

Hello, everyone. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thank you for tuning in. We have another Boot Camp class for your rising next gen high potential leaders October 21st of this year. So, don't forget to sign them up for them.

This week I want to talk about deciding how to decide using the Eisenhower Matrix. So, contractors occupy a very, very, very busy world. The, the pace is backbreaking and it's relentless. Let's face it. So, what about this is important to you? Well, you've got to have a way to sort through the complexity and I think the Eisenhower Matrix may be a great tool.

Now why is it called the Eisenhower Matrix? Most of us were introduced to this planning tool by Stephen Covey in his book, the 7 Habits of Personal Success. The book came out in 1989. Can you believe that? If you want to feel old, that book came out in 1989 and I can't remember. Everybody read it. It was maybe the biggest business book ever. It was huge. So this is where I was introduced to it and probably you too, but Eisenhower used this in World War II and he used this when he was the president of Columbia University, and he used it when he was president of the United States.

So, I have a question for you. Are you busier than the man who ran the allied side of World War II? Do you have more demands on your time? Do you have more important decisions to make than Eisenhower did a World War II? If it worked for him it can work for you too. So, most contractors walk in the door on January 1st or the beginning of a week or beginning of a month and they've got a list of things that they want to do, right? So, a few high priority things, but they get so busy. It just gets so jammed up with requests and phone calls and emails and job site emergencies and stuff that that high impact, high priority list goes out the window.

And it's a frustration that I've heard innumerable times from contractors over the years. If you think about this matrix, it's, it's a simple 2x2 matrix, and it's got urgent and important on these axes. Not important on the bottom, not urgent on the east side. And it's a nice little tool that you can use. So, if something is urgent and important, it's in quadrant one. You've got to do it. It's a deadline-driven thing. It's a high impact thing you're doing for a customer. It's something that you have to do.

Now, if you've got a phone call that your house is on fire, that is urgent and important, you're going, you're dropping everything, and you're going. For me the only time I've had a phone call like that in life, my little boy who was nine years old at the time was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Well, that was a blow to me and my family. And we were busy. In fact, I was in a conference room interviewing a new hire, a potential new hire. Well, I had to drop everything, and we were at the hospital for a few days and everything else went to the back. That's urgent and important. Okay? So, in business it will be deadline-driven things. It would be your highest priorities. In personal life it could be a personal emergency, a family emergency, something like that.

The second quadrant is different. These things are very important, but they're not urgent. This is the quadrant that ideally you should spend 20, at least 20% of your time in. This is planning. It's self-care, including exercise. It's vacationing. It's family time. It's all the things that add to the quality of your life. Planning and organizing in your business - this is where you work on your business. Now you see why it's easy to not work on your business because you're always working in your business in quadrant one or maybe worse, quadrant three. We'll get to that in a minute.

But this is where you focus on mission, vision, and values. You focus on goals, desired outcomes, strategic planning, implementing new software, hiring new people. This is where you really create value, long-term value in your organization. This is where you need to be. You need to be spending more time in quadrant two. Oh, we have a graphic too. So, feel free to download the graphic.

Quadrant three. This is the time stealer for most of us. Now back in 1989 when Covey's book came out, what was the biggest timewaster? It was the telephone. It was telephone calls. Telephone jangles and everything appears urgent. It just

did. What's the biggest timewaster today? The telephone is probably a distant second, it's email; it's email and text. They also appear urgent because we feel like we have to get back to our emails right away. Most we don't.

I did a quick analysis of my own emails after a week of vacation. 95% of my emails didn't require anything from me. There was a lot of junk in there of course, but they were stuffed just informing me what other people in the organization were doing. They were FYI type emails. Only 5% of those hundreds and hundreds of emails required me to really give it any personal attention. And I've been on vacation for a week or 10 days. So obviously they weren't urgent, but they appear urgent when they come into your mailbox. So, quadrant three is where you get your time wasted.

Quadrant four is even worse. Quadrant four is busy work, administrivia, compliance stuff. Timewasters like for young people, it's video games. I'm terrible at video games, but people, my son's age he's 27. Oh gosh, they can't get enough of them. TV would be a good example, streaming, whatever you get caught up watching some 20-part Netflix special or something like that. So, quadrant three and four is where your time gets away from your quadrant. One stuff you have to do, quadrant two is stuff you schedule, right? This is important stuff. So, you schedule it.

One way I was able to stay in shape when we had little kids and I was trying to get this business off the ground and all of that stuff, I scheduled to go to the gym because if you didn't schedule it, I mean, you schedule doctor appointments and dentist appointments and even haircuts for gosh sake. This is important stuff here. Taking care of yourself is important. So why wouldn't you schedule it and put it on the calendar just like another kind of appointment?

Quadrant three is called the quadrant of delegation. I don't know about that. There's got to be a better name for it. How do you delegate email? Oh, I guess you could delegate emails and have your assistant screen them, but that's a delicate thing. Phone calls, same thing. I don't know if I'd call quadrant three delegating and then quadrant four is the delete. The more you can cut out of those timewasters, the better off you're going to be. You'll spend more time in quadrant two with family, friends, exercising, church, et cetera. And you won't waste as much time staring at a TV or a computer screen or your phone.

Now, how do you decide? You take this tool, you look at the matrix and you decide this activity that we have scheduled for this week, does it fall into quadrant one, two, three, or four? Obviously, if it's in three or four, you can postpone it. If it's in one, you have to do it. If it's in two, you schedule it and you make it a priority. We came out of our strategic planning meeting last week. There were some things that I needed to do. I needed to get with Dennis on something I needed to get with Neha on some stuff, I needed to get with Charlotte, so I scheduled it. That's what you do to make things happen. You put it on your schedule, you put it on their schedules and that way it's a sacred, honored, time bound way to make sure you get things done.

Now, this is usually considered an individual tool. Covey looked at it that way, the articles that I read. Eisenhower used it in that way, but why couldn't it be a team tool so you and your other senior leaders, you have to focus on a few, a very few high priorities, right? Why could you not use this as a team tool to focus the attention of all of your senior leaders versus just one among the senior leadership group?

Eisenhower had one, well, he had a lot of great sayings, but one of his sayings was, "What's important is seldom urgent and what appears to be urgent is seldom important." And I would say in my experience, 30-plus years of working with contractors, I would say that is 100% true. So, use this tool at the individual and the senior leadership and even the group level, and I think it'll help you decide how you're going to decide. I'd love to hear your feedback. This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute.