

# Planning Principles

By Donald Wetmore

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Donald Wetmore  
ctsem@msn.com

Productivity Institute <http://www.balancetime.com>

## PLANNING PRINCIPLES

By: Dr. Donald E. Wetmore

The old adage reminds us that "People don't plan to fail but a lot of people do fail to plan." During a war, we find a tank operator and a general. Which function is more important? It is probably the general, at least in this sense. One can be the best tank operator on the line, get out there everyday and shoot off more rounds of ammunition and shoot them more accurately than anyone else on the line, but if he is not shooting at a target that makes any sense, then his whole day is wasted. The general, through advanced planning, decides where the tank operator ought to go and thereby increases his "productivity".

A lot of people run their days like a tank operator without a general. Awake in the morning, get dressed, off to work, grab the first fire hose someone throws their way, get caught up addressing the demands coming from the loudest voices shouting in their direction, come home at night, sometimes beat and exhausted, get rested, get up the next morning and repeat the cycle. That is living life by accident. I encourage people to live their lives on purpose.

I want each of us to be a general. And there's a war out there in that either you are in control of your time or someone else is. And the best way for us to be a general and in control of our own time is doing effective Daily Planning every day.

Here's five nifty Planning Principles to help maximize your Daily Planning

1. Do your planning the night before. I try to set aside time each night for Daily Planning. I've wound down from the workday and I am less pressured. The major benefit, however, is that by having a plan of action completed the night before, we go to bed with a sense of certainty and control about our next day and with a sense of anticipation we would not ordinarily have. After getting into the habit of accomplishing our Daily Planning each night, the quality of our sleep will be enhanced because we have established a plan each night that gives us the roadmap or game plan for the next day eliminating the need to wrestle with all the loose ends in our heads during our sleeping hours, interfering with the quality of our sleep.

2. Put the plan into writing. There is extraordinary power in the pen. Putting our plan into writing helps us to increase our feelings of control and, indeed, the reality of control. When we try to keep track of everything in our heads, things tend to slip through the cracks.

3. "Have to's" and "Want to's". Good planning involves more than just properly administering our "Have To's". Sure we ought to better handle our "Have To's", but we also need to do a good job taking care of our "Want To's". Plan out not only the things you "have to" do, but, more importantly, the things you "want to" do.

4. Over plan your day. "If you want to get something done, give it to a busy person." The more you plan to do, the more you can get done because you take advantage of Parkinson's Law which says, in part, that a project tends to expand with the time allocated for it. If you have one thing to do for the day, it will take all day. If you have three things to do for the day, you'll get all three done. If you have twelve things to get done for the day, you might not get all twelve done, but probably will get nine completed. See, having a lot to do creates a healthy sense of pressure on us and we almost automatically become better time managers.

5. Prioritize your list. Our list will almost always include "crucial" as well as "not crucial" items. Some items are more important, others less so. Without some direction, we tend to gravitate towards the "not crucial" items because they are typically easier to do, take less time, and may even be more fun than many of our "crucial" items. A simple numerical listing will suffice. Put a "1" next the most important item on your list, the one item you would want done if you could only accomplish one item. Then place a "2" next to the second most important item, continuing the process until all the items on your list are prioritized in order of their importance.

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Dr. Donald E. Wetmore  
Professional Speaker  
Productivity Institute  
Time Management Seminars  
127 Jefferson St.  
Stratford, CT 06615  
(203) 386-8062 (800) 969-3773  
Fax: (203) 386-8064  
Email: [ctsem@msn.com](mailto:ctsem@msn.com)  
Visit Our Time Management Supersite: <http://www.balancetime.com>

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