

Conversation 4 - The Bucket List

Purpose: To help you continue and deepen your thinking about what matters most in life.

Do you have a bucket list? What's on it?

Most of us have some things we'd like to do or accomplish in life. Some of us write a formal list on paper. Others have lists in their heads. Often, the bucket list resides in our personal lives, but having one in our professional lives can make us more effective leaders as well.

What's on your professional bucket list?

The Detail: Do you realize that—by definition and logic—if you have a bucket list, you're thinking about dying? That may seem morbid, but it is in fact a good thing to think about what you want to do before you die. In their 2016 publication *The Book of Joy*, the Dalai Lama and Bishop Desmond Tutu instruct us to consider our own mortality. They rightly contend that this will bring a sense of urgency, perspective, and gratitude. Author and pastor Andy Stanley similarly tells us that “priority determines capacity.” He points to an ancient Jewish text (Psalm 90) that says, “teach us to number our days” in order to achieve wisdom. Numbering your days is thinking about how long you have to live, just like the bucket list. This can be help us focus attention both at home and work. Stanley also challenges us to “compound our minutes” noting (paraphrased):

1. There is a cumulative value to investing small amounts of time in certain activities over an extended period (e.g., exercise, spending time with family, mentoring a new coworker or student).
2. Neglect is also cumulative (e.g., *not* exercising, *not* doing personal finances, *not* spending time with family, *not* sharing your life experiences, *not* fulfilling leadership opportunities when they arise).
3. There is no cumulative value to the random things we opt for over the important things (e.g., surfing the internet, micromanaging instead of delegating).

If we're attentive to the limited time we have, we can use it more effectively. In turn, we can accomplish things that really matter. As mentors and leaders, we must simultaneously model this approach and behavior for others.

Summary: So how does all this come together? If you want to accomplish more and increase your capacity, make a bucket list. Try having one for home (personal life) and one for work (professional life). Write down those items that are most important—ones you really want to accomplish. Then begin.

What item from your bucket lists could you begin to tackle in the next days or weeks?

- Personal Bucket List:
- Professional Bucket List:

How might that help your _____ (career, personal life, studies, family, etc.)? (Choose one aspect and jot a few notes.)

Additional reference: Dalai Lama XIV, Tutu, and Abrams. *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*. New York: Avery, 2016.
Stanley, Andy (Nov. 15, 2014). *Time Of Your Life 2 - At Capacity*. Available at: https://youtu.be/mIsnLZqmk_4
Stanley, Andy (Nov. 15, 2014). *Time Of Your Life 3 - Compounding Minutes*. Available at: <https://youtu.be/YomJ6TUXChM>