-side comparison of spray furniture polish and dry dusting shows the superiority of the spray polish when comparing the amount of dust particles and house-dust mite and cat allergen released into the air while dusting.

Spray furniture polish can reduce airborne dust particles by 83.4%, house-dust mite allergen by 50.3%, and cat allergen by 57.4%.

Spraying polish directly on the surface is even more effective in reducing airborne particles. Using this method, airborne dust particles are reduced by 92.9%, airborne house-dust mite allergen by 95% or more, and cat allergen by 95%.

(Source: *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* 2002;109:63-67)

## PROBLEM SOLVING

### Clutter: A Mountainous Problem

I listened to part of a radio talk show last Saturday, where callers reported or con-

fessed their problems with accumulated junk. One woman admitted she kept everything in 3-ring binders. She estimated that she had at least 150 binders around the house, containing such things as utility bills and junk mail. Another woman said her husband's mess (I wonder how a mess can be given specific ownership) compiled a heap in a corner of the living room that reached the ceiling. (I hope it wasn't a vaulted style.)

I read that Jasper Johns's studio was installed in a museum. It is a permanent display of a room full of junk piled two feet deep, with an easel rising out of the garbage like a monument. Every piece of rubbish was painstakingly photographed, mapped, catalogued, and reassembled to give museumgoers a glimpse of the artist's lifestyle.

Occasionally a news story will sensationalize a junk house, where people live in unimaginable squalor. Rooms are packed with accumulated trash that no one with a squeamish stomach (or even a stout one) would ever wish to uncover. We scratch our heads and wonder how anyone could live that way.

You've probably seen less drastic examples of pack rats who won't part with useless possessions. A habit of holding onto "things" can take over our lives. Clutter can (and often does) get out of hand. When the problem mounts, a feeling of helplessness can overshadow any hope of overcoming the problem.

Our clutter challenges might not be so extreme. But there are lots of ways that clutter can impact our lives. Consider, for example, the amount of time you might spend looking for something that you know you left somewhere. Or perhaps the nagging feeling that a pile of paperwork in the corner won't ever take care of itself.

Other examples might include our surroundings over which we have seemingly little control. The clamor of TVs and radios, visual distractions, and chaos besiege us on every side. There seems to be no escape from the decay of entropy. Whether it's urban blight, billboards, debris, or constant background noise, we can't avoid the unease, even if we want to disregard the clutter in our lives. Clutter can rob us of peace of mind.

### LASTING SOLUTIONS

Sometimes it seems as if we waste our efforts tidying up the corners of our lives. What we straighten in one room might be counterbalanced by the pile of dishes in the sink or a log-jam of other chores. We may seem never able to catch up.

Clutter may be accumulated over a lifetime. It really is a matter of lifestyle and choices. Although it is possible to reverse clutter, the

challenge comes in changing the habits that cause the problem. We begin by recognizing the benefits to reducing or eliminating clutter from our lives.

The benefits to organization aren't just the physical comforts of nice surroundings. Our emotions are affected by the quality of our environment. A messy house or office might tax our feelings of self-esteem. In the same way, keeping a neat setting will lift our spirits. Positive feelings are tied to peace of mind and worthy accomplishment.

Let's look at ways that we can reduce clutter and prevent its return.

## RETHINK

Sometimes we take the mess for granted. It's always been there, so it must be necessary, right? Wrong. Often a mess is just something that we failed to deal with at the time. But just because it hasn't been dealt with, a mess doesn't justify its own existence.

In the end, clutter is a delayed decision. We think at the time we just don't have time to deal with something, so it goes in a pile with a history of other delayed decisions. The reality of the situation is that it usually takes less time to just deal with it in the first place. A good example is the kitchen sink. It doesn't take any more time to rinse the dishes and put them directly into the dishwasher—it's really just a matter of habit.

The alternative to clutter is to make decisions, rather than put things in piles. Once you've made the choice to prevent clutter from overtaking your life, it saves having to make choices over and over again in the future over where everything needs to go. The decision can be easy once we realize what our options are. It boils down to this:

### ■ Put Away

Okay, this one may take some advance preparation. You've heard the saying "A place for everything and everything in its place."

Reach your destination. When I come home, my shoes go in the shoe cabinet by the back door. My coat doesn't come off until I reach the closet to hang it up. And I'm not finished until my lunch containers are put away in the dishwasher (not the sink) and my books make it to the corner of my dresser. Whew. I still greet my wife and kids with hugs and kisses, but the journey isn't done until everything in my hands gets where it belongs.

I have a confession to make. In our home we have places that act like holding cells for things to be put away. One is by the back door for things that need to go to the outside. (But things don't stay there for long—

I promise, ask my wife. Eventually, I take the tools back out.) Another is a basket on one of the office closet shelves, designated as the boys's things to be put away downstairs.

### ■ Give Away or Sell

Volume in = volume out. We hardly need more stuff, unless we need to stuff our homes. If you have too many things to keep organized, you could consider giving things away. Donate to charities, the Salvation Army, Deseret Industries, and thrift shops. "One man's junk is another man's treasure."

### ■ Throw Away

Sometimes the hardest step to getting rid of junk is letting go of it. Maybe I form sentimental attachments to things that I'd never notice if they weren't "my things."

### ■ Store

An end goal to anything stored is future use. Sorry, but things like zoot suits, bell-bottoms, clogs, and too-tight jeans with blown-out knees that you'll never fit into again don't fit that description.

## REORGANIZE

One of my hobbies is that I like to build things. In our house with too little storage, I've enjoyed building closets, storage sheds, and a pantry—all filled with shelves. Each of them is in a space where a nice door completes the effect of hiding away lots of cubic feet of stuff. One of the nice things to do-it-yourself shelving is that you can design to fit the height and depth for boxes.

If kids are always pulling out toys, perhaps having less toys to pull out might be the answer. You could put away half of them, then bring them out after several months when another set of toys goes into deep storage. This also helps kids enjoy a sense of newness to play, rather than taking everything for granted.

Tackle zones. Choose a zone to be clutter free, organize it, and imagine a "Clutter-Free Zone" sign over it. Slowly expand the organized zones to include former disaster areas. Even if it's just a clearing or a furniture arrangement, create a thing of beauty and take pride in it. You can even assign zones for each of the children to take pride in keeping nice.

Containment—Put a lid on the problem. A Lego box could be large enough to sift around in, yet flat enough to slide under a bed. A storage solution can be a nice piece of furniture, like a bureau drawer cabinet that holds all the videos, which doubles as an entertainment center base for the television.

Use your imagination and your personalized design sense.

## HABITS FOR A CLUTTER-FREE FUTURE

Take responsibility instead of laying blame. If everyone in the house feels accountable for order, the tide can be reversed.

There are lots of ways we can conquer the clutter in our lives. A little time organization will save a lot of running around chasing loose ends. Taking care of unresolved issues will free one of the clutter of guilt and wasted anxiety. Being productive frees up worry and pays back with deserved leisure time for relaxation and play.

(Source: By Benjamin Devey at <http://LearningLove.com>. As Benjamin says, "Love is a universal need. It's an active verb, rather than a passive waiting game. Real love allows us to accept others as a whole package, resisting the urge to change the other. Pure love is charity—the desire to uplift another with true caring actions from the heart.")

### Clutter Help

There are lots of de-clutter resources available on the Web. Here are just a few:

<http://www.clutterbug.net>

<http://www.freefromclutter.com>

<http://organizedhome.com>

<http://www.spaceclearing.com>

Throw It Out:

Help for Those Who Just Can't Let Go

<http://www.newhomemaker.com/organization/throw.html>

How to Declutter Your Home

<http://www3.ns.sympatico.ca/calicipages/declutter.htm>

Six Costs of Clutter—from the Dollar Stretcher Newsletter

<http://www.stretcher.com/stories/990426h.cfm>

Controlling the Clutter

<http://customassignments.com/clutter.htm>

Do You Suffer from Pack-Rat-IsM?

<http://www.committment.com/jones2.html>

Do You Have Affluenza?  
Get a Diagnosis from PBS

<http://www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/diag/diag.html>

That the birds of worry and care fly over your head, this you cannot change, but that they build nests in your hair, this you can prevent.  
—Chinese Proverb

## HEALTH

### Hand Washing

A handwashing program in a group of healthy young adults on a military base was associated with a 45 percent reduction of respiratory illness.

The study involved 1,089,800 people over a period of three years. Frequent handwashers reported fewer respiratory illness episodes when compared to infrequent handwashers.

Although surveys reveal challenges with handwashing compliance, this should be added to our list of techniques for preventive medicine.

(Source: *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 21:2 : 79-83)

### Infected Gums and Heart Disease

Those with serious periodontal disease may be prone to releasing toxins into their bloodstream, which helps explain the link between gum infections and cardiovascular disease.

Periodontal disease is associated with an increased risk of stroke and coronary artery disease. Endotoxins, as well as bacteria, can be released into the bloodstream via the mouth. Those with severe periodontal disease are nearly four times as likely to have significant levels of endotoxins than those with healthy gums.

These findings provide additional evidence for a link between the bacteria present in the mouth of those with periodontal disease and inflammatory reactions linked to heart disease.

(Source: *Journal of Periodontology* 2002;73:73-78)

## WORDS OF WISDOM

### My Reality is Virtual

Someone once quipped, "A lot of my reality is virtual!" Whether or not you can say the same thing, I find it is true that a lot of my reality is the way I perceive it. Let me explain what I mean with a true story.

In the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Dr. Paul Ruskin demonstrated how our perception of reality (not actually what is going on, but how we perceive it) determines how we feel about it. While teaching a class on the psychological aspects of aging, he read the following case to his students:

The patient neither speaks nor comprehends the spoken word. Sometimes she babbles incoherently for hours on end. She is disoriented about person, place, and time. She does, however, respond to her name. I have worked with her for the past six months, but she still shows complete disregard for her physical appearance and makes no effort to assist her own care. She must be fed, bathed, and clothed by others. Because she has no teeth, her food must be pureed. Her shirt is usually soiled from almost incessant drooling. She does not walk. Her sleep pattern is erratic. Often she wakes in the middle of the night, and her screaming awakens others. Most of the time she is friendly and happy, but several times a day she gets quite agitated without apparent cause. Then she wails until someone comes to comfort her.

After presenting the case, Dr. Ruskin asked his students (the majority of whom had no interest at the present time to enter a caregiving profession) how they would like caring for this person. Most of them said they would not like it at all. He then said that he believed he would especially enjoy it and thought that they might, also. He passed a picture of the patient around for his puzzled students to see. It was his six-month-old daughter!

Most of the students had already made up their minds that they would not like caring for such a patient. But the age of the patient, rather than the actual duties, made the task seem fun and enjoyable! When they thought the task might be fun, they were positive about it, though their reaction just moments before was quite negative. In other words, they made up their minds not to like something they might actually enjoy very much.

You and I have numerous tasks ahead. How will you look at them today? As pleasant or unpleasant? As chores or as fun? When you think you may actually enjoy them—you probably will!

(Source: "Riches of the Heart" by Steve Goodier)

Everyone who got where he is had to begin where he was.—Robert Louis Stevenson 1850–1895, Scottish Essayist, Poet, Novelist

## FINANCES

### Charity Drive

If you're getting rid of an old car, consider giving it to charity instead of using it as a trade-in. This works especially well if an auto dealer is offering trade-in values well below the Blue Book value.

After you fill out the paperwork, signing over the title of the vehicle, a charity will come and pick it up. Often, the vehicle does not have to be in the best condition—as long as it has four wheels, an engine, and most of the windows, many charities will take it.

In order to come up with the tax deduction, you can pay for an appraisal prior to donating the vehicle. A more practical alternative is to go to [www.kbb.com](http://www.kbb.com), the Web site for Kelley Blue Book, to get a value you can use.

### IRA Revelation

Many people are wary of naming a grandchild as beneficiary of a Roth IRA because that might mean paying an extra 50 percent generation-skipping transfer (GST) tax. However, even if that tax must be paid (which is by no means certain), your family probably will come out ahead by stretching distributions over an extra generation. To make this strategy work, the GST tax should be paid from other, non-IRA funds, which will keep your Roth IRA intact for greater future growth.

Why does it make sense to leave a Roth IRA to a grandchild, even if your family will have to pay GST tax? Because of the power of tax deferral. If your son inherits your IRA when he is 59, for example, he will have 25 years of compounding. But if your son's daughter inherits, at age 26, she will have 56 years to stretch out distributions: an extra 31 years. Counting distributions and the earnings on those distributions, your family could wind up with two-and-half times as much money, by naming a grandchild. Today's \$500,000 Roth IRA could generate \$60 million for your family, tax-free.

(Source: *Retirement & Financial Planning Report*. Published by *FEDweek*.)

### Questions/Comments to:

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An online version of this newsletter may be found at <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/codec/cc/navig-4.pdf>