

Session 3.10 | The Unbelievable Power of Choosing Your Own Priorities

In the last session, we looked at the importance of applied learning. In fact, everything that we do at Guidestone involves applied learning. Tools don't work if they are not applied. And the tools can't apply themselves. They require us to be intentional about applying them to our life, work, and leadership.

So we started by looking at applied learning by looking at the primary reasons why leaders struggle to Apply Learning:

1. Investing in Others - You're already investing so much time into other people that setting aside time to invest in yourself is difficult. And we talked about why investing in yourself first makes the difference.
2. Busyness & Distraction - You and I have very little margin so we live and work every day distracted and overwhelmed with busyness. In the last session we looked at one of the primary reasons why we struggle with busyness and distraction.
 - a. Productivity. We looked at 5 ways to get more done - to be more productive.

In this session, we will look at another reason why leaders struggle with busyness and distraction and the secret for dealing with it.

Take a moment right now to download the Worksheet for this session so you can follow along as we move through.

The second reason leaders struggle with busyness and distraction is...

Priorities. We don't know how to effectively manage priorities. In the last session, we talked about how we think at times that we do understand priorities and we do understand productivity and what we found is that there are simple tips or tricks or steps that many leaders miss. So we want to make sure that you have the foundation for productivity and priorities to help you as you move forward with your development and the development of your team members.

We talked a little bit about priorities in previous sessions, we've talked about schedule and calendar and so we're going to look at a very important truth and a practice which will make all the difference to you.

In the previous Module we shared some great tools and tips with you, but the real issue with time, and schedule, and calendar is that most people have handed off decisions about their priorities to other people. They have given the unbelievable power of setting your own priorities or setting their own priorities over to other people. Let me explain what I mean...

Today, you will make one fundamental decision that will singularly determine the outcome of your day, and in some cases, the outcome of many days in the future.

You made that same decision yesterday and the day before. In fact, you've made this one decision every single day of your career.

At some point during each day you decide if you are going to set your own priorities or if you're going to allow someone else or something else to set them for you.

When priorities are set for you:

1. You struggle to stay motivated.
2. You lack focus because priorities are changed frequently and you don't have control over it.
3. Your life and work feel empty and aimless because you aren't consistently working toward areas and in areas of your passion.
4. You find yourself overcompensating in areas where your skill and your experience are constrained.
5. You experience frustration because priorities that are set for you are at odds with your vision, with your heart, and with your passion.

In short - you become a victim of your environment.

Not long ago, I read an article about 10 things that leaders in a particular industry hate most about their jobs. These leaders listed working 6 to 7 days a week as one of the things that they dislike most about their work.

I was curious and so I began browsing through the comments at the end of the article. I was shocked at some of the things that I read.

Many leaders had commented on the article that although they despise working long days and weekends, that the nature of their work demands it. They HAVE to do it, they said. So they learned to cope with this unfortunate reality.

Some of the comments were things like...

Sometimes, I can get out of the office and go home; but other times, I can't. Some weeks, there's just too much going on.

One spouse commented that:

I can't help but chuckle at the phrase "day off". It's rare for my husband to even have one day off, and it's never the same day from week to week.

Reading through the comments, I realized that it's never occurred to these dear people that they have chosen to place a higher priority on their work and they've chosen to place a higher priority on the pace of work and the structure, the current structure of their work than they have on some of their most important relationships whether it be at home, or family, or friends and in some cases they've placed a higher priority on these things over their own passion and life purpose.

The truth is, very few employers require team members and leaders to work 50, 60, 70 hours a week. And if an employer does require it, no one is forcing you or me to continue working in that environment. We choose to.

Yet, work days get longer. And time for rest and health gets shorter.

Here's the irony - We trick ourselves into thinking that, if we work fewer hours, projects will fall through the cracks, performance will suffer, and we'll lose our job.

If you believe that and you've allowed your schedule to be controlled by others and their demands on you, you have made a choice to allow it. And for you, that may be inexcusable.

Because your life and work matters so much! They matter far too much to be dragged along by chance - by whatever happens today.

When YOU set priorities...

1. You create margin for people - especially those who are most important to you and for yourself.
2. You are better able to manage your own schedule - rather than it managing you.
3. You can focus on pursuing these top priorities in your life and in your work.

The ability to choose your own priorities is empowering. It's energizing. It's enlivening.

Consider these questions –

1. Have you clearly defined your top priorities for your life, for your relationships, for your work?
2. Have you created or used some tool to create a Simple Personal Plan to help you with work-life balance? We show you how to create a simple personal plan and implement it in our Simple Leadership Masterclass. And there's a link on this page where you can see more about the Simple Leadership Masterclass.

3. Have you written out your vision for your career, for your organization, for your role? Have you written out a clear vision for your work? Again, in the Simple Leadership Masterclass we have a complete Module to show you how to create and implement a vision for your work so you have clarity about where you want to go and what that path should look like.
4. Do you have enough margin time - enough time off - to give to these top priorities? Have you worked through the tools in the previous Module and come to the conclusion that you will not be able to create more margin in your current situation? If you've worked through those tools and you still can't find more margin, your present situation may not be sustainable, or you may need some help. So I'd encourage you to shoot us an email. Let us know what you're working through and let us know how we can best help you, and we'll help you work through it.

Making the effort to clarify and establish your priorities will significantly impact your life, work, and leadership. It'll impact your relationships.

Your employer will soon forget about the many hours that you put in, but your family & friends will never forget memory-making moments.

The secret to managing your schedule and managing your calendar is in choosing your own priorities. The secret to overcoming busyness and distraction is in choosing your own priorities. There's incredible power found in choosing your own priorities.

If you haven't already, take just a moment right now to download the Worksheet on this page and complete the action steps for this important session.

Next Session

In the next session, I'm going to share with you the secret to energy and focus for leaders.

In the meantime, remember, you don't have to get it perfect. You just need to take the next step. So take another step today.

I'll see you in the next session.

Fast Action Steps

1. Define your top priorities in life.
2. Define your top priorities in business.