

Eight Steps to Distinguished Results

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The Buddhist doctrine espouses eight steps to attaining enlightenment. This is called the 'Eightfold Path.' I have discovered eight steps that are not quite so spiritual but that are extremely practical in giving Toastmaster Leaders a path to follow to achieve their short term enlightenment - Distinguished District! Here they are with the hope that you apply them on your journey of success.

Step 1: KNOW YOUR GOALS

Know exactly what you want to achieve. If you don't know, find out what's needed to excel in your position. Do you know the specific numbers for your District's critical success factors? Do you know exactly how your team members want to be treated? Don't forget this fifth factor in the 'High Five'! As the Cheshire cat said to Alice in Wonderland, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there!" Know exactly where you want to go.

Step 2: WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS

Write down exactly what you want to achieve. I don't know why this works, but it is a vital step. Write down the critical success factor numbers you want to hit by the end of June. Also write down a description of the quality of the relationship you want to have with each of your team members. I believe this writing step so much that I carry a little card in my wallet in which I have written my personal mission statement.

Step 3: COMMIT TO YOUR GOALS

Everyday, look at your written statement and commit to your goals. Let your commitment sink in to the deepest recesses of your mind. Visualize success. Bring as many of your senses in to play as possible in this process. For example, in your imagination, see, hear and feel the success you desire. Delete the word "try" from the vocabulary of your mind. Instead, just 'know' that you will attain your goals.

Step 4: KNOW WHERE YOU ARE

Analyze the results you have obtained at present. Determine how far you have to go to reach your goals. Ask yourself what the obstacles are to reaching those goals. Sometimes we have imaginary obstacles. Get serious here; strip away rationalizations. Be honest with yourself.

Step 5: IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE CHALLENGES

The job you have to do may seem overwhelming. Break it down in to small tasks. Now the job will seem doable. Create a priority list of what you need to accomplish in order to reach your goals within the time frame you have.

Step 6: GET TO KNOW THE PLAYERS - IT'S A RELATIONSHIP BUSINESS!

Every business, especially Toastmasters, is a relationship business. You will not be able to do everything you have to accomplish by yourself. You need other people. You know that by now! As far as possible, find out the human side of those you serve (District leaders, Club officers, etc.), find out about their joys, fears, pains, frustrations, desires. Build bridges of mutual respect. Everyone doesn't have to like you to get the job done, but it is important that your team members respect your integrity and commitment to those you serve and work with.

Step 7: PREPARE A STRATEGY

In order to reach your goals from where you are, you need a game plan, a strategy. Based on steps 4, 5, and 6, you are now in a position to prepare a strategy based on knowledge. The strategy is the plan to take you from where you are to where you want to be. Write this down clearly, step by step. As far as possible, get your team members involved in this.

Step 8: TAKE ACTION!!!

General Douglas McArthur said, "There is no substitute for victory." An effective Toastmaster leader says, "There is no substitute for action!" Now that you have clearly defined goals and a strategy to achieve them, don't take action in baby steps. Take massive action! It is much easier to achieve success with a massive dose of action rather than by taking small steps every now and then.

So dear District leader, I hope you will find this eight-step path a useful guide to propel you to District and personal success. May you attain your Toastmasters 'nirvana' (heaven)!