

LEADERSHIP LESSONS  
VOLUME TWO

*THE*  
*POWER*  
*OF*  
*FOCUS*



DONALD THOMPSON



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# INTRODUCTION



Leadership Lessons is a guide for professionals and individuals who are responsible for managing multiple priorities and delivering results. Leadership Lessons is not a “silver bullet” to solve your time challenges but will provide you with valuable thoughts and perspective on how to develop positive behaviors, maximize your potential and obtain better results with less stress. In terms of meaningful learning outcomes,

Leadership Lessons: The Power of Focus is designed to give you a clear perspective on the distractions that keep you from success, the items that are most worthy of your focus and ways to help keep you focused to achieve your desired goals. In terms of meaningful learning outcomes, this eBook will help you:

- Create focus for your professional and personal life.
- Learn exercises to help identify and achieve goals.
- Make productive time choices.
- Manage distractions and increase focus.

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# FINDING YOUR POWER

Imagine this common scenario.

You get up in the morning after hitting the snooze button a couple times, rush to get the kids ready for school and yourself ready to work. After sitting in traffic, you arrive to work barely on time, already frazzled, to a pile of work from the previous day, a manager requesting new items and an inbox full of emails to sift through.

You spend your day jumping from one task to the other, without clarity of purpose and priorities, so you clock out without a feeling of accomplishment, only to return home exhausted in time to check homework and put the kids to bed, all while thinking about the quarter end report for your manager that you haven't even started.

Sound familiar?

In today's hectic world it seems that the people who constantly juggle multiple tasks and priorities get a lot of credit for success. Actually, the opposite is true. When you look a bit closer, you will find that the most successful people have a focus-driven approach to their success. It is time for you to harness the power of focus and achieve the goals that you desire.



Your success and happiness is within reach, as long as you harness the power of focus. Personal and professional productivity are reasonable expectations. However, we must harness the power of focus by defeating the enemy.

## DISTRACTIONS ARE THE ENEMY

No matter what your routine or lifestyle, distractions will be a regular occurrence. Vehicles will break down, friends will have an emergency, urgent requests will pop up at work, a really exciting event is suddenly available, or any number of other items can divert your attention.

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Once distracted, studies have shown that it takes an average of 20 minutes for most people to return to their original task. This time can add up, and before you know it, the day is gone and your progress has been limited.

The key is to manage distractions so they do not completely disrupt your focus. Understand that distractions will occur, but you should have tools and techniques in place to maintain ownership of your time and focus.

Think and act with a new perspective:

- Communicate and remind yourself of your top three priorities – by clearly communicating the important items to yourself and your team, you can gracefully and tactfully decline distractions that can be deferred.
- Avoid work assignments or requests that do not align with your manager's goals or your organization's core strategy.
- Determine the most important task that would provide the most impact if completed today.
- If you must, deal with the interruption as quickly as possible – do not dwell on it or let it consume any more time than necessary. If you can, consider delegating or postponing low impact tasks so you can focus on the priority items.

### CREATE FOCUS FOR YOUR LIFE

Some may believe that as long as you strive to attain happiness, that is enough focus. But for those driven to success, more specific goals can help you achieve and exceed your expectations. If you want to be happy, for example, define what happiness would mean to you. If you desire financial stability, list some things that would clearly outline what that would look like for you. Every person is different, but creating a winning structure and winning habits for our day is imperative.



Once you have set a goal, prepare the steps needed to achieve the goal. It could be saving a small amount of time or money, or it could be attaining a particular certification or degree. Regardless of the goal, there are steps involved to get there.

Remind yourself of the goal; then visualize yourself performing the steps to the goal. Note potential obstacles and how you can overcome them, and repeat this

ritual on a regular basis to keep your goals in mind. Finding someone who can provide support and guidance can be extremely helpful in boosting your productivity and efforts towards your goals. Look for mentors, peers, coworkers or friends who can make a positive influence on your priorities. Creating focus begins with a clear and documented list of what you want. For example, if you have a financial goal, you should understand:

What is the exact amount of money required? (Goal)

What will you need to do to achieve this goal? (Action)

What is the date that you must achieve your goal? (Urgency)

Who can help you attain your goal? (Team)

Who benefits when you win? (Cause)

By understand the specific actions required to get your goal accomplished, you will increase your focus because you have clarity regarding what you truly want.

**BUILDING LONG TERM SUCCESS REQUIRES DAILY FOCUS  
ON HIGH IMPACT ACTIVITIES, PROJECTS AND  
RELATIONSHIPS THAT DRIVE YOU TOWARDS DEFINED  
GOALS.**

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# FINDING YOUR POWER ASSESSMENT & ACTION

## QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND REFLECTION

- What are your top priorities for yourself, your family, your career?
- What things do you do regularly that don't make progress toward your goals?
- What necessary items can you contract out that fit in your budget, such as weekly babysitting, house cleaning, grocery delivery/pick up?

## ACTIONS STEPS

- Discover a morning ritual. Get up earlier to exercise and/or meditate to create clarity for that day.
- Work with your manager to outline your top three priorities for each week and work those items first.
- End your work day by recapping what you accomplished and setting priorities for the next day.

"Time lost is never found again." ~Benjamin Franklin

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# FOCUS YOUR ENERGY

It is great to have focus, but what if you are feeling lost with no clear goal? What if you are not sure of the first steps toward your goal? The following are some ways to help you focus your energy and leverage your power to achieve your dreams:

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO FAIL

Numerous examples exist of people who failed time and again, but got back up and kept their focus. From Michael Jordan to Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates, and many others, failure is a key part of success. Do not be afraid or discouraged when failures or setbacks occur. Embrace your effort, learn from the experience and keep practicing.

## USE TEAMS AND NETWORKING

There is power in numbers, and through teamwork you can accelerate your success. Try having lunch with colleagues that can help with projects. This can build rapport and make complicated problems easier in a casual atmosphere. While meetings are good opportunities to interact, make sure they are productive and have a clear agenda.

## REWARD YOURSELF

Each day can be filled with small victories. Be sure to rejoice when you hit a particular milestone. This reinforces your good habits and keeps you on track to achieve long term success. Your ultimate goal may be to strengthen your relationship, so you may set up some steps where you spend quality time each week with each other. After four continuous weeks reward yourself by doing something you love such as a game of golf or a spa treatment.

## REVISIT AND REFINE

Even the highest achievers spend time reviewing their tasks and refining their steps. Their goals may even be modified slightly as life events or new aspirations surface. It is perfectly alright to periodically take a look at your goals to make sure they are still a priority for you. For example, you may have had a goal to become a veterinarian, but you may find that it is becoming more of a struggle than you had first thought. Consider whether you should persevere and push through to still achieve this goal, or if you could look at becoming a technician or other occupation that is more realistic for your abilities.



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## LET TECHNOLOGY HELP YOU

There are numerous technological options that can help to remind you and keep you focused on your goals. Using a calendar is an ideal method. Set up repeating “appointments” with yourself and include specific task items that you expect to accomplish at that time. A little friendly alarm now and then can help keep you on track. You can set calendar alerts on your phone or through your computer. Some people even leave themselves voicemail messages as an extra reminder for the next day at the office.

## MEDITATION AND CONCENTRATION

Keep a healthy balance of diet and exercise so your mind stays alert and focused. Use meditation techniques to calm anxiety and help to clear your mind of any clutter. Some meditation techniques involve simply visualizing your goals. Others may be designed to help you clear your mind and just concentrate on breathing. You may prefer a simple



simple walk in the park or watching a sunset to be a perfect meditation method. Choose a technique that feels comfortable for you and schedule time every day or so to practice it.

## REWARD YOURSELF

Each day can be filled with small victories. Be sure to rejoice when you hit a particular milestone. This reinforces your good habits and keeps you on track to achieve long term success. Your ultimate goal may be to strengthen your relationship, so you may set up some steps where you spend quality time each week with each other. After four continuous weeks reward yourself by doing something you love such as a game of golf or a spa treatment.

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## ARE YOU IN THE RIGHT JOB?

If you are having a difficult time setting specific goals, there are three exercises that can help you. The first is to take a look at the things that make you happy. Think of some events in your life that you really enjoyed or felt you had a special talent for. This could be working on your car, writing a presentation, or planning an event.

Think about careers around that enjoyable event and pick one or two career options. Another technique is to look closely at the way you spend your day. Subconsciously, many of us gravitate to tasks that we enjoy. Look at what you did yesterday, or the week before, and make a list of what you spent most of your time doing. Was it cooking? Do you enjoy that?

Perhaps it was reading - could you be an editor? The third option is to take an online skills assessment test, or visit a career counselor to take a skills test. This can help you determine what activities you are naturally better at doing and provide goal options.



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# HOW TO FOCUS YOUR ENERGY ASSESSMENT & ACTION

## QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND REFLECTION

- What are your goals for yourself personally and professionally?
- Who in your life can be a source of motivation and accountability for check-ins as you progress toward those goals?
- How will it feel to have accomplished your goals?

## ACTIONS STEPS

- Create a vision board that outlines your top goals for each area of your life and look at it daily.
- Create a SMART outline for each of the goals on your vision board.
- Read Leadership Lessons: Time Choices to understand how to manage interruptions and focus on priorities.

"Focus is being productive instead of busy." ~Tim Ferris

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# FINAL THOUGHTS

Everyone can choose their own destiny. While circumstances can change, you can stick to the goals that you set and plan the steps to attain your goals. Use the techniques outlined here to specify your goals, organize and review your steps on a regular basis, and use ways to stay focused and continually move towards success.

The road will not always be easy, but when you remain focused you can still make progress. Distractions are all around us and can easily pull us away from achieving our real goals.

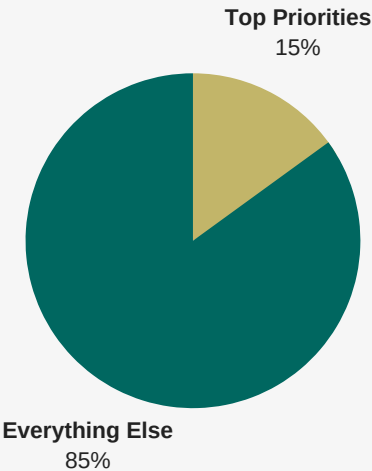
Practice focus techniques one day, one hour, or one minute at a time to build your personal stamina and drive towards your goals. Even the smallest steps can add up over time to move you closer to your own individual success.

“WITH SO MUCH TURMOIL AND CHAOS IN THE WORLD,  
SIMPLE GOALS WITH A LASER FOCUS HELP ME CUT  
THROUGH THE NOISE.”

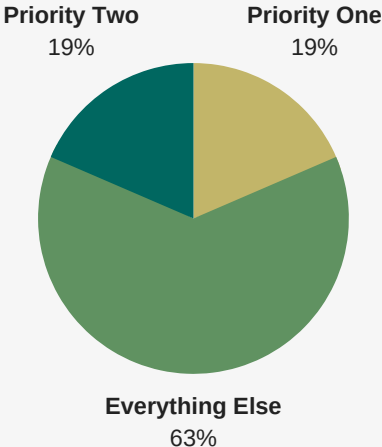
# WORKSHEETS

# WORKDAY EVALUATION: HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR DAY?

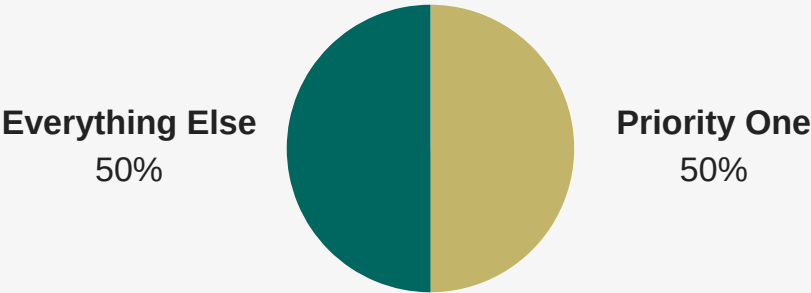
## TIME WASTER



## PRODUCTIVE



## LASER FOCUS



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Priority 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Priority 2: \_\_\_\_\_

# SMART GOAL SHEET

SMART Goals Guide	
<b>Specific</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» What exactly needs to be accomplished?</li> <li>» Who else will be involved?</li> <li>» Where will this take place?</li> <li>» Why do I want to accomplish the goal?</li> </ul>
<b>Measurable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» How will I know I've succeeded?</li> <li>» How much change needs to occur?</li> <li>» How many accomplishments or actions will it take?</li> </ul>
<b>Attainable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Do I have, or can I get, the resources needed to achieve the goal?</li> <li>» Is the goal a reasonable stretch for me? (neither out of reach nor too easy)</li> <li>» Are the actions I plan to take likely to bring success?</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Is this a worthwhile goal for me right now?</li> <li>» Is it meaningful to me—or just something others think I should do?</li> <li>» Would it delay or prevent me from achieving a more important goal?</li> <li>» Am I willing to commit to achieving this goal?</li> </ul>
<b>Time-bound</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» What is the deadline for reaching the goal?</li> <li>» When do I need to take action?</li> <li>» What can I do today?</li> </ul>

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As an entrepreneur in the technology space, Donald Thompson has led or participated in multiple successful exits to firms like Adobe, KPIT and Beringer Capital. With a current focus on accelerating the next generation of technology companies and entrepreneurs, Donald is an advisor and investor to several startups and established organizations.



He believes that digital strategy and communication is the next wave in how brands interact with consumers. Currently, Donald is CEO of Walk West, a digital marketing agency that focuses on web design and development, social media and content marketing, video production, issue advocacy, and more for companies like Velcro Brand, Make A Wish, JP Morgan Chase, and H&R Block. He is appointed to the NC Board of Science, Technology and Innovation and is

an emeritus member of the strategic advisory board for NCSU's Computer Science Department. Donald serves as a mentor for Google for Entrepreneurs Exchange: Black Founders and recently served as a judge for the Thurgood Marshall College Fund OFC Hackathon pitch competition. Donald also serves on the board of several startups including Creative Allies, Proposa and Gryppers.

Please visit [www.donaldthompson.com](http://www.donaldthompson.com) for additional learning materials, videos and to inquire about opportunities for Donald to consult or speak within your organization.

**“EVERYONE WANTS TO BE ON HIS OR HER ORGANIZATION’S VALUABLE EMPLOYEES LIST. THE RIGHT MINDSET CAN GET YOU THERE.”**