



# Respond, Not React Playbook



Katharine Halpin

# Respond, Not React Playbook

**Respond, Not React Playbook.**

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# Respond, Not React Playbook

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# Respond, Not React Playbook

## Playbook Summary

For every 20 minutes we take to strategize, plan and organize, we save an hour later on. This is because we are in a proactive, strategic mindset and are better able to respond, instead of reacting to every 'challenge of the day', operational crisis, or some staffing or resource constraint.

To keep ourselves in a strategic mindset, these 9 Habits are critical, some daily and some weekly.

- ✓ Allow 20 Minutes of Prep Time Between Meetings to Make Notes and Take a Break.
- ✓ Calendar Everything, Completely and Consistently - daily.
- ✓ Do a Brain Dump - at least once daily, preferably in the morning and at 5 pm.
- ✓ Conduct a Comprehensive Commitments Review Daily to Create White Space.
- ✓ Prepare for Meetings Using the 5 Ps.
- ✓ Schedule Project Work Time Regularly - between 7 am and 5 pm.
- ✓ Schedule Think Time to Solve Problems Strategically and Completely - weekly.
- ✓ Schedule Think Time to Grow Leaders Through Delegation - weekly.
- ✓ Schedule Think Time to Close Gaps Between Vision & Reality - at least weekly.

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## Introduction

Since the invention of the smartphone in 2009 and all the related applications, real-time communication has become the new expectation in the workplace as well as life in general. It implies an immediate response is necessary. This expectation, perceived or real, places us all at the risk of feeling overwhelmed.

This sense of immediacy and urgency leads to stressful days, hectic schedules, and undue pressure to meet deadlines, which can lead to projects that devolve into chaos.

This way of doing business leaves little to no time to think strategically, gain a different perspective, and create new paths to efficiency.

Based on our own experiences with overwhelm and those feelings of urgency, we have developed these 9 Habits over the past few decades. We have created a strategic playbook to tackle these new and diverse expectations and their impact on the workplace and life in general. Our hope is that by implementing these Habits or taking your own current habits to a higher level of effectiveness, you will successfully increase your effectiveness and your team's effectiveness and alignment.

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## Habit 1: Schedule Travel Time and Prep Time

This allows us to:

- Ensure we are in the most productive mindset.
- Have time to organize our thoughts and prepare.
- Listen better because we are more focused.
- Self-manage our judgments and conversations in our head.

Many of us are addicted to doing ‘one more thing’. We think, “Before I leave my desk to go into this meeting or drive across town to a lunch meeting, I’ll just send *one more* email,” or, “I’ll just make *one more* phone call,” or, “I’ll just send *one more* text, because it won’t take me any time at all.”

A head coach would never allow his team to show up randomly and haphazardly at the last minute. He wants the team in the locker room early so everyone has time to get into the right mindset for the game by connecting with each other, hearing the pep talk, and reviewing the playbook.

When we have a mindset that makes us think we have time to accomplish ‘one more thing’, we set ourselves up to be frenetic, frazzled, and frantic. When an athlete sees an opportunity to run the ball down the field, they cannot predict what obstacles may appear. If they hesitate, the opportunity might have already passed and the window might be closed.

We must arrive early. Arriving early allows us to get ourselves in the right mindset. We need to feel prepared. We need to look at our meeting agenda again. We need to remind ourselves of the purpose of this meeting and the outcome we need to drive towards during this meeting. We need to think about who else will attend the meeting. We need time to ask ourselves, “How well do I know these people and, most importantly, what kind of connection do I have with each of these people?”

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When we make that last phone call or text message or email, we create an environment where we may be late—because things always take longer than we anticipated. Once we are in a rushed mode, we tend to get behind a school bus, or we get caught up in construction traffic. The result is that we will not have the time to get where we need to go and arrive in a focused manner. We will not have that extra window of time to prepare.

Even if you're in a corporate environment where you simply walk down the hall or get on an elevator to go to another floor, you should still take that reserve of time. We recommend 20 minutes between meetings. Everyone needs time regulate their liquids by taking a bio-break. You might need to get a snack. You may want to write down what you've promised to people in your earlier meetings. Even more importantly, you need to write down what people have promised *you* in that last meeting.

Too often, people go from meeting to meeting to meeting, and when they get to the end of the day, they can't remember what they promised or what other people promised them.

When you arrive late or unprepared, you rob yourself of both focus and clarity. It takes time to recover from being frenetic or frazzled. You are unable to bring your full attention to the agenda, the people, and the purpose of the meeting.

Practicing Habit 1 allows you to be more fully present in all your meetings:

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- You arrive early.
- You have time to gather your thoughts.
- You listen better because you are able to focus.
- You have fewer judgments and conversations in your head such as, “That will never work.”
- You speak up more easily and more consistently, even about your smallest concerns.
- You have more patience.
- You encounter fewer distractions.
- You feel peaceful.

You now have opportunities to prepare, to meet people you wouldn't normally have time for, and to connect with them in meaningful ways. These are people who may be necessary to help move your goals and objectives forward. They deserve this investment of time to arrive early and be prepared.



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## Habit 2: Calendar Completely and Consistently

This allows us to:

- Create white space on our calendar to have time to think and act strategically.
- Ensure we attend the right meetings.
- Take every event as a development opportunity for someone on our team.

A head coach schedules games and practice sessions weeks in advance of the season. This provides the opportunity for every player to be prepared and the team to be ready for every game.

Most of us use electronic calendars. We have solid support structures in place to ensure that every meeting and appointment is scheduled properly, so we can be successful.

Most of us can only go to meetings that are on our calendar. Therefore, it's critical that we have a time every day to review our calendar and confirm with our emails to ensure every meeting and appointment is recorded.

We cannot create white space on our calendar unless we can see the big picture: a week at a glance, or a month at a glance. You can't get this big picture perspective unless everything is recorded in your calendar. Like a football player who is looking at the playbook with a drawing of the entire football field, you need the big picture perspective on your time. Imagine you are trying to work with your coach to understand the strategies the coach designed. Imagine you need to gain a full understanding of all the different plays and potential challenges. You can only gain this understanding if you can see the full picture. It's the same with your calendar. You can't create white space and manage your precious resource of time until you have the big picture perspective: the complete and accurate picture of your calendar. So, it's very important to get everything on the calendar, so you can move productively towards Habits 3, 4, and 5. That's your goal.

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Once everything is accurately and completely recorded in your calendar, there are two opportunities.

1. Spend time quietly reflecting on your calendar. Go back two days, five days, even 30–60 days if time permits. Look at the meetings you have had and think about the commitments you made. Ask yourself:

- Did I leave any loose ends?
- Have I failed to deliver on any action I promised to take?
- What have others promised to deliver to me?
- Do I know the status of all the ‘moving parts’ from these previous meetings?

2. Now review today's calendar. Consider the meetings you have today in light of the 20-minute reserve of time we covered in Habit 1: Travel and Prep Time.

- Do you know the purpose and objective of each meeting on your calendar for today?
- Do you have the agenda?
- Have you had an opportunity to review and modify each meeting's agenda?

When will you schedule the time to assess the purpose of each meeting, the desired outcomes, and the role you will need to play? Put this time in your calendar and keep it sacred. Once you complete this reserve of time, start scanning the calendar for tomorrow, next week, and next month.

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## Habit 3: Brain Dump Think Time - The Key to Eliminating Overwhelm

This allows us to:

- Get out of overwhelm within 10–20 minutes.
- Start to delegate more effectively.
- Stop swirling the random conversations, action items, and reactions in our head.

Studies by the National Institute of Health indicate that every one of us has approximately 50,000 conversations in our head every day, all alone.

We suspect some people are up to a quarter of a million conversations every day, but we won't ask them to identify themselves. Let's agree that we all have at least 50,000 every day.

Many of those conversations are limiting and self-sabotaging. They are negative and judgmental, and they limit our ability to really drive the results we deserve.

If we try to maintain our to-do list—our action items—in our head with all those 50,000 conversations swirling randomly and dangerously, the end result will not be productive or pretty. If we have our action items comingled with those negative stories we've made up, we can no longer distinguish the facts from the stories we've made up about the facts.

It's just too much for any human being to be able to separate and organize. Therefore, we encourage people to do a brain dump at least once daily.

We recommend you do this manually, because we can type as fast as we can think, but we cannot write as fast as we can think. By writing out our to-do list and brain dump, our brains are slowed, and we can start to gain a broader perspective on our tasks and commitments.

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The best systems we've seen are the three-ring binders system where you have a tab for each person and each project you're managing. This manual binder allows you to flip back and forth between the tabs as you do your brain dump.

Not everyone is willing to carry a three-ring binder around, so many of us use our Excel spreadsheets, iPad, apps, or iPhone notes. Any app that allows you to maintain folders for projects and people will be effective.

Our goal for you is to get everything out of your head and into a system or onto paper. Regardless of your preferred system, we recommend you include everything:

- Personal errands,
- Family commitments,
- Work commitments by project, by person, and by team,
- Calls and emails you need to either initiate or return,
- Conversations you need to have,
- Tasks you need to either perform or delegate, and
- Any situation where you need more research or a briefing before taking action.

By getting all those commitments and errands out of your head, you're able to look at things more strategically. The first benefit is that you will feel so much more confident upon completing your brain dump, even if it is a raw list on the back of an envelope. This confidence occurs because you are no longer in overwhelm. You will feel confident you will be able to accomplish everything, because you will be able to review the list and check tasks off as they get completed.

The second benefit is that you will be better able to establish an estimate of how long each task will take. You will also have much greater clarity on how many things you actually need to do. If you have a page-and-a-half brain dump, that might indicate you are trying to do too much. Or it could be an indication you are too hands-on. It's just not feasible for one individual contributor, manager, or executive to work through a page-and-a-half brain dump in one day.

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Some people like to review and revise their brain dump in the afternoon toward the end of the day. This Habit allows them to review their calendar:

- Who did I meet with today?
- What did they promise me?
- What did I promise to these people?
- When do I need to follow-up with these people?

Maybe you prefer to do your brain dump in the morning because you're a morning person. It doesn't matter when you do your brain dump. The critical piece is that you do it consistently once or twice a day.

Maybe you already do a variation of this Habit. Our request is that you take your already established habits and buff them up by doing them more comprehensively and more consistently.

Just like a football player will clear his mind, refresh his perspective, and allow himself to focus solely on the game, the plays, and the coach's pep talk, we too need to bring focus and discipline to our daily activities. We cannot accomplish this level of focus without consistently doing this brain dump.

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## Habit 4: Commitment Review - The Key to Creating White Space on Your Calendar

This allows us to:

- Consistently create unbooked white space on our calendar.
- Make more strategic decisions, based on a broad perspective.
- Take more focused and strategic action.

Our goal is for you to be like the quarterback who can see the entire football field: the player who can see where he needs to run, where he needs to throw the ball, or catch the ball to score that winning touchdown. You need the same wide-angle perspective to drive the results you deserve. To drive the results in the most strategic and the most effortless manner, you need to create white space on your calendar to think and act strategically.

The Commitment Review Habit is where that begins to happen. This Habit brings a balanced perspective and gives you clarity about:

- Your overall commitments and goals,
- The alignment between your daily activities and your vision, commitments, goals, and values,
- The appropriate number and types of commitments and tasks you need to manage at any one time,
- The best person for each task that either doesn't fit on your calendar or is not aligned with your own strengths.

For 10–20 minutes at least once a day, review your calendar and your brain dump so that you can:

1. Ask yourself if every task aligns with your strategic vision, overall commitments, goals, and values—both for yourself and for your organization. If your tasks and commitments do not align with these, don't do them.

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2. Now, look for commitments you could delegate. Ask yourself, “Am I the very best person to do this? Is this a good use of my time?” Ask yourself, “If I delegate this task or project, will it provide someone else a professional development opportunity?”

Look for patterns and trends. For example, do you spend the most time on your best clients and staff? Or do unprofitable projects and poor performers eat away at your time and energy?

Look for opportunities to act more efficiently. Can you reduce your travel time by scheduling appointments in the same region on the same day? Can you discuss two projects with the same client in one meeting instead of making two separate meetings? Can you give staff more information about projects so they understand your expectations more clearly? Can you communicate clearer expectations with clients and staff to minimize re-work, duplication of effort, and delays? Where do you have opportunities to under-promise so you and your organization have a chance to over-deliver?

Ask yourself:

- Am I the best person to perform this task?
- Is this a task in my wheelhouse and expertise?
- Is this something that fits with my strengths?
- Whose career development opportunities will I be limiting if I perform this task myself?
- Who should be involved in this task because it offers a learning or development opportunity for them?
- Who is the subject-matter expert who could do this task in a more comprehensive, more accurate, more complete way than I could?
- Which one of these events do I no longer have a commitment to?
- Which one should I dump or delegate to somebody else to attend?
- Which ones do I need to do?

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When you ask yourself these questions, you start to remove things from your calendar, and you start to delegate responsibilities that should be delegated.

This Habit begins to create white space on your calendar. It gives you an opportunity to be strategic. You get to decide who is eligible to get on your calendar and who is not. This allows you to avoid you being a reaction machine who responds affirmatively to everyone who wants to get on your calendar.

Now you have the required time to discern, reflect, and consider. This is the key if you want white space on your calendar so you can catch your breath, look at the big picture, think strategically, take action that is in accordance with your strategic mindset, and drive the results you want.

Consistently practicing Habit 4 will free up large amounts of time for you, your inner circle, and your direct reports, as well as your entire organization. As you become more consistent with this practice, you naturally become more strategic in your actions.



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## Habit 5: Prepare for Meetings using the 5 Ps

This allows us to:

- Make meetings exponentially more productive.
- Drive results more strategically and systematically.
- Develop other leaders on our team.

Studies show that in corporate America today 15% of people's time is spent in meetings. We believe that's a low estimate. We think it's actually more like 30–50% of a manager or executive's day.

In some cases, people are in meetings from 7 am until 6 pm. These managers and executives are then expected to get their work done outside of that time frame. They have no time for health breaks. They don't have time to get a snack or eat lunch unless they are willing to eat during a meeting. They have no time to manage their own work, to prioritize, organize, or think strategically.

Studies also show that 67% of these meetings are ineffective. These meetings are ineffective because decisions are not being made in decisive, clear manners that drive strategic actions. As a result, no one can execute on the decisions effectively. As a result of ineffective meetings, we do not articulate or document:

- Goals.
- Deadlines.
- Measures of Success.
- Measureable Results.

Why are we so abysmal at conducting meetings? Studies further indicate that 92% of the people in meetings are multitasking. As a result, they are unable to focus on the meeting discussions.

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Why do we allow ourselves to multitask during expensive and important meetings? Because we rarely know the purpose of the meeting. In many cases, there was no agenda sent out 3–5 days in advance with the purpose of the meeting. There is no charter for the committee or task force. If it is a committee or governance meeting, attendees often don't know their scope of authority. They don't understand their role. They don't know if they are the decision-maker or if they are just in attendance to brief a decision-maker. They don't know if they are expected to be part of a team that will make a decision.

With these intense schedules and back-to-back meetings, people are often racing into a meeting at the last minute because they were just coming out of another meeting. This results in no time to really connect with people and ask about their vacation or about their weekend. There is rarely time to ask about or acknowledge their recent work successes. As a result, there are rarely strong connections among the people in the meeting. This produces people who don't have a commitment to the meeting outcomes, so they presume it's okay for them to multitask.

What makes these challenges worse is during a two-hour meeting everyone in the meeting could receive a hundred emails, which are now waiting for their response. This makes us feel a sense of urgency.

In our experience, there should be five components for every meeting in order to:

- Formulate decisions,
- Capture those decisions, and
- Execute on those decisions effectively and in a timely manner.

These five critical components for productive meetings come from our partners at Results.com.

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## 1. What is the Purpose of the Meeting?

The purpose of each meeting should be stated at the top of the agenda. It can then be reinforced as people prepare for each meeting. It can be reinforced during the meeting when attendees get off track from the agenda. If there is a team or committee charter, it should be documented in the same way.

Attendees need to understand their scope of accountability and responsibility with this group attending this meeting. Attendees need to have time to prepare. This should include fully understanding the purpose of the meeting.

## 2. Preparation for the Meeting is Critical for Effective Meetings.

Preparation should include a review of the agenda. This allows a leader to inquire with their team if they are even the right person to attend the meeting. Often the wrong person attends a meeting. If you are not the subject-matter expert, you might not be the person who should attend. If you are not the person to make the decision, who is the person best prepared to brief the decision-maker?

Everyone needs time to prepare. That's why the agenda for the meeting should be shared 3–5 days in advance.

## 3. What is the Process for the Meeting?

There should also be a process and cadence for meetings. If we have a monthly meeting, then people need to understand this meeting is established on the third Thursday of the month at 3 pm. If it's a weekly stand-up meeting first thing on Monday mornings at 7:30, then everyone needs to get into a cadence and know what to expect on the agenda and how they can be best prepared.

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## 4. Meetings Need to be Productive.

When everyone is prepared, no one will consider multitasking. Multitasking makes us stupid. For more information about the research on the high cost of multitasking, see *Alignment for Success*, available on Amazon.

Every attendee in a meeting needs to have his or her talking points prepared in advance. What important thoughts need to be shared? Who will be in attendance during this meeting? How can we share our perspective and observations in a manner that will allow them to respond productively? How can we throw them the ball in a way they can catch?

Unproductive meetings are expensive and waste \$37 billion each year. Think about the compensation package of leaders and managers within your organization. Using these 9 Habits, you can ensure your company is not contributing to that waste of resources.

## 5. Progress Needs to Occur with Each Meeting.

The bottom line for every meeting is progress. What progress are we making towards our goals for this project? This requires meeting minutes, meeting notes, or a project plan that gets tracked and revised during meetings. Are we executing on our goals? To what degree have we progressed? Progress requires focus and discipline during the meeting. We must trust but verify when others report their status on our projects.

This level of preparation allows everyone to bring their best self to the meeting and create positive environments during meetings:

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- Where large and small concerns are voiced.
- Where meaningful discussion can occur.
- Where the pros and cons of decisions are vetted fully.
- Where the potential unintended consequences are addressed prior to making the decision.
- Where decisions are made in a way that allows everyone to champion the decision once the meeting is concluded.

These five steps are not complicated, but they require focus, discipline and muscle building just like a football player. When you bring that focus and discipline, and when you encourage your colleagues to bring that same level of focus and discipline, you will be amazed and delighted at the progress you make. Further, the connections that are built because of the shared sense of accomplishment will further drive bottom-line results.

When you put these five components in place as part of Habit 5:

- Productivity is enhanced exponentially,
- Profits increase,
- Shareholder value grows,
- Companies expand, and
- Our economy thrives.

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## Habit 6: Project Work Time - The Key to Maintaining a Broader Perspective

This allows us to:

- Get our nights and weekends back so we can focus on our family and interests.
- Maintain a balanced perspective because we are not fatigued.
- Move projects forward faster and with more velocity.

Many individual contributors, managers, and executives find themselves working in the evenings and on weekends. Our smartphones drive this intense pace. Back-to-back meetings during the week make the challenge even greater.

But even if you are a CEO or board chair, there are still tasks that only you can complete and projects you need to drive. You are required to review documents, prepare remarks, and organize agendas every day. You need to be briefed on projects and time frames.

As an individual contributor, manager, or executive, a wide variety of projects require your focus and attention regularly.

Your own Project Work Time needs to be scheduled into the calendar as if it were a board of directors meeting or a meeting with the governor. If you are not a CEO or board chair, this time may need to be rescheduled. But having it on your calendar guarantees you will accomplish your tasks in a timely manner.

Now that you have mastered Habits 1–6, you are prepared to experiment with Strategic Think Time. We recommend three different types of Strategic Think Time, but these exercises can be applied to any situation or challenge.

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## Habit 7: Think Time to Solve Problems Strategically and Completely

This allows us to:

- Solve problems more strategically.
- Get to the 'root cause' of recurring challenges, and eliminate these challenges.
- Further develop processes and systems to prevent 'exceptions' and 'the challenge of the day'.

Imagine you are on a winning football team. Imagine now that your team has a big loss to an important rival. Your coach will not just dismiss this loss and walk away without reflection. He will call the team together to assess what worked, what could have been improved, who needs to become more masterful in certain areas, and how the team needs to improve collectively and individually.

Strategic Think Time is similar. When a problem occurs, there were always red flags and key indicators. Sometimes these start like a burning ember. They feel like an intuitive hunch. Because we are in meetings all day every day, or rushing from one project to another, we often do not pick up on these hunches or burning embers. Without some attention, the problem will only grow larger and more complex. When you have a problem or a challenge, or when you have noticed a pattern or a trend, when you have an intuitive hunch, it is in your best interest to schedule 20 minutes or even two hours to think strategically about the situation.

Everyone has a 'challenge of the day'. The key is seeing the patterns and trends, and creating a potential solution to the challenge well before the burning ember becomes a bonfire.

As you sit with a blank screen or a blank pad of paper, define the problem or problems you face. Then, schedule one hour at least twice each week for a Strategic Reserve of Time to think about each problem.

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In this scheduled time, sit with a blank pad of paper behind a closed door. Write your problem as a question or questions. For example:

- How can we better retain our staff?
- What would grow this organization's profitability by 100% this year?
- How do we get 300 people focused every day on the same goals and objectives?
- How can we create the space for the next layer of leadership and management to step up?

After you write your big questions, take a deep breath. Then, start jotting down bullet items. Give yourself permission to doodle so as to relax your mind. Keep making notes and comments on paper or on the screen. Keep asking yourself questions.

After 30–60 minutes, you will have a page or two of notes. You may have come up with some unrealistic or impossible ideas, but a few of them will be real gems. You will see something that you didn't see before, something that will help you overcome your problem. You will also make discoveries about what has been missing from your actions and attitudes towards this problem.

When desired results are not accomplished, it is typically because one of three things is missing:

1. A commitment to yourself or your colleague,
2. The skills and competencies required, or
3. The structure needed to support success.

Ask yourself:

- What is missing?
- Who am I being that has allowed this situation to occur?
- Who am I being that has allowed this challenge to fester?



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## Habit 8: Think Time to Grow Leaders Through Effective Delegation

This allows us to:

- Develop more leaders more effectively and more quickly.
- Assess our “A” Players, our “B” Players, and our “C” Players quickly.
- Expand our scope of influence and effectiveness.

Just like the coach can't clean the locker room or groom the football field, not every task that appears on your brain dump or every event on your calendar requires your attention and focus.

This Habit gives you clarity about the objectives of projects you need to delegate. But more than that, it enhances your ability to develop additional leaders within your organization. We believe this is the true measure of effectiveness for any leader.

In your scheduled Delegation Think Time, sit with a pad of paper or a blank screen and think of a project you want to delegate.

1. Write the objective.
2. Write your idea of the best possible outcome.
3. Write what that outcome would mean for every stakeholder.
4. Write about who could handle this project based on their own strengths.
5. Establish both milestones and timelines so that you can communicate your expectations clearly, concisely and consistently.
6. Practice articulating your expectations to others on this project.

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7. Decide on the best method for the initial communication and follow-up messages.
8. Determine the best method to capture and respond to their questions and concerns.
9. Establish a method for ‘interim checkpoints’ so that obstacles get removed quickly.

Often, the realities of staffing determine to whom we can delegate. As a result of these constraints, spend even more time preparing your expectations if you cannot choose the very best person to complete the project. Don't try to communicate expectations when you bump in the hall.

Next, schedule a meeting with your delegate and prepare to secure their commitment. In preparation for this meeting, review your notes. This review will help you paint the picture of the best possible outcome, as well as articulate the specific, measurable results you need—and the dates you need them by.

Start that meeting with some context about the importance of the project and why you believe your delegate can accomplish it. Specify which results, tasks, and deadlines are negotiable and which are not.

The greatest source of stress in the workplace and at home is un-negotiated expectations. Don't cause undue stress on everyone because you don't practice this habit.

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## Habit 9: Think Time to Close Gaps Between Vision and Current Reality

This allows us to:

- Fulfill on our vision and audacious goals.
- Support strategic and big picture thinking.
- Solve problems that appear to be unsolvable.

Just like a winning head coach still spends time focusing on how to recruit stronger players, play bigger teams, and be part of a greater conference, we all have gaps we want to close.

Peter Senge, the noted management and leadership guru, calls these gaps Creative Tension. He suggests we focus simultaneously on both:

**Our current reality**, just like Martin Luther King, Jr. never missed an opportunity to articulate the high price being paid by African-Americans in the US in the 1960s, and

**Our long-range vision and goal**. MLK also used every opportunity to share his dream for his little children: that they might not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

This differs from Problem Solving Think Time. Instead of moving you away from an undesirable problem, Creative Tension Think Time moves you towards your vision. Creative Tension lives in the gap between where you are and where you want to go. This gap applies to your:

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- Quality of life.
- Quality of relationships.
- Career.
- Family.
- Company's growth.
- Shareholder value.

Schedule your Creative Tension Think Time on a regular basis, at least weekly. We recommend new leaders set aside every Friday afternoon for this exercise.

Pick an area of your life, your career, or your company and focus on the creative tension:

- Describe your vision for yourself and your organization.
- How good could it be?
- What would it look like if you achieved all your goals and lived your vision?
- Describe the current reality.

With goals, make them as specific as possible. The more clarity you have about your vision, the more prepared you are to create it. Similarly, stay focused on the facts when describing current realities. Reflect on and write about key performance measures. For example, if you focus on expanding your business, compare the current and the future revenues, resources, profits, and staffing. When Thomas Watson, the founder of IBM, was asked how he built such a company, he said he held in his mind the vision of what a large, complex, profitable company would do, and he did that from the very first day.

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## Conclusion

These 9 Habits unlock the door to effectively:

- Position you as the strategic leader in your organization,
- Manage your time,
- Bring out the best in yourself consistently, and
- Bring out the best in others, too.

These Habits lay the foundation for strategic leadership by supporting your own clarity of vision, focus, and clear communication. Effective self-management and self-leadership are required to bring solid management and inspired leadership to your entire organization.

We can easily break the cycle of rush-act-rush-act by practicing these Habits consistently. Our work, our organizations and our world can become simpler, saner, and amazingly more productive. Our lives can become more satisfying and more rewarding.

Initially, practicing some of these Habits on the weekend can be the most productive way to accomplish them regularly. However, this is time spent planning and organizing your work and calendar, not performing your work. Studies show that for every 20 minutes you spend planning and organizing, you save an hour later. This occurs because you are getting out of reactive mode and into strategic, proactive mode.

This is similar to the time a football player spends in the gym lifting weights and building strength. A football player wouldn't think of not completing his regimen every day.

As you develop these Habits, your strategic leadership style will emerge naturally. Your results will cascade out to all levels of your organization: leaders above you, your peers, and your teams.

# Respond, Not React Playbook

People will want what you have:

- Calm, thoughtful approaches to solving complex problems,
- Peace of mind,
- Clear thinking, and
- Effective, productive teams.

Others will see it in your face, recognize it in your pace, and hear the stories of your success.

# Respond, Not React Playbook

## About the Author

Katharine Halpin has facilitated business growth for almost 25 years. She innately knows how to bring order to chaos. The Halpin Companies' clients typically see double to triple growth in their revenue, profits, and shareholder value by using the Halpin proven methods. To learn more, see The Halpin Companies [website](#). Follow Katharine on [LinkedIn](#). To connect directly, call Katharine at (602) 266-1961.