

From Motivation to Motive-Action by Denis Waitley

In the past, change in business and social life was incremental and a set of personal strategies for achieving excellence was not required. Today, in the knowledge-based world, where change is the rule, a set of personal strategies is essential for success, even survival. Never again will you be able to go to your place of business on autopilot, comfortable and secure that the organization, state or government will provide for and look after you. You must look in the mirror when you ask who is responsible for your success or failure. You must become a lifelong learner and leader, for to be a follower is to fall hopelessly behind the pace of progress.

As you look in the mirror to see the 21st Century you, there will also be another image standing beside you. It is your competition. Hungry for food. Hungry for a home, for a new car, for security, for a college education. Hungry for knowledge. Smart, quick thinking, skilled and willing to do anything necessary to be competitive in the world marketplace. Working long hours and Saturdays, staying open later, serving customers better and more cheerfully. To be a player in the 21st Century you have to be willing to give more in service than you receive in payment.

These are the new rules in the game of life. These are the actions you must take to be a leader and a winner in your personal and professional life. By mastering these profoundly simple action steps, you will be positioned to be a change master in the new century.

Action Step 1 - Consider Yourself Self-Employed, But Be a Team Player.

What this means is that you are your own Chief Executive Officer of your future. Start thinking of yourself as a service company with a single employee. You're a small company that puts your services to work for a larger company. Tomorrow you may sell those services to a different organization, but that doesn't mean you're any less loyal to your current employer. Taking responsibility for yourself in this way does mean that you never equate your personal long-term interests with your employer's.

The first idea is resolving not to suffer the fate of those who lost their jobs and found their skills were obsolete. The second is to begin immediately the process of protecting yourself against that possibility – by becoming proactive instead of reactive. Ask yourself these questions:

How vulnerable am I? What trends must I watch? What information must I gain? What knowledge do I lack?

Again, think of yourself as a company. Set up a training department in your mind and make certain your top employee is updating his or her skills. Make sure you have your own private pension plan, knowing that you are responsible for your own financial security. Entrusting the government or an employer, other than yourself, with your retirement income is like hiring a compulsive gambler as your accountant.

You're the CEO of your daily life who must have the vision to set your goals and allocate your resources. The mindset of being responsible for your own future used to be crucial only to the self-employed, but it has become essential for us all. Today's typical employees are no longer one-career people. Most will have five separate careers in their lifetimes. Remember, your competition is a hungry immigrant with a laptop. Action Step Number One is to consider yourself to be self-employed, but be a team player.

Action Step 2 - Be Flexible in the Face of Daily Surprises.

We live in a time-starved, overstressed, violent society. Much of our over-reaction to what happens to us every day is a result of our self-indulgent value system, where we blame others for our problems, look to organizations or the government for our solutions, thirst for immediate sensual gratification and believe we should have privileges without responsibilities. This condition is manifested in the high crime rate and in the increase in violence in the work place where employees blame their managers for threatening their security.

I have learned how to be flexible in the face of daily surprises, which is one of the most important action traits for a leader. I really haven't been angry for about 17 years. During that time, no one has tried to physically harm me or someone close to me. I've learned to adapt to stress in life and reserve my fear or anger for imminently physically dangerous situations. I rarely, if ever, get upset with what people say, do or don't do, even if it inconveniences me. I do react emotionally when I see someone physically or emotionally abusing or victimizing another. But I've learned not to sweat the small stuff.

The Serenity Prayer, "Grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference," is a valuable measuring tool we can apply to our lives. Simple yet profound words to live by.