# SUCCESS MADE SIMPLE

*"WHERE YOUR SUCCESS IS THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS."*

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## THE 10 "BEST PRACTICES" THAT WILL DETERMINE YOUR SUCCESS OR FAILURE IN BUSINESS.

# EDWARD J. MURPHY

*Founder of The Effectiveness Institute*

This book was extracted from Volume 1,
*The Art of Followership*, 2023,
from *The Success Made Simple Series*
of 10 books. Edition 1, LU: 5/23.

# WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT
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*"I highly recommend the training from The Effectiveness Institute as required for new leaders and a review for seasoned leaders - as a reminder of what they should be doing. This training is unique because it's replete with valuable information that you can learn today and use tomorrow. If you want to become absolutely essential to any organization, this training is for you."*

**- Dennis D. Cavin**
Lieutenant General, US Army (Retired)
Vice President Army Missile Defense Programs
Lockheed Martin, Corporate Business Development

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*"I recommend the training from The Effectiveness Institute because Ed Murphy doesn't theorize; he draws on his extensive experience from many years of service in the US Military and working as an Executive Coach in Corporate America. His keen insights and practical advice make this training required for anyone trying to negotiate the maze of organizational chaos."*

**- Lee Lacy**
Assistant Professor
US Army Warfighter Program
Command and General Staff College

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*"The training from The Effectiveness Institute will help you become more effective and successful at work and in life. It will also help you unlock your potential and direct your team to greater success. I highly recommend this training."*

**- Lance Revo**
Principal Engineering Design Specialist
Cyber Security at AREVA NP

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***Never STOP Learning!***

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# INTRODUCTION

*"The greatest thing a man can do in this world is to make
the most possible out of the stuff that has been given him.
This is success, and there is no other."*
*- Orison Swett Marden*

This book will provide you with 10 actionable, *best practices* you can learn today and use tomorrow to achieve the success you deserve.

The contents of this book have been extracted from *The Art of Followership*, from SUCCESS MADE SIMPLE: *Where your Success in Business is the ONLY thing that Matters.*

It's the professional development program you'll need to achieve the success you deserve.  It consists of ten courses, one for each of these ten core competencies of your success in business.

Followership, Delegating, Planning, Organizing,
Communicating, Problem-Solving, Awareness, Training,
Motivating and Character-Building.

It's for everyone in the workforce who reports to another person for their work assignments, including small business owners, entrepreneurs, and the self-employed working for customers, clients, guests, or patients.

Simply stated, this book is for you and
your team regardless of your occupation,
position, or level of authority.

I'm Ed Murphy, the founder of the effectiveness institute.  My goal is to help you rise above your peers, to be the best at what you do, and to stand out, rather than just fit in.

To that end, I bring over 40+ years of experience in both peace and war helping people overcome their fear and achieve their true potential.

For my first career, I served 24 years as a US Army Officer, during two wars, Viet Nam and Desert Storm, traveling all over the world.  After the military, I spent the next 20+ years as an Executive Coach in Corporate

America working with hundreds of business executives, small business owners, and teams, in Seattle, San Diego, Kansas City, and Phoenix.

Currently, I'm the author of over 30 books on Amazon and create online training courses on the ten core competencies of success in business.

During my time as an executive coach, I was blessed to work with some of America's most successful men and women, including hundreds of business executives, teams, and small business owners.

I documented what they did, and how they did it. I also recorded what worked and what didn't. But, most importantly, I captured how they made people feel.

As a result, I learned that the most successful people stood out because they were able to do these three things better than anyone else:

- They were able to consistently produce excellent results.

- They added greater value to those who helped them produce their results, especially their boss.

- They treated everyone with respect and kindness, no matter what.

You see, you may be the top producer, but if you haven't added value to those who helped you achieve your results or haven't treated everyone with respect and kindness, no matter what, you'll never become successful, period.

Let me ask this, what new skills or abilities have you acquired in the last twelve months? What contributions have you made to your current position since this time last year?

If you're having difficulty answering these questions, you're not alone. Cheer up! At least you're in the right place.

**What makes this program so unique?**

SUCCESS MADE SIMPLE provides these three things you'll never find anywhere in academia or Corporate America, to help you achieve the success you deserve:

- It gives the most actionable *best practices* (tactics, techniques, and tools) needed to consistently produce excellent results.

- It teaches the most effective *best practices* used daily by the most successful people in their field, which you were never taught in school.

- It provides step-by-step instructions explaining what should be done, how to do it, and the tools needed to make it happen.

Without these *best practices*, you'll be wasting your career sitting on the sidelines, watching others move ahead while wondering why it wasn't you.

I know that by learning, using, and sharing these *best practices*, you'll be adding greater value to your boss and team - making you irreplaceable.

*REMEMBER, WE'RE ALL A "WORK IN PROGRESS".*
*SO, NO MATTER HOW GOOD YOU THINK YOU ARE;*
*YOU CAN ALWAYS BE BETTER.*

So, what are you waiting for? You have too much to lose by not taking a more active role in your Professional Development.

When you're ready to *elevate your game* to the next level, come join us and discover why our readers come away saying, *"I wish I knew this stuff years ago."*

***Enjoy your book!***

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Also, if you feel this information could help someone else, please let them know. If it makes a difference in their lives, they'll be forever grateful to you, as will I.

***Never STOP Learning!***

Ed

Founder of *The Effectiveness Institute*

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*STOP WISHING YOU WERE BETTER AND
DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT TODAY!*

# 1

# BY KNOWING WHAT EVERY COMPANY NEEDS MOST TO SURVIVE

*"It is the men behind who make the man ahead."*
*- Merle Crowell.*

Before we address the *ten best practices*, I need to set the stage first by explaining what all companies and bosses need most to survive.

Have you ever tried to figure out what's most important in business, and what's not?  Especially when there are too many things to do, too few people, and hours in the day, to get it all done.  How can you add greater value if you don't know what your company needs most to survive?

### Let's start by examining civilian-controlled and for-profit companies.

These companies include the self-employed, small businesses, and corporations like Microsoft.

As an Executive Coach, I often asked senior executives, "What matters most to the survival of your company?"  The first answer I normally got was people.  And people are an important resource, but not the most important.  Just quit your job and see how quickly you'll be replaced.

Some folks said technology.  And technology is important but again not the most important.  So, what really matters most to the survival of every civilian-controlled company?

The only folks who don't struggle with this question are the self-employed and Small Business Owners; these guys get it.  They'll tell you that the most important thing to their company's survival is *Positive Cash Flow* or PCF.

Without PCF companies can't pay their people and are soon out of business, game over!

And according to the Small Business Administration, this is the primary reason 80% of start-ups fail within their first three years.

So, how can you contribute to the PCF of your company? Well, here are the three most important activities that generate PCF.

**The first activity is to Increase Revenues.**

This activity normally involves those in sales, marketing, sales support, and business development, but anyone can contribute. Can you recommend better ways to sell more products or services, discover new uses for existing products, or attract new customers? This is how revenues are increased.

**The second activity is to Decrease Operating Costs.**

This activity normally involves those in finance, accounting and purchasing, but is everyone's job. Can you recommend better ways to eliminate redundancies, consolidate, or reduce waste? How about improving processes by reducing the time required, or better maintaining equipment and vehicles to extend their service life? How much could be saved annually? This is how Operating Costs are reduced.

**And the final activity is the one most people forget.**

*This involves anticipating problems today to save money tomorrow.*

This activity normally involves those in legal, compliance, loss prevention, safety, human resources, and customer service.

Since insurance and lawsuits are so expensive, can you recommend better ways to ensure compliance with outside agencies, or enhance physical and cybersecurity? How about eliminating unsafe conditions, or

safeguarding high-value items and proprietary methods?  This is what saves money tomorrow by anticipating problems today.

Since the most important thing to the survival of these civilian-controlled companies is *positive cash flow*, how can you make a greater contribution?

### Caution:

If your business unit IS NOT involved with increasing revenues, or getting products and services to the end user, you may be considered *non-essential*.  And being *non-essential* means that you could be among the first ones laid off if your company's cash flow goes negative.

### *But what about government-controlled organizations like schools and government agencies?*

WHAT MATTERS MOST TO THEM IS PROVIDING QUALITY SERVICES THAT BENEFIT THE GREATER GOOD, THE PUBLIC.

If their services become ineffective or obsolete, they run the risk of being downsized or eliminated.  And they have a different problem with cash flow; it's called cutbacks.

And don't tell me that government jobs are secure because they're not. In 1995, I witnessed **President Bill Clinton** release over 1000 US Army Lieutenant Colonels with a stroke of his pen.  Depending on which political party is in power, cutbacks, downsizing, and budget reductions happen all the time.

Since the most important thing to these government-controlled organizations is the quality of the services they provide, how can you make a greater contribution?

As you focus on providing whatever your organization needs most to survive, your value will be enhanced.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 4, the Art of Organizing, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# 2

# BY KNOWING WHAT EVERY BOSS
# NEEDS MOST TO SURVIVE

*"It takes half your life before you discover*
*life is a do-it-yourself project."*
*- Napoleon Hill*

How can you add greater value to your boss if you don't know what your boss needs most to survive?  Let's face it; every boss experiences a variety of stresses every day, ranging from the mundane to the life changing.

However, the greatest stress every boss feel is the stress of keeping their job, or not getting fired, especially if they're new.  The fact remains that any boss who can't resolve problems, get things done, or achieve his goals, won't be around very long.

This is the first law of business: and it goes like this:

EITHER PRODUCE A POSITIVE RESULT OR STEP ASIDE.

And if you don't believe me, then tell me what happens to unproductive NFL football coaches, near the end of every season.

THAT'S RIGHT; THEY GET FIRED!
IT'S NOT PERSONAL; IT'S BUSINESS!

This is why every boss needs effective followers who can resolve problems, get things done, and achieve their goals.  This means helping your boss put points on the board, just to stay in the game.  And this is where you come in.

The better you get at resolving problems, getting things done, and achieving your goals, the more value you bring.

The project could be a problem, a goal, an obstacle, or anything else your boss needs to be done.

And you don't need to be an engineer or a certified project manager to manage a project. All you need is a basic understanding of a few simple concepts and Best Practices, which you'll learn from this course.

Let's start with the basics.

### What's a Project?

A project could be anything that needs to be started, stopped, or changed. For example, it could be a problem, goal, issue, concern, activity, or event.

*I define a project as any assignment that requires the effort of others.*

Anything one person can do is a task and not a project. So, whenever you get stuck at work, realize there's a simple way to re-frame anything into a simple project to get things moving again.

### What's a Plan of Action?

Every project should have a good *Plan of Action, or POA,* which has at least these six components:

**1. Objective:** A good objective statement answers these questions: Who is this project for what, when, and where is the project, and why are we doing it?

**2. Methods:** This explains how your project will accomplish your boss's Objective.

**3. Timetable:** The timetable is created by planning backward from the day you receive the assignment until the project is over. It lists all the activities and *Preventive Actions* needed to find and fix problems before they get in front of your boss or the customer.

**4. Resources Needed:** This includes all the things you need and when and where you need them.

**5. Unresolved Issues:** These include all the issues, questions, concerns, shortfalls, obstacles, or problems that could slow or stop you.

**6. Risks:** These include all the things that could *reasonably go wrong,* meaning anything that has gone wrong in the past and how they'll be *mitigated.*

*What's a Project's Life Cycle?*

**Here's a simple *Project Chart* showing the four phases of a seven-day project that begins in 30 days.**

| Project Chart for a 7-Day Project Starting in 30-Days | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Phase** | **1** | **15** | | **25** | **30** | **37** |
| **1** | Plan | IPR 1 | | | | |
| **2** | | | Prepare | IPR 2 | | |
| **3** | | | | | Execute | AAR |
| **4** | | | Assess | | | |

Notice that this chart shows all four phases of a simple project: *Planning, Preparing, Executing, and Assessing*.

The *Assessing Phase* is conducted continuously throughout the project. It's formalized using two *In-Progress Reviews (or IPRs)* between project phases, and one *After-Action Review (or AAR)* the day after the project ends.

Also, if your project involves the creation of a product, it will need a fifth Phase, the *Maintenance Phase*. Even creating a document or a software update will need a review, and possible revisions every so often. And manufactured products, like cars, will need repair parts, manuals, and trained mechanics.

As you continue to resolve problems, get things done, and achieve your goals know that you're becoming more effective and successful than you were yesterday.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 4, the Art of Organizing, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# 3
## BY KEEPING YOUR
## EYE ON THE BALL

*"We don't have a crisis of leadership in Washington.*
*We have a crisis of followership.*
*- Jonathan Rauch*

The first *best practice* you'll need to achieve the success you deserve involves your ability to *follow up* or *keep your eye on the ball*.

### How well do you follow up and would your boss agree?

FOLLOW-UP IS A SUBSEQUENT ACTION TAKEN, TO CHECK ON THE VALIDITY OF AN INITIAL ACTION.

And there are three situations where follow-up is needed.

*Situation 1.  When someone fails to respond to your solicitation.*

Using a sales example, if one of your prospects fails to respond to your solicitation, or declines to do business with you, you should continue to follow up.

FOLLOW-UP HERE MEANS CONTINUING TO CONTACT SOMEONE UNTIL YOU RECEIVE A POSITIVE RESPONSE.

The secret to good follow-up is to continue to add value to the person you're trying to contact.  And the second secret is, "Don't get discouraged," and here's how.  Just remember SW, SW, SW, N.

THIS MEANS SOME WILL.  SOME WON'T.  SO WHAT.  NEXT!

Never give up.  Just find another way to get there.  Remember, the best salespeople close the sale on their 5th attempt.

*Situation 2.  **When you're trying to contact someone to resolve a problem.***

Here are the most important steps to resolve a problem.

> **Step 1. Call to resolve the problem.**   John called because of a
> delayed order.  And if he got their voicemail, he left a message
> with the date, his name, company, number, the problem, and
> requested a return call.

> **Step 2. Document your actions.**   John always documented his
> follow-up actions.   This way, when his boss asks, he can show
> his "Action Log."

> **Step 3. Show up in person.**   After John called several times with
> no response, he showed up in person and got the problem
> resolved.

> **Step 4. Add it to your Unresolved Issues List**.   Until resolved,
> John kept this issue on his Unresolved Issues List and ensured his
> boss had a current copy.

*Situation 3.  **After delegating an assignment or making a reservation or
appointment.***

> FOLLOW-UP ALSO MEANS CONTACTING SOMEONE, A FEW DAYS
> BEFORE THE DUE DATE OF AN ASSIGNMENT, RESERVATION,
> OR APPOINTMENT, TO CONFIRM IT'S STILL VALID.

This means that when it comes to delegating, 5 % of your
job is asking someone, to perform a task, by a certain time.  The other
95% is to follow up to ensure it gets done.

**And here's a great story about how Joe saved the day by following
up.**

> *It was June 1st, when Joe was asked by his boss to set up a
> luncheon, for 30 senior executives, at the best steak house in
> town, for June 15th.  This was two weeks before the luncheon
> when Joe made the initial reservation.  He documented the date,
> time, and the name of the person he spoke with, on his
> Assignment Tracking Form, which you'll learn in Lesson 8.*

*On June 12th, a few days before the luncheon, as Joe reviewed his Assignment Tracking Form, he decided to follow up, and here's how the phone call went.*

"Hi, this is Joe Sanchez from Trident Resources. I'm calling to follow up on my reservation, for 30 people, for Thursday, June 15th, at 11:30 A M. Is everything still on track?

The scheduler said, "Joe, I don't have a reservation for your company. When did you make it and whom did you speak with?"

After looking at his Assignment Tracking Form, Joe said, "I called two weeks ago, on June 1st, and I spoke to Carol."

After a long pause, the scheduler continued, "Carol was let go two weeks ago. That may explain the problem. After another long pause, she said, 'You're lucky. You called just in time. If you had waited any longer, you'd be out of luck.'"

*After Joe's heart rate returned to normal, he was glad he recorded all his phone calls and followed up when he did. If not, he would have had 30 senior executives, standing around, smelling steak, with no place to sit. Rookie mistake.*

So, I ask again, how well do you follow up and would your boss agree?

As you continue to follow up, you'll stand out above your peers, and your boss will be convinced that you have your act together.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 3, the Art of Planning, available from *[TheEffectivenessInstitute.com](TheEffectivenessInstitute.com)*.

# 4

# BY CLOSING

# THE LOOP

*"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is
the courage to continue that counts.
- Sir Winston Churchill.*

The second *best practice* you'll need to achieve the success you deserve
involves your ability to *follow through* or *close the loop*.

## How well do you follow through and would your boss agree?

How well do you follow through and would your boss agree?

Many people think follow-up and follow-through are the same, but
they're not!

FOLLOW-THROUGH IS THE PROCESS OF RETURNING
TO THE ASKER, EITHER FACE-TO-FACE OR ON THE PHONE,
AND REPORTING THE STATUS OF THEIR REQUEST.

Follow-through is different, and here's why. Follow-through requires
that you perform these four simple steps.

Let's assume that you've just been asked by your boss to perform a new
assignment.

### Step 1. By understanding and accepting the assignment.

Before accepting the assignment, ensure you understand the
requirements and when it's needed – the deadline. If you have questions,
ask.

Now, you need to determine if you can deliver the assignment as
requested. If not, speak up. This is when the negotiations begin. Once
you're certain you can deliver, accept the assignment, and begin work.

### Step 2. By Returning and Reporting.

After completing the assignment, *Return* means contacting your boss, either face-to-face or on the phone. And *Report* means that you provide your boss with the status of her assignment.

### Step 3. By knowing what to do if the assignment can't be completed as requested.

If this happens, *Return and Report* to your boss, either face-to-face or on the phone, explain the situation and recommend what needs to be done to complete her assignment.

### Step 4. By being responsive.

When your boss asks you to do something, treat her assignment with the respect and priority it deserved.

For example, if it's Monday, and your boss wants something by Friday, deliver it before Thursday or earlier. And if your boss asks how long it would take, and he knew it was a two-day task, he told her it would take three days, then delivered it in two.

**Remember,**

*"ALWAYS UNDER PROMISE AND OVER DELIVER."*

This is what your boss means when she says,

*"GET BACK TO ME.  KEEP ME POSTED.  KEEP ME IN THE LOOP.*

### And there are two situations where follow-through is needed.

**Situation 1. When your boss or customer asks you to do something.**

Let's assume that you've just been asked by your boss to perform an assignment. When this happens, ensure you understand the assignment, and when it needs to be completed - the deadline.

If you have questions, speak up!  If you can't deliver, say so!  This is when the negotiating begins.  Assuming that you can complete the assignment as required, begin work.  After completing the assignment, *Return and Report* to your boss, either face-to-face or on the phone.

And if you can't complete the assignment, *Return and Report* the problem to your boss, and recommended what needs to be done to complete the assignment.

**Situation 2.  When you ask a Direct Report to do something.**

Whenever you ask a Direct Report to do something, ensure they understand the assignment, and when it needs to be completed - the deadline.  Once they've accepted the assignment, ask them to *follow through* and explain how to *Return and Report*.

So, I ask again, how well do you follow through and would your boss agree?

As you continue to follow through, you'll stand out above your peers, and your boss will be convinced that you have your act together.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 3, the Art of Planning, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# 5

# BY TRACKING ALL
# THE MOVING PARTS

*"The single biggest problem in communication
is the illusion that it has taken place."
- George Bernard Shaw*

The third *best practice* you'll need to achieve the success you deserve involves your ability to keep track of all the moving parts for which you're responsible.

## How do you keep track of all your moving parts?

Effective people know there are many " moving parts " in business, and some lose their way - unless someone tracks them.

TRACKING MEANS KEEPING A PAPER OR DIGITAL TRAIL BY
DOCUMENTING THE MOST IMPORTANT MOVING PARTS.

AND MOVING PARTS IN BUSINESS ARE ALL
THE THINGS THAT KEEP CHANGING.

Here are several ways to keep track of your most important "moving parts."

### Let's start with keeping track of your Assignments.

Assignments come in two flavors: Assignments *Accepted* from others, and Assignments *Made* to others.

Just because your boss gives you an assignment doesn't mean you have to blindly accept it. If you can't deliver, say so. Then, explain what you'll need to make it happen. Now the negotiations begin.

**Here's an example of an Assignments Tracking Form.**

| Assignment Tracking Form | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assignments Accepted | | | | Assignments Made | | | | |
| Date | From | Action Item | DL | To | Date | DL | Checked | Status |
| 11 May | Boss | ABC Report | 19 Mar | Sue | 12 May | 17 May | 15 May | OT |

Notice that this table has two sides. The left side tracks your Assignments *Accepted* from others, like your boss. The right side tracks your Assignments *Made* to others, like your direct Reports, or vendors or suppliers.

Under Assignments *Accepted,* you'll see the date you received it, whom it came from, the name of the assignment, and the deadline, or DL. Under Assignments *Made*, you'll see whom you assigned it to, the date, the deadline, the date you last checked, and the status.

For example, using this table, let's assume that this is 11 May, and you just received an assignment from your boss to complete the ABC Report, with a deadline of 19 May.

The next day, you reassigned the ABC report to Sue, one of your direct reports, with a deadline of 17 May. This way, you have two days before your boss's deadline, in case changes are needed, or something goes wrong.

Also, if you ever need to ask for an extension to a deadline, never ask for one more day. At least ask for two days, because you never want to have to ask for a second extension.

Document all your Assignments Made to use for your internal meetings. You can also create an *Assignment Tracking Form* for each Direct Report. If you fail to document all your moving parts, you'll quickly lose track of who's doing what.

**Let's talk about how to keep track of all the changes.**

Changes can be dangerous for these three reasons:

- The ten percent who never received the change.

- All those who received the change but didn't fully understand its effects on them.

- All those who make assumptions about the change, which is always dangerous.

The problems come later when things start to go sideways, and everyone is shocked. To avoid this, ensure all project members know about all the changes and understand how they affect them. And review these changes during all future meetings.

**What's the best way to communicate changes to others?**

The best way is face-to-face. The second best is via phone conversation, not text. Then, follow up with a detailed email.

Don't use email as your primary means of communicating changes. Many people don't read their email for days and others misunderstand the effects of the email on them. And, most importantly, ask yourself who else needs to know this information. Now, act on that answer.

**Here's a good example of a Change Control Log.**

| Change Control Log | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | Change | Originator | Recipients | Method | Response |
| May 4 | Added 12 to headcount. | Tom | Brian, John, Sam | F2F | None |
| May 5 | Next meeting at 10 AM, not 9 AM. | Tom | Brian, John, Sam | Phone | N/A |

Notice that this table tracks the date, the change, the Originator - the source of the change, The Recipient - who was told about the change, and

the Method - how the message was communicated, like on the phone, face to face, or email.

Your *change control log* will come in handy later, especially when others complain that they never got the change. Just refer to your change control log, tell them the date, who received the change, and how it was transmitted. In the end, just know that whenever a change is made, these three "dangers" will always be out there somewhere.

YOUR JOB IS TO HUNT THEM DOWN AND MAKE THEM GO AWAY.

**And here's a great story about the dangers of assumptions.**

> Tyrone was the Person-in-Charge of his company's Annual Team Building Session. Three days before the session, his boss called and told him that the venue had been changed, to a remote cabin, with no electricity. Tyrone immediately met with John, the team member assigned to provide the food and beverages for the session, and informed him of the change in venue, and the lack of electricity.
>
> The day before the session, Tyrone followed up with John and was shocked to find that John had not considered the new refrigeration requirements for the food and beverages.
>
> Since this was a three-day session for 15 people, this change required that the food and beverages be stored, and refrigerated in ice coolers, and that fresh ice be delivered twice daily, to keep everything cool.
>
> John didn't realize the impact of the change on his assignment. He didn't recognize the need for ice or coolers and assumed Tyrone would take care of it. And Tyrone assumed that John had it covered, which turned out to be false.
>
> As a result, the night before the session, they spent all night scrambling around, in the dark with their flashlights, delivering ice-filled coolers to the cabin.
>
> All this could have been avoided if they had understood the potential impact of the change on their assignments, identified and

*tested their assumptions, and created a Plan of Action to deal with it.*

AND YOU'D BE SURPRISED TO KNOW HOW
OFTEN THIS HAPPENS IN BUSINESS.

**What else should someone be tracking?**

- **Absenteeism.** Who has not shown up for work and why? Who's in the hospital and why?

- **Budget.** Is your money being spent wisely? Are you within budget?

- **Focus.** What's your Focus? What are your top three priorities? Do your members know?

- **Goals.** What are your goals and your boss's goals?

- **Sensitive items**. What's proprietary or of high dollar value? Where are they located, and how are they being secured?

- **Earned Time Off.** Are members taking vacations or time off?

- **Loyal Service.** Celebrate each year of loyal service and make every five years a big deal.

- **Birthdays.** Celebrate by saying, "I'm so glad you were born."

- **FAQ Site.** This is a good place to display your Purpose, Direction, and Serving Philosophy.

- **Dashboards.** This tells others how your unit or projects are doing.

- **Outstanding Requisitions.** What do we have on order, and when are they due to arrive?

- **Recognition program.** Who has been recognized, when, and for what?

- **Upcoming Reports and Deadlines.** To avoid surprises and crisis management, keep a current list of what's coming up.

- **Recurring events:** What happens every week, month, quarter, and year?

This is why it's nice to have a #2 Person to help keep track of all Long-Term and Short-Term Extra Duty Assignments (like those listed above). Your #2 Person can delegate specific tasks to different team members to report at future meetings.

**The most important thing to remember is,**

*"Never trust your memory.  Document everything."*

As you continue to keep track of all your moving parts, expect that things will run much smoother than without doing so.  And your boss and teammates will be convinced that you have your act together.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 3, the Art of Planning, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# 6
## BY CONTRIBUTING TO
## THE BOSS'S MEETINGS

*"It is the responsibility of leadership to provide opportunity,*
*and the responsibility of individuals to contribute.*
*- William Pollard*

The fourth *best practice* you'll need to achieve the success you deserve involves your ability to contribute to your boss's meetings.

### How can you contribute to your boss's meetings?

Your boss's meetings are more important than you could ever imagine. Bosses hold periodic meetings, to learn what's going on concerning the status of assigned work, and to pass on, what's important to them and their boss.

Followers attend meetings to exchange insights, suggest solutions, share feedback, and build relationships. They're also used for voicing opinions, brainstorming ideas, facilitating creative thinking, and promoting cooperation.

Effective people know how to make a greater contribution to their boss's meetings. But how do they do that? They know that these meetings may be their boss's only observation of their performance. So, they make them count! They also know that these meetings will be attended by their boss's other direct reports, their peers.

**Instructions:**

Before we review these two lists of meeting do's and don'ts, I need you to record the things you'd like to add, delete or change from these lists before your next meeting with your boss.

*Here are the most important things TO DO during these meetings.*

1. Arrive 15 minutes early to get to know your Peers.

2. Treat everyone with respect and kindness, regardless of how they treat you.

3. Demonstrate support for your boss with your 100% attention, involvement, and participation.

4. Eliminate all distractions.  Put your cell phone on vibrate, and out of site.

5. Support your peers.  Teamwork is critical.

6. Come with the attitude to contribute, encourage, and help others.

7. Demonstrate an understanding of your boss's goals.

8. Wait for others to finish, before speaking.

9. Follow up with answers to questions you couldn't answer.

10. Be sensitive to your boss's time, by always stating your bottom line, upfront.

11. If you can't attend, send someone to discuss your agenda items and Unresolved Issues.

12. And if you have no one to send, call your boss the day before, and provide your update.

*And here are the most important things NOT TO DO during these meetings.*

1. Hog the airtime.  Be brief and let others speak.

2. Wander off the agenda. Help your boss keep others on track.

3. Surprise your boss. Bosses hate surprises - unless it's great news.

4. Interrupt or cut someone off. If you must, then apologize.

5. Embarrass or surprise a peer. Do so privately.

6. Find fault or complain. Only do so privately with your boss.

7. Continue arguing after your boss has made his decision.

8. Ask a question that could embarrass someone. Ask it privately.

9. Be late or absent without calling.

And 10. Use bad or offensive language or jokes.

### *Let's review.*

What did you learn? What do you need to add, delete, or change from these two lists to make a greater contribution to your boss's meetings? These meetings may be your boss's only observation of your performance. If you fail to meet these expectations, you'll never be considered a team player, which won't help your career.

As you continue to make a greater contribution to your boss's meetings, you're building credibility and proving that you're a team player.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 5, the Art of Communicating, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# 7

# BY ASSESSING YOUR ACCOUNTABILITY

*"It is not what happens to you that determines how far you go in life;*
*it is what you do with what happens to you.*
*- Zig Ziglar*

The fifth *best practice* you'll need to achieve the success you deserve involves your ability to demonstrate accountability.

## What's accountability and why is it important to your boss?

Do you know what to do when your boss finds something wrong within your area of responsibility? This is when you'll get the chance to demonstrate your accountability.

ACCOUNTABILITY IS YOUR ABILITY TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY
FOR YOUR ACTIONS AND IN-ACTIONS AND THE OBLIGATION
TO REPORT, EXPLAIN AND BE ANSWERABLE FOR
ANY ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES.

*Accountability* is often confused with responsibility. They're related but different. *Accountability* is normally not a problem - until something goes wrong. For example, if something goes wrong within your area of responsibility, you'll get the chance to explain what happened to your boss and maybe his boss.

Sometimes, depending on the severity of the problem, your boss won't be happy with you and may treat you badly.

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY;
TAKE IT PROFESSIONALLY AND FIX IT.

Most people don't understand that, yes, responsibility and *accountability* go together; they're part of the same iceberg.

However, you can't see the *accountability* part of the <u>iceberg</u> because it lies hidden beneath the surface until something goes wrong.

### What does every boss expect when bad things happen?

When things go wrong for which you're responsible, your boss's job is to ask you for an explanation.

> WHAT YOUR BOSS DOESN'T NEED IS FOR YOU TO BLAME OTHERS, MAKE EXCUSES OR HIDE THE TRUTH.

And yes, the mistake may have been made by one of your direct reports - not you. But your boss doesn't care. He just wants it fixed.

**Here's what your boss expects you to do:**

**Step 1.** Step up and accept the blame! *I'm on it!*

**Step 2.** Investigate - what happened and what caused it to happen?

**Step 3.** Report the facts and recommend how it should be fixed to your boss.

**Step 4.** Fix it and fix it for good!

**Step 5.** When fixed, report the fix to your boss.

**Step 6.** Make sure it never happens again.

*Accountability* is something every boss expects.  Unfortunately, this quality isn't something you were born with.  And the only time you get to demonstrate your accountability is when things go wrong.  This also includes the actions, in-actions, and adverse consequences of those members within your charge.

> YOU'RE ACCOUNTABLE TO YOUR BOSS FOR
> EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS OR FAILS TO HAPPEN
> WITHIN YOUR AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY.

However, *accountability* can't exist unless you know everything you're responsible for. For example, you can't be held *accountable* for your company's finances if your duties and responsibilities are to service rental cars.  Your job is to help your boss anticipate and eliminate all the obstacles that could slow or stop the achievement of his goals.

> REMEMBER, MISTAKES, ERRORS, AND DEFECTS ARE NOT
> A PROBLEM IF CAUGHT AND FIXED BEFORE GETTING
> IN FRONT OF YOUR BOSS OR THE CUSTOMER.

### *How accountable are you?*

Well, let's see.  I'm going to ask you four special questions.  I need you to document your answers, either Yes or No.  In the end, you'll know how accountable you are and where you need to improve.

### First question: Are you self-correcting?

> A SELF-CORRECTING PERSON IS SOMEONE CAPABLE OF
> CORRECTING HIMSELF WITHOUT EXTERNAL HELP.

Being accountable includes being *self-correcting*, especially when starting a new position, even within the same company.

Starting anything new is about learning what you need to know as soon as possible. And I'm always amazed by those who never take notes. Why don't more people take notes with their cell phones or a *Rocket book*?

I learned something profound many years ago that has helped me throughout my entire lifetime.

### *"A short pencil is a long memory."*

They didn't have cell phones back then, so I took notes on 3 by 5 cards which I carried with me all the time.

When you have a question, capture it on your phone. The person with the correct answer often won't be immediately available. If you find a term you don't understand, document it on your phone. Later, find out what the term means.  Keep a list of all your questions and terms you don't understand. This list will help later when you sponsor a new member into your team. This also goes for the names of the new members you meet.

SELF-CORRECTING PEOPLE DON'T TRUST THEIR MEMORY.
AND THEY AREN'T AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS
AND PROACTIVELY SEEK ANSWERS.

So, are you self-correcting? Yes, or No?

### Second question: Do you live your life with no excuses?

Why do people make excuses? They do so because it has worked for them in the past and avoids accepting accountability. They're testing your limits to see how much they can get away with, and they fear the consequences of their actions or inactions.

### What's the difference between a "reason" and an "excuse"?

Here's a simple rule:

**Here are the seven most used excuses.**

- **Denying.** Refusing to admit or acknowledge that their bad behavior is a problem. For Example: "I can stop swearing any time I want. My language isn't that bad."

- **Isolating.** Removing themselves from the team area to maintain their bad behavior. For Example: "If I had my own office, this wouldn't be a problem."

- **Rationalizing**. A narcissist's reason to explain their bad behavior. For Example: *"Nobody's Perfect."* The truth is there's no excuse for bad behavior!

- **Blaming or transferring.** Transferring accountability for their bad behavior to others. For Example: "I wouldn't be late all the time if my teammates treated me right."

- **Recriminating.** Turning an accusation around and blaming the accuser. For example: "You do the same thing." or "Bob did the same thing, but you didn't come down on him."

- **Projecting.** Rejecting their feelings by ascribing them to another. For example: "Why is that stupid idiot so hostile?"

- **Minimizing or Trivializing**. Refusing to admit the effects of their bad behavior. For Example: "I only told one bad joke. It's not a big deal."

In the end, they close their eyes to the destructive consequences of their bad behavior, or they try to explain away their actions in a way that saves them from having to feel.

*There's no excuse or reason for bad behavior! It's wrong and must be dealt with immediately.*

So, do you live your life with no excuses? Yes, or No?

**Third question: Do you do your best work every day?**

**Here's a great story about doing your best work.**

> *It's rumored that when **Dr. Henry Kissinger** was Secretary of State in the administrations of **Presidents Nixon and Ford**, he asked for a security assessment to be made of a foreign country.*
>
> *On the first day, when a subordinate delivered the report, Secretary Kissinger asked, "Is this your best work?" The subordinate thought for a second and walked out of the office.*
>
> *On the second day, the subordinate returned with the report, and Kissinger asked the same question. The subordinate thought for a moment and walked back out of the office.*
>
> *On the third day, the subordinate returned, and Kissinger asked for the third time, "Is this your best work?" This time the subordinate said, "Yes." Kissinger then responded, "Good, now I'll read it."*

I share this story to highlight that there are no shortcuts to success. Your success will always be linked to "*doing your best work.*"

So, do you do your best work every day and would your boss agree? Yes, or No?

**Final question: Do you make written recommendations to your boss to make things better?**

Your job is to help your boss achieve his goals. But what do you do when you find problems that need to be resolved? What do you do when you find things that could be improved?

Do you create a *Decision Paper or a Business Case* and send it to your boss? Why not? What are you afraid of?

So, do you make written recommendations to your boss to make things better? Yes, or No?

***Let's review.***

How did you do?  If you can't answer these four questions with a convincing YES, you need to reassess your level of personal accountability.  Effective people take this *self-assessment* annually and fix what needs to be fixed.

As you continue to remain accountable to your boss for everything that happens or fails to happen, within your area of responsibility, his confidence in you will continue to grow.  You're also accountable for the actions, and inactions, of those within your charge, your direct reports.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 5, the Art of Communicating, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# 8

# BY UNCOVERING
# ALL EXPECTATIONS

*"Exceed your customer's expectations. If you do, they'll come back
over and over. Give them what they want - and a little more."*
*- Sam Walton.*

The sixth *best practice* you'll need to achieve the success you deserve
involves your ability to uncover all your expectations.

## What's an expectation, and why are they so dangerous?

AN EXPECTATION IS SOMEONE ELSE'S BELIEF ABOUT
YOU THAT'S CENTERED ON THE FUTURE.

But here's the problem with expectations. Regardless of how talented
you are if you don't meet the expectations of your team members, boss,
and company, you'll be headed for trouble. Think about it. Without a clear
understanding of what others expect from you, you'll be operating in the
dark, which will take you a long time to recover.

*So, what does everyone expect from you?*

THE WORST THING YOU COULD EVER DO IS
TO ASSUME THAT YOU ALREADY KNOW.

One way to avoid this is by uncovering all these expectations within
your first 30 days on the job, even if it's within the same company. Let's
face it; a less-than-expected result gives rise to the emotion of
disappointment. And if something happens that's not expected, it causes
the emotion of surprise.

AND IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT BOSSES AND CUSTOMERS
DON'T LIKE TO BE DISAPPOINTED OR SURPRISED.

There are three types of expectations that exist in business; stated, inherent, and hidden.

***Let's talk about Stated Expectations first.***

> STATED EXPECTATIONS ARE VERBAL OR WRITTEN EXPECTATIONS FROM YOUR BOSS AND THE COMPANY.

These are normally found in your job description, and company policies and procedures. Here are the most important steps to identify all your stated expectations:

### Step 1. Know your duties and responsibilities.

Your duties are the tasks your boss needs you to perform.

> YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE THE OBLIGATION TO PERFORM A TASK ASSIGNED BY YOUR BOSS, WHICH HAS A PENALTY FOR FAILURE, CALLED ACCOUNTABILITY.

Both are normally found in your job description.

### What's the difference between Duty and Responsibility?

> DUTIES CAN BE ASSIGNED AND REASSIGNED. RESPONSIBILITIES CAN'T!

### Step 2. Know the Standards.

> STANDARDS ARE THE ESTABLISHED NORM, OR REQUIRED MINIMUM LEVEL OF CONFORMITY, TO INDUSTRY AND COMPANY POLICY.

To find the standards that apply to you, review all company policies, standards of conduct, and any Standard Operating Procedures. Pay close attention to safety, security, intellectual property, and proprietary documents and procedures.

### Step 3. Know your Constraints.

Constraints include imperatives and restrictions.

- **Imperatives** are the things you must do, like achieving your goals.

- **Restrictions** are the things you can't do, like accepting gifts from vendors, and include borders and limits.

   **Borders** are the official or unofficial lines dividing one area from another, showing who's responsible for what.

   **Limits** are the point at which something ends or beyond which something starts.

### Step 4.  Know how much authority you have.

AUTHORITY IS YOUR BOSS'S PERMISSION TO TAKE CERTAIN AGREED-UPON ACTIONS TO SUPPORT YOUR OFFICIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Authority can include making work assignments to others, hiring, firing, making decisions, and spending money.  Also, do you have the authority, and the resources needed, to perform your duties and responsibilities?  If not, let your boss know!

### Step 5.  Know your Projects.

Do you know all the past projects completed before you arrived, your current ongoing projects, and your upcoming projects?

### *Let's talk about Inherent Expectations.*

INHERENT EXPECTATIONS ARE ALL THE BOSS-ONLY DUTIES THAT MUST BE PERFORMED TO ENABLE THE TEAM TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS.

Let's assume that your boss is the owner of a small advertising firm. Here are just a few of the most important *boss-only* inherent expectations or duties that will consume 80% of her time.

- Traveling to and attending meetings she must attend, conducting internal meetings, and following through.

- Conducting interviews, checking, and inspecting.

- Planning, organizing, team building, and training.

- Enforcing standards, correcting, and retraining.

- Inspiring, motivating, and promoting.

As you consider these *boss-only* inherent duties, realize they're the most important things every boss must do.

AND THIS IS WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT
TO BE RESPECTFUL OF YOUR BOSS'S TIME.

**And the final type of expectation is Hidden Expectations.**

These are the most dangerous because they lead to poor performance, mistakes, and failure.

HIDDEN EXPECTATIONS ARE WHAT OTHERS EXPECT YOU
TO DO THAT'S UNCLEAR, UNSPOKEN, OR UNWRITTEN.

For any boss to keep you around, the issue always involves your performance, which includes your results and behavior.

- Your *results* involve how well you achieve your goals.

- Your *behavior* involves how well you add value to all those who help you achieve your results, especially your boss.

- And do you treat everyone with respect and kindness, regardless of how they treat you?

Let's assume that this is your first meeting with your boss after being hired.  Here are the most important questions you need your boss to answer:

- What're your expectations of me at your meetings, like reports or updates?

- How will you assess my performance for both results and behavior?

- What authority do I have? Can I make work assignments, hire, fire, make decisions, and spend money?

- What are my current ongoing projects and my upcoming projects?

- What are my imperatives, things I must do?

- What are my restrictions, things I can't do?

- What are your goals, my goals, and how are they related?

- What are your expectations of me for tradition and culture?

- Do I have your permission to voice my honest opinion, behind closed doors, without fearing negative consequences?

Then ask your predecessor, peers, team members, and HR for any hidden expectations for performance, culture, and tradition.

As you identify all the things others expect from you, you'll be ready to hit the ground running.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 5, the Art of Communicating, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# 9
# BY MANAGING
# RISKS

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*There is only one big risk you should avoid at all costs,*
*and that is the risk of doing nothing."*
*- Denis Waitley*

The seventh *best practice* you'll need to achieve the success you deserve involves your ability to manage your risks.

## How much risk is too much?

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SIMPLY STATED, RISK IS UNCERTAINTY!

Managing anything requires the ability to anticipate and mitigate risk. You can't control everything that happens to you, but you can control your degree of preparation and how you respond. Here are some of the most important things to consider when assessing risk.

### 1. Decrease your probability of Failure.

By anticipating and mitigating your risks, you're decreasing your probability of failure, which increases your probability of success.

### 2. Understand that control over other people is an illusion.

This simple prayer, which I learned during my recovery from alcoholism, helped me finally answer this life-altering question:

WHAT ARE THE ONLY THINGS IN LIFE I CAN
CONTROL AND THEREFORE CHANGE?

### THE SERENITY PRAYER

"God, grant me the **Serenity** to

**Accept** the things I cannot change,

**Courage** to change the things I can,

and the **Wisdom** to know the difference."

*By Reinhold Niebuhr*

And these answers changed my life forever.

IN THIS LIFE, YOU CAN'T CONTROL OR CHANGE OTHER PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS, SITUATIONS, OR CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE ONLY THINGS YOU CAN CONTROL, AND CHANGE ARE YOUR THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND DEEDS.

And all those years, I thought I could control and change other people. This may be a shocking epiphany for many of you because you've probably made the same mistake.

YES, YOU CAN INFLUENCE THEM, BUT YOU CAN'T CONTROL OR CHANGE THEM. YOU CAN ONLY CONTROL AND THEREFORE CHANGE YOURSELF.

This concept is crucial because until you learn to truly control what you can control (your thoughts, words, and deeds), you'll never be able to influence anyone to help you consistently produce excellent results.

### 3. Identify your Risk Goals.

When managing risk, you should always have these two goals.

- To make the *probability less likely* to happen, like putting training wheels on your child's bicycle.

- To make the *impact less severe* when, and NOT if, it happens, like requiring your child to wear a safety helmet.

### 4. Conduct a Risk Assessment.

With the help of your team, conduct a good *Risk Assessment* to identify all the things that could *reasonably go wrong,* including anything that has gone wrong in the past during similar projects.

Risks come in two forms: Internal and External.

- **Bad Internal Situations** are risks that DON'T REQUIRE a call to 911, like equipment breakdowns, people being late, cell phone batteries going dead, and other mistakes, defects, or errors.

- **Bad External Situations** are risks that WILL REQUIRE a call to 911, like fire, injuries, accidents, property damage, violence, or theft.

### 5. Assess the Impact and Probability.

For each Bad Situation, assess these two critical things:

- **Impact.** How will this Bad Situation affect your project and is rated as *Significant, Moderate, or Minor?* Based on your assessment, when, and not if, this Bad Situation happens, how seriously will it affect your project?

- **Probability.** How likely is this Bad Situation to happen and is rated as *High, Medium, or Low?* Based on your assessment, how likely is this Bad Situation to occur?

### 6. Assess your Risk Options.

I'll bet you didn't realize that when it comes to risk, you always have these three options: You can avoid, share, or accept the risk.

#### Option 1. AVOID the Risk.

In some cases, you may want to avoid the risk altogether. This could mean not getting involved or just deleting a high-risk activity. This is a good option when taking the risk involves no advantage or when the cost of mitigating isn't worth the risk. However, you may miss an opportunity when you avoid a potential risk entirely. So, explore your options before deciding.

**Option 2. SHARE the Risk!**

You could decide to share the risk and the potential gain with others. For example, you share risks when you insure your project site or partner with another company.

**Option 3. ACCEPT the Risk.**

This option is usually best under these three conditions:

- When there's nothing you can do to prevent the risk.

- When the potential loss is less than the cost of insuring against the risk.

- When the potential gain is worth accepting the risk.

For example, you might accept the risk of a project launching late if the potential sales will still cover your costs.

### 7. Beware of Scope Creep.

Scope means the size of the project and its requirements, complexity, and goals.

<div align="center">

*Scope creep occurs when others want to make changes to your project.*

</div>

So, negotiate these changes to gain more time, money, or both.

### 8. Always vet your facts and test your assumptions!

Are your facts true, and how do you know for sure? Are your assumptions valid and necessary to move the work forward? Failing to take these steps will put you on a collision course with *Murphy's Law* and seriously decrease your project's probability of success.

### 9. Anticipate all the things that could reasonably go wrong.

What could possibly go wrong here?

More reasonable questions might be:

- What has gone wrong in the past during similar projects.

- Based on this situation, what's reasonable to believe that could go wrong?

With the help of your team, brainstorm to determine all the things that could *reasonably go wrong* during your project.

### 10. Be watchful of Murphy's Law.

In case you've forgotten, here's my *Law on Steroids*.

**"If anything can go wrong, it will, at the worst possible time!"**

"If anything can go wrong, it will at the worst possible time."

The Effectiveness Institute

*"And just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water."*

When you think about it, *Murphy's Law* is less about being negative and more about thinking forward. When *Murphy's Law* shows up in your life, it's easy to feel like you couldn't possibly control every situation or anticipate every risk.

However, what you'll learn is that even though there will be circumstances beyond your control, you can still proactively plan for how best to respond.

### 11. Create Contingency Plans.

The purpose of any *Contingency Plan* is to respond to an anticipated bad situation to mitigate its severity when it occurs.

Failing to consider these fundamentals of managing risks before your next project will put you on a collision course with *Murphy's Law*, which won't end well for you.

As you consider these things before your next project, you'll dramatically increase your probability of success.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 3, The ART of PLANNING, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# BY RESOLVING
# PROBLEMS

*"Problems are not stop signs they are guidelines."*
*- Robert H. Schuller*

The eighth *best practice* you'll need to achieve the success you deserve involves your ability to resolve problems.

## When faced with problems what do you do?

Effective people know their ability to resolve problems is critical to their success.

PROBLEM-SOLVING IS YOUR ABILITY TO SELECT THE BEST
OPTION BY USING A PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS
TO TEST AND RANK ORDER ALL VALID OPTIONS.

And here are the most common problems you'll encounter during your career.

### Level 1 Problems, "What Should I Do?

These problems ask, "Where can I find help to resolve this problem? All problems have an entire career field dedicated to their resolution. For example, if you have a legal problem, you ask a legal problem solver: an attorney.

And for any problem, start your research on *YouTube* to learn what to do. Then, use *social media* to find those who've had similar problems and ask for help.

### Level 2 Problems, "How Much, or "How Many?"

These problems ask, "How much time, money, or other resources, am I willing to expend, to resolve this problem." The answers could range from

everything, if you can afford it, to nothing, if you do it yourself. The only issue now is allocating sufficient resources, to ensure the real cause of the problem goes away.

Have you ever solved a problem, only to find that it keeps coming back? Perhaps you didn't find the real cause of the problem.

*THERE'S A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CAUSE
OF A PROBLEM AND ITS SYMPTOMS.*

Many problems only present their symptoms for you to see. You've got to dig deeper and ask better questions, to find the real cause.

### Level 3 Problems: which option should I choose, "X" or "Y"?

These problems ask, "Should I do this myself, or hire an expert? Or should I buy "X", or "Y?" This requires a simple "X" or "Y" answer. Your challenge now is to decide which option is the BEST by assessing their advantages and disadvantages. The decision criteria many people use in this situation, are "How much will it cost, how difficult will it be, and how long will it take?"

**Following this scenario, here's an example of a simple decision matrix.**

| Choice Between the Two | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Criteria** | **Option X** | **Option Y** |
| **Total Cost?** | $100 | $80 |
| **Difficulty?** | Difficult | Moderate |
| **Time to Resolve?** | One Week | Three Weeks |
| **Advantages?** | Shortest Time | Lowest Cost, Least Difficult |
| **Disadvantages** | Highest Cost, Most Difficult | Longest Time |
| **Decision?** | | |

Notice that this Decision Matrix displays the raw data for the total cost, degree of difficulty, and the number of weeks it will take to resolve the problem.  Also, note the advantages and disadvantages of each option - but the final decision rests with you.

But what if your problem has more than two valid options?  I thought you'd never ask!

### Now you have a Level 4 Problem.  Which option is the best?

These problems ask which option is BEST when you have three or more valid options.  They're among the most complex problems you'll find in business.  This is because many people in business make major decisions based on emotions, or personal relationships, and justify them later with logic.

The beauty of the Problem-Solving Process is that it removes all the emotions, bias, and politics that are normally associated with this kind of flawed problem-solving.  This requires the use of the eight-step, Problem-Solving Process.  To learn more about this topic, see Volume 6, The ART of Problem-Solving, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com.*

### Are there some problems where the best thing you can do is nothing?

Actually, when faced with any problem you have four options for how to respond.

First, you can take action right now.

Second, you can wait.

Third, you can report the problem to the proper authority.

And fourth, you can just do nothing or walk away.

Think about it.  You have these four options every time you're faced with a problem.  And if you feel that "doing nothing" is your best option, among the options available, then just walk away.

*JUST KNOW THAT "DOING NOTHING,"*
*IS MAKING A DECISION, BY DEFAULT.*

*AND DOING NOTHING, OR WAITING, ARE TWO DIFFERENT OPTIONS.*

As you continue to resolve problems for your boss, know that you're becoming more valuable with every problem you solve.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 6, the Art of Problem-Solving, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# 11

## BY MAKING THE
## BEST DECISION

*"Stay committed to your decisions but stay
flexible in your approach."
- Tony Robbins.*

The ninth *best practice* you'll need to achieve the success you deserve involves your ability to make the best decisions.

### When faced with a tough decision what do you do?

Effective people know their ability to make the best decision is critical to their success.

DECISION-MAKING IS YOUR ABILITY TO RESOLVE
PROBLEMS BY USING THE PROBLEM-SOLVING
PROCESS TO SELECT THE BEST SOLUTION.

In simple terms, decision-making is the act of choosing between two or more courses of action or options. And here are the eight most important things to consider before making any decision.

### 1. By using critical reasoning and creative thinking.

Your reputation and credibility, as viewed by your subordinates, peers, and superiors, depend on the quality of your decisions, which start with the quality of your thoughts.

We all think. It's in our nature to do so. However, much of what you think about every day is flawed, which means your thoughts are biased, distorted, and prejudiced. It's part of being human.

We all fall prey to errors in reasoning, human irrationality, and self-interest caused by our emotions. Yet, the quality of what you say and do every day depends on the quality of your thoughts.

Flawed thinking will cost you both money and the quality of your life. On the other hand, excellence in thought requires a more disciplined and systematic approach.

How can you cope with the complexities and ever-changing nature of business? Fortunately, you have two powerful Awareness Skills to help you overcome these human flaws: Critical Reasoning and Creative Thinking.

*Critical reasoning* is a self-disciplined skill that attempts to reason more logically by asking better questions, considering alternatives, avoiding falling for the simple solution, and recognizing the consequences and effects your actions have on others.

> CRITICAL REASONING IS YOUR ABILITY TO LOGICALLY EXAMINE YOUR THOUGHTS, CHOICES, AND DECISIONS FOR TRUTH AND VALIDITY.

And it helps you identify the Best Option for problems with maximum buy-in, ultimately saving time, money, and stress. This skill includes researching, statistical analysis, classifying, recognizing patterns, forecasting, and making calculations.

*Creative thinking* is different. It asks you to identify those inhibitors that focus your thinking along predetermined paths, including your perceptions, culture, environment, emotions, and intellect.

> CREATIVE THINKING IS YOUR ABILITY TO SEE NEW POSSIBILITIES OR DIFFERENT WAYS OF DOING THINGS BY FINDING NEW STRATEGIES, INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES, OR UNIQUE OPTIONS.

*Creative thinking* involves skills like brainstorming and originality, which promote divergent thinking and stimulate curiosity. It's used to solve problems, deal with crises, improve products and processes, and deal with situations where new options are needed.

Both skills help you evaluate your thinking for relevance, consistency, accuracy, fairness, and completeness. And when you apply these skills, you'll enhance your ability to make the best decisions.

### 2. By knowing the Best Person to decide.

The general rule in business is,

<p style="text-align:center"><em>Followers recommend and Bosses decide!</em></p>

Or, at least, the boss should take responsibility and ownership of his direct report's decisions, especially if they turn out badly. Also, if the decision affects everyone in your team, why can't they be given a chance to concur or non-concur with reasons?

### 3. By knowing when you need your Boss's Approval.

Have you ever been in a situation where you were waiting for your boss's approval? Why are you asking for approval if the problem is internal, doesn't require additional resources you don't have, and isn't in conflict with any internal standards? Isn't that what your boss is paying you to do? But do let him know what you've decided.

<p style="text-align:center"><em>Sometimes it's better to ask for forgiveness than permission.</em></p>

Or, if you're in doubt, tell your boss when you'll be making your decision (like the end of the week), and if you don't hear from him before that time, you'll be moving forward. Before deciding, don't forget to assess and document all the risks, unintended consequences, second and third-order effects, and unresolved issues.

### 4. By always seeking the Best Option.

Some people struggle to make the *right, correct, or good decision*. The only way you'll know if your decision is right, correct, or good is to be there to observe the results. Unfortunately, this doesn't happen all the time. Sometimes, your decision won't produce quantifiable results for a long time. So, instead of struggling with the right, correct, or good decision,

### 5. By using the Problem-Solving Process.

This process is designed to resolve problems with three or more possible options.  Since many decisions in business are made emotionally, and justified later with logic, you need a better way of selecting the BEST option.  You'll want to use this process, because it removes all the bias, politics, and human emotions, from the equation.  To learn more about this topic, see Volume 6, the Art of Problem-Solving, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

### 6. By making timely decisions.

**General Colin Powell** once said,

> ***"The key is not to make quick decisions,***
> ***but to make timely decisions."***

Resist the impulse of making snap decisions when there's no need to do so. Normally, you'll have sufficient time to decide.

*A good rule of thumb is to decide after acquiring 40-70% of the information you need.*

The most important thing you can do with every difficult decision is to set a date to make the decision, and on that day, decide!

### 7. By Pulling the Trigger.

Many people are what I call "Ready - Aim" people.  By this, I mean that they lack the confidence to Fire or Pull-the-Trigger.  They have difficulty deciding because they fear making a bad decision.

*The most important thing you can do with any difficult decision is to set a date to make the decision and on that day, decide!*

Also, don't let your fear or pride get in your way, of doing the right thing.

### *8. By asking others for help.*

You don't have to go it alone.  In fact, you should always ask others for help, if possible.

<div align="center">

*How else will you know all the risks related to your problem before making your decision?*

</div>

However, to do so, you'll need to know how to collaborate and achieve consensus.

### Here's the Bottom line on Decision-Making:

<div align="center">

*Make the best collaborative decision possible given the time, options, and information available, and don't look back.*

</div>

As you attempt to become a better decision-maker, focus on making the BEST decision given the time, options, and information available, and don't look back!

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 6, the Art of Problem-Solving, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# 12

## BY CONDUCTING A
## BACKBRIEFING

*"Progress always involves risks. You can't steal*
*second base and keep your foot on first."*
*- Frederick B. Wilcox*

And the final *best practice* you'll need to achieve the success you deserve involves your ability to identify your boss's expectations before starting work.

### Does your work meet your boss's expectations?

Well, let's face it, no matter how talented you are, if you don't meet your boss's expectations, you'll be starting over, or looking for a new job. Effective people know that one main cause of project problems is failing to uncover their boss's expectations before starting the project. But how do you do that? One way to resolve this problem is by giving your boss a Backbriefing before starting work.

A BACKBRIEFING IS A PLAN OF ACTION BRIEFING
YOU GIVE YOUR BOSS EXPLAINING HOW YOU
INTEND TO ACCOMPLISH HIS OBJECTIVE.

This simple technique is a great way to achieve a "meeting of the minds" before work begins. Backbriefings enhance mutual understanding and trust by exchanging questions and answers to ensure no unmet expectations or hidden surprises appear later. And they also enhance your credibility, thus relieving the need for micromanagement.

*When should Backbriefings be conducted?*

In business, there are two types of projects: Expected and Requested.

**Expected Projects** are projects that are already part of your job description, like an annual trade show.  For expected projects, provide a Backbriefing to your boss at least 90 days before the project starts.

**Requested Projects** are different; they're newly assigned projects. For requested projects, provide a Backbriefing to your boss no more than a week after receiving the assignment.

### *How are Backbriefings conducted?*

They're best conducted in these four phases:

### Phase 1.  Identify your project's requirements first!

Let's assume that you've just received an important project from your boss.  A few days later you meet with your boss to capture her requirements before moving forward.

Here are the best questions to ask to ensure you understand your boss's requirements.

1. Who's this project for, what, when, and where is this project, and why is it being conducted?

2. How important is this project, and to whom?

3.  What's the desired result, and how will it be measured?

4. What's the limit of my authority to spend money, make assignments, hire, fire, or make decisions?

5. What must be started, ordered, or purchased soonest?

6. What are the most important tasks that must be completed for this project to be a success?

7. Who's responsible for each major task?

### But what if you already know the requirements?

If you've conducted this project before, it might be okay to skip Phase 1.  However, don't skip the other phases. This is because during Phase

Two, as you brief your boss on your Plan of Action, you'll know if your assumption was correct.

Just know that assumptions can be dangerous for many reasons.  This is why Effective people always confirm the requirements before starting work.  They do this because they know that whenever they make assumptions,

*THEY RUN THE RISK OF MAKING AN 'ASS' OUTTA 'U' AND 'ME.'*

So, be careful!  You don't want to be starting over.

### Phase 2.  Create your Plan of Action (POA).

Create your Plan of Action.  Anything you didn't know for sure, you listed as TBA, or to be announced.

### Phase 3.  Conduct your Backbriefing.

You provided the boss, and her entire team, with a hard copy of your Draft Plan of Action.  You then discussed each of the six paragraphs from the POA while your boss helped you fill in the blanks.

*REMEMBER, YOU'RE NOT EXPECTED TO HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS BUT YOU'RE EXPECTED TO HAVE ALL THE QUESTIONS.*

You also recorded any assignments your boss made during the briefing and any questions you couldn't answer.

### Warning!

If your boss ever asks you, "What if this happens," she's asking you for a Contingency Plan.  Also, if your boss doesn't want a Backbriefing, provide her with a draft copy of your POA for approval.

### Phase 4.  After the Backbriefing.

*First, create a Memorandum For Record or MFR.*

After the Backbriefing, you created an MFR, documenting what happened during the meeting, including any assignments your boss made and any questions you couldn't answer.  The next day, you gave your boss a copy of your memo.

***Second, Follow through.***

A few days later, you followed through to provide your boss with the answers to the questions she couldn't answer during the Backbriefing. You continued to provide periodic Project Updates and took charge of your project.  Good Job!

If you fail to conduct a Backbriefing with your boss before starting your next project, do so at your peril.

As you continue to give Backbriefings to your boss, know that your confidence, trust, and credibility will be enhanced.

To learn more about this topic, see Volume 3, The Art of Planning, available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

# CONCLUSION

*"Strive not to be a success but rather to be of value."*
*- Albert Einstein*

***Congratulations!***

And thank you for reviewing this book.  As promised, you now know ten *best practices* that will determine your success or failure in business.  May they serve you well!  But there's much more to learn.

This book is just a snapshot of what's available to you from Success Made Simple.  There are ten powerful core competencies waiting for you to master to truly become more effective and successful.

There has never been a greater need for effective people who can consistently produce excellent results, add greater value to those who helped produce those results, and treat everyone with respect and kindness.

You now have ten of the most actionable *best practices* you were never taught in school or college to support you throughout your career.  And there are hundreds more waiting for you to master.

If you see the potential value of what we offer you, come join us and discover why our clients come away saying, *"I wish I knew this stuff years ago."*

REMEMBER, NO MATTER HOW GOOD YOU THINK
YOU ARE YOU CAN ALWAYS BE BETTER.

As always, I wish you great success.

***Never STOP Learning!***

*Ed*

Founder of *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

**PS:** If you feel this information could help someone else, please let them know. If it makes a difference in their life, they'll be forever grateful to you, as will I.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*"Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only
true friends will leave footprints in your heart."*
*- Eleanor Roosevelt*

I'd like to recognize those with whom I've had the pleasure of serving, whose professionalism and character I vividly recall, most of whom are not here today to tell their story. What you'll learn here comes from them.

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Special thanks to my long-time mentor and friend, Joyce Kuntz, who encouraged me to write these books. After leaving the US Military, Joyce was my first and best boss when I joined her consulting firm in Seattle years ago. Unfortunately, Joyce is gone now, but her legacy lives on in these books.

*"I must be able to say with sincerity that to see things differently
is a strength, not a weakness, in my relationship with others."*
*- Joyce Kuntz*

I thank Joyce's husband, Ed Kuntz, who turned out to be the man who brought me to Seattle from Kansas City to start my incredible second career as an Executive Coach.

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And to all those whose names are not found here, rest assured that you're not forgotten. Your legacy lives on in my heart and in these books because of your immeasurable contributions to my life. This book is for you.

And finally, I thank my soulmate and wife, **Diana**, for her love, encouragement, and understanding throughout this process.

WHEN I COUNT MY BLESSINGS, I ALWAYS COUNT HER TWICE.

# ABOUT THE
# AUTHOR

*"I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."*
*- Stephan Grelle*

Ed Murphy grew up in Western New York and considers himself lucky. From age 7, he knew what he wanted to be when he grew up. He wanted to be a Soldier. Three days after graduating High School, he joined the US Army and completed Basic Training and Advanced Infantry Training.

A year later, Ed became a Cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point. In 1970, he graduated as a 2d Lieutenant, headed to Airborne and Ranger School, then off to Viet Nam for a year.

Ten years later, Ed returned to West Point to teach Military Science and earned an MS from LIU in night school. During his two years as a Battalion Commander in West Germany, his greatest achievement was helping 1400 soldiers begin their college education. He wanted to give them something of real value - something no one could ever take away. A few years after the first Gulf War, Operation Desert Storm, he retired.

For his second career, with a little help from *Tony Robbins*, he spent the next 21 years as an Executive Coach, working with hundreds of business executives, teams, and small business owners in Seattle, San Diego, Kansas City, and Phoenix.

After that, Ed retired again and decided to document everything he learned from those he most admired during his 40+ years in the US Military and in Corporate America.

Two years later, he began writing books for Amazon dedicated to providing the best practices and advice on how to achieve greater success in business and life.  Currently, he's authored over 30 books on Amazon.

Today, at 76, Ed considers himself blessed to live in Phoenix, AZ, where he enjoys writing, eating sushi, genealogy, and spending time with his best friend and wife, *Diana*.

*What new skills or abilities have you*
*acquired in the last twelve months?*
*What contributions have you made to your*
*current position in the past year?*
*What're you doing about it?*



Ed grew up in Western New York and served 24 years as an Army Officer, from Viet Nam to Desert Storm. He then spent the next 21 years as an Executive Coach, working with thousands of individuals, business leaders, and teams in San Diego, Seattle, Kansas City, and Phoenix.



His entire adult life has been dedicated to documenting why some people are more effective than others. His research has led to the creation of the SUCCESS MADE SIMPLE Series of ten books, one for each of these Core Competencies of Effectiveness and success in business: Followership, Delegating, Planning, Organizing, Communicating, Problem-Solving, Awareness, Training, Motivating, and Character Building.

He holds a BS from the United States Military Academy at West Point and an MS from LIU. He's currently retired and creates instructional courses on how to become more effective and successful at work, which are available from *TheEffectivenessInstitute.com*.

**Final Note:** The contents of this book have been provided to you free of charge as a courtesy by *The Effectiveness Institute,* where your success in business is the only thing that matters!