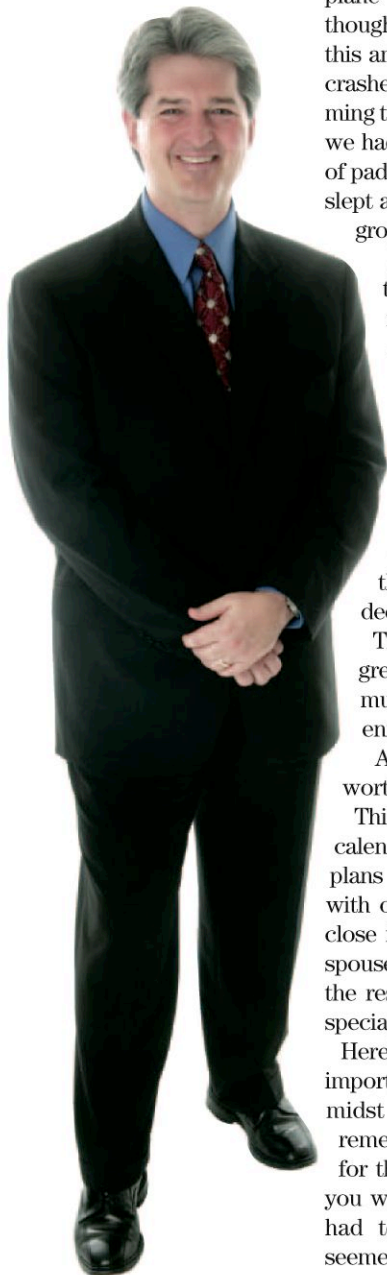


Treasured memories

Make time for the experiences that will be your most memorable moments.



I stood in the bow of the raft, balancing myself against the turbulence of the water, and said goodbye to the hundred miles of raging whitewater that had been my home for the past six days. Beside me stood my son, Scott, and my daughter, Sarah, also saying farewell.

I saw tears in their eyes that matched my own as I put my arms around them and knew that the memory of these days together would last forever.

As we later huddled together in the small plane that took us over the mountains, I thought about the memories we shared from this amazing trip — the towering rapid that crashed over my kayak and sent me swimming to the laughter of my children, the talks we had around the campfire after long days of paddling and the deeply spiritual night we slept at the site of a Native American campground.

It wasn't easy to make time for this trip. My responsibilities at work had never been greater, and there were moments when I wondered how I could possibly be away. But as I watched the river fade into the distance through the small window of the plane, I knew that the memories we had created on that river would last long after my day-to-day concerns at work were forgotten and that the choice to go was one of the best decisions of my life.

This realization illustrates one of the greatest lessons in the business of life: We must choose to create the memories that enrich our lives.

Are you filling your life with moments worth remembering?

Think about the next few weeks on your calendar. Are they punctuated by special plans for an afternoon spent exclusively with one of your children, a dinner with a close friend or a weekend away with your spouse? Or is your calendar consumed by the responsibilities of your life, leaving the special moments to happen by chance?

Here's a simple exercise to drive home the importance of planning special times in the midst of your busy schedule. Can you remember your specific challenges at work for this same month last year? The things you were worried about, the deadlines you had to meet and how important it all seemed? Probably not.

Now think about what you do remember from last year.

Most likely, you only remember the moments that really mattered. They might be moments you shared with co-workers or with loved ones, big events or smaller, more intimate moments. Some might be painful, while others are moments of real joy and connection with the people you love.

But this is all that you really remember from an entire year of your life. In essence, these memorable moments were your life; the rest were just details.

Why not create a life that is filled with the memory of treasured moments? What do you want your children to remember? The day you took off from work to spend with them, the night you took them to hear their favorite band in concert or the adventure trip that they will never forget?

What do you want the people on your team at work to remember? The special recognition you took time to give them at a company meeting or the afternoon you spent offering them personal mentoring?

These special memories, and all the others you want your life to include, won't happen unless you make time to create them. Some will be as simple as choosing a date, while others may require a series of steps. For my adventure trip, I spent a year completing at least one task each week, such as researching rivers, making reservations or buying gear.

The six days on the river were simply the final step, but with planning, I was able to weave all of these tasks into my schedule while still fulfilling my other responsibilities.

You can create a life that is rich with special moments and real connections with the people you care about, but to do so, you must take action. Start by opening your calendar right now and making time in the coming week for an experience that will one day be a treasured memory.

You'll be glad you did.

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