

Personal Productivity Template

A template I have used as a professor in mentoring hundreds of students working towards their advanced degrees and their professional advancement is presented below. Even without an advanced degree, some of these concepts may well be helpful as I know many successful people without a degree or advanced degree making well above minimum wage who have followed some of these concepts.

- Start with a **personal vision**. What do you want to do in life? What is important to you? Where do you want to live? What are you prepared to do? Where do you see yourself in 3 years, 5 years, 10 years?
- What are your **values**? Education? Free time? Travel? Teaching? Creating?
- What are your **strengths**? Are you good at math, robotics, working with people, or like to sell things? Or are you more mechanical and like to work on cars, or other mechanical things? Or are you more creative? Do you want to start your own business?
- What are your **weaknesses**? What do you not like to do?
- What **threats** do you see in your near to mid-term future? What can you do to avoid them or reduce them?
- What **opportunities** do you see in your near to mid-term future? Can you leverage your strengths to exploit these opportunities?
- Set some **goals**, maybe 3 or 4, SMART goals. Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bounded. For example, I will complete an Associate Degree in health care over the next 3 years. I will complete my RN studies by 2027. Or, I will complete an internship in automotive maintenance in 12 months.
- Goals should be **rationalized**. For example, the pace of change in our society is accelerating and technology is driving it. If I don't start something now or soon, and complete it, I will be left behind.
- Some **implications** of starting school or an internship will include giving up some free time, investing in yourself, perhaps working longer hours, and so on.
- Continue to **learn** new skills and improve current skills if they are still important. Drop or reduce non-productive activities.
- Key skills** in today's environment include subject matter knowledge, collaboration and teamwork, oral and written communications, research, abstract thinking, and critical thinking. Focus on the first few and add the last few later.
- In round numbers, about 10% of success is **competence**; 30% is **image**; and 60% is **visibility**. Image includes how you look as well as how you dress and are groomed. A positive attitude is important as well. Give and share credit. You have to be seen as someone people want to be around. Visibility is critical. People may want to and be able to help you, but they have to know you exist. Be visible, meet other people, build relationships, and network. Learn to solve problems for people and organizations.

As my friend and colleague Dr. Thomas Sheppard taught us:

The **world** has changed.

The new business environment needs fewer people **trained** to do things repetitively in a specific way, and demands more people who are **educated** to find new ways of doing things.