

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

THE INTERACTIVE EDITION



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# THE MAIN THING IS TO KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING

In this section we'll introduce the Quadrant II organizing process—a thirty-minute weekly process and tool that will empower you to create quality of life based on needs, principles, and endowments. As we move through the parts of the process, we'll address questions such as these:

- Suppose you're planning a day. How do you know what's really most important for you to do? What determines your “first things”—urgency, values ... or an empowering vision and mission based on the principles that create quality of life?
- What do you do when you feel torn between different roles in your life, such as work and family or contribution and personal development? Is “balance” a matter of running between bases fast enough to touch them all?
- Suppose you have the day planned and someone comes to you with an “urgent” need. How do you know whether it's “best” to change your priorities? Can you change with the confidence and peace that you're putting first things first?
- Suppose you're going through your day and an unexpected opportunity comes up. How do you know whether it's “best” to respond to the opportunity or stick to your plan?

The first time you go through this process, you'll see immediate benefits. You'll be able to start shifting your focus from “urgency” to “importance” and learn how to create a flexible framework for effective decision making instead of a schedule made of cement.

But you'll experience the process on a much more powerful level as we go through each step in depth in Chapters 5 to 10. In these chapters, we'll talk about:

- the transforming power of a principle-based vision and mission
- how to create balance and synergy among the various roles in your life

- how to set and achieve principle-based goals
- why the perspective of the week makes such a vital difference in putting first things first
- how to act with integrity in the moment of choice—where the rubber meets the road in daily living
- how to create an upward spiral of learning and living

At the end of each of these chapters, you'll find specific suggestions for goals you can set during weekly organizing to integrate these things into your life. Some ideas may be more helpful to you than others. We hope you'll come up with many ideas on your own. After going through these chapters, you'll come back to the process with new eyes. You'll be able to see how, over time, Quadrant II organizing can empower you to live, to love, to learn, and to leave a great and enduring legacy.

The key to quality of life is in the compass—it's in the choices we make every day. As we learn to pause in the space between stimulus and response and consult our internal compass, we can face change squarely, confident that we're being true to principle and purpose, and that we're putting first things first in our lives.

## **4: Quadrant II Organizing: The Process of Putting First Things First**

Roger: Some time ago, a friend of mine—a business consultant—was moving into his new home. He decided to hire a friend of his to landscape the grounds. She had a doctorate in horticulture and was extremely bright and knowledgeable.

He had a great vision for the grounds, and because he was very busy and traveled a lot, he kept emphasizing to her the need to create his garden in a way that would require little or no maintenance on his part. He pointed out the absolute necessity of automatic sprinklers and other labor-saving devices. He was always looking for ways to cut the amount of time he'd have to spend taking care of things.

Finally, she stopped and said, "Fred, I can see what you're saying. But there's one thing you need to deal with before we go any further.

“If there’s no gardener, there’s no garden!”

Most of us think it would be great if we could just put our gardens—or our lives—on automatic and somehow get the quality-of-life results that come from careful, consistent nurturing of the things that create it.

But life doesn’t work that way. We can’t just toss out a few seeds, go ahead and do whatever we want to do and then expect to come back to find a beautiful, well-groomed garden ready to drop a bountiful harvest of beans, corn, potatoes, carrots, and peas in our basket. We have to water, cultivate, and weed on a regular basis if we’re going to enjoy the harvest.

Our lives will bring forth anyway. Things will grow. But the difference between our own active involvement as gardeners and neglect is the difference between a beautiful garden and a weed patch.

This chapter describes the gardening process. It’s identifying what’s important and focusing our effort to help it grow. It’s planting, cultivating, watering, and weeding. It’s applying the importance paradigm to nurture quality of life. It’s a “high-leverage” activity you can do in about thirty minutes each week. And whatever your current quality of life, the Quadrant II process will produce significant results.

On one level, this process is a first-aid measure to treat the problem of urgency addiction. If you haven’t had a chance to think deeply about needs and principles in your own life and you’re basically operating from the urgency paradigm, it will immediately help you begin to shift from urgency to importance thinking. Just going through the process will help you act on the important instead of reacting based on emotion or circumstance.

On another level, it creates the framework in which you can organize your time to focus on needs and principles and begin to work on them in your life. Through the organizing process, you can create Quadrant II time to connect with your deep inner life, create a personal principle-based mission statement that deals with all four needs, and develop your personal capacity to understand and align your life with the principles that govern quality of life.

On yet another level, this process enables you to translate your personal mission statement into the fabric of your daily life. From the mission to the moment, it empowers you to live with integrity and put first things first in a balanced, principle centered way.

As we present the steps in the process, we suggest that you consider them carefully. Write things down. The more involved you are, the more significant your learning will be. We suggest that you look over the following worksheet and then use it to organize the next week of your life according to the six step process that follows.

The forms we're using in this chapter are part of an organizing system we've developed based on Quadrant II.\* We want to emphasize the fact that the system is not a "magic tool." The system is designed to enhance the process of Quadrant II organizing. But the same process can be done in a modified daily planner, on a computer, in a spiral notebook, or even on a paper napkin. It's important to make sure that whatever system you use is aligned with what you're trying to do. A system that's focused on prioritizing urgent Quadrant I/III activities will get in the way of your effort to transition into Quadrant II.

## **THE WEEKLY WORKSHEET®**

As you look at the weekly worksheet on the following page, you'll notice that it's different from most planning tools in that it is a weekly and not a daily page.

The week creates context. You may have seen the wonderful two or three-minute video clip where the camera pans over what appear to be great hills and valleys, sweeping up and down, giving various perspectives of the apparent contours of a vast geographical area. At each sweep of the camera, we wonder what it is we're seeing. Are those raised areas the undulating hills of some barren wasteland? Are they the huge dunes of a remote desert? After a few moments, the camera slowly backs up so that the whole becomes visible. The "mountains" and "valleys" are the recognizable texture of an orange!

Daily planning provides us with a limited view. It's so "close up" that we're often kept focused on what's right in front of us. Urgency and efficiency take the place of importance and effectiveness. Weekly organizing, on the other hand, provides a broader context to what we do. It takes a bigger picture and lets us see the "mountains" for what they really are. The activities of the day begin to take on more appropriate dimensions when viewed in the context of the week.

### **STEP ONE: CONNECT WITH YOUR VISION AND MISSION**

As you begin to organize for the coming week, the first step is to connect with what's most important in your life as a whole. Context gives meaning. Consider the big picture—what you care about, what makes the moments in your life meaningful. The key to this connection lies in the clarity of your vision around such questions as:

- What's most important?
- What gives your life meaning?
- What do you want to be and to do in your life?

Many people capture their answers to such questions in a written personal creed or

mission statement. Such statements capture what you want to be and what you want to do in your life and the principles upon which being and doing are based. Clarity on these issues is critical because it affects everything else—the goals you set, the decisions you make, the paradigms you have, the way you spend your time. Returning to the ladder metaphor, a personal mission statement provides the fundamental criteria for deciding which wall you want to put your ladder against.

Because it's so foundational, it's the natural first step in the Quadrant II process. Why schedule activities and appointments that aren't aligned with your purpose? Connecting with your personal mission is foundational to operating out of the importance paradigm. It dramatically affects the way you carry out the rest of the Quadrant II process. If your mission includes such things as personal growth, family involvement, qualities of being, or areas of contribution, reviewing it will reinforce these "first things" in your mind. It will create a powerful framework for decision making in the steps that follow.

In Chapter 5, we'll get into the area of personal vision and mission in depth. We'll look at how you can create an empowering mission statement that will produce quality of life results and generate a passion for life.

If you don't have a personal mission statement now, you may get some feeling for what's important to you by doing one of the following:

- List the three or four things you would consider "first things" in your life.
- Consider any long range goals you might have set.
- Think about the most important relationships in your life.
- Think about any contributions you'd like to make.
- Reaffirm the feelings you want to have in your life—peace, confidence, happiness, contribution, meaning.
- Think about how you might spend this week if you knew you only had six months to live.

Consider the impact a personal mission statement could have for you by asking yourself

the following questions:

- *What difference would a clear vision of my principles, values, and ultimate objectives make in the way I spend my time?*
- *How would I feel about my life if I knew what was ultimately important for me?*
- *Would a written statement of my life's purpose be valuable to me? Would it affect the way I spend my time and energy?*
- *How would a weekly reconnection to such a statement affect the things I choose to do during the week?*

**If you do have a mission statement, review it now—before you decide how to spend the next seven days of your life. Reconnect with the things that are deeply important to you. If you don't have a mission statement, spend a few moments connecting with your inner compass and thinking about what really matters most in your life.**

## **STEP TWO: IDENTIFY YOUR ROLES**

We live our lives in terms of roles—not in the sense of role playing, but in the sense of authentic parts we've chosen to fill. We may have important roles at work, in the family, in the community, or in other areas of life. Roles represent responsibilities, relationships, and areas of contribution.

Much of our pain in life comes from the sense that we're succeeding in one role at the expense of other, possibly even more important roles. We may be doing great as vice president of the company, but not doing well at all as a parent or spouse. We may be succeeding in meeting the needs of our clients, but failing to meet our own need for personal development and growth.

A clear set of roles provides a natural framework to create order and balance. If you have a mission statement, your roles will grow out of it. Balance among roles does not simply mean that you're spending time in each role, but that these roles work together for the accomplishment of your mission.

We'll take an in-depth look at roles and the balance among them in Chapter 6. For now, just list the roles that come to your mind in whatever way feels comfortable to you. Don't be overly concerned about getting them "right" the first time. It may take several weeks

before you feel they capture the various facets of your life in a way that works for you. There's no set way to do it—another person doing almost the same things you do might define the roles differently. In addition, your roles will probably change through the years. You may change jobs, join a club, marry, or become a parent or grandparent.

You may define your family role as simply “family member.” Or, you may choose to divide it into two roles, “husband” and “father,” “wife” and “mother,” “daughter” and “sister.” Some areas of your life, such as your job, may involve several roles: one in administration, one in marketing, one in personnel, and one in long range planning. You may also want to have one role that reflects personal development.

Since studies show that it's less effective to attempt to mentally manage more than seven categories, we recommend that you try to combine functions, such as administration/finance or personnel/team building to keep your total number of roles to seven. This will support mental organization around these role areas. On the other hand, don't feel that you have to come up with seven roles. If you only identify five or six roles, that's fine. The number seven simply represents an upper limit to comfortable mental processing.

Identifying roles gives a sense of the wholeness of quality life—that life is more than just a job, or a family, or a particular relationship. It's all of these together. Identifying roles may also highlight “important, but not urgent” areas that are currently being neglected.

In addition to the roles you've identified, we'd like to suggest a separate and foundational role called “sharpen the saw.” We treat this as a separate role for two reasons: 1) it's a role that everyone has, and 2) it's foundational for success in every other role. You'll find this role represented in the upper-left-hand corner of the weekly worksheet.

The term “sharpen the saw” is a metaphor that describes the energy we invest in increasing our personal capacity in the four fundamental areas—physical, social, mental, and spiritual. We often get so busy “sawing” (producing results) that we forget to “sharpen our saw” (maintain or increase our capacity to produce results in the future). We may neglect to exercise (physical area), or fail to develop key relationships (social/emotional area). We may not keep current in our field (mental area). We may not be clear about what's important and meaningful to us (spiritual area). If we fail to build our personal capacity in these areas, we quickly become “dulled,” and worn out from the imbalance. We're unable to move forward as effectively in the other roles of our lives.

We often hear stories of Olympic athletes who have spent years in vigorous training and preparation for their event. They mentally rehearse their performance, envisioning over and over the details of execution. They create in themselves the strength that allows them to compete successfully. These athletes can't train only when it's convenient or easy and expect to come out winners. Neither can we expect to have the capacity to enjoy life fully without caring for and conditioning the sources of strength in our lives.

You may find that this “role” of sharpening the saw overlaps with a personal development role you already defined. That’s not a problem. The important thing is that none of the four areas is neglected. Some people use their “sharpen the saw” role for organizing weekly “investment” activities such as daily exercise or personal reading, and use one of their other roles for long-term issues such as career planning or continuing education. It’s really a matter of what works best for you.

It’s also important to realize that all of these roles are not distinct “departments” of life. They form a highly interrelated whole. By identifying your roles, you’re not trying to break your life down and fit it into neat little boxes on a planning page. You’re creating a variety of perspectives from which to examine your life to ensure balance and harmony. The paradigm is always one of importance, interdependence, and relatedness.

**If you haven’t done so, write your roles on your worksheet now.**

**Now consider these questions:**

- Do I often find that I’m consumed by one or two roles in my life, and that the others do not receive the time and attention I’d like to give them?
- How many of my “first things” are in roles other than those that receive most of my time and attention?
- Do the roles I’ve selected work together to contribute to the fulfillment of my mission?
- What difference would it make in the quality of my life to consider these roles on a weekly basis, and ensure that my activities are appropriately balanced?

We’ll address these and other role-related issues in Chapter 6.

### **STEP THREE: SELECT QUADRANT II GOALS IN EACH ROLE**

With your framework of roles identified, ask yourself:

**What is the most important thing I could do in each role this week to have the greatest positive impact?**

As you pause to consider this question, consult the wisdom of your heart as well as your mind. What do you feel would make a significant difference in each role? What about your role as a spouse? As a friend? As a parent? As an employee? As you consider the most important activities in each role, begin to use your compass instead of the clock. Listen to your conscience. Focus on importance rather than urgency.

If one of your roles deals with your own development, your goals might include such things as planning time for a personal retreat, working on a mission statement, or gathering information about a speed reading course. If you are a parent, your goal might be to spend some one-on-one time with your child. If you're married, it might be to go on a date with your husband or wife. Job-related goals could include setting aside time for some long-range planning, coaching a peer or subordinate, visiting customers, or working on shared expectations with your boss.

In the "sharpen the saw" area, physical goals might include regular exercise or proper diet. In the spiritual area, you might choose meditation, prayer, or the study of inspiring literature. In the mental area you might set a goal to attend a class or pursue your own reading program. For social development, you might work on principles of effective interdependence such as empathic listening, honesty, or unconditional love. The key is to consistently do whatever builds your strength in these areas and increases your capacity to live, to love, to learn, and to leave a legacy. An hour a day spent "sharpening your saw" creates the "private victory" that makes public victories possible.

You'll probably be aware of several goals you could set in each role. But for now, limit yourself to the one or two goals that are most important. You may even feel, based on your inner compass, that you should not set goals in every role this week. The Quadrant II process allows for that flexibility and encourages you to use your compass in determining what's most important for you to do. In Chapter 7, we'll look at how you can use your endowments to make those choices and to set and achieve principle-based goals that create quality-of-life results.

**Write your goals in the "goals" area or on the weekly worksheet.**

If you've considered carefully, your goals will represent those activities that you feel are truly important to fulfillment in your roles.

Now ask yourself these questions:

- What would happen if I did these things during the coming week?
- How would I feel about the quality of my life?
- What if I did only some of them?
- Would it make a positive difference in my life?
- What if I did this every week?

- Would I be more effective than I am now?

## **STEP FOUR: CREATE A DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK FOR THE WEEK**

Effectively translating high-leverage Quadrant II goals into an action plan requires creating a framework for effective decision making throughout the week. Most people are constantly trying to find time for the “important” activities in their already overflowing Quadrant I/III schedules. They move things around, delegate them, cancel them, postpone them—all in the hope of finding time for first things. The key, however, is not to prioritize your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.

One of our associates shared this experience:

*I attended a seminar once where the instructor was lecturing on time. At one point, he said, “Okay, it’s time for a quiz.” He reached under the table and pulled out a wide-mouth gallon jar. He set it on the table next to a platter with some fist-sized rocks on it. “How many of these rocks do you think we can get in the jar?” he asked.*

*After we made our guess, he said, “Okay. Let’s find out.” He set one rock in the jar ... then another ... then another. I don’t remember how many he got in, but he got the jar full. Then he asked, “Is that jar full?”*

*Everybody looked at the rocks and said, “Yes.”*

*Then he said, “Ahhh.” He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar and the gravel went in all the little spaces left by the big rocks. Then he grinned and said once more, “Is the jar full?”*

*By this time we were on to him. “Probably not,” we said.*

*“Good!” he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it went in all the little spaces left by the rocks and the gravel. Once more he looked at us and said, “Is the jar full?”*

*“No!” we all roared.*

*He said, “Good!” and he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in. He got something like a quart of water in that jar. Then he said, “Well, what’s the point?”*

*Somebody said, “Well, there are gaps, and if you really work at it, you can always fit more into your life.”*

*“No,” he said, “that’s not the point. The point is this: if you hadn’t put these big rocks in first, would you ever have gotten any of them in?”*

With the “more is better” paradigm, we’re always trying to fit more activities into the time we have. But what does it matter how much we do if what we’re doing isn’t what matters most?

Our Quadrant II goals are like the “big rocks.” If we put other activities—the water, sand, and gravel—in first, and then try to fit the big rocks in, not only will they not fit, we’ll end up making a pretty big mess in the process.

But if we know what the big rocks are and put them in first, it’s amazing how many of them we can put in—and how much of the sand, gravel, and water fits in between the spaces. Regardless of what else actually does fit in, the key point is that the big rocks—our Quadrant II goals—are in first. (See the illustration on page 90.)

As you look at your weekly worksheet, put your Quadrant II goals in place. You’ll notice that there are two kinds of areas on the weekly worksheet for each day. One is divided into the hours for specific appointments; the other provides space to list priorities for the day. To schedule your Quadrant II goals, either set a specific time during the day to work on the goal, or list it as a priority for the day. (See page 91.)

Usually, the specific appointment is the most effective. You may feel your most important goals for the week include doing some long-range planning, exercising, and preparing a major project proposal. Make specific appointments with yourself to work on these goals, and treat an appointment with yourself as you’d treat an appointment with anybody else. Plan around it. Channel other activities and requests to different time blocks. If that appointment has to be changed, reschedule it immediately. Give yourself the same consideration you would give anyone else.

In some cases, it may be more effective not to schedule a goal at a particular hour of the day, but to list it as a priority instead. For example, if your goal is to improve your relationship with your teenage daughter, it’s important to realize that the opportunity may not surface at a predictable time. Rather than planning a specific activity together during the week, you may find it more effective to simply put her name at the top of your list of “other priorities” and watch for an opportunity. If you do this on Monday and nothing develops, draw an arrow on that line across to Tuesday. If nothing happens on Tuesday, draw it across to Wednesday. This way, the priority is on your mind. You’re looking for the right occasion. And you can see what’s happening in your week with regard to it.

Then, on Wednesday evening, when you’re reading the paper and she comes in and wants to talk, you have the motivation to push your paper—not your daughter—aside.

Of course, specific activities with your children are also very valuable. It’s often the time

spent bowling or watching a movie together that allows the spontaneous conversations to occur. The important thing is to be sensitive to both the need for the goal and the nature of the goal when determining what's most appropriate.

**If you're planning your week as you go through this chapter, take some time now and schedule your Quadrant II goals.**

Scheduling important Quadrant II goals is a big step toward putting first things first. If we don't put the Quadrant II activities in place first, it's easy for the week to be filled by the flood of activities from Quadrants I and III that constantly clamor for our attention. It's hard to "fit in" those important Quadrant II activities that would make such a significant difference.

But if we put the "big rocks" in first, we reverse that tendency. We create a framework to accomplish what we feel is important, around which we can then "fit in" other activities.

With the big Quadrant II rocks in place, you can comfortably start adding other activities—either as appointments or priorities for the day. It pays to examine each activity carefully and determine which quadrant it's really in. It may feel urgent. Is it? Or does it just seem that way because someone or something else is creating pressure? Is it really important? Or has the feeling of urgency made it only seem important?

As we observed earlier, if you're addicted to living in a crisis mode, it's easy to think that almost everything you do is in Quadrant I. But careful analysis will probably reveal a great deal of time spent in Quadrant III. If you're struggling to find time to invest in Quadrant II, Quadrant III is the primary place to get it.

Once you start to invest time in Quadrant II, it significantly impacts the amount of time you spend in each of the other quadrants. As you plan, prepare, build relationships, or enjoy quality recreation, you'll find that you spend far less time picking up the broken pieces in Quadrant I or reacting to the urgent demands of others in Quadrant III. The ideal to work toward is eliminating III and IV. It's spending time on important Quadrant I and II activities, and shifting more and more to the preparing, prevention, and empowering activities of Quadrant II.

As you look at your week, it's important to realize that it's critical not to fill every moment of every day with time-sensitive appointments. Allow for flexibility. While you do your best to plan what's important based on available knowledge, the fact is that life is not the automatic incarnation of a planning page, no matter how well that page is written. To ignore the unexpected (even if it were possible) would be to live without opportunity, spontaneity, and the rich moments of which "life" is made.

The object of Quadrant II organizing is not to set a schedule in cement. It's to create the framework in which quality decisions based on importance can be made on a day-by-day,

moment-by-moment basis.

If you're working on your week now, plan your other key activities around your Quadrant II goals and schedule them as appointments or as daily priorities.

Consider the value of such a weekly framework by asking yourself the following questions:

- How do I feel about my week as I have it planned?
- What difference would it make if I planned Quadrant II goals in each role (either as appointments or as daily priorities) each week, and carried them out?
- Do I see the logic in putting the “big rocks” in first? How will this help me to get those important things done?

In Chapter 8, we'll take a closer look at three “operating perspectives” we gain as we move from the daily to the weekly focus.

## **STEP FIVE: EXERCISE INTEGRITY IN THE MOMENT**

With important Quadrant II goals in place for the week, the daily task is to keep first things first while navigating through the unexpected opportunities and challenges of the day. Exercising integrity, or integratedness, means translating the mission to the moment with peace and confidence—whether putting first things first means carrying out your plan or creating conscience-directed change. All the steps we've taken so far in the process are designed to enhance your character and competence, your judgment, your ability to access that inner compass in decision-making moments where the rubber meets the road.

There are three additional things you can do at the beginning of the day that will enhance your ability to put first things first:

1. **Preview the day.** This is a much different process from the “daily planning” of traditional time management. It's spending a few moments at the beginning of the day to revisit your schedule, enabling you to get your bearings, check your compass, look at the day in the context of the week, and renew the perspective that empowers you to respond in a meaningful way to unanticipated opportunity or challenge. At this point, some people prefer the room for greater detail available on a daily page.

2. **Prioritize.** Before you begin to prioritize in the traditional sense, you may find it helpful to identify your activities as QI or QII. This gives you an additional opportunity to ensure that Quadrant III activities haven't slipped into your schedule in disguise. It also helps you keep a kairos or compass context to the day—which is normally more chronos

or clock-focused. And it helps reinforce the importance paradigm and make you more aware of the nature of the choices you make.

If further prioritization is helpful, you can give some indication of the status of each QI or QII activity. Some people prefer to use the ABC method, assigning each item an A, B, or C, depending on importance, and always working on A's. Others prefer a simple numbering system that requires more specific priority decision. (See pages 96 and 97.)

Whether or not you use the more detailed priority indication, we highly recommend that you highlight, circle, or mark with an asterisk your most important priority. This may require deciding between two Quadrant II activities you have scheduled for the day. If the nature of the day is such that nothing else gets done, you still have the satisfaction of knowing you did the one thing that mattered most.

As you prioritize, it's critical to remember that your prioritization only includes the items you've put into your framework for the week. It does not take into consideration the priority of unexpected opportunities or challenges. If you've given careful consideration to your roles and goals, what's in your framework will reflect your best effort to determine what's first for the week. But none of us is omniscient. Things can come up that are genuinely more important than what you have planned. Keep connected with your inner compass so that you can act with integrity to what's important; not necessarily to your schedule.

**3. Use some form of T planning for the day.** On the daily sheet, the basic structure allows you to list "time sensitive" activities on the left and activities that can be done at any time of the day on the right. This technique is often called "T planning." By separating the time-sensitive activities from the rest, you're able to make more effective scheduling decisions and remain sensitive to important commitments. The more condensed Weekly Worksheet puts these same areas above and below. (See pages 98 and 99.)

An activity is considered "time-sensitive" if its value is attached to a specific time of the day. A doctor's appointment, for example, may have high value at 10:00 in the morning, but no value at all at 4:00 in the afternoon (unless you're still waiting in the doctor's office). Because an activity is scheduled in the "time sensitive" area does not automatically mean when the time arrives you quit what you're doing and shift focus. You may be involved in something genuinely more important and need to reschedule. The key is your ability to discern between the two activities and determine which is more important at the time.

As you live through the day, factors will undoubtedly come up that cause you to reevaluate the activities you've planned—your boss calls a meeting, somebody offers you two tickets for the symphony, your daughter calls from school with a broken arm, a client cancels an appointment.

Quadrant II organizing empowers you to look at the best use of your time through the paradigm of importance rather than urgency. As situations change, you can pause and connect with your inner compass to determine the “best” use of your time and energy. When the unexpected is less important than what you had planned, Quadrant II organizing gives you perspective and the power to keep on track. When the unexpected is more important, it empowers you to adapt and change with confidence, knowing that you’re acting on the truly important and not just reacting to the urgent.

In Chapter 9, we’ll take an in-depth look at how to access that inner compass in any moment of choice. We’ll talk about how to be strong in hard moments, how to know when the unexpected opportunity or challenge is more important than what you’ve planned, and how to either stay with what you’ve planned or change with confidence and peace.

### **STEP SIX: EVALUATE**

The Quadrant II process would be incomplete without closing the loop—without turning the experience of one week into the foundation for the increased effectiveness of the next. Unless we learn from living, how are we going to keep from doing the same things—making the same mistakes, struggling with the same problems—week after week?

# The Power of THE Process

## REVIEW



### CONNECT TO MISSION:

Empowers you to access the deep burning “yes!”



### IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS:

Empowers you to focus effectively on the most important things you can do in each role each week to accomplish your mission.



### EXERCISE INTEGRITY:

Empowers you to pause in the space between stimulus and response and act with integrity to first things in any moment.



### REVIEW YOUR ROLES:

Enables you to reconnect with the avenues through which you can do first things in a balanced, synergistic way.



### ORGANIZE THE WEEK:

Enables you to put the “big rocks” in first and to schedule around them.



### EVALUATE:

Empowers you to turn your weeks into upwards spirals of learning and living.

At the end of the week—before you review your mission statement to begin organizing the next week—pause to ask questions such as:

- What goals did I achieve?
- What challenges did I encounter?
- What decisions did I make?
- In making decisions, did I keep first things first?

In Chapter 10, we’ll suggest more specific questions that draw on the power of the four human endowments to help us learn from living. With this final step, the Quadrant II

process becomes a living and learning cycle that creates an upward spiral of growth.

Now suppose you were to spend thirty minutes a week for the next fifty-two weeks of your life going through this process. Suppose you only accomplished half of the Quadrant II goals you set. Would that represent more time in Quadrant II time than you're now spending? A little or a lot? If you were able to invest that much more time in Quadrant II, what difference would it make in the quality of your personal and professional life?

## **THE PARADIGM AND THE PROCESS**

Quadrant II is not a tool; it's a way of thinking. We recognize that many people using second and third-generation planning tools use them essentially in a fourth-generation way. On the other hand, some people using fourth-generation tools—including our own organizing system—use them in second- or third-generation ways with significantly less effective results.

The paradigm is obviously most essential. But we do need to recognize that a tool that's not in alignment with the paradigm can create ineffectiveness and frustration. If you're trying to create a fourth generation lifestyle based on importance, and you're using a tool that's focused on daily prioritization of the urgent, it's like trying to make progress along a path while someone is dropping boulders in front of you every step of the way. The system may even threaten to overpower the paradigm so that you end up serving the system to your disadvantage instead of having the system serve you in helping you accomplish what you're trying to accomplish.

The Quadrant II organizing process reinforces the “importance” paradigm. The greatest value of the process is not what it does to your schedule, but what it does to your head. As you begin to think more in terms of importance, you begin to see time differently. You become empowered to put first things first in your life in a significant way.

If you're like most of the people we've had the opportunity to work with, you've probably been able to see some of the immediate benefits of this Quadrant II organizing process—the shift from urgency to importance thinking, the greater perspective of the week, increased flexibility, getting the “big rocks” in first.

But the journey has just begun. This chapter has provided an overview of the Quadrant II organizing process. The next six chapters contain the depth and richness of this process that will empower you, over time, to “keep the main thing the main thing” in your life.

## **The Passion of Vision**

*It's easy to say “no!” when there's a deeper “yes!” burning inside.*