



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Getting Your Priorities Right

Most managers not only establish priorities, they live by them every day! However, some say they have priorities, but do nothing about it. This is not prioritizing. It is wishful thinking. Unfortunately, success is rarely built on wishful thinking.

Why prioritize?

Without priorities, only the urgent work gets done and one may never get around to doing the important stuff. Effective managers have always known that priorities help them to focus on tasks that make a difference. They provide purpose, direct energy and drive action. They allow leaders to set their own agendas.

Successful businesses, corporations and other organizations spend considerable time developing a mission statement and defining goals, as these are their priorities. They identify what's valued, define what the organization is all about, and underscore where it is going. They minimize confusion and maximize consistency.

Don'ts

Setting priorities is not guesswork or magic. It does not require ingenuity or clairvoyance. It's mostly a matter of common sense. To avoid identifying inappropriate priorities is to never prioritize something just because

- It's what you like to do most
- It's fun
- It's the easiest and quickest thing to do
- It's just always been a priority
- It just happens to be at the top of your to-do list
- It promises an immediate pay-off

Dos

True priorities are those jobs, tasks, responsibilities or functions that keep one on track and guide everyday actions toward desired ends. A priority is when

- It's a key part of your job description
- It closely matches the mission of the organization
- It moves you toward individual and organizational goals
- It yields the biggest payoff
- The boss says so
- Only you can do it
- It's what you do best



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- It's what you are most passionate about

Anyone can identify and give lip service to high-sounding priorities. Priorities make a difference only when acted upon. Sorting out priorities can empower managers to consistently do what's important, not just what's next. However, it doesn't happen by chance. It has to be a conscious choice.