

# What Matters Most Getting There in 5 Easy Steps



By Sheila Hawkins

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## What Matters Most?

When it comes to the list of things that we have to do, it can be difficult getting to the things that really matter. If you're not organized and don't have a time management system in place it can be even more difficult. You can spend a lot of time putting out fires and not getting to what matters most.

In the fast paced society that we're operating in today it's easy to forget about the things that we really want to do; the things that truly satisfy us. Usually, people spend time working on things that are important and urgent, but also tend to focus on things that are urgent but not important such as interruptions, non productive meetings and pressing matters. Very rarely do they spend time on things that fall under the category of being important but not urgent; things like planning, seizing opportunities, and recreation and relaxation.

Time management expert Stephen Covey developed a matrix to help people gain perspective of their tasks and gain better awareness of their priorities. It's called Covey's Quadrant. Quadrant 1 contains the important, urgent things; Quadrant 2 important, not urgent things; Quadrant 3 urgent, not important items; Quadrant 4 the not important, not urgent items.

### Covey's Quadrant



Following the 80/20 rule, we know that 80 percent of the desired results come from 20 percent of high leverage activities or efforts. With that in mind, the greatest payoff comes from working on projects or activities that are in quadrant 2; the important but not urgent things. Focus on those things allows you to position yourself to spend less time handling crises. The trick is getting there. To do so requires that we deliberately and constantly choose. If you think about it, life is all about choices. We all have the freedom of choice with everything, including managing our time. Developing the habit of choosing the really important things is primary in getting that big payoff.

So, how do you get to what matters most? By looking at everything you have on your plate and the things you would like to place on your plate. There is an exercise that Covey proposed that does work when it comes to getting to what really matters.

- ◆ Get a pack of index cards. On each card, write one thing that you feel you should do, want to do, hope to do, plan to do or dream of doing. Be sure you include everything no matter how big or small it is. Keep going until you run out of things.
- ◆ Next, separate the cards into two piles. The first being things that have to be done right now and the other being things that don't have to be done right now. These are your **urgent** and **non urgent** items.
- ◆ Go through both piles and separate each one into **important** and **not important** stacks so that you end up with four stacks that correlate to Covey's Quadrant.
- ◆ Take the two **not important** stacks and put them in a safe place. You are now left with what's **important**.
- ◆ Make a commitment to eliminate all of the activities that didn't make it to your **important** piles. After you work on your **important and urgent** tasks (quadrant 1), work on things that are **important but not urgent** (quadrant 2). No matter how pressing something might seem to be, don't do it unless it's **important**.

Now, committing to live this way is one thing; doing it is another. It takes time to change your habits. You are going to be facing the daily pressures placed upon you by others around you as well as yourself and you'll be tempted to do things that aren't important. Continue to constantly and deliberately choose and remember that your focus is to drop the things in quadrant 3. Keep a record of the things that you have dropped from your list so that you can see the progress you are making. Don't beat yourself up in the process of getting into your new habit; it's not going to happen overnight, simply because of the way we're wired. It takes 21 days for us to make something a habit; sometimes a little longer. As I always say, celebrate your accomplishments, they will fuel your forward. Before you know it you'll be doing what really matters to you and you'll have more harmony present in your life.

## About the Author

A native Detroiter, Ms. Hawkins has a passion for assisting people and community. She is an excellent facilitator and consultant. Sheila has a background in accounting, human resources and project management and more than 25 years of hands-on experience in the corporate, non-profit and private arenas. She has specialized in professional organizational and project management services for over 17 years, serving individuals and companies of various sizes.

Sheila has been dubbed by those close to her as The Do it in Time Diva because of her time management expertise. She is also known for her excellent organizing skills and her ability to personalize the environments and systems that she creates for her clients and her knack for creating systems that increase productivity in the workplace. Sheila is President and CEO of Third Eye Group, a personal productivity firm based in Detroit, Michigan. The Company provides customized professional organizing services for individuals, small business owners, and entrepreneurs. Services are tailored to the needs and personality of the client helping them transform environments and behaviors to create order and peace in their lives. Company services include home and office organizing, time management, productivity training and coaching, event planning and project management. Additionally, the company provides workshops and electronic products for individuals, business owners and company work teams.

Sheila brings a strong sense of commitment to everything that she does and believes in always putting her best foot forward and striving for perfection, which has those around her look to her for leadership and guidance. Her strong project management skills and attention to detail coupled with her dedication, integrity, and hard work has made her endeavors productive and successful. This has assisted in enabling organizations, companies and individuals to streamline processes, develop programs, systems, and infrastructures.

For more information on Third Eye Group, its products and services, please visit [www.thirdeyegroup.org](http://www.thirdeyegroup.org) or contact them via email at [info@thirdeyegroup.org](mailto:info@thirdeyegroup.org).