

Mastering Your "To-Be" List

By Jeff Davidson

Virtually every accounting professional maintains some type of to-do list, whether it's as simple as a few notes on a page or a comprehensive electronic system. To-do lists, as everyone knows, have high utility - the items on the list are constant reminders as to what we want or choose to get done.



However, how often do you compose a "to-be" list containing a roster of the characteristics and traits that you'd like to attain, develop, or improve upon?

Disarming and Enervating

Considering who and what you'd like to be can, at first, be disarming. After all, few people fixate on what they want to become as opposed to what they need to do. Most people proceed directly to listing the projects and tasks that will help them to accomplish specific goals. Most times the goals are work related, but often they're personal in nature. Yet, without identifying and acknowledging who you want to be, you can miss the forest for the trees: periodically it's vital to make the cerebral link between the tasks that we accomplish and the roles and positions to which we aspire.

When you produce a to-be list, you help put in motion an array of behaviors and activities that will increase your probability of becoming the person you wish to be. For each to-be that makes your list, a variety of to-do-type tasks quickly become associated.

Leadership Can Be a Choice

If you aspire toward leadership, for example, and your to-be list includes "to become a leader," then you are inexorably drawn to those tasks and activities that will help you accomplish your goal. Such tasks might not necessarily be those that normally make your to-do list.

In pursuit of being a leader, beyond effectively executing the assignments facing you, you might also choose to read one book on leadership each month; regularly observe the leaders in your own firm; volunteer for situations that enable you to exhibit leadership skills; and start addressing articles, interviews, and features on leaders in your industry, geographic area, or those whom you simply admire.

As a second example, if you aspire to be a better partner to your spouse or significant other, you might find yourself gravitating toward a variety of activities that traditionally wouldn't have made your to-do list. In becoming a better partner, perhaps you enroll in a course (with or without your partner) on relationships, you speak at length with friends who have been in long and successful relationships, or you listen to a CD on becoming a more effective listener, and so on.

Explorations

The items that make your to-be list might require new types of exploration. You might find yourself attracted to events and activities that are new to you, or find yourself associated with others with whom previously you felt you had little in common. At some point, you find yourself trying new behaviors, putting yourself into novel situations, and asking others for advice on new topics.

The wonderful thing about a to-be list is that the mere act of composing the list increases the probability of your movement in the desired direction. The positive, self-fulfilling progress that you make, compared with doing nothing of the sort, significantly puts the odds in your favor.

Paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln, "When we make up our minds to accomplish something, we are already halfway there." He was right on the mark. Deciding to move in a particular direction and intending to take action to support your decision is the precursor to actual movement and achievement.

Give yourself the wonderful opportunity to become the person you truly want to be. Starting with a blank piece of paper or a blank screen, list four to six characteristics, traits, or attributes you desire to have, because you have it within you to succeed.

About the author:

Jeff Davidson is "The Work-Life Balance Expert®," is a preeminent time management authority, has written fifty-nine mainstream books, and is an electrifying professional speaker. He is the premier thought leader on work-life balance issues and has been widely quoted in the Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor, New York Times, and USA Today. Cited by Sharing Ideas Magazine as a "consummate speaker," Jeff believes that career professionals today in all industries have a responsibility to achieve their own sense of work-life balance, and he supports that quest through his website www.BreathingSpace.com.