1-Page Book Summary of First Things First

In *First Things First*, Stephen R. Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, presents a time-management approach that focuses on priorities, or “first things.” This approach teaches you to use your time effectively rather than efficiently. Using your time effectively means focusing on what you’re spending your time on, rather than how much time you’re spending.

The Urgency-Importance Matrix
There are two factors that determine how you spend your time: importance and urgency. A task can be either important, urgent, both, or neither.

The “first things” method of time management emphasizes important tasks, rather than those that are merely urgent. All our daily, weekly, and monthly activities fall into one of the following four categories, as seen below:

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<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Not Urgent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quadrant I</td>
<td>Quadrant II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Not Urgent, but Important</td>
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<td>Quadrant III</td>
<td>Quadrant IV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urgent and Important</td>
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Quadrant I is both urgent and important. This quadrant contains emergencies and problems that require your immediate attention. This can include health emergencies, a work deadline, or a broken-down car.

Quadrant II is important, but not urgent. This is where you do prevention, maintenance, long-term planning, relationship building, and personal leadership activities like evaluating your thought patterns and assessing progress toward goals. For the highest quality of life, Quadrant II is where you should spend most of your time.

Quadrant III is urgent, but not important. The urgency of Quadrant III activities can make them appear important, but they don't actually align with your values or contribute to the achievement of your goals. Quadrant-III activities include making phone calls, going to meetings that lack purpose, and receiving unexpected guests.

Quadrant IV is neither urgent nor important. These activities add no value to your life; even recreational activities don't belong here because true recreation is a restorative and valuable Quadrant-II activity. Quadrant IV includes gossiping, mindlessly watching television, or passively scrolling through social media.

Quadrant-III and Quadrant-IV activities add little value to your life. You should limit time spent in these quadrants. Although Quadrant-I activities are inevitable, you should aim to spend most of your time in Quadrant II. This can be difficult, especially if you've spent your life reacting to the urgent business at hand rather than engaging in activities that benefit you in the long run. The first step toward spending more time in Quadrant II is to recognize when urgent tasks are not important and stop wasting your time on them. Eventually, you'll shift to an “importance paradigm,” a mindset in which you automatically focus on spending your time doing the things that are most important to you.

### Shift to an Importance Paradigm

How do you shift to an important paradigm and start spending your time on activities that align with your goals and values?

There are three principles that guide your shift to an importance paradigm.

1. **You must fulfill your four human needs and capabilities:** to live (the physical realm), to love (the social realm), to learn (the mental realm), to leave a legacy (the spiritual realm). Humans get a sense of fulfillment only through satisfying these four fundamental human needs. Activities that help fulfill these needs are Quadrant-II activities.

2. **You must understand “true north” principles:** true north principles include integrity, moderation, self-discipline, loyalty, responsibility, honesty, and patience. These are universal principles that give you direction and context for where you are now and how to reach your destination. Activities that align with true north principles are Quadrant-II activities.

3. **You must understand the four human endowments:** These endowments are self-awareness, conscience, independent will, and creative imagination. Activities that nurture these endowments are Quadrant-II activities.

### Quadrant-II Scheduling

The heart of First Things First is Quadrant-II scheduling. This is a time management system that helps you understand your priorities and spend the majority of your time in Quadrant II, where the most personal and professional growth happens.

**Step 1: Identify Your Long-Term Vision and Personal Mission**

The first, foundational step of this planning process is to identify what’s most important to you, what gives your life meaning, and what do you want to achieve in your life.
One way to clarify these priorities, or “first things,” is through a personal mission statement. This is a written document in which you outline your guiding principles and long-term goals.

As you create a personal mission statement, consider the following questions:

- What are three or four “first things” that are important in your life?
- What are some of your long-term goals?
- What are the most important relationships in your life?
- What kinds of contributions do you want to make to your community, society, or the world?

**Step 2: Identify Your Roles**

Everyone has different roles in life: You are a spouse, son or daughter, brother or sister, father or mother, friend, professional, and individual. Often, people feel dissatisfied when they excel in one or two roles at the expense of other roles.

As you set your personal mission and manage your time to work toward that mission, it's vital that you identify and address each of your roles so that your efforts lead to a balanced life.

Make a list of your roles. You can list them generally (e.g. family member, employee, church member) or more specifically (e.g. spouse, parent, manager, producer, deacon, parishioner). As you make your list, keep in mind that studies show that people are less effective at mentally managing more than seven categories, so try to keep the number of roles to seven or fewer.

**Step 3: Set Quadrant II Goals for Each Role**

Now that you've identified your roles, think of Quadrant II goals for each of those roles. For the time being, limit these goals to things you can do in the next seven days. Rather than addressing urgent needs, these goals should reflect your personal mission and focus on things that would make a significant, long-term difference.

For example, in your role as a parent, you may schedule quality time with your kids. In your role at work, Quadrant II goals can include allotting time for long-term strategizing or building relationships with your customers.

Once you've written down your goals for this week, ask yourself:

- What results do you expect if you achieve all of these goals in the next week?
- How will you feel if you only achieve some of them?
- What kind of difference would you expect to see if you did these things every week?

**Step 4: Schedule Your Quadrant II Goals**

Picture your weekly schedule as a jar, your Quadrant II goals as rocks, and urgent tasks as sand and gravel. If you start by filling your jar with sand and gravel, you won't have room to fit many rocks in after. But if you start by filling it with rocks, you'll be able to fit many more into the jar and still have room to pour in the sand and gravel -- they'll simply find space in the smaller nooks and spaces around the rocks. Similarly, if you schedule the important Quadrant II tasks into your week first, the other urgent matters will fit in around them; but if you first attend to the urgent Quadrant-I and -III activities, you're likely to run out of room for your Quadrant-II goals.

Take the goals you listed in Step 3 and schedule them into your week -- either by assigning a specific time appointment for each goal, or by writing a goal as a top priority for a given day.

Once you've scheduled your Quadrant II goals for this coming week, start adding in the Quadrant I tasks you need to accomplish.

As you're doing this, be sure not to schedule every minute of each day; this method of time management requires you to maintain flexibility in your schedule for unexpected events and opportunities that will inevitably come up.

**Step 5: Tackle Each Day Within the Context of Your Weekly Goals**

As you move through your week, you'll face unexpected changes in your schedule and will need to make decisions in the moment about how to proceed. The Quadrant-II organizing approach and an importance paradigm will help you navigate these decisions, but there are also a few things you can do to help you stay in line with your weekly goals and priorities.

1. Start each morning by reviewing what's on your schedule for that day.
2. As you preview the day, prioritize the tasks you have scheduled. Evaluate which are Quadrant I and Quadrant II activities; this can also help you recognize if a Quadrant III activity has made it into your schedule.
3. Go through your day's activities and do “T planning,” indicating which of the day's activities are time-sensitive and which aren't.

Step 6: Review and Learn From Your Week

At the end of the week -- before you start to make next week's schedule -- stop and consider how the week went. Did you achieve your goals? Did you face challenges? How did you handle spur-of-the-moment decisions? Did you successfully keep first things first?

Furthermore, at the end of each month or quarter, reflect on patterns to the weeks that have passed. What patterns of success or failure do you have in setting and achieving your goals? Are your expectations realistic?

Finding Win-Win Solutions

The time-management approach outlined above can also help you set goals and create management systems as a team. However, developing a vision and establishing priorities for a group has unique challenges. This is, in part, because most people...

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Read Full Summary of First Things First

Here's a preview of the rest of Shortform's First Things First summary:

First Things First Summary Part 1 | Chapter 1: Be Effective, Not Efficient

Do you feel like there just aren't enough hours in the day? That no matter how furiously you work, you can never get ahead of all the demands on your time? That you're constantly checking things off your to-do list but still don't have enough time for the important things, like friends, family, and self-care? Your problem might be that you're working efficiently, but not effectively.

Most time management approaches focus on being efficient -- getting as much done as quickly as possible. But if you don't stop and evaluate the tasks on your to-do list, you could be wasting your time doing things that don't benefit you or your long-term goals. Using your time effectively means focusing on what you're spending your time on, rather than how much time you're spending.

This is the difference between the clock and the compass: The clock measures the amount of time that passes, but the compass guides you toward your ultimate destination. When you have a gap between the clock and your compass -- between what's important to you and how you're spending your time -- it creates tension, anxiety, and dissatisfaction in your life.

To align the clock and your compass and really take control of your time and your life, the first thing you need is a solid grasp of the goals and values that are most important to you. Secondly, you need the tools to help you manage each day to keep you moving toward those goals, even amid all the demands and responsibilities that others place on you.

The Evolution of Time Management

As culture has changed and life has gotten more hectic for everyone, there's been an explosion of time management tools and literature. Most of the time management approaches can be broken down into three generations, each one building on the previous one and improving efficiency, but each with its critical flaws. We'll discuss the three generations now, before discussing how this book offers a fourth generation that places the emphasis on using your time effectively.

First Generation: Sticky Notes and Checklists
Shortform Exercise: Understand Your Management Tools

Use these questions to determine which “generation” of management tools you currently use and which paradigms may be holding you back from living an effective, rather than an efficient, life. After you’ve identified the issues, later exercises will help you find solutions.

What tools do you use to manage your time? (Perhaps you check off items on a daily to-do list, write in a planner, or use an app on your phone.) List the two or three tools you use the most.

First Things First Summary Chapter 2: Understand the Urgency-Importance Matrix

There are two factors that determine how you spend your time: importance and urgency. A task can be either important, urgent, both, or neither.

The fourth generation of time management emphasizes important tasks, which ultimately move you closer to your goals and values. But we’re often distracted by urgent tasks -- things as trivial as a ringing phone or as critical as a health emergency.

Urgency vs. Importance

Imagine a square divided into four quadrants: One axis measures whether something is urgent or not, and the other axis measures whether it is important or not.

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<tr>
<th>Quadrant</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>I</td>
<td>Urgent and Important</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>Not Urgent, but Important</td>
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<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Urgent but Not Important</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Neither Urgent nor Important</td>
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Quadrant I

Quadrant I is both urgent and important. This quadrant contains emergencies and problems that require your immediate attention. This can include health emergencies, a work deadline, or a broken-down car.

You can’t ignore Quadrant-I needs because they are important, and life inevitably includes urgent matters, but you can prevent some things from becoming urgent if you attend to important tasks that include prevention and maintenance.

For example, if you’re driving down the highway and your car runs out of gas and stops, you’re in an urgent situation; you can’t get anywhere until you get some gas in the tank. But if you had filled up the tank sooner -- when it was important but not yet urgent -- you could’ve avoided this situation.

The same goes for other areas of life, including personal care. Exercise is important but not urgent. However, if you neglect doing it for too long, you can develop urgent health problems. Mental and emotional self-care, such as journaling and meditation,...
Shortform Exercise: Identify Your Primary Quadrants

Use these questions to identify where you spend the most time: Quadrant I (urgent and important), Quadrant II (important but not urgent), Quadrant III (urgent but not important), or Quadrant IV (neither urgent nor important).

Think about how you spend your time. Which quadrants do you occupy most?

First Things First Summary Chapter 3: Shift to an Importance Paradigm

We've discussed why it's critical to place importance over urgency and use your time in a way that aligns with your goals and values. But how do you do that?

There are three aspects you need to understand in order to effectively shift to an importance paradigm.

1. You must fulfill your four human needs and capabilities.
2. You must understand “true north” principles.
3. You must understand the four human endowments and how to use them to create new paradigms.

Let's explore each of these in depth.

Fulfilling Your Four Human Needs

The first step of shifting to an “importance paradigm” is fulfilling your four human needs.

There is a difference between living day-to-day and feeling fulfilled. Humans get a sense of fulfillment only through satisfying four fundamental human needs: “to live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy.”

The need to live involves your physical needs for survival, including food, shelter, clothing, good health, and money.

The need to love pertains to humans' need to be social and have relationships with other people in which they can love, be loved, and feel they belong.

The need to learn is your need to continuously nourish and develop your mind.

The need to leave a legacy pertains to a more spiritual desire to live a life of purpose and meaning, in which you feel you're contributing to society.

Neglecting any of these needs can create or feed urgency addiction -- if you don't pre-emptively address them in Quadrant II, they fester to become emergencies in Quadrant I.

Take Care of Your Four Needs in a Balanced Way

The four needs are interrelated -- whether each is satisfied affects the fulfillment of the others. If any of these needs are unmet, that lack can easily hamper your ability to meet the other three needs; all four needs must be taken care of collectively to maintain quality of life.

However, people often tend to compartmentalize these four areas of need and address them with a “touching bases” paradigm. This paradigm ignores the needs' interrelatedness and defines balance by...
Shortform Exercise: Identify Your Growth Areas

Examine your human endowments and identify which ones could use your attention.

Of the four human endowments (self-awareness, conscience, independent will, and creative imagination), which do you feel are strong? Which do you feel need to be strengthened or used more often?

First Things First Summary Part 2 | Chapter 4: Start Quadrant II
Scheduling

Now that you have an understanding of the importance paradigm and what you need for a high quality of life, let's put it into practice with the Quadrant II organizing process. The Quadrant II organizing process is a 30-minute weekly process to organize your time based on principles, needs, and endowments in order to create quality of life.

The Quadrant II organizing process will:

- Address your urgency addiction by helping you to prioritize important activities rather than react to urgent needs.
- Provide a framework for managing your time in a way that keeps your focus on consistently taking care of your human needs and acting on principle.
- Teach you how to translate your mission statement into your day-to-day activities and decisions.
- Allow enough flexibility for unexpected events and opportunities.

This process takes a weekly planning approach because a week provides more context than a single day. Daily planning keeps your view so limited that it only allows you to see what's right in front of you, which can feed into an urgency paradigm, rather than allowing you to plan for what's important.

(Shortform note: The book provides a weekly worksheet that includes space to carry out each of the following steps, but you can use any planner, digital scheduler, or simply a piece of paper to use the Quadrant II organizing process.)

Step 1: Identify Your Long-Term Vision and Personal Mission

The first, foundational step of this planning process is to identify what's most important to you, what gives your life meaning, and what you want to achieve in your life; this creates the context through which you'll set and pursue your goals.

One way to clarify these priorities, or “first things,” is through a personal mission statement. This is a written document in which you outline your guiding principles and long-term goals. A personal mission statement reinforces your priorities and reminds you of them through the changing circumstances and demands of everyday life.

In Chapter 5, we'll go into more depth about how to create a personal...

First Things First Summary Chapter 5: Create Your Personal Mission Statement

Your vision of your life and future is the most powerful tool you have in realizing that life. Your creative imagination allows you to create a vision of the life you want or expect, and that vision has an incredible influence on your behaviors, affecting the
choices you make each day and the way you manage your time.

If you have a short-term vision -- if you only think a few days or weeks into the future and haven't given much thought to how you want your life to play out in the long term -- then you'll simply react to what's in front of you. Your actions and decisions will be based on urgency or your current mood or other people's suggestions.

If your vision isn't grounded in reality, your choices won't reflect an understanding of true north principles and the consequences they bring. This will cause you to make ill-informed decisions (because they're based on illusion and not reality) that don't create the results you want or expect.

If your vision is limited to only one area of life (e.g. focusing on financial and social needs while ignoring mental and spiritual development) your actions and choices will create an imbalanced life.

If your vision is based on the social mirror -- what society and the people around you say is important or possible -- then your choices will be based on other people's values and expectations. In the process, you'll lose your connection with your inner self and fail to recognize and appreciate your individuality and unique abilities.

The Passion of Vision

When you have a vision that is based in principles, addresses your human needs, uses your human endowments, and envelopes all roles and aspects of your life, it sparks a passion inside you that is a powerful motivating force.

For example, Gandhi was naturally timid, fearful, insecure, and isolated. He didn't enjoy his work as a lawyer until he found satisfaction and purpose in helping people with opposing views reach win-win solutions. Inspired by this realization and the injustices he saw against the Indian people, Gandhi developed a vision to create an...
Most people's biggest source of dissatisfaction and unhappiness in life is the imbalance they feel between their different roles and responsibilities. Many people feel their work demands so much of them that there aren't enough hours in the day to give adequate time, energy, and attention to their family. Or they're just barely keeping up with family and work, but have no personal time for their own rest and rejuvenation, so they feel burnt out.

This feeling of being constantly pulled in different directions stems from the paradigm that balance is about either/or: You either devote the next hour to work or to family, but not to both. The either/or paradigm is largely part of Western culture and contributes to a scarcity, win/lose “chronos” mentality that there is only limited time and time spent in one role is always at the expense of another.

But in reality, the person who goes to work and brainstorms in meetings is the same person who cooks dinner at home and helps the kids with homework. Furthermore, all your roles are part of your interrelated whole person, so who you are in each role impacts who you are in all your other roles.

To find balance among your roles in life, you have to stop thinking “either/or” and start thinking “and.” Don’t compartmentalize your roles and the time you devote to each of them, but find an equilibrium where you can address multiple needs at once.

How to Create Balance Among Your Roles

It's one thing to understand that your roles are interrelated, but it's another to put that into practice in your time management approach. How do you combine your time when you need to create a presentation for work and also help your daughter with her science project?

Start by stepping back and taking a bigger-picture view of your roles and the skills you bring to each. Of course, there are certain job-specific skills that you need for work, like how to use a computer program or follow your company's workflow. But there are also more general competencies and principles that translate to multiple roles.

For example, the...

First Things First Summary Chapter 7: Setting Goals

Goals are a key part of self-improvement and time management methods. However, goals can be counterproductive if you don't set them or execute them carefully and conscientiously.

There are two major ways in which goals can end up working against you.

1. Your sense of integrity and courage take a hit when you fail to achieve a goal.
2. Sometimes, even when you do achieve your goal, the outcome is unexpectedly negative.

Falling Short of Your Goal Hurts Your Integrity

Your personal integrity is the trust you have in yourself to do the things you say you're going to do. Everyone has a Personal Integrity Account, which is a running balance of how much trust you have in yourself to keep commitments.

When you successfully make and keep a commitment, you make a deposit into that account. More deposits lead to a higher balance, which provides a sense of strength, security, and stability.

But when you don't achieve a goal or keep a commitment, you make a withdrawal from your account, which can be a painful blow to your confidence. Frequent withdrawals deplete your trust in yourself and others' trust in you, making it harder to have the confidence and courage to set and achieve goals in the future, which ultimately continues the cycle of low personal integrity and low confidence. If you get into this cycle, when you do face a challenge in your life, you may not have the strength of character to face and overcome it.

Strengthening your character is like strengthening your muscles: It takes time and consistent exercise. And if you don't have it, it's impossible to fake it (e.g. you can't fake your way through lifting a weight that's too heavy for you).
The Reasons We Don't Reach Our Goals

Have you ever made a New Year's resolution that fell flat by February? Or felt a moment of inspiration and set an ambitious goal that you just couldn't reach?

Sometimes, you fail to reach your goals because they're unrealistic. Whether they're professional goals, weight loss goals, or personal goals, they must be realistic and achievable. Otherwise, you're...

First Things First Summary Chapter 8: Develop a Weekly Plan

A key aspect of effectively setting goals and managing your time is choosing the right time frame for your planning.

Planning within the framework of a week is a balanced compromise between daily and long-term planning. It connects a bigger-picture perspective with day-to-day actionables. Let's look at some of its benefits.

A Weekly Framework is Ideal for Balanced Renewal

A week encompasses a natural balance of life: It includes work or school days, evenings, and weekends. This lens is broad enough to incorporate self-renewal on a weekly and daily basis.

Weekly Self-Renewal

As you're doing your weekly planning through the Quadrant II organizing process, you can proactively schedule in rest and renewal time that is genuinely rejuvenating.

Many people fall into the trap of getting so burnt out that they escape to Quadrant IV activities (which are neither urgent nor important) to rest, but the effect is the same as munching on potato chips when you're hungry -- it only temporarily satiates you and doesn't truly satisfy your need. True rest and renewal is a Quadrant II activity because it is important and necessary for your well-being.

Quadrant II renewal activities include:

- Investing quality time in your important relationships with family and friends.
- Participating in religious activities, which keep you connected with your values.
- Renewing your energy through rest and recreational activities.
- Giving an outlet to your talents through devoting time to your interests and hobbies.
- Performing community service.

Even the weekly planning session included in the Quadrant II organizing process is an act of renewal in itself. This dedicated time gives you the opportunity to refresh your awareness of your basic needs and principles, reconnect with your four human endowments, recommit to your vision and goals, and maintain balance among your roles.

Daily Self-Renewal

When you're looking at the scope of a week, you can plan time for daily renewal in a way that's balanced and maximizes the benefits in your life....

First Things First Summary Chapter 9: Stay True to Your Mission in Each Moment

No matter how carefully and thoughtfully you plan your week during your weekly organizing session, or review your plans and priorities for the day each morning, unexpected events and demands are bound to come up -- that's life.
The Quadrant II organizing process is not simply about making your weekly plan and sticking to it no matter what; it's meant to empower you to navigate those unexpected events along the way. Quadrant II organizing keeps you closely connected with your mission, endowments, and principles to empower you to live with integrity when you encounter these moments of choice.

You constantly face moments of choice, big and small, and in those situations, there are many factors that can weigh on your decision.

- Urgency
- The social mirror
- Your expectations
- Others' expectations
- Your deep values, which reflect what's important to you in the long term
- Your operational values, which reflect what you want in the short term
- Your conditioning
- Your self-awareness

It's easy to blame other people or external circumstances for what happens in your life, but you always have control over how you'll respond: You can make your choice based on conscience and self-awareness or you can make your choice according to urgency and others' expectations.

Every small choice you make contributes to the quality of your life. Over time all those small decisions create a momentum that turns into "habits of the heart," habits that become deeply ingrained. Those habits are the biggest factor in determining your experiences and quality of life.

Make Principle-Centered Choices

To live a principle-centered life, you must commit to listen to and act on what your conscience dictates. Your conscience will always point you toward true north principles, which ensure the greatest quality of life.

But how do you know if the voice you're hearing is your conscience or the influence of something else, like your scripting (the stories you tell to and about yourself) or the social mirror?

Think for a moment about a relationship in...

First Things First Summary Chapter 10: Learn From Your Experiences

The last -- and first -- step in the Quadrant II weekly organizing process is to evaluate your experiences from the past week to inform your choices for the coming week. The value of each week is not just what we accomplish during it, but what we learn from it and how we apply that to the weeks that follow. This creates an upward spiral of growth.

Through a continuing cycle of organizing, acting, and evaluating, you increase your self-awareness, strengthen your connection with your conscience, and increase your capacity to implement constructive habits and act effectively.

Strategies for Evaluating Your Week

Using a personal journal or making notes on the back of each week's schedule may be helpful in your weekly evaluation practice. Some people find it useful to create a list of five or six questions to ask yourself before you begin planning for the following week.

Your questions might include some of the following:

- What goals did I achieve?
- What pushed and empowered me to achieve these goals?
What challenges did I face?

How did I overcome these challenges?

Did I make the best use of my time by accomplishing these goals?

Did my commitment to accomplishing these goals steer me away from opportunities that could've been a better way to spend my time?

Did reaching these goals add to my Personal Integrity Account?

Which goals did I fail to achieve?

What prevented me from reaching these goals?

Did I make better use of my time by not accomplishing these goals?

Did these choices add to or withdraw from my Personal Integrity Account?

Which unmet goals should carry over into the coming week?

Did I dedicate time for renewal, reflection, and recommitting to my mission?

Did I dedicate time each day to sharpening the saw?

How did my renewal impact other areas of my life?

How did I create synergy among my roles and goals?

How did benefits and strengths in one role strengthen my performance in other roles?

Which true north principles did I use this week? What was the...

First Things First Summary Part 3 | Chapter 11: Creating Synergy Through Interdependence

Beyond the tools and strategies already discussed in the Quadrant II organizing process, one of the most powerful ways you can make the most effective use of your time is through creating synergy with other people. Your relationships with other people have a huge influence on how you spend your time and the quality of life you create.

Consider these questions:

How much time and energy do you spend dealing with Quadrant I problems that became urgent because of miscommunication or misunderstanding with someone else?

How much time and energy do you spend on Quadrant III tasks because they're important to other people and you confuse that with being important to you?

How much time and energy gets wasted in your family or company because of people miscommunicating, misunderstanding each other, or blaming and accusing each other?

How much more time effectiveness and quality of life could you and the people around you enjoy if you were all able to work together to capitalize on everyone's unique talents and creativity?

Traditional time management techniques are based on a management and control paradigm that causes you to see other people in a transactional way: They're either tools for delegation or interruptions to your schedule. But this view ignores the potential of creating synergy with others in order to achieve both your and their goals more effectively.

The fourth-generation approach to time management takes a transformational view of interdependence, applying the skills you've practiced to create synergy among your roles and goals to your interactions with the people around you.

Your First Things, Roles, and Human Needs are Inherently Interdependent

With very few and extreme exceptions, everyone's life is interdependent by nature. That extends to the personal priorities, roles, and human needs you identified in the Quadrant II organizing process.
Think of your first things, the most important things in your life. Most of them relate, in some way, to other people: Your goal of
good health and financial security likely connects...

First Things First Summary Chapter 12: Finding Win-Win Solutions

Society teaches us to have a "win-lose" mindset -- if you win, someone else must lose. But to reach your goals in an interdependent
world, you need to change how you think about winning. Winning doesn't mean someone else loses; winning means
accomplishing your goals, and you can accomplish more if you cooperate rather than compete.

How to Create a Win-Win Solution

There are three steps to the win-win process:

1. Approach the problem with a "win-win" attitude: This first step is to adopt the appropriate mindset. To create wins for
everybody, you need to first acknowledge that individual success at the expense of the group isn't true success.

2. Listen first, then speak: The second step involves listening and seeking to understand the other person's point of view. Don't
speak until you understand all the sides of the issue, and until others in the group are satisfied that you understand.

3. Synergize: The last step is to create a list of alternatives that are better than the solutions that any individual could come up
with herself.

What if We Can’t Come to An Agreement?

Sometimes the three steps are difficult to execute when you disagree with others. Here's how to troubleshoot each step:

1. Approach the problem with a "win-win" attitude: Think of your differences as an asset. You'll end up with a creative solution
that none of you could have come up with on your own. Go into the discussion with an open mind and commit to keep the
discussion going until you have a solution that everyone's happy with.

For example, say you're a sales representative. The manufacturing facility you work with has been late delivering its shipments,
causing you to make late deliveries to clients. Your clients aren't happy. You go to talk to the manager of the facility to work out the
problem and he tells you he's been swamped and you're lucky to get your shipments at all. Rather than get upset, you realize that
this man is doing his best. You want him to win. You want your clients to win. And you want to win yourself. You seek a solution
that works...

First Things First Summary Chapter 13: Empowering Yourself and Others

In most organizations, employees aren't empowered to make their own decisions and aren't given the freedom to take initiative on
their own projects. This is bad for the job satisfaction and professional growth of the individual and also bad for the company.

If you're an employee in a "low-trust" organization that micromanages your work life, you may think there's nothing you can do. But
everyone has a "Circle of Influence," as discussed in Chapter 7. If you think the problem can't be helped, that thought is the
actual problem. Even if you're not the leader of your group, you can still be a leader and empower yourself by focusing on your
Circle of Influence rather than blaming others.

Whether you're "the leader" or "a leader," there are three things you can do to empower yourself and others.

1. Create Empowering Environments

There are four conditions of an empowering environment: trustworthiness, self-motivated team members, systems aligned with
goals, and accountability.
Allowing individuals to tap into these endowments makes them feel empowered, improving the company's culture and the quality of its output. Each of the four conditions falls into your Circle of Influence, to varying degrees.

**Condition #1: Trustworthiness**

Members of a group need to be trustworthy for everyone to feel empowered. A person's trustworthiness is created by combining her competence and character. A person's character includes the ability to face problems in a direct but compassionate way, the ability to see a number of different alternative solutions to a problem, and the ability to live an integrated life in which public, family, and private lives are aligned with principles.

A person's competence includes not only job-specific knowledge and skills, but the ability to see the big picture, alternate between different viewpoints, and work well with others.

Both are equally important -- a person may be honest and kind, but if she's not competent, you can't trust her; conversely, a person may be skilled and knowledgeable, but if she's not honest, you also...

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**First Things First Summary Chapter 14: Finding Peace with the First Things First Strategy**

When you base your priorities on true north principles and put first things first, you find four different kinds of peace:

1. The peace that comes from fulfilling your four human needs: living, love, learning, and leaving a legacy.
2. The peace that comes from developing your four human endowments: self-awareness, conscience, independent will, and imagination.
3. The peace that comes from cooperating with others instead of competing.
4. The peace that comes from living according to your conscience.

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**Obstacles to Peace**

There are several roadblocks to peace to be aware of: unrealistic expectations, lack of courage, and pride.

**Unrealistic Expectations**

Unmet expectations are one of the greatest sources of frustration in day-to-day life. When you have the expectation that you'll check every task off your to-do list, that you won't run into difficulties, or that everyone will agree with your ideas, unexpected issues or interruptions cause frustration. You see the people around you as problems. Conversely, when you see your daily plan as a roadmap rather than a checklist, you see problems as opportunities to create better systems and empower others.

If you want to find peace, you need to mitigate frustration by changing your expectations. If you work with others toward a shared vision and live a principle-centered life, your expectations will become more realistic. You can also examine particular frustrations to identify the unrealistic expectations at their source.

**Lack of Courage**

When you lack courage, you keep doing things the way you've always done them, basing decisions on society's priorities rather than your own, or not basing decisions on priorities at all. On the other hand, courage allows you to listen to your conscience and make decisions based on your principles.

You can develop courage by achieving your goals, no matter how small. For instance, your goal could be to get out of bed the first time the alarm goes off. Each time you set a goal and meet it, or keep a promise, you build your confidence....
Reflect on the lessons of *First Things First* and how you’ll implement them in your life.

What elements of the *First Things First* approach do you find most useful? The guidelines for Quadrant-II scheduling? The steps for creating win-win stewardship agreements?

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