

- Mark your confusion.
- Purposefully annotate the article (1-2 mature, thoughtful responses per page to what the author is saying)
- Write a 1+ page response to the article.

Warren Buffett's "2 List" Strategy: How to Maximize Your Focus and Master Your Priorities

By James Clear for *JamesClear.com*

With well over 50 billion dollars to his name, Warren Buffett is consistently ranked among the wealthiest people in the world. Out of all the investors in the 20th century, Buffett was the most successful.

Given his success, it stands to reason that Buffett has an excellent understanding of how to spend his time each day. From a monetary perspective, you could say that he manages his time better than anyone else.

And that's why the story below, which was shared directly from Buffett's employee to my good friend Scott Dinsmore, caught my attention.

Let's talk about the simple 3-step productivity strategy that Warren Buffett uses to help his employees determine their priorities and actions.

The Story of Mike Flint

Mike Flint was Buffett's personal airplane pilot for 10 years. (Flint has also flown four US Presidents, so I think we can safely say he is good at his job.) According to Flint, he was talking about his career priorities with Buffett when his boss asked the pilot to go through a 3-step exercise.

Here's how it works...

STEP 1: Buffett started by asking Flint to write down his top 25 career goals. So, Flint took some time and wrote them down. (Note: you could also complete this exercise with goals for a shorter timeline. For example, write down the top 25 things you want to accomplish this week.)

STEP 2: Then, Buffett asked Flint to review his list and circle his top 5 goals. Again, Flint took some time, made his way through the list, and eventually decided on his 5 most important goals.

(Note: If you're following along at home, pause right now and do these first two steps before moving on to Step 3.)

STEP 3: At this point, Flint had two lists. The 5 items he had circled were List A and the 20 items he had not circled were List B.

Flint confirmed that he would start working on his top 5 goals right away. And that's when Buffett asked him about the second list, "And what about the ones you didn't circle?"

Flint replied, "Well, the top 5 are my primary focus, but the other 20 come in a close second. They are still important so I'll work on those intermittently as I see fit. They are not as urgent, but I still plan to give them a dedicated effort."

To which Buffett replied, "No. You've got it wrong, Mike. Everything you didn't circle just became your Avoid-At-All-Cost list. No matter what, these things get no attention from you until you've succeeded with your top 5."

The Power of Elimination

I believe in minimalism and simplicity. I like getting rid of waste. I think that eliminating the inessential is

one of the best ways to make life easier, make good habits more automatic, and make you grateful for what you do have.

That said, getting rid of wasteful items and decisions is relatively easy. It's eliminating things you care about that is difficult. It is hard to prevent using your time on things that are easy to rationalize, but that have little payoff. The tasks that have the greatest likelihood of derailing your progress are the ones you care about, but that aren't truly important.

Every behavior has a cost. Even neutral behaviors aren't really neutral. They take up time, energy, and space that could be put toward better behaviors or more important tasks. We are often spinning in motion instead of taking action.

This is why Buffett's strategy is particularly brilliant. Items 6 through 25 on your list are things you care about. They are important to you. It is very easy to justify spending your time on them. But when you compare them to your top 5 goals, these items are distractions. Spending time on secondary priorities is the reason you have 20 half-finished projects instead of 5 completed ones.

Eliminate ruthlessly. Force yourself to focus. Complete a task or kill it.

The most dangerous distractions are the ones you love, but that don't love you back.

Possible response options:

- What distractions in your life are like those described in the last sentence of this article? What is the author's point about those?
- What would your list of 25 and 5 be? Write them down as your response and explain why you chose the 5 you chose.
- Select any passage and respond to it.