Time Management Bookends –

A Framework for Success

Toolbox Teleclass Transcription

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Professional Program

Track 3: Nuts & Bolts: The Fundamentals of Business

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WHAT ARE BOOKENDS

Welcome to the advance Toolbox Teleclass, Time Management Bookends: A Structure for Success. So this is an advance concept under the larger time management system concept, and in the [Time Management System](), I talk about creating a time map and kind of organizing your day into blocks.

What I've found over working with people on time management issues for years and working on it myself is that if you start the day well and you end the day well, it becomes much easier to manage the middle of the day.

WHY DO I THINK THEY'RE USEFUL IN BUILDING YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

And what I recommend is when you're building your time management system that you build from the outside in. In other words, from the…first, you put into place the morning and the evening routines and then you build towards the middle of the day.

So that's what I mean by bookends--that morning routine or ritual and the evening routine or ritual. Now when you are working from home, you'll generally have pretty much one morning bookend and one evening bookend.

But if you work a day job and then come home work on your own business or if you're working at the office, and so you have your morning routine when you first wake up, and then you need a routine when you walk in the door at your office and a routine when you're done in your office, and then another routine at night before you go to bed, you may end up creating sets of bookends, okay?

And what's going to work around this is really up to you and a question of experimenting. So let's talk about how you think about this. So for example, for me, I work in an office so I have a morning bookend when I first get up in the morning.

And then I have a morning bookend when I first walk into my office and then I have an evening bookend at the end of my office day, and then in the evening bookend at night before I go to sleep.

So that has been working for me though to some degree I'm always in the process of building these and honing them, as you should be with all your systems. You know, trying stuff on and finding out what works.

FIRST STEP – CURRENT REALITY

So the first step in building your bookends is to establish your current reality.

WHAT'S WORKING/NOT WORKING

Look at how you're structuring your first thing in the morning and your last thing at night. And do what's working and not working breakout on that. So for example, you know, what may be working is that you get up at the same time every day, but what's not working is that when you sit down to start work it's a little hard for you to get started.

What you want to be looking at again always with what's working and not working processes is not just look at what is or isn't working, but look at why. What stops it from working? What are you doing instead of having it work? So if you sit down but it takes a little while to get into working, what are you doing instead? And is that the best thing to be doing to set yourself up into the right mind space to start work, okay?

So kind of be thinking and looking at the dynamic of what's working and not working, not just a bullet point of that. So for example, you know, eating late at night might not work, but why are you eating late at night? What's going on that has you eating late at night? Okay?

CREATE THE LIST OF THOSE THINGS YOU DO EVERY MORNING/EVENING

You also want to create a list of those things that you actually do every morning and every evening. And what you might do is just start tracking it. So if you don't tend to do the same things every day or your schedule is kind of erratic, start tracking kind of how you wind down.

What are you doing when you're closing up your office? What are you doing at night right before going to bed? Just you know, start creating a list, and remember this is your current reality don't try to change anything at this point. Just take notes. No judgment. Just take a note to see what you're doing, okay?

And once you've kind of done that for a couple of days or perhaps a couple of weeks. If you're schedule is really erratic, you might want to do it for a couple of weeks and just take a look at what specifically you're doing.

LOOK AT THE LIST AND DECIDE WHICH THINGS YOU WANT TO KEEP, INCREASE/DECREASE OR DELETE

Look at the list of things that you're doing in the morning and the list of things that you're doing in the evening, and you know, identify those things that you want to keep, the things that you want to do more of or less of, and the things that you actually wanted to stop doing altogether, okay?

Again at this point you're not changing anything, you're just making some notes on that list. So for example, if you find that 2 days out of the week you're exercising, but you like to up that to 4 days or you find that you know before going to bed you're watching 3 hours of TV and you'd like to get it down to 1 hour, okay?

So just look at that list and kind of evaluate what you're doing and what you want to keep, what you want to increase or decrease, and what you wanted to delete and just make those notes in the margin. So that was the first step: the current reality.

SECOND STEP – BRAINSTORM

Now the second step is brainstorming.

CREATE A LONG LIST OF ALL THE THINGS YOU'VE EVER THOUGHT MIGHT BE A GOOD THING TO DO EVERY DAY:

If you're like most people have thought from time to time, "Wouldn't it be a good idea to do X first thing when I wake up in the morning?" Or, "Boy, you know so and so says that they always meditate before they go to sleep. I'd like to try that." What you want to do is create a long list of all the things you've ever thought might be a good thing to do every day.

Now at this point I don't want you to identify what you should do in the morning or what you should do in the evening. You're not trying to structure anything, and you're not editing this list at all. It's a brainstorm list, so you just want to make a long list of all of those things.

And some of those things like I said could be:

MEDITATE
Meditating,

EXERCISE
Exercising,

READ YOUR VISION
Reading your vision, creating your contacts, you know. You could be doing…setting goals. You could be reading your goals. You could be working on your to-do list. You know, creating a schedule. You might want to get your email out of the way first thing in the morning. It's entirely up to you. Put anything and everything you've thought of doing on that list.

And then once you've done that and really let yourself go crazy with that. Put more things on that list than you could ever possibly do and still you know get any work done, because it's a brainstorm list remember.

ADD TO THE LIST ALL THE THINGS YOU REALLY MUST DO EVERY DAY, MORNING AND EVENING

Then add to the list all the things that you really must do every day--morning and evening. Things like:

SHOWER AND DRESS
showering and dressing and shaving.

CAT BOX
and doing the cat box or taking the dog for a walk or, you know, whatever. Whatever the things are that feel likeboy, you know, making your bed. Make your bed every morning or whatever it is for you.

So that you end up with the second step with a really long list of things that would be a good idea to do in the morning or in the evening, whether it's at home or at work, again at this point you're not identifying that kind of stuff. You're just putting it in all in one big honking list.

THE THINGS I STRONGLY RECOMMEND

SCHEDULE THE DAY
Now some of things that I strongly recommend go on that list is to schedule the day.

ASSESS AND ADJUST
I recommend you do some kind of assessing and adjusting process. I like to look at what I got done that day, cross off the list--the to-do list, reschedule anything that needs to be rescheduled, and just take a look at what I learned. You know, what were the lessons from the day?

Some, you know, if you're working on your the rest of your time management system, this is the time to look at how it went, so that you can try something different out of something that didn't work.

So some kind of assessing and adjusting at the end of the day. I find at the end of the day works best for assessing and adjusting. I like to schedule the next day the night before.

A lot of my clients don't want to do that. They want to do that in the morning. This is over and above what you do at the beginning of each week. I actually recommend you schedule the week in broad terms at the beginning of each week, and then you kind of get more detailed the night before.

That's what I like to do but some clients like to get more detailed in the morning. That's part of their morning. Sit down with their coffee and look at their to-do list and what are they going to get done that day? Up to you.

GRATITUDE/ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I strongly recommend doing some kind of gratitude or acknowledgement process. Whether that's five things that you were grateful for that day. I like to start out in the morning with what I'm grateful for. I like to end at the end of the day with what I want to acknowledge, what accomplishments I got, who, you know, who really helped me, who I'm thankful for, that kind of stuff.

CONTEXT

And I also recommend setting a context, and I know that I've talked about setting a context on another call, but I don't remember which one. Sorry! Basically, and I'll go over it in this call again, and I actually I have time to do that and I think it's worthwhile doing. So I do this process called setting a context at the beginning of my coaching sessions with my clients. I do it at the beginning of my day. If you follow me on Twitter or Facebook, periodically I post it. I don't always post it every day, particularly if I'm going several days in a row with the same context. I won't keep re-posting the same context over and over again.

What a context is. Well, let me put it to you this way. If I were to say to you, the meaning of the word "plant" is dependent on the context of the sentence it's in, you understand what I mean, right? Because a "plant" could be a green thing that grows. It could also be a place where manufacturing happens, right? A manufacturing plant or an electric plant, right?

It could be a verb, something you do. You could plant a green growing thing in the ground. You could also plant your butt in the chair, right? So there's lots of meanings for the word plant, and it depends on the context--the words surrounding it.

Well, the way our brains work is that we interpret our environment and our experience based on the context of our beliefs, our expectations, our past experience, our assumptions, our parents' beliefs, expectations, past experience, and assumptions, right?

All of that stuff you use to filter the information that's coming at you through your senses and decide what it all means. What's important, what's not important, and what significance it has.

And that's why two people can experience the same events and have a very different response to it, because there's the event and then there's their interpretation of the event and their interpretation of the event is determined by their context, by their beliefs, by their expectations, by their assumptions.

But here's the thing about your context, it's unconscious. You don't think, "Well, this is happening, and I believe these things therefore this must mean that." Like it all happens in an instant unconsciously.

What setting the context does is it allows you to become conscious and intentional in how you interpret your environment, how you framed what's happening to you. You may have heard the quote, "It ain't what happens to you, it's what you do about it that counts," right?

Well, what you do about it is greatly determined by your context, because what you do about it is greatly determined by what you think it means. And what you think it means is determined by your context.

So setting the context at the beginning of each day kind of sets your framework for the day, but like I said this is stuff that happens unconsciously, and some people really struggle with this consent.

So let me give you some examples of ways to go about setting a context. So hold on one second...didn't want to cough into the recording. So let's say you're thinking, "Well, you know, today I really want to be courageous. I want to step out into you know-- I want to make some phone calls I've been avoiding and contact some people to book some concerts, and I just have been a little nervous about that, and so I really want to feel courageous today."

But here's the thing: courage is an emotion, right? A context is your belief, and remember if you listen to the class about, you know, Creating Your Beliefs or Transforming Your Beliefs, your emotions…and also the class on Emotional Intelligence-- your emotions are a result of your belief. So a context is choosing the belief that's going to have you feel courageous.

So for example, you might choose a belief of, "Every step I take takes me closer to my goals." Or you might choose the belief that, "No one person, gig, opportunity will make or break my career. Only I can do that." You might choose a context of, "Every day it gets easier to pick up the phone." You might choose a context of, "No matter what the outcome of these phone calls, I am creating relationships and engaging."

Now I recommend and even though I did get a little bit agenda specific when I was giving you suggestions, because I was just kind of brainstorming at the top of my head. I recommend being not agenda specific, because what we really want to be doing is building these deep kind of foundational beliefs and choosing those consciously and intentionally. So perhaps the belief is, "The universe is always acting in my favor."

So imagine if you have that context, "The universe is acting in my favor," and you made a booking phone call and they told you, "I'm sorry. We're not interested." Well, how would you interpret that information if the universe is always in my favor?

"Well, phew! That probably would not have been a good place for me to play." Or "Maybe it's not quite time yet for that venue, and I'll come back to them later." Or "I didn't get that gig because a bigger, better gig is coming along, because the universe is always acting in my favor."

You see how the context affects how you interpret, okay? So you want to set a context that is your foundational belief that you really want to embrace, okay? And if you're not sure what I mean by that, go back and listen to the Transform Your Beliefs - The Key to Success and Emotional Intelligence and some of those other success skills classes will help you with this concept, and you can always, of course, submit a context to the Ask Coach Debra session, and say, "Is this a good context?" And I'll give you feedback on it.

Okay, so those are the things that I recommend go on that brainstorming list, scheduling the day, assessing and adjusting, some kind of gratitude and acknowledgment, and you know, really giving yourself your wins and your successes and setting your context.

Third step – design your bookends

So the first step is current reality. The second step is brainstorming--all the different things that could go into it, and then I also talked about what I recommend. Now the third step is to actually designing your bookends.

START WITH WHAT YOU'RE ALREADY DOING

Start with what you're already doing that you decided that you want to keep.

PICK AM/PM ACTIVITIES YOU WANT TO DO

And pick a handful of activities that you either want to increase or add into your morning routine and your evening routine.

And if you have two morning routines at home and then at the office and two evening routines at the office and at home, you know, pick a couple for each. And you just want to kind of design your ideal, like where you want to get to. This is kind of creating your vision of your routine.

PUT THEM IN THE ORDER THAT SEEMS TO MAKE THE MOST SENSE

And put them in the order that seems to make the most sense, but also

INCLUDE TIME ESTIMATES AND ADD UP TOTAL TIME

Include time estimates, like how long will it take you. If you exercise every morning, how long are you going to exercise? If you are doing setting the context, how much time do you want to give that, okay? How much time are you going to spend scheduling your day? Whatever it is.

Putting some time estimate and add up to total time, so you have a sense of the size of the block, because remember you need to fit this into your time map and adjust your time map, so that there's a place for these bookends in that time map.

FOURTH STEP – IMPLEMENTATION

Now what I recommend for the fourth step is the implementation.

ADD ONE THING AT A TIME

And the way I recommend you go in about doing it is one piece at a time. Add one thing at a time. Add one thing at a time to each bookend, okay? Now if you're already doing stuff that you want to keep, keep that stuff.

And add this one thing into that already existing process. So for example, when I first started doing this, I was getting up. I was taking my medication every morning. Those were the things. I got up at the same time every day and I took my medication every morning, and then I would have my breakfast, but those were really the only things that I was really consistent with.

And sometimes I was sitting with my coffee too long, cuddling with my cat, and sometimes I wasn't getting dressed because I was working at home at the time, and sometimes, you know, whatever, but those are the things I was definitely do every morning.

And I decided I wanted to make my bed, so that's the first thing I added. So I attached making my bed to having my coffee. So I would have my breakfast, make my bed, and get my coffee.

CONNECT WHAT YOU'RE ADDING TO SOMETHING YOU'RE ALREADY DOING EVERY DAY

If you can connect routine-wise, if you can kind of connect in the pathwayof an already existing routine a new activity, you are more likely to do it consistently, okay? So if you want to start taking your vitamins in the morning and you have the same thing for breakfast every day, put the vitamins in front of that cereal box, so you see the vitamins when you go to get your cereal box, and that reminds you, "Oh I got to take my vitamins," okay?

So really fit the new activity in the already existing habit and play with it for a while. Do it that way for a week and see how it works before you add another piece in. So you're going to build this piece by piece. Now some things may make sense to put together. You know, if you decide you want to start exercising every day, then you need to put getting dressed in your exercise clothes in advance of that, right? So those are some things that are going to make sense to put in together.

EXPERIMENT

You want to experiment with this, and if something-- if you're not doing it, like if you decide, "Okay, I want to do this thing every morning," but you don't do it, don't just give up.

Don't throw the baby out with the bath water. Don't throw the whole routine away. Really investigate what's stopping you. What do you doing instead? What choice are you making? And when exactly did that choice happen? Can you change what you're doing just before that choice to make it more likely that you will do that thing, okay? And play with it. Maybe it's not the right time.

If you decide, "Well, I should exercise every morning," but you're just not a morning person and it's hard for you to move in the morning, then try exercising at a different time of day and don't make it part of your bookends.

You know, put it in before lunch or something or in the midday when you're lagging an energy, okay? Play with it. Maybe you exercise between leaving the office and getting home, so it becomes part of that end of the bookends.

So play with things. Don't throw the baby out with the bath water. Just experiment, because if something's not working, there's a reason why it's not working.

Maybe it's not the right time, maybe it's just not something that you really want to do, you just think you should.

What would happen if you didn't do it? Maybe that's not something you want to put into your bookends, okay? So be really kind of inquisitive, experimental. Use the scientific method with this process, so that you don't…you have a theory that doing it this way will work. You try it out. You get some result, and then you examine the conclusions.

You can make, you can draw from those results, and then you create a new experiment, right? You create a new theory, "Oh well, maybe if I do this first and then that." Try that out for a week. See how that works.

So really this is about experimenting, trying stuff out, and building piece by piece. Don't try to put it all in it at once. Add one thing at a time, okay?

ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER

Now one of the best things you can do around this is having an accountability partner. So that you share with someone, "Okay, well, this week I want to add this thing into my routine."

Because that person may also help you figure out, you know, why didn't it work? What could you do instead? They may bring a different perspective to it, particularly if you tend to be really hard on yourself.

If you tend to be hard on yourself, get an accountability partner. Someone who's going to help you really analyze your results with a --from a compassionate, patient, and forgiving perspective, okay? And really play with this. Have a curiosity around discovering what's going to work for you, okay?

Definitely share with me with the comments, you know, what happens if you come up with some great ideas for bookend activities? Share them with us because we all, you know, a lot of the bookend activities I do I got from someone else.

So you know, share with us what you end up going with, or what you try and what you like, and let us know how you do, okay?

And if you're struggling with something absolutely submit it for the Ask Coach Debra call. This is also something that you can send me an email about as your monthly email question or if this is really something that you're really struggling with and your part of

the professional mentorship program, certainly something we could do in the 15-minute laser coaching session we could talk about and brainstorm different ways to solve these issues.

Have a great night and have great bookends. Alright, talk to you soon!

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