

It's Your Choice--Where Will You Focus Your Time and Energy?

by Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2008, published in the Houston Home Journal on Saturday, July 19, 2008

If someone asked you that question every few moments, you'd either make better use of your limited time and energy, or you'd become extremely irritated with that person!

This article is not about "time management," though many leaders need major help in this area! This article is about your decision-making power! You decide, every day, every moment, how you will invest that irreplaceable resource--your time!

Will you apply it wisely, accomplishing any of dozens of possible achievements? Or will you fritter it away? Or maybe worse, will you behave in a way that will require follow-up rework later?

Your choice of how to use your time and energy is often not conscious. If it were, you'd likely use your time and energy better. You'd not watch that extra hour of television. You'd read and exercise more frequently and vigorously. You'd do some planning for that presentation you've got coming up in a week. You'd organize the garage or your desk. You'd spend some relationship time with that teenage son of yours who's going off to college at the end of his next year in high school.

For many of us, the day (and the energy) runs out before the "to-do" list has been accomplished. In our household, we frequently acknowledge that "everything takes longer than you initially expected!"

Earlier in my career, I taught a course on time management based on the premise that "whatever you are doing at this moment is the most important activity in the world to you right now."

Since then, I've realized that I presumed that we always consciously consider all our options. Not so for most of us! I now am aware that we often are not even sensitive to many of our possibilities. The number of lost opportunities is far greater than most of us realize.

Two weeks ago, I wrote that there are at least five different ways to respond to any situation. I contend that when it comes to our use of time, we only consider the proverbial "tip of the iceberg."

Let me speculate. Imagine you hire three highly respected "time management" consultants. Allow each to observe you for three full days. Then let them spend two days interviewing your customers, suppliers, staff, and family. Ask each to provide an independent recommendation for the top five most important activities for your upcoming week. I'll bet you receive at least a dozen different recommendations!

Whether I'm right or not isn't the point. My objective is to raise your awareness. I want you to realize that there are dozens of opportunities available to you every day that you never even consider!

Periodically, I review how I'm spending my life. I strongly encourage you to do the same. Whatever age you are, in ten years, you'll never be able to go back and recapture those lost opportunities!

I wish I could find the article that convinced me, at age fifty, to take a year of travel through the United States and Canada. The writer suggested that, though we humans regret our mistakes, we regret even more the attractive alternatives we never attempt. My wife and I had saved for five years to make that trip. My father kept saying, "Do it while you are young enough to enjoy all that driving!"

I followed the advice of Dad and that article. Hiking in most of North America's national parks was an amazingly memorable experience. God's creation is awesome! Time flies--that was ten years ago!

How will you spend the next ten years? How about the next year? Where will you put your energy next week? What will you do in the next ten minutes? It's your choice!

As your leadership coach, Dennis Hooper will support your organization's move toward genuine excellence. E-mail Dennis at dennis@buildingfutureleaders.com or call him at (770)-286-2250.