

Driving yourself

There's an old adage that says there are four types of people in the world – those who are self-starters, those who need to be jump-started, those who need to be towed, and those who need to be pushed.

The funny thing is that many of us fall into most of these categories, depending on what we're doing, and who we're doing it with.

Very few of us stay in one category or the other. Some are hard-driving, take-no-prisoners types, all the time, all the day, all the year. Others are low-energy, "I'll wake up one of these days," types, all of the time, in every circumstance.

But most of us gain enthusiasm depending on what we're doing, and why we're doing it. Most of us seem to excel at times, coast at times, and stop at times.

How do we stay on task? Well, each person has their own techniques, but here are some easy methods to put you back in gear.

1. Make a list. Yes, I know it sounds old-school, but the very act of writing down a task list seems to help for most people. Write down the things you need to do, choose the most important task, get it done, and cross it off the list. If you have to wait on the task, temporarily move on to the next on the list in priority. When you get done with that one, go back to the first one on the list.

This simple little method alone has turned multitudes of non-focused workers into paragons of efficiency. Start at the top, order the list, check them off. It sounds like the old "lather, rinse, repeat" instructions on the shampoo bottle – but it really works, time and time again.

2. Learn to magnify your efforts. Use technology wisely. Organize your time well. Enlist other people. Focus your efforts on the task at hand, just as you would focus a camera to see a subject more clearly. Doing these things can help you achieve greater results from whatever effort you are able to give.

3. Organize your day at the beginning of the day, or even the night before. Get to work ready to work.

4. Minimize anything that's going to detract from your attitude. Keep your spirits high. Don't pay attention to the negative attitudes of other people. Don't allow yourself to get caught up in the minutiae that will drag you down – even if it's interesting!

It's not that difficult to turn yourself from into a self-starter. It's mostly just habit, coupled with great techniques. Despite what people may tell you, even someone who needs to be pushed can learn how to drive him or herself.