



Consider the Consequences - Superior Thinking

by Brian Tracy

The mark of the superior thinker is his or her ability to accurately predict the consequences of doing or not doing something. The potential consequences of any task or activity are the key determinants of how important it really is to you and to your company. This way of evaluating the significance of a task is how you determine what your next "big move" really is.

LONG TIME PERSPECTIVE

Doctor Edward Banfield of Harvard University, after more than 50 years of research, concluded that "long-time perspective" is the most accurate single predictor of upward social and economic mobility in America. Long time perspective turns out to be more important than family background, education, race, intelligence, connections or virtually any other single factor in determining your success in life and at work.

Your attitude toward time, your "time horizon," has an enormous impact on your behaviour and your choices. People who take the long view of their lives and careers always seem to make much better decisions about their time and activities than people who give very little thought to the future.

THINK ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

Successful people have a clear future orientation. They think five, ten and twenty years out into the future. They analyse their choices and behaviours in the present to make sure that they are consistent with the long-term future that they desire.

In your work, having a clear idea of what is really important to you in the long-term makes it much easier for you to make better decisions about your priorities in the short-term.

DETERMINE THE CONSEQUENCES

By definition, something that is important has long-term potential consequences. Something that is unimportant has few or no long-term potential consequences. Before starting on anything, you should always ask yourself, "What are the potential consequences of doing or not doing this task?"

The clearer you are about your future intentions, the greater influence that clarity will have on what you do in the moment. With a clear long-term vision, you are much more capable of evaluating an activity in the present and to assure that it is consistent with where you truly want to end up.

MAKE IT A TOP PRIORITY

If there is a task or activity with large potential positive consequences, make it a top priority and get started on it immediately. If there is something that can have large potential negative consequences if it is not done quickly and well, that becomes a top priority as well. Whatever your "big move" is, resolve to gulp it down first thing.

KEEP MOTIVATED

Motivation requires motive. The greater the positive potential impact that an action or behaviour of yours can have on your life, once you define it clearly, the more motivated you will be to overcome procrastination and get it done quickly.

Thinking continually about the potential consequences of your choices, decisions and behaviours is one of the very best ways to determine your true priorities in your work and personal life.

ACTION EXERCISES

Review your list of tasks, activities and projects regularly. Continually ask yourself, "Which one project or activity, if I did it in an excellent and timely fashion, would have the greatest positive impact on my life?"

Whatever it is that can help you the most, set it as a goal, make a plan to achieve it and go to work on your plan immediately. Remember the wonderful words of Goethe:

"Just begin and the mind grows heated; continue, and the task will be completed!"

If you liked this article you can find out more about Brian Tracy's ideas at: www.briantracy.com

"You don't have to be great to get started. But you have to get started to be great."

Les Brown