

TEN STEPS TO ATTAIN YOUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

By Laura A. DeCarlo, CERW, CCM, CEIC, CCMC, IJCTC, CECC, CCRP, CWPP
A Competitive Edge Career Service, LLC

Whether you work for a company or are in business for yourself, it is important to strive to have and maintain a balance in your life and to ensure you take daily steps to create and maintain the life you want. The following steps will guide you on your path to a life of fulfillment.

Studies have shown that less than 2% of the population writes down their goals. It is also typically this 2% that holds most of the nation's wealth! Do you think there just might be a correlation?

This can best be accomplished by:

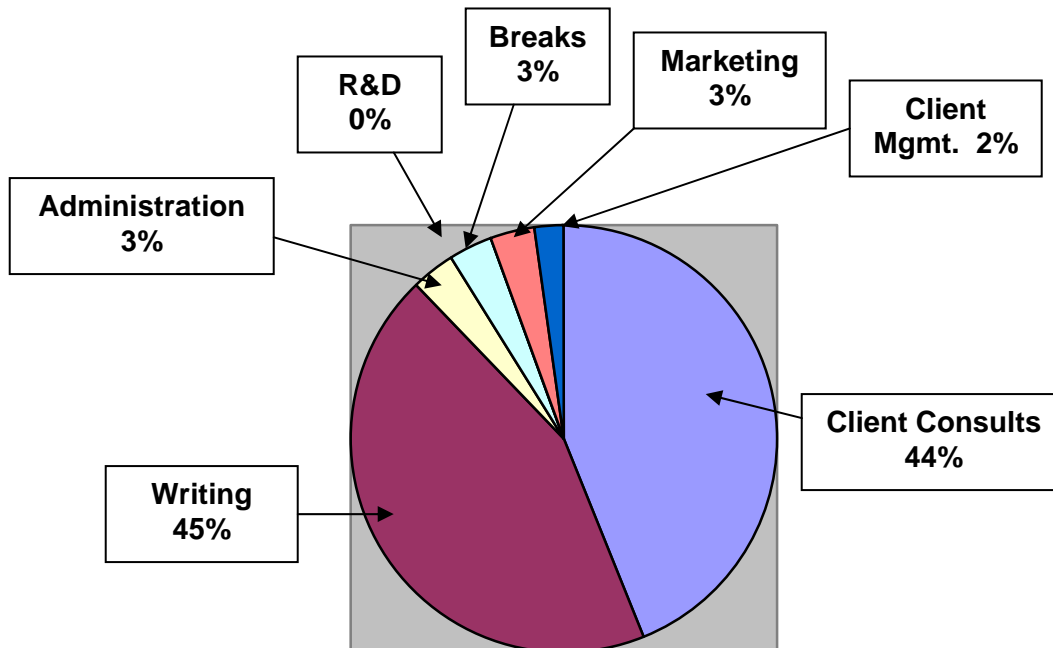
1. Listing goals
2. Setting priorities
3. Analyzing current use of time
4. Eliminating time wasters
5. Scheduling short- and long-term goals.

1. Create a plan for yourself.

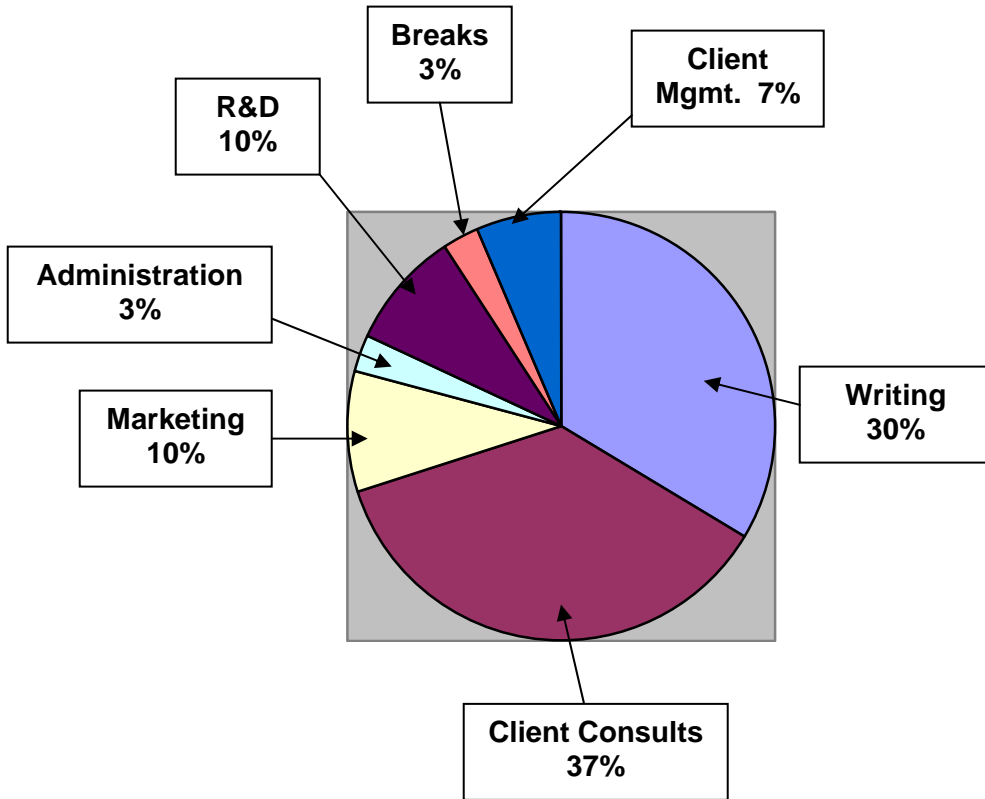
Use the following blank pie chart to detail out how your time is currently used and how you would like to begin using your time in those slots.

Example of Daily Activities, current and proposed:

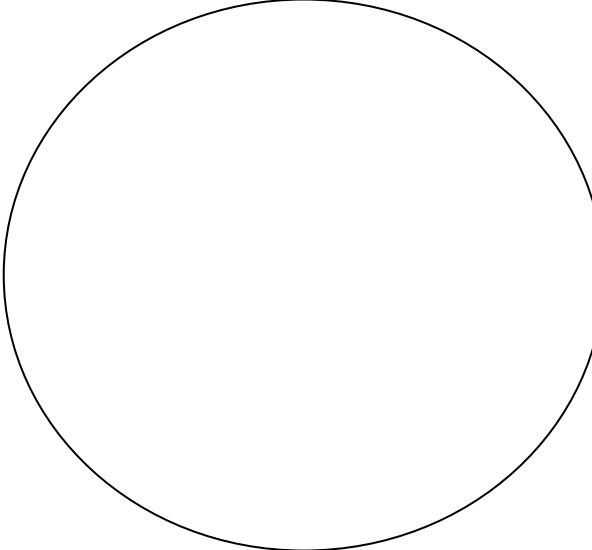
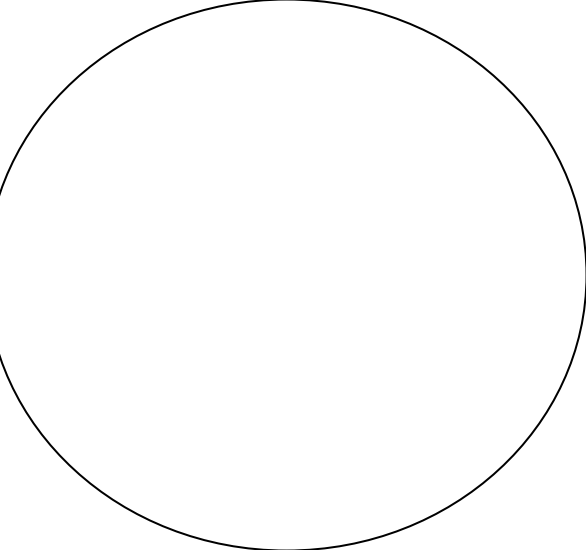
Current Daily:



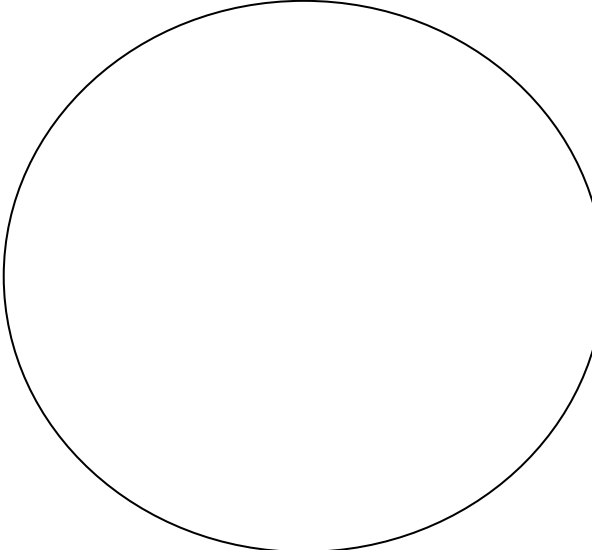
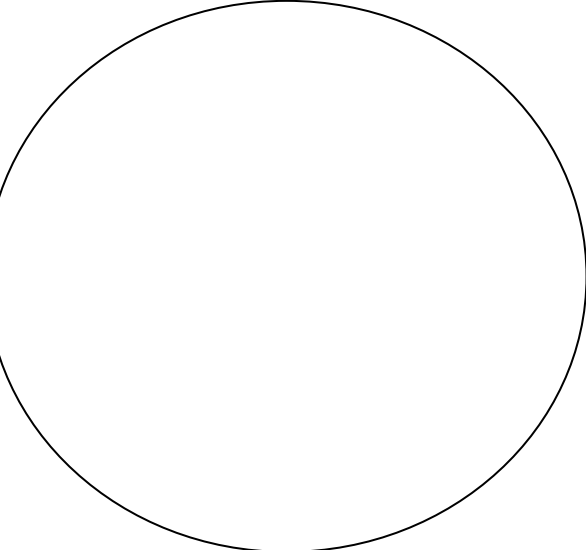
Proposed Daily:



MY DAILY OPERATING PLAN

Current	Proposed
	

MY WEEKLY OPERATING PLAN

Current	Proposed
	

2. Ask yourself empowering questions in order to begin moving toward a plan that is more in sync with your ideal day and week.

- “What will it take to make these changes?”
- “What’s most important to me about making these changes?”
- “What kind of life could I / would I have if I made these changes?”
- “Who can I involve in making these changes to ensure it happens?”
- “What steps can I take today to reach these goals?”

You may need to go deeper here with questions such as:

- “Where am I selling out on myself?”
- “Why do I feel I cannot make time for these activities?”
- “What’s important to me about these activities?”
- “What would life be like without these activities?”
- “What do I gain fulfillment out of?”
- “What are my values and how can I honor them?”

3. Make a written list of goals and break them down.

A. Three long-range goals (five years).

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

B. Three goals to achieve in the next year.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

C. Three goals to achieve in the next six months.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

D. Three goals to achieve in the next month.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

E. Goals to accomplish next week.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Apply minute and detailed planning to this list to map out realistic timelines for steps. Try to put aside time each week to review and edit goals.

Ask yourself questions such as:

“Who should I involve in meeting this goal (networking, contacting, schools to go to, etc.)?”

“When will I do this step? And this step? And the one following?”

Minute planning suggests that you not make vague plans such as this week, but rather you say:

“This Thursday at 1pm I will contact Mary at the Chamber of Commerce to discuss...”

Take this action one step further and commit it to your calendar.

4. Ask yourself motivating, thought provoking, and directional questions as you get ready for each day.

When you are standing in the shower, eating breakfast, or commuting to the office, you are typically on automatic pilot or allowing for a million thoughts to spiral through your brain. Take control of this time and harness your positive energy for the day by asking yourself three, three-part questions such as:

- A. What am I grateful for today? – What about that makes me grateful? – How does that make me feel?
- B. How do I choose to be today? – What about that makes me motivated? – How does that make me feel?
- C. How can I pamper myself today?
- D. How can I have this day be easy?
- E. What do I have to be passionate about today?
- F. What do I have to be motivated about today?
- G. How can I be generous to myself today?
- H. What can I achieve today?

The idea is to ask yourself positive, gratitude-building questions. It will feel difficult at first but the value is unending in how you will feel your mind focusing and taking on a feeling of gratitude, hope, and motivation to direct your day in a high-energy, positive manner.

If you are to excel beyond the daily work commitments and take command of a fulfilling future, you must master the energy of your feelings.

5. Evaluate and improve your presentation and presentation materials.

A typical flaw that most of us suffer from is misunderstanding the total value of presentation. While there are many cost effective brochure paper resources, and resume, website, and web portfolio templates, the outcome is typically far from stellar. If you have a tool to make you money, don't waste your time and your future on a “do-it-yourself” approach.

Secondly, evaluate your strength, skills, and value by asking yourself questions and taking steps to follow through:

“Are there things about myself I refuse to see that need to be improved?”

“What have I been unwilling to change?”

“Why do I think a professional resume, brochure, or website is not important?”

“Where might I be in denial?”

“Where do I stop short?”

“What needs to improve?”

Don't beat up on yourself, but identify areas for change and address them as goals. You may find that they range from lowered self esteem regarding those 10 pounds you want to lose to an outdated wardrobe or a need to learn the computer to grow in your field.

By taking the blinders off you allow yourself to begin taking steps to create the life you want.

6. When all else fails, create an external “warrior” or “second voice” to keep you on track and in line.

It can be very daunting to consistently follow your goals and simply live your life. Sometimes we don't feel strong enough to do this on our own. Encourage yourself to sign up with a professional coach, join a support group, surround yourself with nurturing friends, etc. But in the quiet times, the times you are alone, and the times you start to slide into auto pilot, it is important to have a voice of strength to rely on.

This “higher power” that you assign to your well-being and growth could take the form of the ever-perfect athlete or single-minded warrior, an action hero, or some other persona you look up to such as a mentor. When you find yourself beginning to make poor choices or quitting something, simply ask yourself,

“What would the warrior do?”, “What would Zig Ziglar do?”, or “What would Superman do?”

Would the warrior skip his daily run and eat that candy bar? No!

Would Zig Ziglar take no for an answer when selling a product? No!

Do you want to be the warrior? Yes!

This process, while it may sound silly, can have a profoundly positive impact! Externalizing our inner voice can make it much easier to trust our intuition in following what is best for us.

7. Be good to yourself and be fair with your expectations.

It is fairly common to place unrealistic expectations upon ourselves and to give up or berate ourselves if things don't turn out as we expected on the first try.

All change takes time and is rarely welcome. Allow yourself some kindness and fairness.

Remember my favorite quote:

“He was an overnight success, and it only took seven years.”

We create our own luck and can find the path to our goals much more fulfilling if we take a realistic approach. Idealizing the outcome will lose momentum quickly in the face of reality.

8. You can't create success in a vacuum. Isolation is the killer.

Just as you have opted to visit the CoreNet Global Career Center and read this article, you must continue to do things to stretch yourself. As author and career counselor Barbara Sher is fond of saying, “It's isolation that kills the dream”.

Hope and possibility are tentative, fragile things that must be nurtured and brought to light. That cannot be achieved in a vacuum.

9. Keep a daily journal; plan to plan.

Putting aside a few minutes each night to journal on the day and review what has come and gone can be a powerful and valuable exercise. It will allow you to gain clarity on the events of the day, see what you might have done differently, and let you see what you have actually accomplished. Some of the most successful managers I know utilize this technique as part of their project management methodology to better master their time and performance.

10. "Never, never, never ...give up!" – Winston Churchill

Take these quotes with you as mantras to brighten and drive your days as you move, one step at a time to create the career and life you desire and deserve:

Regarding Time:

"The darkest hour is only 60 minutes." - Unknown

"If there's hope in the future there is power in the present." - John Maxwell

Regarding Attitude:

"We have to learn to be our own best friends because we fall too easily into the trap of being our own worst enemies." - Roderick Thorpe

"Change your thoughts and you change your world." - Norman Vincent Peale

"When you are looking at the sun, you see no shadows." - Helen Keller

On Problems:

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." - James Baldwin

"If you learn from a defeat, you haven't really lost." - Unknown

"Don't get discouraged; it is often the last key in the bunch that opens the lock." - Unknown

On Goals & Motivation:

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." - Unknown

"Success consists of a series of little daily efforts." - Mamie McCullough

"You must begin to think of yourself as becoming the person you want to be." - David Viscott

"The one consistent trait of successful people - they continue to place one foot in front of the other." - Unknown

"Life is a game - be a player, not a spectator." - Unknown

"Come to the edge, he said.

They said, we are afraid.

Come to the edge, he said.

They came. He pushed them...and they flew." - Guillaume Apollinaire

Create a plan for yourself.

- 1. Use the pie chart to identify where you are and where you want to be so you have an idea of what you need to be moving toward.**
- 2. Ask yourself empowering questions in order to begin moving toward a plan that is more in sync with your ideal day and week.**
- 3. Make a written list of goals and break them down.**

3 goals for 5 years, next year, next six months, next month, next week. Schedule them
- 4. Ask yourself motivating, thought provoking, and directional questions as you get ready for each day.**

What am I grateful for today? – What about that makes me grateful? – How does that make me feel?
- 5. Evaluate and improve your presentation and presentation materials.**
- 6. When all else fails, create an external “warrior” or “second voice” to keep you on track and in line.**
- 7. Be good to yourself and be fair with your expectations.**
- 8. You can’t create success in a vacuum. Isolation is the killer.**
- 9. Keep a daily journal.**
- 10. “Never, never, never ...give up!” – Winston Churchill**



Laura DeCarlo is a published and award-winning Certified Career Management Coach and Certified Expert Resume Writer. She is the President of the Professional Resume Writing & Research Association (PRWRA) and Principal of A Competitive Edge Career Service, LLC, a turnkey resume writing, career coaching and career management firm. She is also the liaison for the partnership between the PRWRA and CoreNet Global. For a free consultation or resume critique contact Laura via email at success@acompetitiveedge.com or by phone at 800-715-3442 / 321-752-0880.