

Your Personal GPS

By David B. Burns

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Sunday drives are nice. You get in your car, drive around (with no particular destination), enjoy the scenery, maybe get something to eat, and eventually go back home. You've spent your time, burned up your gas, and enjoyed a relaxing day. That's great for Sunday drives. It's not great for your work or your life.

Vaguely-defined goals - or no goals at all - give you the personal equivalent of the Sunday drive. You spend lots of time, burn up lots of energy, and get to the end of your day(s) only to realize you didn't accomplish much of anything. You were busy, but you were busy going nowhere special. To get somewhere special, you need clearly-defined goals.

Since I'm at the point in my life where I've already spent more time than I have left, it's increasingly important to have clear goals. Goals focus the time and energy I have remaining. They act as a personal GPS.

One way to set clear goals and start working to reach them is to ask yourself three questions:

- 1. Who am I?**
- 2. What do I want?**
- 3. How am I going to get it?**

Who am I?

To answer this one, simply start asking more questions. There is no magic number here, but your questions should include: What motivates me? What excites me? What are my greatest interests? What are my passions? What makes me jump out of bed in the morning? Your goals must match your interests. Even lofty goals, if they don't align with who you are, will soon become tiresome and your will to achieve them will end. Your answers to the who-am-I questions lead to the second of the three questions.

What do I want?

This seems like an easy question to answer and, initially, it is. The problem is that most people want too much. Wanting everything often gets you nothing. Your time and energy is too scattered to be effective. To be effective, you need to sort the gold nuggets of your wants from the gravel.

First, make a list of everything you “want.” Next, read through the list and imagine that you could only accomplish two or three of the items. Which ones would they be? They are your highest priorities. Finally, put the remaining items in a file to accomplish later, but only after the most important ones are complete. Now that you know what you want, you need a plan to make it happen.

How Am I Going to Get It?

To create your plan, analyze your goal and list every single action you must take to reach it. Once you’re listed every task, put those tasks in a logical sequence. Make sure the tasks that are dependent on other tasks are listed following the prerequisite. For instance, you have to enter the data before you can print the report.

Now start at the beginning of your sequence and get to work. Take the first step, take the second step and continue to completion. Congratulations, you have arrived. Now set your personal GPS for the next destination and go.

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