

TRANSCRIPT
PODCAST #4: EAT THAT FROG

VOICE-OVER: Here is this week's Raising The Bar podcast for Business To Business Magazine with Business Development Coach Robin Hensley.

ROBIN: It has been said that if the first thing you do each morning is to eat a live frog, you can go through the rest of the day with the satisfaction of knowing that you have experienced what is probably the worst thing that is going to happen to you over the next 24 hours.

Hello and welcome to this edition of Raising the Bar's coaching series. I'm Robin Hensley and this week we will be talking about how to accomplish your goals by biting into your biggest, hardest and most difficult tasks first. Disciplining yourself to start there and persist until your work is complete will dramatically improve your effectiveness. Just a reminder that there's no need to take notes on what I will be sharing with you today. You can download a complete transcript at btobmagazine.com.

Studies show that for those men and women who get paid more and promoted faster, it is the quality of their action orientation that sets them apart. It is that one specific observable and consistent behavior that positions them for success. The truth is that the most successful, effective people are those that tackle their major tasks first and work diligently and single-mindedly until those tasks are complete. This is a life-changing revelation. No matter what your circumstances, it is not who you know or what you know that determines your success. It is how you spend your time. And, how you spend your time is entirely up to you. Of course, it is not always that easy, is it? I think if we were to boil the whole thing down to its basic elements, success or failure is simply a result of the habits we create. In this case, we're talking about the habits of focus and concentration. There are three "Ds" to building those habits. They are decision, discipline and determination.

- First, you must make the decision to develop a habit of completing your most difficult tasks first. But, a decision alone is meaningless until you act, so
- Second, you must build new habits by practicing over and over again until you master them. And finally,
- Back everything you do with determination until the habit is locked in and becomes a permanent part of who you are.

The amount of time required to complete an important job is often the same as the time required to do an unimportant one. Before beginning any work, ask yourself, “Is this task in the top 20 percent of my activities or in the bottom 80 percent?” Making the right choice will give you a tremendous feeling of pride and satisfaction from the completion of something valuable and significant. Completing a low-value task gives you none of that in exchange for consuming the same amount of time and energy. When in doubt about which task or project to put at the top of your list, imagine you are about to leave town for a month. What would you absolutely make sure you got done before you left? Whatever your answer, get busy right now and get it done. If your virtual vacation doesn’t give you the pecking order of your to-dos, then ask yourself . . .

- What are my highest value activities?
- What can I and only I do that, if done well, will make a real difference?
- What is the most valuable use of my time right now? That is, what is my biggest frog of all?

Actually applying yourself to getting things done in the right order means training yourself like an athlete might prepare. If you want to consistently perform at the top of your game, regardless of what it is, you must set your standard higher than anyone else could ever set it for you. Then you must prepare your mind and body for the rigors of the activity. Feed yourself as you would feed a world-class athlete before a competition. In many ways, that is what you are as you begin each workday. Building your physical stamina through exercise and getting the proper rest are equally important. Take your fitness pulse by asking yourself:

- What am I doing physically that I should do more of?
- What am I doing that I should do less of?
- What am I not doing that I should start doing if I want to perform my best?
- What am I doing today that affects my health that I should stop doing altogether?

Practice saying “no” to anything that is not a high-value use of your time and your life. If you find that the word “no” has disappeared from your lexicon, practice saying it out loud right now. Pledge to say “No” to anything that may take the guise of fitting into your spare time. Spare time for you is a myth. You simply do not have any extra time to do what does not need to be done. Your dance card is full.

When it comes to rest, and by rest I really mean sleep, we all seem to think less sleep and more work is the badge of accomplishment. It is as if we can claim some great distinction among our peers by how hard we drive ourselves on as little fuel as possible. Fully rested, you can get two, three or even five times more accomplished than when you are tired. One extra hour of sleep every night can literally change your life.

Now, if the thought of adding an extra hour of sleep is disturbing to you, (I can hear you arguing with me even as I tell you this) then consider what taking one full day off every week could do. Yipes! Are you shaking in your boots? A full twenty-four hours every week that positively excludes reading, email correspondence, catching up on things at work or doing anything else that strains your mind will re-charge and re-energize you. That extra boost of energy will help you overcome procrastination and help you stay on target.

“Procrastination is the thief of time.” So said early English poet Edward Young. Even in the seventeenth century, people were aware of the high cost of putting things off. But procrastination can be a good thing, too. It only requires looking at it from a fresh perspective. Unconscious procrastination is the putting off of what is most important or what has the most significant long-term consequences. Creative procrastination is a thoughtful process that postpones, perhaps forever, what you are not going to do right now. Here’s a question for self-reflection to differentiate unconscious from creative procrastination.

“Is this something I would not start up again today, knowing what I now know?” Your answer will automatically route that project or task into the “Do It Now” or “Creative Procrastination” basket.

Finally, let’s review seven practical steps for eating that frog every workday.

1. At the end of your workday, or on the weekend, make a list of everything you have to do the next day.
2. Review this list, applying the 80/20 Rule and ranking your list in order of importance.
3. Select the job or task that has the most serious potential consequences if you do or don’t get it done.
4. Gather everything you will need to start and finish this task and lay it out, ready for you to start working on it in the morning.
5. Clear your workspace completely so that you have just this one, most important task, sitting on your desk waiting for you in the morning, ready for you to bite into it.
6. Train yourself to get up, get ready and then walk in, sit down and start on that task without interruptions, before you do anything else.
7. Build your new behavior into a habit by doing it every day for 21 consecutive days. You will double your productivity in less than a month when you do.

P.S. You can trick your willpower into engaging wholeheartedly in this time-management make-over by reminding yourself that what you are doing is just for today—that “just for today” you will plan, prepare and start on your most difficult task before you do anything else.



Remember, if you have to eat a live frog, it doesn't pay to sit and look at it for very long. Just go ahead and put worst things first. As Goethe said, "The things that matter most must never be at the mercy of the things that matter least."

For more on managing procrastination, take a look at "Eat That Frog: 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time" by Brian Tracy or drop by his website at www.briantracy.com.

Until next time, I'm Robin Hensley.

VOICE-OVER: You have been listening to a Raising The Bar program on tackling big projects first by eating that frog with Business Development Coach Robin Hensley. For a full transcript of this program, stop by the Business To Business Magazine website at btobmagazine.com.

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