

BOOK REVIEW

18 MINUTES : FIND YOUR FOCUS, MASTER DISTRACTION AND GET THE RIGHT THINGS DONE

* Dr. Purushottam Bung

Peter Bregman (2011). 18 minutes: Find your focus, master distraction, and get the right things done, The Orion Publishing Group Ltd, Price: Rs.495.00, Pages 261, ISBN:9781409130574.

Author's profile :

Peter Bregman advises and consults to CEOs and their leadership teams in organizations ranging from Fortune 500 companies to start-ups and nonprofits. He speaks worldwide on how people can lead, work and live more powerfully. He is a frequent guest on public radio, provides commentary for CNN and writes for *Harvard Business Review*, *Fast Company*, *Forbes* and *Psychology Today*. He lives in New York City.

Review :

Goal setting, time management and task management have become the most sought after soft skills amongst executives/entrepreneurs of all cadres irrespective of their functional domain. The pressures on executives/entrepreneurs to achieve maximum in shortest span of time has become order of the day. There are so many books available on the above topic which tell about the importance of goal setting, time management, and task management and how one can manage these in an abstract manner like; classifying activities to be done or tasks to be accomplished into four categories, i.e. Important and Urgent, Important but not Urgent, Urgent but not Important, and Neither Urgent nor Important and then allocating time and delegating work accordingly and so on. But Peter Bregman in this book has in fact explained what one has to do or can do to ensure the honing of above mentioned soft skills to achieve maximum in the shortest span of time.

As the title says very clearly, one has to dedicate eighteen minutes out of four hundred eighty minutes of a working day as per the following;

Five minutes before the start of the day: for setting specific targets for the day and planning.

One minute every hour as the day passes: for monitoring the progress made in that hour with respect to the targets set for the day.

Five minutes at the end of the day: for total retrospection with regard to goals set for the day and accomplishment of the same.

This investment of eighteen minutes, every day, will result in enhanced focus and getting the right things done.

The four parts of the book give reader a complete tool kit as to how to manage the time effectively and efficiently. The first part is all about slowing down, stopping or pausing for a while and doing some serious introspection with regard to; what are the priorities of one's life, what is that one wants to achieve in his life, and so on. Such pauses will in fact refuel one's body and mind and help in creating time and space to aim one's efforts more accurately.

* Prof. Dr. Purushottam Bung, Professor and Director, KLS IMER, Belgaum, Karnataka, India

The second part focuses on analyzing Strengths, Weaknesses, Differences and Passions of oneself, and then setting the focus/goals/aims for the year through leveraging the Strengths, embracing the Weaknesses, asserting the Differences, and pursuing Passions. Author emphasizes that one should focus on maximum of five specific goals (goals can be work related or personal) that matters most and not too many. Everything that one does must fit in one of these five areas.

The third part focuses on translating and slicing down the yearly goals in to measurable and meaningful daily objectives. Spending five minutes before the commencement of the day on creating a daily to-do list through listing of the tasks to be accomplished during a given day and putting them under the five broad goals that one wants to accomplish in a given year. This will reduce the overwhelm and make one's efforts more focused. According to Peter, what one shouldn't do or ignore (e.g. frequent checking of the mail box for emails, message box in cell phone for smss' and so on) is more important than what one should do. Detailed scheduling of the tasks is another important aspect. He says not to leave things on one's to-do list for more than three days. Setting hourly alarm for timed interruption will help in monitoring the progress on hourly basis. Spending five minutes at the end of each day, thinking about learning happened in that day and on people with whom one should connect to make one's life more meaningful. These eighteen minutes a day, according to Peter can save hours of inefficiency.

The fourth part deals with simple tips for effective task and time management like; creating the right work environment, self motivation, making work a fun filled activity, resisting the temptation to say yes too often, learning to say no convincingly, keeping the forum open for discussion without actually waiting for too long, considering transition time while planning a task, taking time off (vacation) from the routine activities on regular basis, using right intentional distraction techniques, avoiding switching of the tasks (in the name of multitasking) as it is inefficient and unproductive, not seeking perfection (in fact encouraging imperfection) in all the work that one does, staying alert and quicker adaptation to changing situations/circumstances, and so on.

In total the book provides a simple, powerful and effective approach to managing each year, each day, each hour and each moment to ensure that you get the right things done. By setting out what is most important in one's life and creating a daily 18-minute ritual spread across an eight hour working day, one can learn to concentrate on the things that really matter. According to the author, the ritual is the key, and its power is its predictability; if one do the same thing in the same way over and over again then the outcome becomes predictable too.

The author while explaining the detailed process of goal setting, time management, and task management and simple tips to gain mastery in the same has delved deeply into his personal experiences as a management consultant and executive trainer. Large number of small chapters, each chapter focusing on specific learning is the unique feature of this book. This book is must read for all the working executives/entrepreneurs and students from management stream to gain valuable insights in goal setting, time management and task management and to hone these soft skills.

