

THE MANAGEMENT JOURNAL FOR CORPORATE GROWTH

SmartBusiness

a SMART BUSINESS NETWORK publication

Reprinted from the August 2005 issue of *Smart Business Atlanta*.



Choosing the life you want

Start right now to build your own life plan.

How many tomorrows do you have? Thousands? One? The answer is that you don't know.

But the real question is about how you are living your life. Are you living on the assumption that there will always be a tomorrow to do what you want to do, to become the person that you want to be?

Three days ago, I was having dinner with my wife and daughter at a favorite restaurant and life couldn't have been more perfect. A few hours later, I was in an emergency room with my blood pressure crashing and my family watching a monitor that no longer registered a heartbeat for a full three seconds.

Did I wish for the chance to send one more e-mail, review one more report or attend one final meeting? Of course not.

But what about you? Isn't that what you do day after day as you're working late, taking cell phone calls at dinner and canceling your vacation?

We consistently make these decisions based on the conscious or unconscious assumption that there is always tomorrow to create the life we want. And then one day, our tomorrows are gone.

Wouldn't it be better to live each day making sure that we aren't missing the things that matter most to us? Over the years, I've been able to combine a successful career with a phenomenal marriage, being a great dad to my kids, backpacking, whitewater rafting, rock climbing, earning a third-degree black belt, becoming an author and a speaker, and now being Papa to my three grandchildren.

Jim Huling The Business of Life

And I possess no greater talent, ambition, drive or luck than you do.

The difference is that I had a plan. Start right now to build your own plan by choosing an area of your life that is one of the most important to you, such as your role as a spouse, parent or friend.

Now, think about what you really want in this role. What kinds of experiences do you want to share? What do you want the relationship to have meant throughout your life?

Stephen Covey recommends a powerful exercise in the "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" for gaining a vision of all that you want from a particular area of your life — writing a eulogy. I want to warn you, this is not for the faint of heart.

Picture the face of the person who is the focus of this role for you. Imagine that person standing before your friends and family one day when your time with them has passed. Hear them saying, "I'd like to tell you what my relationship with my dad/mom/husband/friend meant to me."

And then write the words that come from your heart.

As you do this exercise, use real language, resisting the temptation to settle for lofty words such as "He was a great person who dedicated himself to the highest use of his talents and to serving

the common good." Not only is this meaningless, it carries no emotional content. Without emotional content, you'll be missing the spark that will inspire you to want to live it out.

In my eulogy for my daughter, Sarah, to give about me, I started by writing, "My dad was always there for me." It was a sentence that changed my life. I then went on to write about how much we loved each other, the times we shared and all the things we would do together.

Today, I have a written statement of what I really want from my roles as Donna's husband, Scott's dad, CEO of my company and many others.

This is the plan that gives my life focus and a sense of meaning, the plan that lets me live knowing that I'm creating the life I want. In an emergency room three days ago, I was reminded that none of us is guaranteed a single tomorrow. Start today to win at the business of life.



JIM HULING is CEO of The Jim Huling Group, a strategic consulting company enabling leaders and their teams to achieve extraordinary results. Jim's leadership experience spans over three decades, including eleven years as CEO of a leading technology company named multiple times as one of the "25 Best Small Companies to Work For in America." Jim is a nationally recognized keynote speaker and is also the author of *Choose Your Life!* a powerful proven method for creating the life you want, now available on Amazon.