

From the author of the *Wall Street Journal*
National Bestseller *The Trust Edge*

THE DAILY EDGE

Simple Strategies to
Increase Efficiency
*and Make an Impact
Every Day*

DAVID HORSAGER

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—Mike Hajek, Director of Contracts and Marketing,
National Joint Powers Alliance

THE
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and Make an Impact
Every Day*

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Author of the National Bestseller
THE TRUST EDGE



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The Daily Edge

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Dedication

To Nate, who has the Daily Edge,
but not at the expense of relationships.



To Lisa, who manages
our home and four children
with diligence and grace.



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Thank you to the organizations and audiences who have invited me to speak and consult—many of you inspired, tested, and ultimately revealed the level of productivity that comes when one has *The Daily Edge*.

The Daily Edge (*n*): The advantage or edge gained when priorities are clear and there is a daily effort to act on those priorities.



The inspiration for this book

came from learning and implementing several techniques that radically changed the way I do work and live life. It all started when I took some time off. I began reading several books on productivity and time management, which

made me become more aware of how people use their time. I watched a great leader use time so effectively, yet, not at the expense of relationships. Those experiences inspired me to develop and implement the techniques featured in this book.

While I never intended to be a productivity expert, people who attend my presentations and seminars have asked me to expand on this topic of productivity. Perhaps one of the reasons why my message is appealing is the simplicity of my approach. This book is unique in that it isn't long on theories or philosophical ideas. Instead, it is packed with tips that I've gathered and used in my own life. They have made a huge difference for me, and they can do the same for you.

The Daily Edge will provide you with practical ways to **be more efficient and effective while honoring relationships**. Each of the tips has been passed on from a friend or learned from reflection after a busy day. Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randy Payne', written in a cursive style.



Tip 1

90-Day Quick Plan



Eighteen years ago a man challenged me to not complain for 90 days straight. I couldn't complain about anything, not food, not the weather, nothing. That changed my life. Some people say you can change a habit in 21 days. I question whether that is long enough. While 21 days may be too short, an entire year is too long. Think about it, most people can't keep their New Year's resolutions for even two weeks. People often think, "I have all year to get going on that." **90 days is a sweet spot.** It is a short enough time frame to stay absolutely focused, and yet it is long enough to get more done than most people get done in a whole year. When I lost my weight, the first 90 days were the most important. In those three months, I lost thirty-three pounds, but more importantly, my thinking about food, exercise, and how I spent my time was transformed. Everything changed in 90 days.

Most strategic planning is done at an off-site retreat, yet provides little momentum toward action. Instead of an annual planning session, try

making a 90-Day Quick Plan. Every 90 days we encourage everyone on our team to create a 90-Day Quick Plan. It gives leaders and teams an actionable framework that provides clarity and leads to tangible results both personally and professionally.

Here's how to make it work. Pick an area of your business or life that you'd like to address, and then ask six questions. *The plan should take less than 30 minutes to create.*

Question 1: *Where am I?* If you do not know where you are today, you cannot know where you would like to be in the future. (If you are doing a 90-Day Quick Plan as a team, ask, "Where are we?" and use "we" in the following questions as well.) Ask this question and you will be able to quickly identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. For example, where am I in my relationship with my kids? Where am I in my health? Where am I in comparison to expected sales? Where are we as far as the number of people we are reaching with our message or product?

Question 2: *Where am I going in 90 days?* Remember, it is not one year or five years like many strategic plans. Thinking about your answer in question 1, where would you like to be in 90 days? Write a clear, quantifiable (numerical if possible) goal. You will likely accomplish more than you thought in just 90 days!

Question 3: *Why am I going?* If the "why" is strong enough, the plan does not need to be perfect. If a building is burning and my kids are in it, I don't need to know every detail—I'm going in because my "why" is so strong. When your team is motivated and unified, they'll do the little things differently. They'll stay passionate and focused, and they'll finish.

Question 4: *How are we going to get there?* How? Keep asking how? until your team commits to taking specific actions.

Question 5: *How are we going to get there?* I press people to ask how? until they have come up with a specific action they will take starting today or tomorrow at the latest.

Question 6: *How are we going to get there?* I have found people must ask how? at least three times before they are clear enough. It may take asking how? seven times in order to get enough clarity. The point is don't stop asking how until you or your team has decided on a specific action that will be taken starting today or tomorrow.

Making It Happen

I remember when I really got this idea of asking “how?” three times. I was training and consulting with one of the biggest health care organizations in North America. They needed change! They were losing funding and patients. We were toward the end of our Trust Edge Experience. One hundred fifty top people including the CEO and senior leadership team were all seated at round tables. Each table had defined a specific challenge they were going to tackle. I remember asking one table full of top leaders about what they needed to take action on in order to grow and be more trusted. The table leader said, “We need to be clearer.”

I said, “How will you be clearer?”

After brainstorming with his group, the table leader said, “We are going to communicate more.”

I said, “How?”

After more brainstorming, he said, “We are going to hold each other accountable.”

I said, “How?”

The table, seated with bright minds and fine leaders, had to be pushed three times in order to realize they needed a more specific action plan. They worked together to create a plan for communicating more often and more clearly. An important piece of their plan was how they were going to hold each other accountable to this effort. They were able to start following their plan the very next day.

On a personal level, when I decided to lose weight, I kept asking “how?” until I went from “eat less and exercise more” to defining fifteen specific actionable ideas I could implement on a daily basis.

With greater clarity around your 90-day plan, you will gain the trust of your team and bottom-line results will follow.

“The most pathetic person
in the world is someone who has sight
but no vision.” —Helen Keller



To watch David teach the 90-Day Quick Plan, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQsZRU8TW-4

However beautiful
the **strategy**,
you should
occasionally look
at the **results**.

—Winston Churchill

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Tip 2

DMA's: Difference-Making Actions



Have you ever had a day in which you worked really hard but felt like you didn't get anything done? Many people look at their to-do list and get so overwhelmed that they end up doing nothing! The DMA strategy gives powerful clarity. It works beautifully especially once you have your 90-Day Quick Plan. It was inspired by a strategy successfully used by Charles Schwab of Bethlehem Steel Company, the first American to earn a million-dollar annual salary.

DMA stands for Difference-Making Actions. **DMA's simply give focus and intentionality to do the most important things every day.** This simple strategy will increase results like nothing else. Make a habit of doing DMA's on a daily basis and your impact will multiply.

Here's how it works:

The DMA Strategy:

- 1.** First thing every morning, take a sticky note.
- 2.** At the top, write your most important current goal.
- 3.** Then write the numbers 1-5 down the page.
- 4.** Next to the 1, write the most important thing you could do today to accomplish that goal. Then write the next most important thing under 2, and so on.
- 5.** You now have a list of the 5 most important things you could do today that would make the biggest difference in accomplishing your goal and ultimately fulfilling your organization's mission.

When you write your DMA's, make sure they are FUN:

F= First priority first. List your tasks in order of priority and then do them in order. Don't start working on the second task until you have finished the first one or you have come to a roadblock that requires someone else's help. Your DMA's are the most important actions for the day! Don't attempt more than five, or you might get overwhelmed and do nothing. If you can't boil them down to a few simply stated tasks, then you probably need to restate your goal.

U= Under the main vision and current major objective. DMA's are the five most important actions you can specifically take today to move your organization forward. They must come under your main vision and help accomplish your most important and current priorities!

N=Number attached. It is not a DMA unless there is a specific number attached. In other words “Calling more prospects” is not a DMA, but “Making 10 sales calls” is. “Organizing your office” is not a DMA, but “Organizing for 20 minutes” or “Cleaning out 2 drawers” are DMA’s. Difference Making Actions must be quantifiable.

It is important to note that *DMA’s are based solely on what you can do*, not what others need to do. In other words, “Calling three people” is a DMA as that does not rely on whether anyone answers or not. However, “Selling 5 gadgets” is not a DMA as it relies on what others must do. If you consistently do your DMA’s, great outcomes will follow.

Each time you complete a Difference-Making Action, put a line through it. Believe it or not there is great satisfaction in seeing that sticky note at the end of the day with five lines crossed through your most important tasks. I once had an intern fresh out of college who was invaluable to our organization. Every day he accomplished his DMA’s and then left that sticky note on his cubicle wall. Each day he added his next sticky note with lines through his accomplishments. Do you think he needed to be micromanaged? No way! There was proof on the wall he was doing Difference-Making Actions that moved our mission forward every single day.

Helpful DMA Hints

Be focused. When you write your DMA’s, make sure that they are focused. Your DMA’s are the most important actions for the day—you shouldn’t have any more than three. If you can’t boil them down to a few simply-stated tasks, then you probably need to restate your goal.

Be clear. Your DMA's should be clear and quantifiable. The focus here is on activities, not outcomes, so be sure you know exactly what you are going to do. "Make ten sales calls," or "spend one hour on the website" is much better than "sell more," or "work on the proposal."

Be realistic. Your DMA's will not be effective if you can't actually do them. Don't write down that you would like to write five proposals every day, if you know realistically you can't finish more than two.

Be committed. Lastly, build your day around them. Now that you have them, make sure you prioritize them over all other things, meetings, e-mails, and less important tasks. I often have my DMA's done by 11 a.m. because I do them first. The rest of my day can be structured as needed, but I first did something important that will make a significant impact on my organization and the lives of those we serve.

***Example:** A salesperson who wants to make \$10,000 in commission every month might know from experience that he will need to find four new clients. And to find those four new clients, he needs to set one appointment each day, which he should be able to do by making 20 sales calls. He now has a strong DMA: Make 20 sales calls each morning. By making this the most important part of his day, he can learn to focus on that goal without being distracted by incoming phone calls, meetings, and other items that are urgent, but less important.*

Never mistake motion for action.

—Ernest Hemingway



To watch David teach the DMA strategy, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCuxFKaTmls

Simplicity

boils down to *two steps*:

Identify the

essential.

Eliminate the rest.

—Leo Babauta



Tip 3

Power Hour



Writing down your DMA's is one thing, but getting them done is another. Despite our best intentions, we all know how quickly those priorities can be set aside in order to deal with the most urgent tasks.

In my office and many others, having a “power hour” has been a great way to keep at what is most important. It's so simple, you might be surprised at how well it works. So what is our secret? One quiet hour every day.

For 60 minutes each morning, we don't do meetings, phone calls, or e-mails. We don't take any interruptions. Messages go to voice mail and the inbox fills. Some would say, “You mean you won't take a call from a client to serve them?” No, we won't take a call during that hour so we can serve them even better. Unlike many offices, we can really focus, concentrate, and serve others best by actually getting something done for them. We focus on the activities we identified as most important to our long-term success.

Here's how to make it work for you:

- **Go public.** Let everyone you work with know you are setting aside an hour a day. Informing assistants, customers, and colleagues of your plans will leave them less likely to disturb you.
- **Share the idea.** In my office, everyone gets a quiet hour. That way, we don't interrupt each other, and we all get more done.
- **Be consistent.** Use the same time every day for your quiet hour if you can. It will allow people who work with you to get used to your routine and help reinforce the habit in your mind.

Try this method for a while, and I guarantee you will be surprised at how much you can accomplish in just 60 minutes. Not only will you make headway on your biggest projects, but you will find that by getting the day off to a strong start, you might feel energized to accomplish more in your remaining time.

Constantly distracted workers in busy offices
are able to focus on a task for an average of 11 minutes
before they're interrupted. —a University of California study

All things
are ready,
if our minds
be so.

—William Shakespeare



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