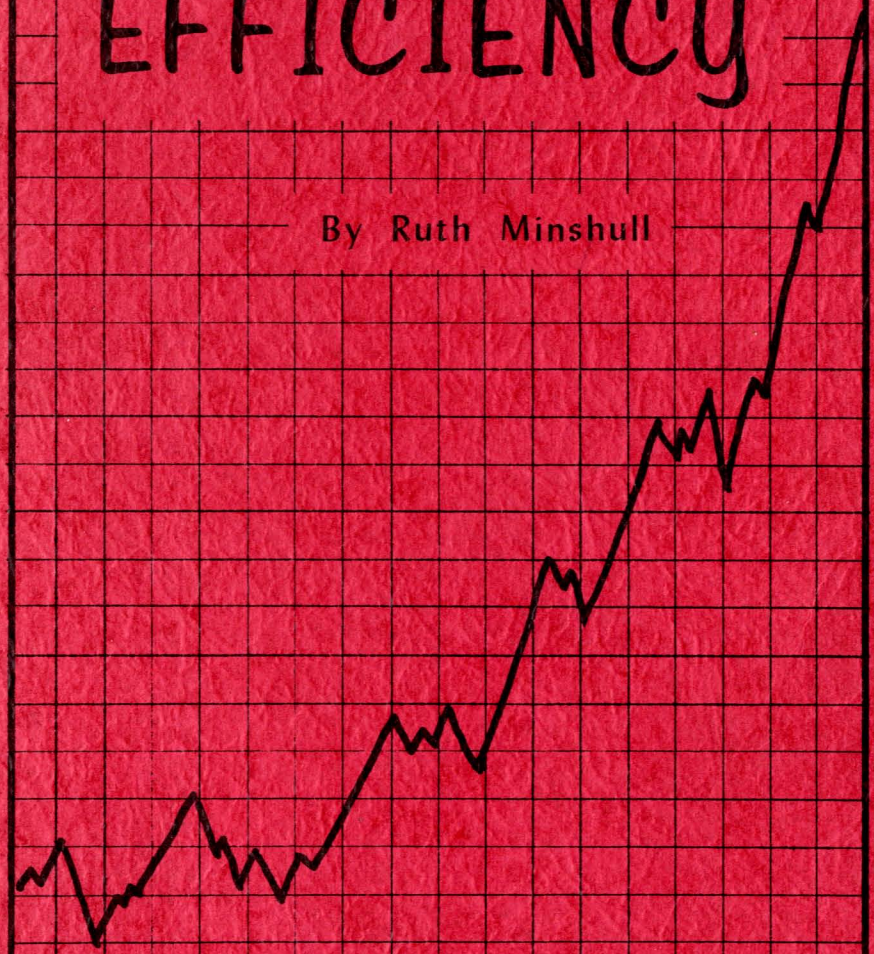


EFFICIENCY

By Ruth Minshull



The Application Series

The Application Series

#1 Efficiency

#2 All the Happiness

#3 Ups and Downs

LET US BE PRACTICAL. A science is not a science unless it is practical. A theory is no good unless it works.

--L. Ron Hubbard
Fundamentals of Thought

EFFICIENCY

By Ruth Minshull

Assisted by
Edward Lefson

SCIENTOLOGY ANN ARBOR
Ann Arbor, Michigan

The material in this booklet is derived entirely from the works of L. Ron Hubbard, Founder of Dianetics and Scientology.

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SCIENTOLOGY is an applied religious philosophy founded and developed by L. Ron Hubbard. It offers highly workable methods by which an individual can assume more positive control of his life and destiny.

> *A civilization without insanity, without criminals and without war, where the able can prosper and honest beings can have rights, and where man is free to rise to greater heights, are the aims of Scientology.*
>
> --L. Ron Hubbard
> *Fundamentals of Thought*

This booklet is one of a series which demonstrates various ways the authors and others have successfully applied a few of the basic principles of Scientology.

IMPORTANT NOTE

In reading this book be very certain you never go past a word you do not fully understand.

The only reason a person gives up a study or becomes confused or unable to learn is that he or she has gone past a word or phrase that was not understood.

If the material becomes confusing or you can't seem to grasp it, there will be a word just earlier that you have not understood. Don't go any further, but go back to BEFORE you got in trouble, find the misunderstood word and get it defined, using any good dictionary.

The phone rang.

It was my friend, Susan, almost inarticulate with excitement, "Ruthie, you're never going to believe this..."

I started laughing as I replied, "Well, try me out anyway."

"I stopped the clock! Really. Remember in class the other night you taught us how to be efficient? Well, today I tried it out, exactly what you told us to do. And do you know what? I cleaned the entire house, scrubbed the kitchen floor. I ironed everything in the clothes basket--that always takes a whole day by itself. I even prepared a casserole for dinner. And when I finished it wasn't even noon yet! Listen, I did at least two days' work in half a day. I've got the rest of the afternoon off and am I going to enjoy myself! I'm so proud I can't see straight!"

Susan kept house better than I (an easily observable fact), but she worked at it all day, every day. Her place sparkled, but she seldom found time for personal enjoyment and outside interests.

When our class met again the following evening, a businessman spoke exhuberantly, "You know that overflowing in-basket I told you about the other night? I was sure I had a good six months' work there. Well, yesterday I cleaned out the entire thing!" Glancing sideways at another student he laughed, "No, I didn't throw it away. I expedited every paper there--all in one day. Just by following the procedure you gave us the other night."

This was the final evening of a three-part course covering some of the basic principles of Scientology. The class consisted of a barber and his wife, a writer, a real estate woman, three college students, a postal worker, several business executives and a few housewives. One by one, each person in the class enthusiastically reported success in accomplishing the homework I had assigned to them.

These people were discovering what L. Ron Hubbard meant when he called Scientology an applied philosophy.

During our second meeting (the one that triggered all this happy action) we had discussed efficiency.

EFFICIENCY

The efficient person accomplishes much in a short time, with a minimum of wasted effort.

This concept is reflected in the dictionary definition of the word:

> Efficient: 1. Having a direct effect; causative. 2a. Acting or producing effectively with a minimum of waste, expense, or unnecessary effort. b. Exhibiting a high ratio of output to input. (Latin efficere, to EFFECT)
>
> --*American Heritage Dictionary*

Defining the word, unfortunately, won't necessarily teach us how to be efficient. Furious activity alone, for instance, doesn't equal efficiency. The office worker stirring up a blizzard of flying paper at his desk may be producing nothing but confetti.

The key to efficiency is CONTROL.

No one becomes efficient without understanding and using control. Whether you are trying to squeeze three days' housework into the half-hour before hubby arrives home with a client, calculate an intricate job estimate for a waiting customer, or type a ten-page report for an impatient board of directors, you must exercise control. Control of your actions, your materials, your equipment, the communication lines related to the job and, above all, control of your own thinking.

Efficient production requires that we be able to command our immediate environment. And if we're shooting for a raise, a promotion or

greater responsibility, we must demonstrate control of an even wider area.

When a person is barely able to control his own small section of the assembly line, he can hardly complain (although he probably will) if he's not promoted to the foreman's job, which involves controlling the equipment and production of many people.

THE CYCLE OF ACTION

To understand control we start with what L. Ron Hubbard calls the "Cycle of Action." Every task we undertake, from milking the cows to flying an airplane, is composed of three distinct parts:

1. Start
2. Change
3. Stop

A real estate agent starts a cycle by first listing a property; he proceeds to show it to potential customers, and concludes the cycle by making the sale.

We start a fire burning, we change it by adding wood or raking the coals, and we stop the fire by extinguishing it.

This combination of start, change and stop is the "Cycle of Action." Every activity in life is such a cycle; some are lengthy and involved, such as running your own business; others may be as brief and uncomplicated as the treatment we give a piece of junk mail.

CONTROL

Control is the ability to start, to change, and to stop.

An expert truck driver starts his truck moving, changes its direction exactly as needed, and precisely stops it. In one pass, he can back that thirty-ton, eighteen-wheel monster into an alley one inch wider than the truck itself.

A concert pianist demonstrates superb control over every key on the piano. He strikes the desired note, holds it and releases it accurately to produce inspired music. He executes thousands of such cycles while playing each composition.

Too often the word control hits us with a negative jolt. We hear the words rent control, wage control, price control, all of which generally mean "stop." Stop the rising rents, wages, or prices. Even traffic control signals are called "stoplights," not "go lights."

The irritated father growls, "Myrtle, can't you control that kid?" and he means, "Can't you stop him?"

But good control comprises much more than stopping.

The person able to start a job, see it through quickly and effortlessly, then complete it--demonstrates good control of his work. He's

not leaving a trail of incomplete Cycles of Action behind him--a sure sign of inefficiency.

> *Control consists entirely of starting, changing and stopping. There are no other factors in positive control. If one can start something, change its position in space or existence in time and stop it, all at will, he can be said to control it, whatever it may be.*
>
> --L. Ron Hubbard
> *The Problems of Work*

START

Exactly when do we start a cycle?

I have posed this question dozens of times, and nearly always received the same response: "You start something when you get the idea of doing it."

It is true that most undertakings are preceded by planning, but when we only "think" about doing something, have we actually started it?

We all know people addicted to castle-building in the sky, but who accomplish nothing. Abercrombie intends to write a blockbuster of a novel. Jarine wants to take up interior decorating. Lucifer envisions an idea for powering a car with old laundry water. But they only talk about it; we see no action.

So when do we really start a Cycle of Action?

To start, we must begin some motion in the physical universe. Though they may precede it, thoughts are not action. Most of us find it easier to dream about our plans than to implement them.

ABILITY TO START

An efficient person starts without difficulty and continues a Cycle of Action with minimal delay.

Those who experience difficulty with starting either never start (the dreamers we just mentioned), or are compulsive starters who begin project after project, never to complete any of them. Their enthusiasm wanes. Their attention flits. Their determinism wavers. They only nibble at each task before leaving it.

CHANGE

While starting is putting something in motion, changing means keeping something in motion. So the word "change" in the Cycle of Action means to carry forward or to continue. If Bilby intends to walk down the street to watch the dog fight, he must start walking and continue walking (changing his position in space) until he arrives. If done briskly and directly, this constitutes efficiency. Should the dogs then turn on him, he would probably return home even more efficiently!

ABILITY TO CHANGE

A person with problems on this part of the cycle may constantly start things, continue them briefly, but let them fizzle out. He's unable to keep things in motion. If Bilby--on his way to that dog fight--slowed down to a stop halfway there, he'd never reach his destination. Nor would he arrive if he turned off in the wrong direction or walked around in circles.

An individual relinquishes control of his cycles when he is easily diverted, slowed down or stopped before he reaches his intended goal.

Percy starts to panel the basement; he lets himself be detoured to repairing the washing machine, and then to planting new shrubs in the yard. The basement is forgotten.

Marybell begins knitting a beautiful afghan for her living room couch, but one day while bulldozing through the living room debris preparing for guests, she moves her knitting bag from its accustomed place beside the TV chair. It now moulders quietly in the back of the coat closet. She tells herself occasionally, "I'll have to finish that afghan sometime."

Then we find the person who compulsively keeps things in motion, who must change things--whether needed or not. He starts out to build a bookcase, then changes his mind and converts it into a cabinet. He paints it green, but before it reaches the den, he decides to remove the paint and varnish it. While the finish is still tacky, he impulsively saws the legs off and... This endangered piece of furniture may never see full daylight.

A compulsive changer buys a table lamp and returns the next day to exchange it for a wall fixture which is taken back two days later for a refund. On the job, he confuses his subordinates with constantly changing instructions, and he alters the orders given to him. Flitting from project to project, from friend to friend, from one job to another, the compulsive changer demonstrates little control of his life and environment.

STOP

Stopping a Cycle of Action simply means finishing the intended motion of that cycle.

Furthermore, it means leaving it finished.

ABILITY TO STOP

A person in good control of his Cycles of Action recognizes when a job is done, and ends off.

Due to impatience or limpness, however, many people halt their own cycles prematurely.

As a high school student, Fred grasped Algebra with no difficulty, but each day, he rushed through his homework. Although he understood the concepts, simple mathematical errors resulted in poor marks. A few minutes more spent on each paper could have earned Fred an A in Algebra instead of a C.

We also see compulsive stoppers, whose game is thwarting the cycles of others, rarely starting or creating anything themselves. They may be obvious and noisy about it. The boss yells, "Stop sending me those crazy ideas of yours. I didn't tell you to do it that way." Angry parents shout, "Stop all that running around."

There are less obvious ways to stop someone: Subtle criticism ("I suppose it's all right--if you like purple"), joking ridicule ("Is that a dress you're making or a canopy for the riding lawn mower? Ha ha. Just kidding, darling"), the apologetic diversion ("I know you're busy, but why don't you leave that report for a while and..."), the pseudo-innocent interruption ("You've just got to come and look at this"), not to mention advice offered for your own good ("You know, hardly any new inventions ever succeed. I'd hate to see you waste all your time").

A stop is still a stop, whether accomplished with a snarl or a smile.

A compulsive stopper in a management position eventually squashes the creative talents

of those beneath him. Saying "no"--his warped version of control--becomes a way of life for him. If not actively criticizing the projects of others, he simply turns down every suggestion, proposal, request, or idea. Uncreative himself, he's playing it safe. By stopping an idea at inception, he figures to save money and minimize his own liability. He presents ample justification, of course, but his negative defense disguises an unimaginative mind. Eventually he destroys morale around him and may curtail the progress and expansion of an entire business.

> *The individual who absolutely has to control everything in sight is upsetting to all of us and this individual is why we have begun to find things wrong with control.*
>
> --L. Ron Hubbard
> *The Problems of Work*

THE MOST COMMON PROBLEMS

Our most common difficulties are: 1) the inability to complete desired actions and 2) the inability to stop undesired action.

An artist, for instance, paints a picture and then returns each day to add a few dabs of paint here, a splash there, a stroke someplace else; he's unable to end the Cycle of Action of that painting.

The person who fails to finish jobs produces a chaotic environment. Joe's lawn mower lies torn apart in the basement while the grass grows six feet high. The attractive den paneling has never been graced by baseboard trim. His fancy rewiring job crossed a few wires and put both the bedroom and the kitchen outlets on the same line; now every time someone plugs in the electric frypan and the refrigerator turns on, a fuse blows and the bedroom clock stops. He changes the fuse, but hasn't yet bothered to sort out the wiring. (Sometimes he's late for work, after forgetting to reset the clock.) Behind the garage sits a decrepit car that looks like a junkyard reject; it just needs a little fixing--when he finds the time.

Hopelessly optimistic, such a person takes on new jobs with gusto. In the office, his desk is piled high with papers, folders, plans, incomplete projects and half-written reports. He may appear desperately busy, but mindless activity is not efficiency.

THE TROUBLE WITH ENDING CYCLES

If you belong to the legion of put-offers who would rather trifle than toil, it might help to know that you're not alone. Our most persistant difficulty is the inability to carry our own cycles to completion.

There's that tantalizing urge to leave some part of the job undone--that last crusty pan

lying in the sink, the tools still left out on the bench, the few remaining papers on the desk, the report that needs only a cover page.

Some people harbor an unconcious consideration that "stop" means death. Others hesitate to complete their cycles for fear they will be exposed as dispensable. Whirling in the bedlam of all their unfinished cycles, they have convinced themselves they lead busy, demanding lives.

Paradoxically, those who never finish cycles frequently cherish visions of great achievement. They intend to start--as soon as they "find the time." They haven't realized that they could make time by properly controlling Cycles of Action.

The most efficient people I've ever known keep a clear desk at the office, a clean and orderly home--and they find abundant time for activities they value.

Conversely, the inveterate muddle-makers appear unduly busy. When you examine their output, however, you'll observe that they produce little. That frantic, overworked soul who insists he could develop his earth-rattling invention if he could only find the time, is kidding not only you, but himself.

OVER-PREPARATION

Perpetual preparation is one way to put off starting. A would-be mountain climber could read a hundred books on the subject and collect enough equipment to conquer Mount Everest, but he's not climbing until he sets one of his bulky boots down on the base of the mountain itself.

Insufficient preparation, of course, can sabotage any project, but too often it is the over-prepared person who remains under-accomplished.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Marybell, whose half-completed afghan now sits in the closet haunting her, may realize one day that she simply doesn't want to spend her time knitting. She'd rather refinish antiques. Here it would be more practical for her to buy an afghan from someone else. In any case, she'd find it tremendously therapeutic to bundle up the beast and sell it at a garage sale or give it to a neighbor.

We can always change our minds.

Consider the unfinished boat gathering dust in Mervin's garage. Donating it to the Salvation Army or offering it to a friend would afford him incredible relief. If he's unwilling to do either of these, he should resume work on that boat today and continue working on it every available minute until its finished.

The person in control of his Cycles of Action has options at each step of the way; He can start something or not; he can continue it or not; he can stop it or not. The important factor is his causativeness. Is he controlling the cycles or do they control him?

> *There could be three things wrong with any person and these would be the inability to start, the inability to change, the inability to stop. Insanity, for the most part, is an inability to stop.*
>
> --L. Ron Hubbard
> *The Fundamentals of Thought*

BECOMING EFFICIENT

Begin by listing all of your incomplete cycles. Next to each item indicate whether or not you intend to finish this project as originally planned.

Now dispose of all the projects you don't plan to complete. Throw them out. Give them away. Sell them. Hire someone else to finish them for you. However, you do it, get them out of your life.

Next, examine the projects remaining on your list. Assign priorities.

Select "Priority 1" and get to work on it. Don't let unimportant distractions stop you. Complete that project. After it's finished, proceed to the next item on your priority list. Dedicate every available moment to completing the current cycle. Don't take on major new projects until your entire list is checked off.

You'll enjoy a buoyant satisfaction as you complete those old cycles.

This is the beginning of efficiency: Make that list; assign priorities; complete those unfinished cycles.

STOLEN ATTENTION

I once postponed filling out a state sales tax form which was routinely due between the first and the fifteenth of the month. For some reason I thought it more difficult than it actually was. I'm not sure what I was waiting for, but there was always the wild chance the world would vanish in a puff of smog, in which case it would be a shame to have wasted all that effort. But life not only continued, it raced callously toward the fifteenth. And the tax form summoned accusingly from the corner of my desk.

Finally, with reluctance, I picked up the form. I decided to time myself.

Astonished (and chagrined) I finished in only ten minutes!

It was a simple chore, but that innocent tax form had stolen hours of my time. I had been unable to devote undivided attention to my other undertakings. Putting off that ten-minute job undoubtedly cost me several hours of efficient production.

If your office desk is cluttered with yesterday's unfinished work, take care of it now. Pick up one piece of paper and expedite it. If it requires a search through the files, make that search. If a phone call is indicated, make the call. If you must inquire about prices before you can dispatch a report, send the inquiry through and place the unfinished report in a pending file. Do whatever is necessary to complete that cycle.

After finishing the cycle on the first paper, pick up the next one. Now give that paper your undivided attention.

I gave this advice to the businessman who complained about an overstuffed in-basket that promised at least six months' work. Furthermore, he had told me, it was growing faster than he could clean it out.

I told him: "Don't worry about everything bulging out of that in-basket. Pick up one piece of paper--any piece--and carry it to its conclusion, doing whatever is necessary. Put all of your attention on that one item. Forget

the dozens more waiting for you. You are completing only this one now. When it's done, take up the next sheet of paper."

To the housewives in the class, I offered similar advice: Suppose there's laundry to be done, groceries to buy and a friend is expected for lunch. You walk into your living room and the place is a mess; you don't know where to start. The tables are covered with half-empty glasses and dirty ashtrays. Children's toys, papers, magazines and books litter the floor. It looks hopeless. You wonder (short of burning the whole house down) what can be done.

Everything, if you know what you're doing.

Pick up something and return it to its appropriate place or restore it to its rightful condition. It doesn't matter where you begin. Take one ashtray, clean it and replace it. Pick up one toy and put it away.

The important point here is to start a Cycle of Action--any Cycle of Action--and carry it through to completion. Engage your mind fully on the one action you're now doing, not on all the things you have yet to do.

PRESENT TIME

Most jobs consist of many small cycles done one after another. The secret of efficiency entails breaking the job into a series of bite-

size Cycles of Action, selecting one cycle and, while doing it, staying in present time.

What does it mean to stay in present time? It means giving your total, undivided thought to the action you are doing this very moment, with no concern for the future or the past. If you want to clean that living room quickly, forget about all the other tasks you must tackle today. Don't think about what happened last night. Put your interest solely on this ashtray and how to complete the cycle on it.

In the office, don't fret about the phone calls you must make, or yesterday's discussion with the boss. Attend to this piece of paper you're holding.

If you find it difficult to keep your full attention on one cycle, do this little exercise: Pick up a pen. Roll it back and forth between your hands. Feel its temperature. Be aware of its hardness. Notice its color. Get a firm grip on it, first with one hand and then with the other. Squeeze the pen as hard as you can, observing the imprint it leaves on your hand. Look at the pen. Study its details. When you are thinking of nothing but that pen--how it feels, how it looks, what impression it is making on your hands--you are in present time.

Now take up the first piece of paper you must expedite, study it, feel of it, be aware of its physical properties, observe its message and

determine the action required. Take that action. Now. As far as you're concerned, there is only this paper to be handled. Let nothing else rob your attention.

This is the formula for fast, powerful production. You can accomplish any cycle quickly and accurately when you submerge your thoughts completely in that action alone.

When you are not in present time--when your attention is elsewhere--you slow down, make mistakes, have to redo the job. Furthermore, this "absentmindedness" is the primary cause of accidents.

> *When we say that somebody should be in present time we mean he should be in communication with his environment. We mean, further, that he should be in communication with his environment as it exists, not as it existed.*
>
> --L. Ron Hubbard
> *Dianetics '55*

BREAK UP A TOUGH JOB

The more difficult and distasteful the job, the more important it becomes to separate it into small, easily-confronted cycles. And, at the successful completion of each cycle, make sure that you take a second or two to mentally congratulate yourself: "That one is over. Done. I did it!"

Whether you are calling on customers or weeding out the turnip patch, don't neglect those acknowledgements to yourself. They help to drain off the fatigue of each step along the way.

THE CYCLE THAT BROKE THE CAMEL'S BACK

An accumulation of too many incomplete cycles is demoralizing. If you started the day with a list of ten jobs, and ran into one frustration after another--the hardware store was closed, the lawyer you needed to see was out of town, you forgot to take along your bank deposit--you may surrender to the end of the day feeling discouraged and debilitated.

Unwarranted exhaustion is nearly always caused by a pile-up of incompleted cycles. Little segments of our aliveness linger at all the failure points. We can cure this fatigue by asking ourselves, "What did I intend to do today, that I didn't do?" Make a note of these incomplete cycles, resolve to do them tomorrow and shift your attention to present time.

If a person chronically takes on more activities than he can complete, he may be headed for a nervous breakdown.

Virginia experienced this in college. She started off her first semester with enthusiasm: she pledged a sorority, won a choice part in a play, and took on a heavy course

load. Before long she felt like a juggler trying to keep four dozen oranges in the air at once, while playing an accordion with her feet. One afternoon she lay on the bed crying helplessly. She thought of the theme due in Freshman English, Algebra problems to finish, a speech to prepare. The sorority expected her at a faculty tea before dinner; her boyfriend was going to call and she was scheduled for rehearsal in the evening. "I can't do all this," she wailed.

Realizing she must preserve her sanity, Virginia drastically trimmed down her schedule. She de-pledged the sorority, dropped one of her classes and cut her dates down to one a week. She experienced immediate relief. There was still plenty to do, but just enough to be stimulating--not overwhelming.

It's a mistake to presume that any cycle, once started, must be continued, regardless of the circumstances. In some cases persistence is noble, but in others, it may be down-right ridiculous. We do hold the option to change plans along the way.

CYCLES WITHIN CYCLES

All of life is involved in a Cycle of Action. The cycle of the physical universe, and everything it contains, involves: 1) create, 2) survive (or persist) and 3) destroy (or decay).

Similarly, the complete cycle of a human being is birth, life, death.

Generally, we don't wish to end these larger cycles. Where our bodies are concerned, for instance, we intend to keep them surviving--in the middle part of the life cycle. To do so, we constantly perform many small cycles to rest and repair the body by attending to adequate diet, sleep, exercise and medical care.

Belongings also need our governing influence in order to survive. A car automatically starts to age--moving toward the decay part of the cycle--as soon as it comes off the assembly line. But we can prolong its life with good care. To keep it surviving well we concern ourselves with the changing part of the cycle, by supplying gasoline, oil, lubrication, routine inspection and maintenance.

We promote survival by watching out for signs of deterioration and correcting (changing) them before they become major problems. A house with peeling paint needs a new finish to preserve it. If neglected, the wood rots and crumbles.

CYCLES WITHIN A BUSINESS

Keeping any business alive requires proper control of the many smaller cycles involved with getting customers, ordering supplies, manufacturing the product, meeting delivery deadlines, collecting money, keeping records,

paying bills, hiring, firing, promoting personnel, research and development.

Every Cycle of Action follows this important principle: WHEN GROWTH STOPS, DECAY BEGINS. When an individual reaches full maturity, he commences the aging process. As soon as a house is built, it starts to deteriorate.

When a business or company is not growing, it will contract. If the product is only mediocre, someone will invent a better one. If it is superb, others will imitate it. No business person should ever assume he has reached a plateau of security.

We must constantly assess and update cycles within the business. Obsolete cycles should be phased out, new cycles started and the most successful current cycles maintained and strengthened. New customers must be reached, new materials and supplies investigated, more efficient production developed, personnel periodically reviewed. Products, record keeping, pricing, equipment--all must be kept in present time.

A person afraid of change resists starting something new, or ending old cycles. His business gradually slips behind. Another person, hung-up on change, may capriciously alter everything. Either one of these aberrations can cost a company considerable money.

The whole idea of constructive change is to keep modifying your operation toward greater profit and lower cost. Locate what is working successfully and strengthen it; isolate the more costly and less profitable aspects of the business and change them.

It is surprising how many otherwise brilliant business people do not fully apply these simple principals.

Mr. Farrell owned a small plastic-manufacturing company. Orders had dwindled for one line of toothbrush holders, but he hesitated to discontinue it. At the same time, since the mold and initial production would be costly, he postponed marketing a promising new line of bicycle baskets. Being conservative by nature, Mr. Farrell tried to hold the status quo. His income, however, declined steadily as costs multiplied.

After learning these fundamentals of efficiency, he dropped the toothbrush holders and hastened manufacture of the new line. His income soon climbed.

SPECIAL TALENTS

People best at starting things are often creative; they should be placed in design, art, or development. They introduce the ideas for new projects, better products, more efficient systems.

Those best at continuing things function most effectively when occupied with maintaining the building, repairing the machinery, keeping employees happy, or preserving good public relations.

There is even a place for those whose main talent lies in stopping. They perform a police function; they are the inspectors of our society. You need them to control the product quality, the ethics, or the expenditures of a company.

Ideally, each employee (and especially the management) would be equally competent at handling all phases of the Cycle of Action.

> *The optimum condition would be for everyone from manager down to janitor to be capable of starting, changing and stopping and to be able to endure being started, changed and stopped. Thus we would have a balanced and relatively unconfused business activity.*
>
> --L. Ron Hubbard
> *The Problems of Work*

Employees proficient at only starting, only changing, or only stopping, require constant supervision. Turned loose, they would shift the emphasis of a business all out of proportion. They would start too many new projects, or keep certain out-dated practices going too long, or stop so many functions and ideas that the business would soon cease running.

HANDLE IT ONCE

Here is an important rule of efficiency: wherever possible, handle each item only once.

Often we sit down at our desks, pick up a letter, and think, "Well, this requires looking up something in the files. I'll do it later." We slide the letter aside and take up a memo. But that first letter pulls a little of our attention away from the memo we now have in hand, which necessitates calling Joe for the price of plastic strips. We set that one aside too, still searching for something we can expedite now. We light on that project for the boss, but now we have two other papers pulling at our attention.

If we continue this putting-off procedure, we end up with a chaotic office and a confused mind, as our hands flutter helplessly over a desktop of unfinished paperwork.

OVERLAPPING CYCLES

Of course, not every cycle can be carried to completion in one handling. Perhaps we are forced to wait for the answer to an inquiry, the results of an experiment or an end-of-the month report. So we must juggle an assortment of long-range projects and shorter-range projects, as well as those that can be disposed of instantly. To maintain efficiency, however, carry each cycle as far as possible in present time; end it for now.

Productive people continually synchronize dozens of cycles. To do this effectively, make good use of lists. Write down all of your current or planned projects. Make separate sheets outlining every step necessary to complete each one. Keep your lists in a pending file and review them periodically to make certain you have taken every possible action. Follow up regularly on people who may be delaying one of your cycles.

Once you carry each cycle as far as possible at the moment, dismiss it from your mind. This leaves you free to become engrossed in the next project. The whole idea is to keep yourself, as well as each project, in present time.

CONTROLLING OTHERS

The primary function of any good executive is to control the cycles of others. Running a household and raising a family also require starting, changing and stopping other people.

The essence of controlling others is permitting them to control their own cycles. The tyrant who insists on blind obedience, who demands that employees be robots, who refuses to delegate authority, is bound to fail. There is no way you can follow someone around and continually dictate his every action; it would be utterly inefficient. Teach each person to do the job you expect of him, make sure he understands it, then turn him loose. He will

make mistakes, but he'll learn. If he is basically competent, you'll be free to put your attention on other matters.

In managing children, don't burden them with several cycles at one time. Don't bawl at your son, "Clean off the table, put away your toys and, for gosh sakes, change that mangy T-shirt." If he has heard too much of this sort of thing, he will mutter incoherently, ignore you completely and walk out of the room. Give him one thing to do at a time. Let him complete that cycle before asking him to do another.

Be sure to acknowledge his completion of each cycle by saying "Thank you," or "You did a good job," This totally ends it--for him and for you. As the child gets older, write out lists of tasks you want him to do and let him complete them on his own.

If you ensure that a youngster carries out his own Cycles of Action well, he won't resent good control. He will be able to follow orders and get things done. He will develop certainty in controlling himself, as well as others.

A person in poor shape resents any effort to control him or induce him to handle his own cycles. His life, his job, his surroundings reflect his incompetence, and his production is close to zero.

MORE ABOUT PRIORITIES

In the Axioms of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard states:

> *Intelligence and judgement are measured by the ability to evaluate relative importances.*

Unfortunately, most of us indulge in a little earnest idiocy occasionally in allowing unimportant details of living to consume our time and attention.

Certain actions, of course, are vital to survival: care of the body, making a living, maintenance of quarters and possessions. But make sure to slice a piece out of each day for the occupations you value. If you need an extra hour daily to practice karate, you may have to forsake Sunny Gumdrop's TV antics and quit rolling your own noodles; but somehow you can make time for anything.

E. M. Forster, the British novelist, proposed this daily schedule for the writer: sleep eight hours, eat two hours, love two hours, and spend one hour a day on church or God. The rest of the time--write.

He didn't mention who was going to take out the garbage; but we can easily see where his priorities lay.

We frequently permit our energies to be wasted on those activities that make the brassiest and most persistent demands; thus we find our days cluttered with mundanities and no time left for the enterprises of deepest interest.

Commencing some favorite pursuit invariably works like a magnet: the phone jangles, the doorbell buzzes, fourth cousins drop in, your secretary breaks a leg, the four-year-old erupts with poison ivy, the plumbing develops a geyser and everything but a herd of antelope charges through the place.

It's easy to succumb to numb indifference and abandon the whole thing.

Don't.

Plan the time, and especially the environment, in which you wish to accomplish an important project. Announce to everyone that you are unavailable between certain hours. I tell my family, "If the house catches fire and if my room's going too, you can interrupt me. Otherwise, I'm unavailable." Ignore the phone, doorbell, voices, noises and any small explosions in the vicinity. Let the world struggle along without you for a while.

PRIORITIES FOR OTHERS

Those under your jurisdiction function more efficiently when they understand the relative importances of the jobs you expect them to do.

Recently I devised the following list of priorities as a guide for my new secretary:

1. Invoice and expedite all orders.
2. Answer any routine correspondence (queries, catalogs, price lists).
3. Transcribe letters, if any.
4. Do any special assigned job.
5. Work on any incomplete mailings.
6. Transcribe manuscript tapes, if any.
7. Make up address plates for new names.
8. Do filing (once a week).
9. Work on any current long-range projects.
10. Work on job description book.

Any request for a non-routine job (make a new file, order supplies, type up a list, call a customer) is placed in her basket with a number attached--usually Priority 4. If I need a special report typed immediately, I assign a higher priority--perhaps Number 2. This means that only the day's orders would take precedence.

She is thus able to start, change and stop her own cycles within the framework of these priorities. By using written instructions and the priority list, unnecessary communication and misunderstandings are avoided. We seldom interrupt each other's cycles.

You can devise similar lists for your children, a club or committee member, your cleaning person, or any employee.

All families, offices or groups function more smoothly when agreed-upon priorities are used as guidelines.

SUMMARY

These are the aberrations that cause inefficiency by preventing us from completing Cycles of Action:

Can't start
Compulsive starting

Can't change (or continue)
Compulsive changing

Can't stop or complete cycles
Compulsive stopping

Check yourself. Do you start too many projects that you never complete? Do you put off starting jobs?

How about changes? Do you perpetually change things, so that projects never reach completion? Are you continually abandoning jobs? Do you keep your body healthy, your car operating dependably, your home, clothes, furniture and belongings in good repair?

How about completing things? Do you prematurely terminate your own projects or those of others? Are you able to cease non-optimum habits and practices?

Neurosis and psychosis of all classes are entirely inabilities to start, to change or to stop.

--L. Ron Hubbard
The Fundamentals of Thought

Don't be neurotic. Be efficient!

If you find your job or your environment overly confused, clean up all your old, unfinished cycles, devoting full attention to each current project. Select one Cycle of Action and complete it. Then take another. As you do this, the confusion disappears. Empty out that in-basket, attack that cluttered desk, purge that chaotic basement, wade through that bulging closet.

While you're slugging your way through the mess, don't ignore what may be mankind's biggest (if unheralded) breakthrough--the waste basket. If you know down deep in your free-wheeling heart that you'll never finish that course in Making Your Own Paper-Mache Coat Hangers, toss it out.

Don't rush--you'll fall all over yourself. If, however, you handle each action in present time, you automatically develop speed and you'll accomplish ten times more than the frenzied soul who's jumping around like a cat chasing a tireless butterfly. Inefficiency, accidents, equipment breakdowns and faulty

products all result from our failure to control the Cycle of Action in present time.

Disorder robs our attention and destroys our space. It's hard to get things done; we find ourselves wanting to leave. So if your office looks as if it should be condemned, begin by restoring order. The efficient person lives and works in clean, uncluttered surroundings.

Once you've established order and disposed of that nagging collection of unfinished cycles, go treasure-hunting through your neglected dreams and dig out those ideas that promise rich rewards.

You do have time for them now.

RECOMMENDED READING

Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health
by L. Ron Hubbard

Scientology: A New Slant on Life
by L. Ron Hubbard

The Problems of Work
by L. Ron Hubbard

Scientology: The Fundamentals of Thought
by L. Ron Hubbard

How to Choose Your People
by Ruth Minshull

Miracles for Breakfast (A Startling New Approach to Raising Children)
by Ruth Minshull

When in Doubt, Communicate... Quotations from the works of L. Ron Hubbard

Books may be purchased by mail.
Write for free catalog:

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