

It's all about the Small Stuff

Performance habits for daily excellence



PRESENTATION NOTES

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*It's not the minutes that make a life,
but the life in the minutes.*

Small Stuff makes a Difference over Time

Small things make a huge difference over time. How we start our morning, how we greet staff, how we manage our time, how we listen and how we invest in our health all makes a difference over time.

It's all about the Small Stuff is about constantly seeking those small changes that improve your opportunities and those around you. And it's about creating successful habits that maintain and grow our success.

Here are two reasons why this is so important:

1. We are all so busy that we need to return to a focus on the basics and how be effective at work and at home. And effectiveness, in this context, is about the long term impact we are having for our time investment (think ROI on 'you!').
2. As leaders we need to 'do the right stuff', not just 'do stuff right'; we need to keep our vision beyond today's challenges to some future goals that we desire and we know are possible. We need to also be prepared to share and mentor junior staff and to present a positive, successful role model for them.



Ok, here we go....

I have compiled these notes from my presentation with you and from previous presentations. The purpose of these notes is to give you more background information for each topic. You can also go to my web site to get more information and to read my current thinking on my blog. www.HughCulver.com

I would also love to hear from you. Send me a note to let me know how my work is influencing you success. hugh@HughCulver.com

“What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen task.” *Viktor E. Frankl, Holocaust survivor; author of Man's Search for Meaning*



Be a Promise Keeper

At the heart of Accountability is simply Keeping Promises. We either keep them and get a benefit, or fail and suffer a cost.

But, first let's look more deeply at what are promises.

In my experience there are two types of promises, and they are not mutually exclusive: transactional and inferred.

Transactional

Transactional promises are easy to spot. There is usually some kind of defined objective (I need to organized that meeting), an end point (by the end of the week) and consequences for failing to make it happen (the project is delayed).

Inferred promises are tougher. There usually isn't a clear definition, outcome or even consequences for failure. When you send that email that was misinterpreted and led to hurt feelings, you broke an inferred promise. Maybe there aren't any email policies, but the inferred promise to support the team was there.

When you were so busy that you didn't acknowledge the help from a colleague, or seek out ways to *help them* you broke a promise.

Inferred promises usually aren't a "big deal", the wheels keep turning and people keep showing up for work. But the cost is there none the less.

In the tourism industry there were many inferred promises. It was called customer service. You could certainly save a lot of time, and even cost, by doing the minimum. But, long term, customer would tire of your short cuts and tactics and your business would suffer.

So much for the definition, now let's look at *why we should care*.

Promises are the currency of any relationship, team or organization. How we make our promises and work to keep them is the measure of success of every relationship. But, it's not always easy.

In our rush to get things done, it's easy to skip over the subtleties of good listening, thanking a colleague, or attention to detail. We are so caught up in emptying our Inbox we might think that we'll have more time later.

Inferred



Finally, let's look at promises we make with ourselves. Again, there are transactional promises (I need to take that course) and inferred (I will be kind to myself and take good care of myself). As you can imagine, we make many more promises with our self than we do with others.

How often have you said to yourself "Today is going to be brutal! I have so much to do!", or "I need to go home earlier", or "I'm always procrastinating", or "I not good at remembering names"? Try thinking of these as breaking a promise: the promise to take care of our self, in my mind, includes being positive and seeing the best in our self.

Try this quick exercise:

If I was a truly a promise keeper at work, I would have to change my habit of...

If I was a truly a promise keeper at home, I would have to change my habit of...

If I was a truly a promise keeper with myself, I would have to change my habit of...

It's so easy to create these negative beliefs and then to allow that recording to replay over and over again all day. It's only small stuff, but it's huge over time.

Let's have a look at how this happens...



CLEAN YOUR WINDOW

We all create Windows on the World - these are the stories we make about challenges, people, work, clients, and our own abilities. These Windows can be good ones that serve our growth and success ("I am good at creating and completing goals") or quite destructive ("I am a procrastinator", or "they aren't committed to the team").

Either way, they are only Windows and they can be changed.

The facts about Windows are:

- We create our Windows.
- We forget we made them up(!)
- We act as if they are true.
- We look for evidence to prove they are true.

"It's not what we don't know that prevents us from succeeding; it's what we know that just ain't so that is our greatest obstacle."

Author Josh Billings



When we operate as if our Windows are true we are missing out on many other interpretations that may serve us better. Whether the Window is a good one and serves us, or it doesn't serve us, it can quickly become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

For example, if you think a person you work with doesn't care about their work (the way you do) your relationship with them could be negatively impacted. You will start to notice all the little things that they do that reinforce this negative story: "Ah ha, they were 5 minutes late to the meeting, and unprepared!"

In turn, they may notice this change in you and respond by distancing them self from you. Over time you begin to notice this change and use it to reinforce your story: "Look they didn't even acknowledge me when I walked by!"

What started from a single behaviour that you noticed has become a self fulfilling prophecy that has changed the relationship.

Now, here's the good news. Just as easily and quickly as we can create one Window we can create another. The rule is that whatever you

focus on you tend to get more of. So, if you choose to change your focus "Actually, there are many things that he does that really help the team." you will start to notice evidence to support that new belief and your new self fulfilling prophecy has begun.

"What we think we become."

Gautama Buddha 563-483BC



Here are three excellent ways to “Clean your Window”:

1. Accurate Thinking

The temptation we have when things are not going the way we want is to see the worst. It is human nature: we need to keep ourselves safe, so we predict the worst possible outcome, see the worst in the other person, and doubt our own capabilities. And then we start to believe our own stories (Windows).

One fast way to move from this evaluation back to observations (unadulterated facts) is to exercise accurate thinking. Simply ask: “What (really) happened?”

One way to structure this questioning is in two columns: left column is “What is good about this/what went well?”. The right hand column is entitled “What is not good about this/what did not go well?”. Only record facts: observations, facts, and conversations: avoid evaluations, judgments and assumptions.

Once you have your lists, evaluate them in terms of how you want to respond *based on the facts*. When I do this exercise, it completely changes my focus from “what happened to me?” (blame) to “what can I do next?” (ownership).

2. Most Respectful Interpretation (M.R.I.)

When you are disappointed or upset with someone, your Window will start to ‘colour’ your future interactions with that person. You may notice that you are more judgmental, reserved, less curious and even blaming.

Instead ask yourself: “What is the **Most Respectful Interpretation (MRI)** I can make of what happened?”. This question will allow a new, better Window to emerge and can allow you to have a more productive conversation with the other person.

You can also use the **MRI** on yourself! The point here is not to necessarily let people “off the hook” but rather *to move to curiosity* before you have the conversation. In this way you open up more opportunities to happen.

Try it out! The next time someone does something at work that upsets you stop and ask yourself “What is the **MRI**?”. Even if your answer is somewhat ridiculous, go with it. The point is not about coming up with a new, accurate interpretation. The objective is to move from blame to a more productive state of mind and then to react differently.

M.R.I.



3. Ask better questions

When we “create” our Windows we move to thinking and acting *from a place of evaluation*. From this place we stop seeing opportunities that might shift us to a new Window, instead we tend to see evidence that we are right!

Just notice what happens when you go into a store and you feel like you are getting bad service. Notice how your evaluations become *more* negative and how you start to notice more examples of “bad service”. In fact, you might even respond to the store staff in a grumpy, unfriendly manner (or, is that just me?).

By asking better questions you start *to challenge your evaluations* and open your mind to new interpretations and new possibilities. For example, instead of asking “Why do I have all this work?” ask “Who is one person I can get to help me?”, or “What can I get done in the next half hour that will make a difference?”. Our mind is wired to try to answer questions; use questions to challenge your thinking and stimulate new solutions.

Build your Asking Muscles!

When we ask others for advice, help, commitments, sales, etc. we are acknowledging their value and we are getting better and exerting our asking muscles. As leaders, when we ask followers for feedback or advice, we show that we value them and care about what they think and value. As co-workers, when we ask we honour our co-worker and show that we are open to learn.

There are many reasons we might have for not asking more, like: “I must be right”, “I don't want to look dumb”, or “I'm supposed to know this answer”. All of these are stories. The reality is that asking questions has benefits that will always outweigh our own, self created, barriers:

When we ask we:

- Learn - what can they share with me that will help me, and them?
- Open our mind - what crazy story have I been living with that is my own fiction?
- Appeal to the other person - through my asking I show that I value their opinion.



The one week challenge

If you want to reach out more and to explore what asking more would do for you. Have some fun with it! For one week simply look for opportunities to practice asking:

- In stores ask for what you want. And if you are not happy, ask for a solution.
- In meetings ask for what you need to make this the most valuable use of your time possible
- With colleagues, ask for feedback on your performance
- With your boss, ask for feedback to help you grow in your job
- With your team, ask for feedback to increase your awareness of your contribution to the team
- In sales, ask for the sale. You will never know until you enquire and the customer may never go the next step unless you do. So now you can both win!



BONUS MATERIAL

Create a Stop Doing list

What are you spending time on that you don't need to? I know that I have a habit of 'collecting' responsibilities and rarely reassessing whether I should still be doing them. The downside of this habit is that we accumulate more work and responsibilities than we need or want.

Just for fun *imagine that you have become your own coach*. For one week look at all the tasks, errands, commitments and routines that you naturally commit yourself to and ask "Do I really need to do this?". If not, get it off your mental or written "To Do" list and put it on your new "Stop Doing List"

We all create a "glass ceiling" to our success and health based on the beliefs we have and also by how busy we keep ourselves. This glass ceiling is based on the stories that we tell ourselves; the good, the bad and the just plain old ones.

For example, if you think you are busy, your glass ceiling is lower and you 'repel' new opportunities. Conversely, on the day before vacation you can become a super hero, being decisive, succinct in your conversations and fast at getting work done. It may even seem like you are getting twice the work done in the same amount of time!

But here's the crazy thing: it's still you and you haven't gone anywhere yet! You have just changed what you make important and raised your glass ceiling. On that one day you have changed your priorities and minor irritations and tasks no longer get in your way.

What are on your lists that, given a choice, don't need to be there? A stop doing list is an exciting opportunity to raise that 'glass ceiling' and create more capacity by freeing up your time and obligations. Here is my list for 2010 (steal what you like):

1. Driving with cell phone
2. Eating at my desk
3. Working through breaks
4. Needing to finish books, magazines
5. Seeking perfection
6. Fake delegation
7. Procrastinating about my health
8. Allowing work to stay 'ON'
9. Lists for the weekend
10. No news (it's mostly negative)



The Small Stuff

Performance habits for daily excellence

Hugh Culver **MBA, CSP** is an author of over 100 articles on personal success, master trainer, athlete, and a professional facilitator and speaker. He pioneered tourism flights to the South Pole, was a professional adventure guide for 18 years in British Columbia, Antarctica and the Yukon, whitewater kayaking competitor, mountain climber, endurance athlete and has even golfed at the North Pole!

Hugh's remarkable training programs and keynote presentations combine street-smart advice with an engaging and often hilarious delivery style that reaches over 25,000 people each year. His clients include: Royal Bank of Canada, BC Lottery Corporation, Imperial Oil, Sun Rype Products, Food Services America, many provincial ministries, municipal governments and associations as well as four universities and colleges.



Hugh D. Culver MBA is a Certified Professional Speaker (one of only 40 in Canada) a Certified Facilitation Professional (one of 80 in Canada). In addition to his professional work, Hugh is the founding director of Dare2Dream™, a youth leadership sea kayaking program on the West Coast of British Columbia.

**“We won’t be remembered for what we did,
only for who we helped so they could do better.”**

Hugh Culver

For more information about Hugh's work visit

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