

High Value Activities (HVAs)

We all know there's always more to do than the amount of time we have to do it in! High expectations are placed on us not only by our managers and the organizations we lead, but also by our families, our friends, and by ourselves. With all the choices in life, it only compounds the issue of too much to do and not enough time to do it.

So how do we deal with all of these expectations, and feel like we've successfully accomplished the right things? How do we align with what's most important to us?

Taking some time to define your High Value Activities (HVAs) for the various areas of your life will help ensure you are doing the right things at the right time. Taking consistent action in these areas will not only help you be organized and successful, but it also helps others to rely on you.

Let's take a look at your position at work. (Once you define your HVAs there, think of any other area in your life that is important to you, areas in which you'd like to feel organized, less stressed and successful - and define your HVAs there as well.)

1. Jot down all of your activities at work. If necessary, take a week or two and track how you spend your time.
2. Once you feel like your list is fairly comprehensive, look at the tasks and see what main buckets you can group them into. Almost all positions can be narrowed to five to seven HVAs. These are the activities that bring the greatest value to the organization.
3. Out of these five to seven HVAs, you next need to prioritize them. Take a look at each and rank it according to the impact it has. This will help you stay focused on the most important activities throughout the day. These HVAs will only change if your position changes.

Note: for many of us, we're spending way too much time on the #4, 5 & 6 High Value Activities when if we would invest in the #1, 2 & 3 HVAs they would prevent the crisis and firefighting.

Sample Manager Role HVAs:

1) Aligning people to the vision and cultivating the right culture

Best Practices:

Defining and changing the vision as necessary to align to corporate vision

Be mindful of culture, how you want people to feel and behave, and award and correct people accordingly.

Understand all the people on your team, what motivates them, what stresses them, how to best communicate with them. Identify your early adopters and have them champion culture and vision.

2) Defining plans and empowering people to own the plans

Best Practices:

Identify your top initiatives that align to the vision, with corresponding HVAs

Empower people to write their HVAs and work with them to refine them

Understand each person's work style and give them the autonomy or support

Have regular meetings to touch base and see how people are doing (daily and/or weekly huddles)

Create Individual Development Plans with each person to help them reach their full potential

3) Keeping people on track

Best Practices:

Check in regularly with people, formally and informally

LAF - Listen, Acknowledge and Follow through

Build in ample time for coaching and mentoring

Reward successes that align with the culture

Make sure you truly are invested in their growth and potential

4) Recruiting

Best Practices:

Identify the attitude and aptitude you need

Create questions based on past experience to help identify attitude and aptitude

Make your team culture one in which people brag about and it will attract other stars

Get team members involved in recruiting and interviewing

5) Dealing with problems

Best Practices:

Empower problem solving by not solving problems for them, but rather asking them if they feel empowered to solve the problem?

Foster peer accountability by first being willing to hold yourself and your people accountable. Then giving the team ownership of accountability by rewarding such behavior.

Do not promote triangulated conversations. Encourage direct communication and embrace conflict. Help the team see it's healthy teams that engage in conflict, in a respectful and direct way.

6) Book work, and other administrative tasks

Best Practices:

Regular short periods to keep track of measurements.

Delegate tasks to empower others, and oversee results