THE POWER OF AN HOUR

Business and Life Mastery in One Hour a Week

DAVE LAKHANI

DAVE LAKHANI is the founder and president of his own consultancy firm, Bold Approach Inc. He specializes in business acceleration and productivity techniques. Mr. Lakhani has built and owned more than ten successful businesses in the last twenty years and is an avid business builder. His advice is published frequently in Selling Power magazine, the Wall Street Journal, Investor’s Business Daily and Entrepreneur. Mr. Lakhani is also an in-demand public speaker, a trainer and the author of Persuasion: The Art of Getting What You Want.

The Web site for this book is located at www.powerofanhour.com
Main Idea
You should dedicate one hour each week to improving your professional and personal effectiveness.

In this hour, the smart thing to do is to work on forming new and better habits. To be more specific, there are nine topics you should work on to enhance your personal effectiveness and nine topics you should focus on to increase your business productivity. Once you've gone through the complete 18-week cycle, you can then start over again and work through the cycle again.

"When you carefully study the most successful businesses in the world or the most successful people, as I have, you'll see that they have one thing in common...a drive to incrementally improve each day, every month, every year. And when you look at people who would be successful or who have businesses that could be successful but aren't, you see them struggle because they are unclear or unsure what to focus on. They know that they should be taking some action, but they don't know where to start. They continue to do the same things every day. They are paralyzed, and inaction kills. Do you know exactly what you could focus on for one hour that would dramatically change your life or your business? Pick the most important hour and get started. You'll be glad you did, and your business will be glad you did. And you'll finally understand what it means to work on your business or your life, not just in it. Take action now."

– T. Harv Eker, author, Secrets of the Millionaire Mind

The basic principles behind the power of an hour

You will be pleasantly surprised by just how much you can accomplish by setting aside one power hour each week to focus on both personal and business issues. By undertaking some intensive, focused thinking for an hour each week, you can create some powerful changes in your own life and in your business. Remember, everyone gets the same number of minutes in a day, but what you do with that time will ultimately determine what you end up getting out of life. Invest your time wisely.

Hours 1 - 9 – Personal improvement

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<td>Think about things you enjoy to refresh</td>
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Hours 10 - 18 – Business improvement

| 10 | Sharpen your business focus |
| 11 | Manage your time productively |
| 12 | Become a better manager |
| 13 | Understand sales & marketing |
| 14 | Enrich the customer experience |
| 15 | Build your networks |
| 16 | Try mentoring others |
| 17 | Give something back |
| 18 | Create some systems |

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<td>Make productive business connections</td>
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<td>Contribute to your community</td>
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<td>Develop systems everyone can use</td>
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You will be pleasantly surprised by just how much you can accomplish by setting aside one power hour each week to focus on both personal and business issues. By undertaking some intensive, focused thinking for an hour each week, you can create some powerful changes in your own life and in your business. Remember, everyone gets the same number of minutes in a day, but what you do with that time will ultimately determine what you end up getting out of life. Invest your time wisely.

To get the most out of the hour you’re going to spend working on key business and personal challenges, you need a system. The most effective system available has seven steps:

1. **Clearly identify what you need to change**
2. **Identify the nature of the change required**
3. **Think creatively and come up with new solutions**
4. **Identify the next steps to be taken**
5. **Schedule your change and take the first step**
6. **Evaluate your progress and measure your success**
7. **Reward your successful completion**

Taking each of these steps in turn:

1. **Clearly identify what you need to change** – because if you solve the wrong problem, you won’t be any further ahead. During each hour you spend on this program, take a few minutes right at the start to make certain you have clear in your mind what problem really needs to be solved.

2. **Identify the nature of the change required** – and be realistic. There’s no use being wildly enthused about some plan or idea which has no chance of being realized in the real world. Think everything through first.

3. **Think creatively and come up with new solutions** – because there are always other options worth exploring. If you think in terms of absolutes, you’ll miss out on some creative ideas. Keep reminding yourself there are always quicker, better and more efficient solutions available to the challenges you face.

4. **Identify the next steps to be taken** – and document them. Be specific about what needs to be done to start moving in the right direction. Assign completion times and the people who will be responsible. Undocumented next steps won’t happen – it really is as simple as that. You need a plan for moving forward if you’re to have any chance of focusing your efforts.

5. **Schedule your change and take the first step** – actually get something tangible done rather than getting bogged down in analysis paralysis. Break your next steps down into blocks of time and schedule them. Start when you say you will and maintain your focus for the entire time period you’ve set aside. Then evaluate what your next step will be, and schedule your next block of time. Keep doing that until you achieve your objective.

6. **Evaluate your progress and measure your success** – by comparing what you’ve achieved thus far to the plan and timeline you set out at the beginning. Regularly evaluate how concisely you’ve focused on the key issues. Come up with metrics for measuring progress which are accurate and repeatable. Measurement in this way will also allow you to forecast when your project will be completed.

7. **Reward your successful completion** – with something you value highly. The better the reward you give yourself, the more enthused you’ll be about your next big project. The same dynamic also exists with teams. If there is something spectacular which will happen to celebrate success, a very strong esprit de corps will develop.

“We all get the same number of minutes and hours in a day to work, create, live, and prosper. It’s how we use those hours that makes the real difference in terms of the quality of our lives and the value of our businesses.”

– Dave Lakhani

“I focus on a single hour because virtually anyone can extract himself from the rigors of daily life and invest one hour a week to create change. An hour is also the easiest quantity of time for us to schedule. Finally, I chose an hour because after fifteen years of helping people realize their business and personal goals, I’ve come to realize it only takes an hour to initiate change. Any more than an hour of real focus without a break results in a rapid breakdown in productivity. After an hour of intense focus, the mind begins to wander, excuses come to the surface, and restarting is harder than ever because the amount of effort you’ve expended beyond an hour. I’ve also chosen an hour because it works. In virtually every business I’ve worked with, when I get people to use this process they achieve exponential results. Also, by limiting your focus to an hour, you will be able to immediately see and feel the gratification that comes from completion once that hour is past.”

– Dave Lakhani

“You don’t have to do everything yourself. The more you focus and leverage your hours by enlisting the help of others to achieve your goals, the more effective you’ll be in powering every hour. Manage your hours by managing your resources. The more hours you spend focused on directing the outcomes of many other hours occurring simultaneously the more you’ll achieve.”

– Dave Lakhani

“Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.”

– Japanese proverb

“In my work with corporate executives, whether of Fortune 500 companies or small businesses, I’ve found they all have one thing in common – they want to create change. Often the change they have in mind is inside their own organization. What they repeatedly discover is that in order to create change in their organization or team, they must first create it in themselves.”

– Dave Lakhani

“While time may seem like the thing you need most of, it turns out that isn’t true. What you need is focus – a very specific kind of focus. I discovered that when you focus on your work or personal life, you will be able to accomplish what many others around you cannot. This is the effect of being single-minded in your effort to create and succeed.”

– Dave Lakhani
There are three steps involved in defining your desired outcome:

1. **Clearly define what it is you want** – so you can be precise when you think through your intentions. Evaluate and specify why your goals are important and why pursuing this goal will be worth the effort you need to put in.

2. **Specify what you’re prepared to do to create the desired change** – what you’ll be willing to start doing or exactly what you will stop doing. Remind yourself nothing comes for free so make a quick reality check and confirm you’re willing to put in the effort which will be required before you get started, not later on.

3. **Determine how you will measure progress and ultimately success** – so you know when to declare victory and start working on different goals. If you fail to do this, you won’t experience the feeling of success which comes with completing a project or reaching a target. Nor will you be able to generate momentum to tackle more challenging goals. Nominate the metrics you want to use.

Spend the first hour laying the foundation on which your future accomplishments will be built. By following these three steps, you actually end up creating your own Achievement Action Plan. You make certain the goals you set out to accomplish are worthy of your effort rather than making a false start.

In order to change your life for the better, you have to look at what is holding you back. The faster you can identify these restrictions and remove them, the more quickly you can start moving forwards towards ultimate success.

To identify your life and business productivity roadblocks:

1. Ask yourself: “In which areas do I feel resistance even though I know I must create change in order to move forward?” Make sure you write down your answers.

2. Next, ask: “What, specifically, needs to change in my life if I am to achieve the goals I’ve set?” Again, commit your answers to writing for clarity.

3. Now ask: “What form does my resistance usually take in each of these areas?” The most common forms of resistance are:
   - Procrastination – delaying what you need to do.
   - Ambivalence – indecision or flip-flopping between options.
   - Waiting endlessly for a precondition to be filled first.
   - Making excuses or justifications.
   - Giving up without genuinely trying.

4. Identify which form of resistance you most commonly tend to use. If you can work to eliminate that form of resistance entirely, it should have the most dramatic impact on your personal productivity and effectiveness.

Once you’ve gone through these four steps, you then know which block you should change right now in order to generate the greatest impact. Armed with that knowledge, you can now start working on eliminating that specific block rather than attempting to tackle all of the potential blockages at once. To further enhance your efforts in the clearing up of these blockages:

- **Set a written deadline for taking action to remove the block.**
- **Note who will be involved in helping you.**
- **Allocate some time to get with this person and discuss what needs to be done.**
- **Don’t forget to specify how success in removing this block will be defined so you’ll know when you’ve arrived.**
- **Define for yourself what practical benefits will be derived by removing these blocks.**

Contrary to generally accepted wisdom, removing productivity blocks is not hard. All you really have to do is to get specific about when you’ll get started and what you’ll do. It’s all too easy for this to get lost in the shuffle if you’re not careful.

To overcome your most serious productivity roadblocks, utilize a four-step action plan:

1. **Clearly identify and describe the block or blocks you are facing** – so you can deal with specifics rather than generalizations. By identifying the problem right at the start of this process, you can come up with a specific solution which will destroy the block holding you back.

2. **Specify concisely and clearly the result you’re intending to achieve by removing the block** – because a worthy and compelling rationale can provide loads of incentive to change. The more attractive the benefits are, the easier it will be to develop a solution plan which will stick. You’ll know what you need to do and what you’ll achieve by doing that.

3. **Define your plan and your timeline for removing that block** – so you can start generating some forward momentum. A good plan will break your overall objective down into manageable steps. It will also act as a roadmap to stop you getting sidetracked by other things. It’s important to write your plans down so you won’t forget them and so you can deal with specifics. By writing your plans in a small notebook, you can then get into the habit of reviewing your plans each day as you decide what needs to get done that day.

4. **Take immediate action** – try and have at least one step which can be taken today to move towards your objective. Doing something constructive feels good and makes you more likely to continue. Note if your actions rely on someone else for success, have a backup plan available in case that person is not available. Doing this helps you maintain your momentum.

“Removing blocks is really not as hard as most of us make it out to be. Clear identification of the obstacle is the first and most important step in the process. What you can clearly define you can easily change. Remember that speed of change and accomplishment are directly related to your ability to be clear and concise in your description of what you want to change and what you want in its place. By implementing this four-step plan, you’ll be able to identify a way to overcome any block in an hour.”

– Dave Lakhani
Work hard to expand your personal network. The best way to do this is by building relationships which are mutually beneficial and supportive. Try and spend more time associating with people who have already achieved what you want to achieve.

All your relationships come in four general types:

1. **Family relationships** – which sometimes are helpful from the perspective of achieving your goals and sometimes are not.
2. **Mutually beneficial business relationships** – associations you have with people who share your goals and who are interested in your business and happy to help you move forward in any way they can. In exchange for that help, you are prepared to do the same for them.
3. **Long-term friends** – the people you care deeply about and who care deeply about you. These people are often your biggest cheerleaders and well-wishers.
4. **One-sided relationships** – those that take more than they give. Ideally, you want to eliminate or at the very least minimize these types of relationships.

To manage your relationships well:

- Dedicate as much time as you may choose to your family relationships and long-term friends as long as this is time outside your normal productive hours.
- Invest at least one hour each week to furthering your mutually beneficial relationships. Try and add something of value to these relationships weekly.
- Spend as little time as possible on one-sided relationships.

Put a financial plan in place. That way, you can stop worrying and start producing. Decide how you’ll save, how your bills will get paid and all the other details so your life will become worry free and fun.

Managing your money needs to be done on a weekly basis to ensure you’re on top of everything you need to be. Developing and maintaining your financial plan doesn’t need to be complex:

1. **Know exactly where your money is going at present** – which will simply be a matter of categorizing your expenditure as:
   - Housing costs – rent or mortgage, electric, gas, utilities, etc.
   - Medical costs – insurance, gym fees, doctor’s fees, etc.
   - Transportation costs – purchase, maintenance, fuel, etc.
   - Savings and investments – of all types.
   - Controllable costs – eating out, entertainment, groceries.
2. **Decide how your money will preferably be allocated in the future** – over the same five categories. When you know how your money has been spent in the past, you have a baseline from which your future changes in allocations can be determined.
3. **Make as many things as automatic as possible** – by setting up all your bills and investments on automatic payments through your bank. This will save you time and having to worry about meeting deadlines.
4. **Make your money management digital** – by using any of the popular personal financial management software packages which are now widely available.
5. **Work to manage your professional advisers intelligently** – meaning use your accountant and financial planner in smart ways. Let them do the lion’s share of the work and you can then spend your time analyzing their results.
6. **Keep track of your frugality efforts** – because if you can earn $50 an hour, then there is no use spending two hours driving around town just to save $25. Concentrate on using your business hours to earn more money.
7. **Decide whether you should invest your own money or use a professional to help you** – by evaluating one simple question: “Do you spend more time watching the score or watching your investments?” If you follow stock prices all the time, have someone else invest your money for you by putting your money into a mutual fund. If you can understand what companies are doing, make your own investments.
8. **Review your financial plan regularly** – so your plan will stay aligned with all your other goals.

Self-improvement adds depth and meaning to your life. It is definitive proof you’re not just getting older but you are continuing to get better. To get moving, you’ll need a solid starting point and then some workable strategies for moving forward. One good way to achieve this would be:

1. Clearly and specifically define which skills you need to learn in order to improve your life.
2. List the specific steps you would need to take to acquire that skill or develop that competency.
3. Add deadlines to each step.
4. Note who else will be involved in or responsible for each step.
5. Allocate time for your action plan and schedule when you will get started.
6. Specify right at the start how you will measure and define success so you can determine when you’ve been successful.
7. Ask: “What is the one action step I can take at this very moment which will initiate my action plan?” Figure out what you can do right away and get that accomplished.

“**The important thing to remember in terms of self-improvement is striving to continuously improve. Remember, it takes about 1,000 hours of practice to develop expert proficiency at anything. If you simply pick one thing that you want to improve and develop expertise in, you can be busy for the next 19 years if you just invest an hour a week, or the next 2.73 years if you invest an hour a day. The choice of how fast is up to you, but the doing is not optional.**”

– Dave Lakhani

“**Self-improvement can take on any form: it may be as simple as learning a new job skill that will allow you to perform at a higher level, or something as complex as going back to school to become a doctor if that is your dream. Self-improvement is about constantly moving your evolution forward so that you never stop learning and never stop setting new goals.**”

– Dave Lakhani
You can’t focus intensely all the time. Use this hour to take a refreshing mental break. Then you’ll be able to return to your directed activities with renewed vigor and commitment. Get into the habit of focusing on something you enjoy.

Rather than sitting around daydreaming about nothing, this is a directed activity with a predetermined outcome. The purpose is to give your conscious mind a rest by deliberately thinking about subjects you enjoy passionately. As your conscious mind takes a brief mental vacation, your subconscious will continue to explore other options and possibilities which may be helpful from a business point-of-view.

To make the most of your mental vacation:

- Schedule a set time to begin and finish.
- Go somewhere where you can be uninterrupted and comfortable.
- Try thinking about the sounds of your vacation activity, then add a layer of smells you’re experiencing, then add another sensory layer and so on.
- At times, you may complement what you’re doing by physical activities. Go to a museum and contemplate past lifestyles or something similar. The whole idea is to think new thoughts for an hour.

Pondering your master life vision allows you to create your perfect life mentally before you attempt to replicate it in the physical world. In simplest terms, you need a multi-dimensional vision which will evolve and grow as you change and mature personally and professionally. Your vision needs to be a compelling plan which becomes a powerful, vital force of personal motivation. A crystal clear vision also serves as a filter attracting those elements which will be helpful and deflecting those choices which will not be productive for you.

To create a great master life vision:

1. Write down your version of a perfect life – what would you do and who would you interact with if you had complete and total control over every aspect of the world? Specify what your version of a perfect life would be.
2. Add a written description of your perfect career or business you’ve built for yourself – what would you love to be doing professionally? Describe in vivid detail how you’d ideally like to be earning a living or what you’d like to be compensated well for doing.
3. Next, describe in writing your perfect relationship – who would complete you as a person and what kinds of qualities are you looking for in a partner in life? Describe the kind of personal relationship you’d like to have.
4. Add in a description of your personal spiritual goals – your relationship with sources of power greater than your own however you personally define them.
5. Outline your perfect financial situation – a clear and concise description of what you’d like to achieve from a purely monetary perspective.
6. Finally, add whatever other details are important to you – like the kind of friendships you want to make, how you’d like to contribute to the world, hobbies you want to spend time in, talents you want to develop, places you want to visit, etc.

Take all of these elements of your master life vision and then blend them into a written narrative which describes your ideal life. Keep this with you so when the daily grind gets intense, you can pause and redirect your thoughts towards higher ideals. You might even use this to track when you have achieved different parts of your master life vision. Over an extended period of time, you can add more detail, delete those aspects which no longer appeal and otherwise allow your vision to evolve and grow.

Reinvention is always good because it allows you to experience new and different things. Something different may even have the impact of making you permanently change your outlook on life and business.

The key steps in reinventing yourself personally and professionally are:

1. Take stock of your current skills – and decide which of these skills will be helpful in your new incarnation and which will not. Obviously, you will want to leverage your existing skills to the max to get a running start on your new life.
2. Assess which skills and other competencies will be required to achieve success – and list all these items in detail. This will become your shopping list of what’s needed to move forward.
3. Honestly assess your core beliefs about change – and evaluate how you genuinely feel about changing who you are. In particular, pause and ask yourself:
   - What will change mean to me, my friends, my family?
   - How will change effect my most important relationships?
   - What am I willing to sacrifice in order to change?
   - What will happen if I am unable to make this transition?
   - Who will be supportive of these changes?
   - Who will feel threatened by these changes?
   - How will my life be better if I make these changes?
4. Map out your action steps to move forward – specifically what needs to be done. Decide which skills need to be learned first and how you will acquire them.
5. Add deadlines to each step.
6. Note who will be involved in each step – and take some time to talk with that person in advance.
7. Allocate and schedule the time needed for your action plan to be implemented.
8. Set up some success indicators – the criteria you will use to decide whether or not you’ve been successful.
9. Finally, select one action step which you can take at this very moment – and do that immediately to initiate your plan of action.
**Business Hour 10**

**Sharpen your business focus**

Spend this hour focusing on the areas your business needs to excel in and then prioritizing those items according to their impact on your profitability and efficiency. Create ongoing improvements by focusing on what’s important.

Most companies have multiple operational units:
- A sales team responsible for generating new business.
- Marketing people who create awareness.
- Operations teams which keep your business running.
- Finance departments to handle taxes and funding.
- Manufacturing or service delivery units.
- Human resources people who staff all the units.

What you need to do for this hour is sit down and look at all of the various parts of your business and ask:

- Which areas of the company need attention right now?
- When was the last time we came up with some ideas for improvement in each of these business units?
- When did we last ask the people who work there for their ideas on how their functions could be improved?
- What would be the impact on our revenues and profits if we were to improve the operation of each unit?
- Where do we want our business to be five years from now, and what do we need to do to start moving in that direction?

Overall, this hour allows you to set aside the immediate needs before you got back to what you were working on.

At the end of the week, go back through all the interruptions which cropped up, the cause of each interruption and how much time it took to do what was needed before you got back to what you were working on.

To prepare for this hour, keep a time log in 15-minute increments for the previous week’s work activities. On the side of your time log, note all of the interruptions which cropped up, the cause of each interruption and how much time it took to do what was needed before you got back to what you were working on.

After each of your numbers, also add one of the following designations:
- I – I had to do this task personally.
- D – This task could have been delegated to someone else.

This exercise is designed to generate awareness of how your work time currently gets used up. Armed with that knowledge, you can then sit down and develop some good systems for managing your time more effectively. If you can get into the habit of classifying each time interruption between 1 and 5 mentally, you then have some pretty good clues for what you need to do in the future. If you can also get into the habit of delegating more, that should have the effect of freeing up more time for productive activities.

There is one other thing you should do to enhance your time management skills. Keep track of how much time you spend focusing on projects each week. Work hard to increase that time week-by-week. Organize yourself so you can focus 100-percent on the task at hand rather than trying to do two things at once.

Over a number of weeks, this can mean a real boost for your personal effectiveness.

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**Business Hour 12**

**Become a better manager**

This hour is dedicated to looking at whether or not you are creating an environment where your people can do their best work. This requires sending a clear message, establishing measurable milestones and holding people accountable.

To become better at managing others, there are a few simple things you can do first:

1. Get into the habit of talking specifics rather than vague but nice sounding generalities like “to be profitable”. Let people know exactly what their goals should be, how success will be measured and what the rewards will be when any goal is reached.

2. Evaluate your organization’s culture and look for ways you can boost the amounts of innovation, motivation and enthusiasm which currently exist. Develop a plan for enriching your company culture.

3. Set up some structures which will empower your employees more. Let them know what decisions you expect them to make, your expectations and how you will support their actions irrespective of any other factors. Let everyone know you will get out of their way and allow them to move forward.

4. Enhance your motivational programs. Usually the best way to do this is by providing employees with more consistent feedback and recognition of accomplishments. Invest some time and effort in developing better and more visible ways to acknowledge those people who do noteworthy things.

5. Become much better at delegating. The more you can handle day-to-day tasks effectively, the greater the new responsibilities you can take on. Delegating also allows other people to develop new skills and competencies. To become better at delegating:
   - Decide who is best suited to a task.
   - Explain the task in as much detail as is required.
   - Give them authority to act and all the support they require.
   - Provide them with feedback and comment.
   - Get out of their way and let them get the task done.

“Managing is one of the most important requirements of a business owner and one of the last to get focus. It is easy to put actual managing off to focus on other issues. Work on doing little things every day that improve the culture of your company. Every effort has a disproportionately positive and cumulative effect moving forward. Your focus on improving management will improve your organization rapidly, visibly and profitably.”

— Dave Lakhani
Sales and marketing are always the lifeblood of any business. Spend this hour evaluating the bigger picture and gaining a sense of direction. Look for practical ways you can increase your firm’s effectiveness and profitability.

While marketing seems like a black art to many managers who do not specialize in this area, there are a few key principles you can evaluate and work on in meaningful ways:

1. **Your unique differentiation** – how do you make your products and services different and distinctive? Are there additional things you can be doing as a business to enhance your product or service’s unique point of difference?
2. **The competitive environment** – what is changing in the marketplace in which you generate sales? What kinds of things can and should your own business be doing to respond to those changes and make them work for you?
3. **Advertising** – is your advertising helping your company grow its profits or not? Building brand awareness is fine but are you generating new customers through your advertising?
4. **Public relations** – are you taking full advantage of the opportunities to generate awareness made possible through media coverage? Are you regularly generating newsworthy material that is interesting and compelling?

Spend this hour looking at ideas on how you can give your current sales and marketing activities a shot in the arm to move your entire business forward.

**Enrich the customer experience**

For this hour focus intensively on the experience your firm delivers to your customers. Look for practical ways you can create an amazing customer experience people will rave about and can’t wait to share with others.

In every industry, there are elements of the customer experience which are highly valued. If you can develop practical and repeatable ways to shine in those areas, you can create a rich customer experience which all your competitors will be unable to match. Spend this hour considering what you can do to create a genuinely unique customer experience.

Once again, the steps to follow here are simple to describe but difficult to implement:

1. Define what constitutes an amazing experience for your customers and how you can go about measuring it.
2. Come up with some practical ways you can enrich the experience you already deliver to customers.
3. List the specific steps that are necessary in order for your business to achieve the desired result.
4. Add deadlines to each step.
5. Note who will be responsible for each step.
6. Allocate and schedule the time required for this action plan to be implemented.
7. Specify how you will define success and how progress will be measured.
8. Look for one specific action step you can take immediately to get started and initiate the plan of action you’ve set out.

**Build your networks**

The more people you have formed a connection with, the better from a business perspective. Dedicate this hour to looking at new ways you can expand your connections and further deepen and strengthen your relationships with these people.

Not all connections are of equal value. You can actually form three types of connections with others:

1. **Mastermind partners** – people who will help you move your business forward in tangible and measurable ways. These types of relationships generate the bulk of your business referrals and advice.
2. **Power partners** – the people who can open doors for you because there is a reciprocal relationship. Power partners will like steering more business your way because they feel confident you’re doing the same for them.
3. **Casual connections** – friends with whom you like to keep in touch but who realistically won’t actually generate any sizable business opportunities.

All of these relationships need to be maintained on a regular basis or else they will slip away. Dedicate this hour to looking for new ways you can keep in touch with your network on a regular basis. These touch points will vary widely according to the type of relationship involved. To be specific:

- For mastermind partners, you will probably be interacting with them and asking for advice on a regular basis. If you can also acknowledge them on special occasions a few times a year, you’ll strengthen the relationship. Taking them to dinner or a sporting event or even sending them a personal gift on their birthday, at the start of a new year or some other occasion are great ideas. Make sure you schedule these personal connections and then follow through.

- For power partners, you probably want to touch base with them once a month. Perhaps drop them an e-mail or make a quick phone call. Once again, if you tie in your contacts with significant dates in their personal lives or professional careers, this can enhance the impact of your efforts. Make sure you’re incorporating something for them every time you contact a power partner.

- With casual connections, the occasional phone call or e-mail when you have something interesting to tell them is fine. Call them and chat for a while. Realize it’s not unusual for some of these relationships to fade away over time so feel comfortable about letting old connections die. Bear in mind you cannot keep in touch indefinitely with every person you meet during your lifetime so invest your networking time wisely. Build the relationships of your choice and let those which are less relevant fade completely.

“By taking the time to create a perfect customer experience you’ll develop a loyal following that wants to do business with you. Your raving fans will find new ways to do that because they crave the experience more than the products themselves. Creating a perfect customer experience will be a defining moment in your success that you can look back on. If you are a leader, manager, salesperson, or spouse, what can you do to create an amazing experience when people interact with you? Apply the same concepts and watch your personal following grow!”

– Dave Lakhani
One-to-one mentoring is an excellent way to build your business. Once you identify a good candidate, take the time to set some objectives and obtain a commitment they will work towards quantifiable goals. Then schedule your time, work with that person and track their subsequent progress.

The goal of mentoring is to pass on in-depth knowledge to a person who has the potential to achieve more. The idea is not to make a clone of yourself but to provide know-how the other person will use productively. It’s helpful if you work together to develop some step-by-step plans for learning new skills and gaining new competencies.

Make sure you end the mentoring process effectively as well. Do something openly which shows you have full confidence in the person you’ve been mentoring and they are now ready to go their own way. Make this formal so they then know they need to stop relying on you and do their own thing. You can then develop a fresh mentoring relationship without the feeling abandoned or threatened.

Writing a check for a charity cause is great but actually spending some of your time giving a hand is even better. Find a cause you admire greatly and get involved. Some possible ways to do this:

- Donate your employees to a worthy cause for a day.
- Sell some excess products you have sitting around the warehouse and donate the proceeds to a charity.
- Have a food drive once a month in your company and donate the food collected to a local food bank.
- Organize a blood drive at your office.
- Get involved in some worthwhile community projects.
- Donate the use of your office resources to a local charity one Saturday each month.
- Adopt a homeless family.
- Give your customers the opportunity to donate a dollar to charity with every sale you make.
- Give employees one paid hour a week they can use for the charity of their choice.

More often than not, the question isn’t whether you should get involved in charitable causes. It’s usually more a matter of getting organized. Set up a specific plan to do so and then monitor how well you stick to your plan. The time spent on charity causes will come back to you many times over.

If you have a system in place, you’ll be able to focus more effectively because you won’t have to be inventing everything from scratch all the time. Good systems and processes will also mean other people will be able to run your business just as effectively as you do.

There are six steps involved in developing business systems:

1. **Clearly identify the system or process** – as specifically as possible. This will help others understand exactly what you’re trying to do.
2. **Identify the outcome you’re trying to generate** – what your business system is intended to do.
3. **Specify who should run the system or process** – what kind of know-how or authorization the person involved will need.
4. **Detail the exact steps involved in performing the process** – and the order in which those steps need to be sequenced. This needs to be very methodical and detailed if it is to have any value later on.
5. **If feasible, identify the expected outcome at the completion of each step** – so the person performing the task can verify they’ve completed everything correctly.
6. **Specify what will happen once the entire process is complete** – how a person will know they have achieved the desired result and should then move on to the next task.

If you look around your business, you’ll probably find a number of business systems and processes which need to be documented so others can perform them. By developing systems, you ultimately end up making your business predictable and easy to replicate. Good systems take away the guesswork.

You may consider developing formal systems for:

- The training of new employees.
- Interviewing potential employees.
- Better managing your workforce.
- Improving operational efficiency.
- Special one-off tasks like the opening of a new branch.
- Evaluating problem areas.
- Allowing someone else to take over managing the business.

Virtually any and every area of your business can be systemized with a little effort. Spend this hour deciding where to document your first system and set up an action plan for doing so. The more time you spend on developing robust business systems now, the less time you’ll need to spend later on solving the problems which crop up.

“The focus areas I have identified for you are simply a place to start. Make your powerful hour of focus a ritual; do it without fail. Set a time, a place, an atmosphere that defines your power hour and totally immerse yourself in it each time you initiate focus. Your very next hour is waiting for you to power it up. What are you going to do next?”

– Dave Lakhani