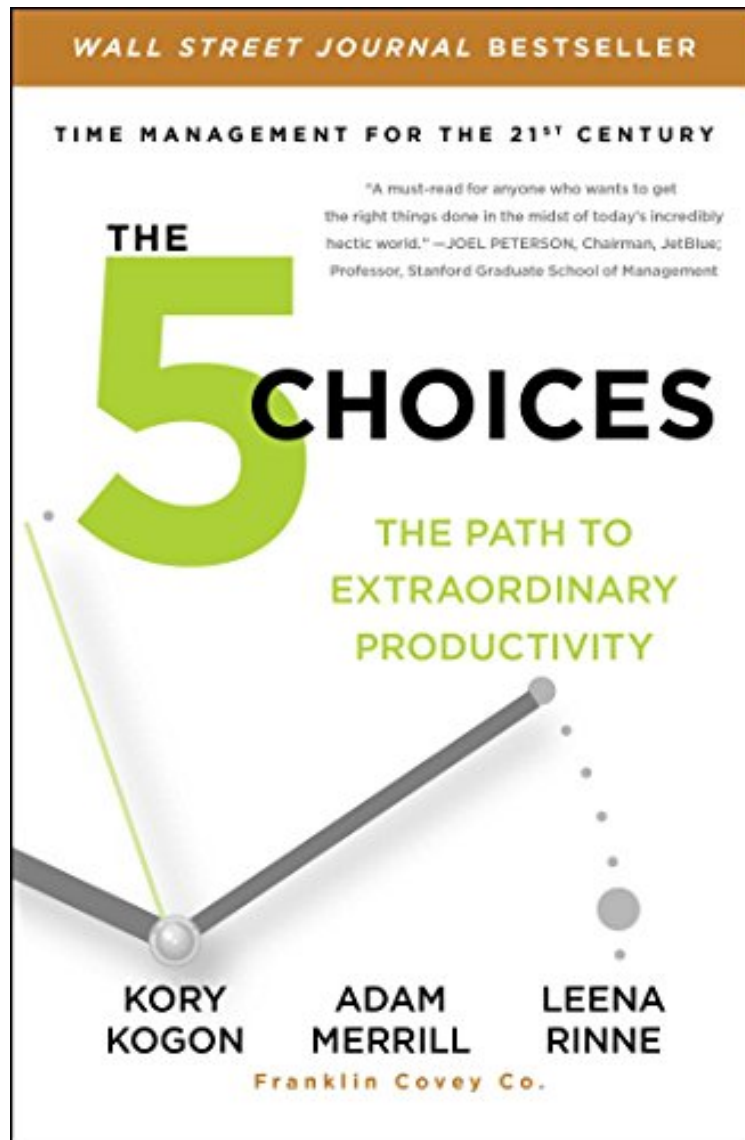


The 5 Choices: The Path to Extraordinary Productivity

Kory Kogon, Adam Merrill, Leena Rinne
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Kory Kogon, Adam Merrill, Leena Rinne : The 5 Choices: The Path to Extraordinary Productivity before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The 5 Choices: The Path to Extraordinary Productivity:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Kory has simplified my lifeBy RagsThis is a great way of addressing the myriad of items that confront us and call for some kind of response. Are they all important or urgent or are some of them of little or no importance? This book explains in easily understood words how one makes those decisions and then what is appropriate as a response. It has enabled me to significantly simplify how I manage all the paper that

comes my way via email or regular mail. I helps me decide to what I will give my attention while so many things are asking for my time and energy. I highly recommend 5 Choices.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Freak7395Great book. Really good articulation on identifying and changing your personal productivity.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Contains some great tips on time managementBy Dave DeCourseyContains some great tips on time management! I will put some of these in place as soon as I can!

The time management experts at FranklinCovey share their five critical techniques for avoiding distractions and paying focused attention to our most important goals and tasks in our daily lives: This book "fits a real need in these turbulent, but opportunity-rich, times" (Steve Forbes).Every day brings us a crushing wave of demands: a barrage of texts, emails, interruptions, meetings, phone calls, tweets, blogsdash;not to mention the high pressure demands of our jobsdash;which can be overwhelming and exhausting. The sheer number of distractions can threaten our ability to think clearly, make good decisions, and accomplish what matters most, leaving us worn out and unfulfilled. Now FranklinCovey offers powerful insights drawn from the latest neuroscience and decades of experience and research in the time-management field to help you master your attention and energy management through five fundamental choices that will increase your ability to achieve what matters most to you. The 5 Choices is time management redefined: it increases the productivity of individuals, teams, and organizations, and empowers you to make more selective, high-impact choices about where to invest your valuable time, attention, and energy. The 5 Choicesdash;from Act on the Important, Donrsquo;t React to the Urgent, to Rule Your Technology, Donrsquo;t Let It Rule Youmdash;will not only increase your productivity, it will also provide a renewed sense of engagement and accomplishment. You will quickly find yourself moving beyond thinking, "I was so busy today, what did I actually accomplish?" to feeling confident, energized, and extraordinarily productive.

"No one understands time management and productivity better than the researchers and consultants of FranklinCovey. The 5 Choices provides new, exciting, and above all, practical insights that can help you cope with your overwhelming workload and realize your full potential, in and out of work." (Dr. Heidi Grant Halvorson, Ph.D., Associate Director, Motivation Science Center, Columbia Business) "A very timely book that fits a real need in these turbulent, but opportunity-rich, times." (Steve Forbes, Chairman and Editor-in-Chief, Forbes Media) "As a working mom I have a very full life at home and at work. Staying productive is an extraordinary feat. The 5 Choices: The Path to Extraordinary Productivity brings together some of the best principles of Dr. Stephen Covey with the best thinking of how to better use my time, my technology, and my brain in order to keep my projects, my sanity, and most importantly my most important relationships prioritized. Extraordinary indeed!" (Jill Clark, Global Vice President, Talent Management, JDAndash;The Supply Chain Company) "The 5 Choices book is the answer to the overwhelming and debilitating stress levels that have become part of every day. With accessibility now 24 hours a day, these choices provide the methods to get the right things done, not try to get everything done, and to feel like you made a meaningful contribution at the end of the day." (Kevin Turner, Chief Operating Officer, Microsoft Corporation) "This incredible book contains practical solutions to modern productivity challenges that are insightful, well-researched, and yet simple enough to apply each and every day. The 5 Choices: The Path to Extraordinary Productivity includes the perfect blend of time management and prioritization tips, neuroscience research application, ways to address feeling overwhelmed with technology, and guidelines on how to manage our mental and physical energy. Utilizing the tools and recommendations provided will give you greater success at work and even more importantly, greater health and balance in everyday life." (Brandon Wade Anderson, Ph.D., Director, Organization Development Talent Management, Transamerica, Inc.) "The 5 choices is a great summary of what we know about the brain and managing our attention. It puts a lot of complex research in an accessible, digestible, and practical set of steps that can help people be more productive everywhere." (Dr. David Rock, Director, NeuroLeadership Institute) "I live a hectic, high-energy and sometimes overwhelming life. As an executive for a large company, working mom and the wife of a NCAA Division I head coach, I constantly feel like I am swimming upstreamdash;up early, getting kids to school, business travel, conference calls, meetings, after-school activities, and community events. While recovering from a serious horseback riding accident I read The 5 Choices and have applied its timeless principles, tips and techniques for managing my life, not just my work or time. I have had great results, which have allowed me to spend more time with family, coach my work team, and recover my health. If you live a hectic life or you want to be more fulfilled The 5 Choices is a must read." (Tabetha Taylor, Senior Director, Learning Delivery, Manheim| AutoTrader) "Sometimes in life you happen upon a "game changer,"hellip;that thing you realize can radically alter perceptions and outcomes. As I digested the principles and tools shared in The 5 Choices: The Path to Extraordinary Productivity, I realized I had indeed found a game changer. The 5 Choices gave me the insights and tools that would enable me to raise my personal bar, live in greater alignment, and increase the probability of achieving those goals that mattered most personally and professionally. The genius of this book is found in its real time "do-ability." If yoursquo;re wired as the type of person who wants to live an "extraordinarily productivesquo; life, this book is a must read." (Jeff Hill, Senior Vice

President, Global Sales, Team BeachBody)“In The 5 Choices, the “aharsquo; for me is that busy does not mean important. So, busy is not the badge of honor, rather it is accomplishment of the important. That one paradigm shift is changing my life and the lives of those around me.” (Kimo Kippen, Chief Learning Officer, Hilton Worldwide University)“The 5 Choices: The Path to Extraordinary Productivity is the perfect complement to the most influential book I’ve read, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. It provides simple and meaningful solutions to today’s paradox; it’s both easier and harder to achieve extraordinary productivity in today’s fast-paced, interconnected world. The 5 Choices can help you and your organization become extraordinary.” (Steve Randol, Vice President, Nestle Retail Operation Center)About the AuthorKory Kogon is FranklinCovey’s Global Practice Leader for Productivity focusing her research and content development around time management, project management, and communication skills. In addition to coauthoring The 5 Choices: The Path to Extraordinary Productivity, Kory is one of the authors of Project Management for the Unofficial Project Manager, and Presentation Advantage. Prior to FranklinCovey, Kory spent six years as the Executive Vice President of Worldwide Operations for AlphaGraphics, Inc.Adam Merrill is vice president of innovation for FranklinCovey, where he leads the effort for developing award-winning content that helps individuals and organizations become dramatically more productive. Adam has been researching time management and productivity topics around the globe for over twenty-five years, with particular emphasis on the impact of changing technology on how people succeed in a digital world. In addition, he is also deeply immersed in the impact physical and mental health have on one’s ability to be productive and make good decisions.Leena Rinne is a senior consultant with FranklinCovey. In her role, she works with clients to increase productivity and develop leaders in their organizations. Leena works with a wide variety of organizations, ranging from Fortune 100 companies to small, locally owned businesses.Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.The 5 Choices CHOICE 1 ACT ON THE IMPORTANT, DON’T REACT TO THE URGENT Anything less than a conscious commitment to the important is an unconscious commitment to the unimportant. —Dr. Stephen R. Covey Kiva lay in bed in the morning trying to shake off the grogginess from the previous night’s short rest. She’d gone to bed quite late. Her alarm pounded in her ears. She knew she should exercise. She wanted to. Before she went to bed, she even downloaded the latest power-yoga app. She smacked off the alarm. The tasks of the upcoming day quickly flooded her mind. A large project at work had a looming deadline. And there were about a million things that needed to be done floating around in her mind. Anxious, she immediately went for her smartphone to check for emails from the project team. “Immediate attention!” “Critical data!” “Needs your review and decision today!” Of the thirty emails that had come in since she put her phone down the night before, many of them looked vital. Some were junk mail; she quickly deleted those. Some were unclear, so she began to scroll through them to see if any of them required her attention. Before she knew it, she’d spent forty-five minutes checking her email and hadn’t even left the bed. “Oh, well,” Kiva sighed, accepting that she’d forgone her chance to try her new yoga routine. In fact, she realized, if she didn’t get going, she would be late for work. After hurriedly taking a shower, putting on some makeup, and staring at her closet to see which outfit was the least wrinkled, she dressed and headed out the door, pausing just long enough to leave a note for her housemate in the other room to take out the trash and pick up some coffee on the way home. Ten minutes later, she stopped by a java hut in the train station to grab a bagel and a latte (better make it a double, or a triple?), and jumped on the train just as it was about to depart. She looked around and found a seat next to a man who looked way too relaxed for this time in the morning. She shrugged it off, reached in her satchel, and opened her tablet. She had an important planning meeting today and needed to get some numbers together. She had hoped to do it yesterday, but there was that urgent request from Karl, who always seemed to bug her at the most problematic times! Maybe he had a crisis radar that activated every time she was under pressure. Wow! And last week he even had the gall to ask her out. What! Are you kidding? Sorry, Karl. She scanned her numbers and realized she was missing some key input from Kellie. She quickly texted: “I need those inventory reports by 9:00. Can you get them to me?” A few seconds later, the text came back from Kellie: “I’m on it!” “Great!” She thought, “Kellie is so responsive. I’m so glad she’s on my team. I can always count on her in a pinch.” While she was shuffling through some papers, the guy sitting next to her gave her a look that was somewhere between bemused and annoyed. “Oh, well,” she thought, “he probably doesn’t have a real job anyway. He’s probably a part-time art professor or something. Certainly not someone who has important business to get done.” She buried her head deeper in her reports. During the twenty-minute ride into town, Kiva congratulated herself for using her commute time so well. She had gotten the reports from Kellie, sent off ten more emails to members of her team so that they knew she was paying attention, and gathered the key numbers she needed for her planning meeting. Her day went pretty much as it always did—hopping from one meeting to the next. Decisions, decisions! The project was pretty close to its original timeline and everybody seemed to be pulling their weight. There was one vendor who never got it right the first time, and always asked for more money to handle increases in scope. “We knew the Web component would be big, right?” If only she didn’t have to spend so much time dealing with corporate reports and internal politics. There were a number of projects going on, and everybody needed the same resources at the same time. She had spent ninety minutes that

afternoon just trying to secure the programming resources she needed this week that had suddenly been pulled to another project. Really? As she closed her laptop at seven that evening, she still had a few more emails to send. (Thank heaven for the train ride home!) She glanced up and plotted an exit path that would take her behind Karl's desk so that he wouldn't see her. She left the building and took a deep breath of the crisp evening air. Ahhh! If she were lucky, she could make it home in time for a take-out meal (Japanese? Italian? Korean?) and catch a couple of episodes of her favorite show online to unwind. Let's look at Kiva's life for a moment. Is she, as she thought, productive? Think about it for a minute. She's working on important things— even critical things. She's using her time to get things done. She's got a number of electronic devices to help her communicate with others. She's connected. She's wired. She's moving things forward and making things happen. So, is she productive? The answer to that question is rooted in the principle of discernment, which is defined as the ability to judge well. This principle is at the heart of effective decision management and how we use our brains. **HOW WELL ARE YOU USING YOUR BRAIN?** In a knowledge-work world where we are paid to think, create, and innovate, a primary tool for creating value is our brain. So, before we go further, let's gain a little understanding about how our brain works. Don't worry, we won't delve deep into advanced psychology or brain chemistry. We will simply talk about two basic parts of our brain: the Reactive Brain and the Thinking Brain. The Reactive Brain is the lower part of your brain. It is the source of the fight-or-flight response and is also where we process our feelings and emotions. Importantly, as we will see, it is also where your brain processes pleasure and enjoyment. Most of these processes happen automatically, before we have time to think about what is going on. The Reactive Brain is also the place of acquired yet deep-seated habits. These are the patterns of thinking and behavior we've placed there so strongly that they have become unconscious and automatic— like driving to work while we are busy thinking about something else. Scientists say that the Reactive Brain was built to ensure our survival as far back as prehistoric times. Imagine a figurative caveman walking in the forest. His survival depended on his ability to react quickly, without thinking, to an immediate threat, like a saber-tooth tiger. If he didn't move fast, he would be that tiger's lunch. In contrast, the upper part of our brain, the Thinking Brain, is the place where we make conscious and very intentional decisions. It is often called the executive function, because it is where we can consciously direct and override other impulses from the Reactive Brain. It is where we act rather than react. It is where we choose to pay attention to something in a deliberate, thoughtful way. Because the responses of the Reactive Brain are deeply ingrained, they take very little energy. They happen fast and, unless we consciously choose a different course of action, the Reactive Brain rules— grabbing our attention away from higher thoughts to more immediate stimuli. Much of the advertising we see is designed to appeal to the Reactive Brain— startling motions, surprising sounds, sexual imagery, and so on. In the words of one researcher, "The implications for marketers are clear: to move people quickly and with the least amount of resistance, we need to focus much of our effort on low-road physical and emotional processing, which are the superhighways to the consumer unconscious."¹ In this view, we are simply wallets with neurons attached— the goal being to capture enough of our reactive neurons to get access to our wallets!

THINKING BRAIN REACTIVE BRAIN

- Planning
- Reflexes
- Attention
- Instincts
- Self-control
- Emotions
- Choices
- Reactions
- Follow-through
- Impulses

The Thinking Brain, by contrast, takes more time and effort, but it is where we transcend our primitive responses, regulate our behavior, and make better choices about what to do. This is the part of the brain that explains why humans effectively left the cave and created civilization and culture. Our ability to choose a more thoughtful response to something is at the heart of what it means to be human. The good news from neuroscience is that, with practice, we can actually rewire our brains to be more thoughtful and discerning about our choices. It is in those discerning choices that we determine the quality, joy, and happiness of our lives. **ON BEING INTENTIONAL** So, what does all this have to do with Kiva? The question about her productivity rests on the deeper question about how she is using her brain. Put another way, has she been discerning amid all the pressures and demands for her time, attention, and energy to make the thoughtful, high-value choices that will allow her to feel truly accomplished at the end of the day? The same principle applies to all of us. In order to be truly productive, we need to gain the habit of being conscious and intentional about everything we do. In today's world, we can't just go on the "I have a busy life" autopilot and expect to end up where we want to be. To be truly productive and make those high-value decisions, it helps to have both a framework and a process. Franklin Covey's Time Matrix provides the framework, and Pause-Clarify-Decide (PCD) provides the process. **THE TIME MATRIX** Franklin Covey's Time Matrix model is one of the most enduring frameworks for helping people manage their time and represents a whole way of thinking. It allows us to be discerning so we can make good decisions about where to spend our time, attention, and energy. It is based on the interaction of things that are urgent and things that are important. Here's how we define those words:

- Urgent. Something that feels like it has to be done right now, whether or not it makes a difference in terms of results.
- Important. Something that, if not done, will have serious consequences in terms of results.

The Time Matrix model illustrates that people spend their time, attention, and energy in one of four quadrants, depending on how urgent and important their activities are. **Q1 IS THE QUADRANT OF NECESSITY** Quadrant 1 (Q1) contains things that are both urgent and

important. It is filled with crises (like a hospital visit), emergency meetings, last-minute deadlines, pressing problems, and unforeseen events. These are the things that need to be done now and, if not done, could have serious consequences. That's why we call it the quadrant of necessity. These things come at you; an angry client is on the phone, a family member has a heart attack, the server goes down, your boss needs something now, or a big opportunity comes up that needs attention immediately or it will slip away. If you spend a lot of time in Q1, you may feel productive and energized, but if you spend too much time there, you may also burn out. Spending all your time dealing with the drama of crises and pressing problems will keep your stress levels high and drain you of your best thinking and creative energy. Although it is often necessary to be in Q1, it is rarely where we do our best, most creative, and highest-value work, even though it may feel like it at the time. In investment terms, you usually get out what you put in. It's essentially a break-even quadrant for the attention and energy you spend there. You may even get some short-term attention for your supposed heroics but, in the overall scheme of things, it's not a solid foundation for enduring success.

Q3 IS THE QUADRANT OF DISTRACTION Quadrant 3 (Q3) activities are urgent but not important. Because things here are urgent, they feel like they need to be done now, but really, there are no serious consequences if you don't do them. Here you find needless interruptions; unnecessary reports; irrelevant meetings; other people's minor issues; unimportant emails, tasks, phone calls, status posts, and so on. Many people spend a lot of time in Q3 thinking they're in Q1. However, they're just reacting to everything coming their way. They are confusing motion with progress, action with accomplishment. If we spend a lot of time here, we can be busy but ultimately unfulfilled. A full calendar and to-do list don't necessarily add up to a full life. Business can be validating at a surface level, but that's about as far as it goes. Q3 takes the attention and energy we could be putting toward those things that are really important and that can really make an impact every day at work and at home. In terms of the time and energy you invest here, you get less than you put in. It's a negative return on your attention and energy.

Q4 IS THE QUADRANT OF WASTE The things in Quadrant 4 (Q4) are neither urgent nor important. We call this the quadrant of waste. We really shouldn't be here at all, but we often get so burned out fighting the battles in Q1 and Q3 that we go here to escape. This is where we let our brains go completely unconscious and fill our time with excessive relaxation, television, gaming, Internet surfing, gossip, and other time-wasters. Q4 is where we find things that are taken to extremes. Appropriate and renewing relaxation, for instance, is a very important activity and is found in Quadrant 2. (We'll talk more about this quadrant in a bit.) But when we find that we've spent ten hours on the weekend, still in pajamas with the remote in hand, watching reruns of some reality show we don't even care about, we know we've gone from productive relaxation to some murky place deep into Q4. When we spend a lot of time in Q4, we feel lethargic and aimless. If we stay there too long, we can experience depression and even despair. We can feel guilty, knowing that our time would be better invested in more important things, but we lack the energy to go there. Although we might find momentary pleasure in some of the activities, they are really empty calories. They don't nourish our lives, our relationships, or our own sense of self-worth. The time and energy you invest here generates zero return.

Q2 IS THE QUADRANT OF EXTRAORDINARY PRODUCTIVITY Quadrant 2 (Q2) activities are important but not urgent. This is the quadrant of extraordinary productivity because here is where you take charge of your own life and do the things that will make a real difference in terms of accomplishment and results. In Q2, you will find things like proactive work, achieving high-impact goals, creative thinking, planning, prevention, relationship building, learning, and renewal. Unlike the other quadrants, where things come at you, you have to consciously choose to be in Q2. You have to use the thinking part of your brain to discern the things of highest value and then act on them. Now, we have heard people say, "Quadrant 2 is a nice, idealistic place to be, but it's not a reality for me. I don't have time for the Quadrant 2 stuff." Really? The reality is that if you want to do great work and feel like you are making your greatest contribution every day, you don't have time not to be in Quadrant 2. This is admittedly not always easy. It takes energy and thoughtful decision making, and will likely require you to break habits and socialization that may feel counterintuitive. But the effort brings incredible returns. Time spent in Q2 reduces the crises and problems in Q1 because you will intentionally spend time planning, preparing, and preventing. If you spend time in Q2, your relationships will be healthier because you invest in them before there is a meltdown or a critical event. You will be more confident and effective at work because you don't wait until the last minute to work on a key project. You will lower your level of stress because you'll intentionally decrease the amount of time you spend in Quadrants 1, 3, and 4. You will increase your ability to be productive over the long haul because you are taking care of your health and energy. Most important, you will know that you are making progress on the things that really contribute and add value to your work and life every day. The most thoughtful, creative, and proactive work that truly changes the game is found in Q2. Bottom line: The time and energy you invest in Q2 generates returns that are much higher, even exponentially higher, than that which you put in. That's why it's the quadrant of extraordinary productivity.

WHAT IS YOUR RETURN ON THIS MOMENT (ROM)? In the introduction, we mentioned a six-year global study on how people spend their time. Here's how the data show up for all four quadrants in the Time Matrix: 51.2% SPENT ON URGENT ACTIVITIES 30.8% SPENT ON THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER 41.5% SPENT ON UNIMPORTANT ACTIVITIES If this were the investment portfolio for the time and energy of your life, where would

you rather be investing? What if you could increase the amount of time you spent in Q2 by even a few more percentage points? Do the hard analysis. Remembering the investment metaphor for the matrix, ask yourself, "What is my return on this moment?"

Q1 = Break Even
Q3 = Negative Return
Q4 = Zero Return
Q2 = Exponential Return

The key to extraordinary productivity is to consciously use the framework of the Time Matrix to assess what is going on in your life. It's an investment decision, an allocation of your time, attention, and energy. Where will the payoff be? Going back to Kiva, if she is busy at work and gets a call saying that her brother has just been in a serious automobile accident and telling her to come to the hospital right away, that would be both urgent and important. It needs to be done now, and to ignore that request would likely have serious consequences. For her, this is a Q1. She puts down what she is working on and goes to help her brother. In contrast, if Kiva is busy at work and her computer dings because someone has emailed a funny joke, it may seem urgent (because it feels like it has to be responded to), but it is really unimportant (no serious consequences if she left it in her inbox for a while), so it is a Q3. Because Kiva likes jokes, if she is not careful, she might mindlessly move her attention to this email. However, if she were discerning this item through the lens of the Time Matrix, she would realize that the project she is working on is far more important, so she would remain in Q2, focused on her project. This conscious and vigilant decision making with the Time Matrix will make a huge difference every single day, yielding a greater return on the investment of your time, attention, and energy.

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR Right now you may be saying to yourself, "Now, this is all fine and dandy, but the person who should be reading this is my boss! If it were up to me, I'd be in Q2 all the time, but so much of my work is out of my control. If I didn't respond to my boss or others immediately, I'd get fired! Then which quadrant would I be in? My work is driven by urgency, and that's just the way it is." Sometimes, it feels as though our work is inherently driven by urgency and that's just the way it is. Yes, we agree that your boss and work environment play a big role in how you spend your time. But if we're going to get real, let's get real. There is probably a lot you do to yourself that puts you in Q3 or Q1—or even Q4—that has nothing to do with others. Our research and experience show that even people with very tight job descriptions, even people who work in urgency-driven jobs like a hospital emergency room or a customer-service center, can take significant steps to reclaim some of their time, attention, and energy, and direct more of it to the activities in Q2. Bottom line: You may never be able to change your boss, but you can change yourself. And if you get your own life in order first, you might actually be able to influence your boss. If not, you are still better off by spending more time in Q2. Let's look at some of the self-imposed things we do to keep us from Q2. To do this, we need to go back to our brain.

THE URGENCY ADDICTION Earlier we talked about two basic parts of your brain: the Thinking Brain and the Reactive Brain. We also said that the Reactive Brain was where we experience the feelings of fight, flight, and pleasure. It turns out that the pleasure circuitry of our brain is central to why we tend to seek out things that are urgent, even to the point where we can become addicted to urgency. Most addictions work on the same basic neurotransmitter in our brain: dopamine.² Cocaine, for instance, works by inhibiting the uptake of dopamine in the brain so that the chemical stays there longer, producing an unnatural high that the brain itself is not naturally equipped to produce or regulate. In a normal setting, dopamine is a great chemical, and it helps us experience the natural pleasures of life.³ It gives us the energy to get up and get going, and it also helps us focus our attention on things that are important to us. Dopamine levels go up in our brain when we do great work, when we accomplish things that matter, when we are moving forward in our lives. However, because dopamine is involved in producing pleasure, which our brain likes, we may start pursuing activities simply because they produce dopamine, whether or not they are actually helpful or productive.⁴ We might, for example, create a false sense of urgency about a task, so we get all amped up to do it, then joyfully check it off so that we can feel a sense of accomplishment without even asking if the task needed to be done at all! Have you ever written something down that you already did just so you could check it off? (Be honest! That same dopamine hit you are looking for!) The idea of urgency addiction is that we like the revved-up feeling of doing things and checking them off, so we start subconsciously looking for things to check off, even if they don't matter. We might even be uncomfortable or jittery if we are not busy checking something or doing something. We could even start to crave the constant busyness in our lives to the extent that we find it very hard to pause and think for any extended period of time. This is a sure recipe to end up in Q3—where we spend our time getting dopamine hits while working on things that really have no value at all. In today's knowledge-work environment, where high-value decisions are the name of the game, this is not a good place to be. Like all addictions, urgency may feel good in the moment, but when we step back and realize what we have done, we feel worse. Sometimes we avoid this realization by simply staying busy all the time. That way, we don't have to look at what we are doing to see if it really matters. It keeps us from confronting the facts about how we are spending our time, attention, and energy. As popular author Brené Brown states, "We are a culture of people who've bought into the idea that if we stay busy enough, the truth of our lives won't catch up with us."⁵ Yikes!

A CULTURE OF BUSYNESS Even scarier, busyness has become social and psychological shorthand to communicate our worth. Go up to people at work and ask them how they are doing. More often than not they'll say something like, "I'm totally busy. How about you?" Then yours'll reply with something like, "Oh, yeah, I'm completely

overloaded. And then you nod your heads together in understanding, having performed the mutually affirming ritual our culture accepts as validating your worth at work and as a human being. The implication is that if you are busy, then someone must need you for something and, therefore, you must be valuable. The busier you are, the more you must be needed. It's the existential claim of the twenty-first century: "I am stressed out, therefore I am." Someone once asked us, "If I am not busy, what am I?" An important question indeed! When we do this to each other inside our organizations, we create a culture of busyness and urgency, rather than a culture of accomplishment and extraordinary productivity. We have been socialized into thinking that everything has to be done now, and that's just not true. IS IT BAD TO BE BUSY? We are not saying it's bad to be busy. Q2 can be a very busy place, because it is filled with exciting, impactful, and high-value work. Being busy doing great things is not the problem. In fact, it is one of the joys of a meaningful life. The problem is when busyness rather than accomplishment becomes the goal. The natural function of the pleasure centers in our brain is to reward us when we do things that are helpful and productive. That's why they are there to begin with. However, they only work properly when consciously directed by the Thinking Brain. It is this Thinking Brain that helps us discern those things that actually merit our attention and energy. When we don't use our Thinking Brain to make wise choices, our Reactive Brain can quickly lead us into places that generate no value and can even damage our lives. When we live in our Reactive Brain, we do things that take us away from the high-return productivity of Q2, and into the low-return productivity drains of Quadrants 1, 3, and 4. WHAT DO YOU DO THAT PUTS YOU IN Q1 OR Q3? The impact of all of this is that when we are addicted to urgency, we can easily slide into Q1 or Q3 without being aware of what we are doing to ourselves. Here's how it often shows up:

- When we say, "I do my best work under pressure!" What we are really saying here is that we need the adrenalizing sense of urgency to keep us focused because we can't do it on our own. Because this line of thinking leads us to be dependent on external pressure to generate what should be internal motivation, we tend to go into a false crisis mode, bringing a deadline upon us so that we are forced to get that chemical hit in our brains to get us going. The problem with this idea is that we rarely, in fact, do our best work under pressure. We may work hard and, ultimately, get the job done, but the kind of quality thinking that great results require is often impossible when the real deadline looms. The alternative is for us to learn how to consciously generate attention internally, naturally, when there is still ample time to do great work. Think about it. Do you often hear yourself saying that you do your best work under pressure? Why do you say that? What are the consequences in terms of your life and the quality of your results?
- When we procrastinate. Procrastination is another of those common, self-imposed robbers of Q2 time. Sometimes we procrastinate because we can't muster enough internal motivation on our own, so we wait for the deadline. At other times, procrastination comes from a fear of failure or uncertainty about how to proceed. So we wait again until the bigger fear of a deadline or other significant consequence forces us to get going. Sometimes we can put important things (like health and exercise) off for years or even decades, until a real crisis forces us to rethink our approach. If you live in the United States, when do you pay your taxes? You may have good intentions and plan on sending in your paperwork early on February 15. It is important, not urgent—a perfectly well-placed Quadrant 2 activity. But data show that nearly half of all taxpayers (41 percent) wait until the final four weeks of the tax season to file their returns, with 27 percent opting to file in the final two weeks before the deadline. Many people actually wait until the night before, standing in line at the post office at midnight, April 14! If you choose to procrastinate, you are taking a perfectly good Q2 activity and pushing it off until it becomes a full-blown Q1 crisis. You are the one who causes Q1 to get bigger than necessary, creating unnecessary stress and sleepless nights. Think about it. Are there important things that you routinely put off until the last minute? Is it a conscious choice, or is it simply unconscious avoidance? What is the impact on the quality of your results? Rewiring your brain to act while items are in Q2 will allow you higher-quality results while mitigating the size and scope of some very stressful Q1s.
- When we become accommodators. Sometimes, in our desire to be helpful to others, we can build dependency and weakness in the relationship so that people always come to us for things they should be doing themselves, landing us squarely in Quadrant 3. Imagine an office setting where a new policy has been posted on a shared drive on the company's internal network. Bob needs to access the policy, but he doesn't know where to get it. He knows Steve is smart, so he goes to Steve and asks him how to get it. Steve says, "It's on the shared drive." But because it's easy to do, he also says, "Here, I'll just email it to you." Bob says, "Great!" and heads back to his office. On the way, Janet stops Bob and asks him if he knows where to get the new policy. Bob says to Janet, "Sure! It's on the shared drive, but it's a lot easier to go ask Steve." Here, Steve has become the go-to person for getting things off the shared drive for everyone in the office. Now, for a while, Steve may like this. It makes him feel useful and validated (dopamine!). But, eventually, a significant amount of his time gets consumed in doing things for others that they should be doing for themselves. More important, it takes time away from what he should be doing to get results in his real job. Now, we are not saying it's not good to be helpful or to not be a team player; but when you establish a pattern of accommodation, you breed dependence and weakness. A much better approach for Steve would be to say, "It's on the shared drive, in the folder marked Policies and Procedures," and leave it at that. If Bob had some sort of problem retrieving it, Steve could say, "Let

me show you how, so that yoursquo;ll be able to get it easily next time.rdquo; That way, Steve is keeping the responsibility where it should be and keeping himself out of Q3. Think about it. Are there instances in which you are accommodating others when you shouldnrsquo;t be? Why are you doing it? Can you find a way to professionally and courteously help them meet their own needs? While you are helping them, what Quadrant 2 activities are starting their march toward Quadrant 1? bull;nbsp;When we are afraid to say no. Sometimes we end up in Q3 or Q1 because we have a hard time saying no to others, even when saying no is the right thing to do. It may be because we are afraid of looking weak or incapable, or from a desire to please others. It could be the fear of isolation or a desire to avoid conflict. It could simply be that we lack the mental energy to deal with the discussion that may ensue. Whatever the reason, these emotions and feelings come from the Reactive Brain. You may know people who are so anxious to get along or avoid conflict that they will say yes to pretty much anything. This can apply to the many small distractions that fill their lives, or to large projects that never should have been undertaken. People who are too anxious to please or avoid conflict can deceive themselves into overoptimistic assessments of their ability to get things done. Ironically, this can result in even greater disappointment or conflict down the road. Even worse, if these individuals are in management positions, they can throw their entire teams into ill-conceived Q3 projects that consume everyone's time, but generate little in terms of meaningful results. You can make it easier to say no in a way that doesnrsquo;t get you fired or on someone's hit list by having your own house in order first. Keep your calendar visible or handy so that you can consistently use it as your road map throughout the day when making decisions about where to focus your time and energy. Then, if you find that you need to say no to something, try phrases like: ldquo;I am working on something that is really important right now, but I have time in about two hours. Are you free then or is there another time that might work?rdquo; ldquo;You know I am always willing to help out, but tonight is date night with my spouse/significant other and it is a big commitment; letsquo;s brainstorm some other options to get this task done.rdquo; ldquo;Irsquo;m finding that I am not really needed in that meeting. Would it be okay if I dropped it from my schedule?rdquo; ldquo;Can we clarify our email and texting? I just want to make sure what the expectations are when I receive emails or texts at night. I want to confirm that I will answer them in the morning first thing. Okay?rdquo; ldquo;I know that I have helped on those projects before, but I may not be the best resource, and it takes me away from focusing on these other top goals. Can we discuss options to make sure my time is being used in the best possible way?rdquo; These examples may not exactly fit your style or situation, but it will pay great dividends for you to come up with some phrases you can be comfortable with. You may even want to practice them ahead of time, so that you can feel more confident saying them. The key thing is to have the courage to politely, yet firmly, decline the unnecessary Q1s and Q3s that can suck you away from activities that will have a bigger impact on results. But letsquo;s face it. Sometimes you need to go to Q1 or what you perceive to be a Q3 just because the boss said so. When you do this, realize that these people are not waking up every morning to come up with new ways to take you off taskmdash;they have performance pressures too. More likely, they see you as a capable and competent person whom they can trust to get something done. While this is good and affirming, as you start to speak up in a confident, professional, and respectful way, you may be able to remove or redirect some of the Q1s and Q3s that come your way. As you do this, you may even help those you work with become more conscious about what they are doing and how those things contribute (or not!) to real results. As you do this, everybody wins! Think about it. Are you comfortable saying no when appropriate? Do you avoid conflict to the extent that you fill your work and life with Q3 activities that keep you from things that are more important? These are some of the more common ways people move themselves into Q1 and Q3. But remember, whether it is pleasure, fear, stress, or conflict avoidance, they all have a chemical incentive in our Reactive Brain. Unless we are conscious and discerning, we will tend to move in the direction of those short-term chemical incentives and right out of the important priorities in Q2. Q2 has chemical incentives as well; they just happen to be ones you have to choose to create for the long-term high of real accomplishment and contribution. In our experience, Q3 is the best place to reclaim some of your precious time, attention, and energy and redirect it to Q2. Think about it. What is one thing you could do differently, starting today, to reclaim some of that Q3 time? **WHAT ABOUT Q4?** The reasons we go to Q4 are usually the reverse side of Q1 and Q3. Sometimes we feel so beaten up from all that time in urgency land that we feel we need to crash and recover. So we go looking for some easy dopamine hits that donrsquo;t require much energy but temporarily make us feel better, and we go to the wasteful or excessive activities in Q4. Now, letsquo;s be clear. Real renewal is very important and, as we said earlier, a vital Q2 activity. And what is renewing for one person may not be for another. For example, many of the things we often consider wastefulmdash;computer games, social media, television viewing, and so onmdash;can all be valid renewing activities for some people, so it would be inaccurate to just lump them together and call them a waste of time. As important as what you are doing are the reasons why you are there and how long yoursquo;ve been involved in a particular activity. What starts out as Q2 renewal can quickly slide into Q4 if you are not careful. One woman shared how she came home extremely tired from several weeks in a row on the road. On Saturday morning, she slept in, then slogged over to the couch to watch one of her favorite TV shows. She normally finds watching one or two episodes to be an enjoyable and a renewing activity but, on this day, she realized that she was burned out, and stayed on the couch while episode after episode churned on and she neglected some important relationships at home. (The sudden

recognition of her dog staring up at her with a "Why are you ignoring me?" look was the first clue.) She knew there would be consequences in her relationships that she would have to repair later on (and there definitely were). But she had let herself get to the point where, for a time, she was literally stuck in Q4. It was a painful learning experience about the Time Matrix and living with balance. The Time Matrix becomes your personal accountability system. Only you can decide which quadrant you are in, because the labels depend solely on what is most important to you. So how do you know when you have slipped into Q4? The key is an honest and discerning internal dialogue about what you are doing. You might consider questions like: • Is this activity really renewing? Is it adding to or draining my energy? • Have I become unaware and stayed in this activity too long? • Is this activity nourishing important relationships or taking away from them? • Is my engagement in this activity excessive? • What price am I paying in terms of more important things by spending my time here?

THE ESSENTIAL SKILL FOR GETTING INTO Q2: PAUSE-CLARIFY-DECIDE The key to getting into Q2 is to pause your Reactive Brain long enough to clarify what is coming at you, then decide whether it is worth your time and energy. We refer to this vital process as Pause-Clarify-Decide (PCD). Our ability to do this comes into play in the moment of choice when we consciously decide whether or not we will do something. Using PCD basically means that we take a brief instant to ask the question: Is it important? This simple process helps us get the return on the moment we desire.

IS IT IMPORTANT? (PAUSE, CLARIFY, DECIDE) Again, this is not how our brain is naturally wired to react. We know that we are wired to respond immediately to things that appeal to our Reactive Brain and get the dopamine flowing. But it is this very act of pausing before we act that makes human achievement possible. Otherwise, we would still be running around in loincloths, looking out for tigers. But don't worry! The good news is that you already do this all the time. You do it when you get up in the morning and decide what to eat. You do it when navigating an intersection and decide which way to turn. There are thousands of decisions—many of them so well practiced that they are virtually automatic—where there is a moment of choice between doing one thing or doing something else. The skill is to take that ability you use so well in some places and apply it to other areas where, up until now, you may not have been so discerning. With an understanding of the Time Matrix, you have a framework to help you clarify whether or not something is important. When something comes up, you can ask yourself, Which quadrant is this in? Then you can make a better decision about what to do with it. If you need further help clarifying where something falls within the Time Matrix, you may want to ask additional questions of yourself or others like: • When does this really need to be done? • How will this impact the project we are working on? • Is there another resource or method for getting this done? • Where does this fit relative to the other priorities I am working on? Asking clarifying questions engages your Thinking Brain, which improves your ability to discern. Clearly, this PCD process will work better when others are on board with you. It would be nice if your whole organization had a Q2 culture—when people constantly used the Pause-Clarify-Decide process before accepting a responsibility, or handing one to you! But even if your organization is not like this, you can create a Q2 culture with the people around you at work or even at home.

HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN Q2 CULTURE We all have a culture—up, down, or sideways—even if it's just you and your boss, or you and a co-worker. To create a Q2 culture around you, you need to create a set of relationships that have a shared framework (the Time Matrix) and a shared language (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, and Pause-Clarify-Decide), which allows you to challenge what you are doing and consciously focus your attention and energy on the things that will have the biggest impact. Here's how to do it:

1. Share the Time Matrix. Describe your understanding of the Time Matrix with the people around you. Sit down with your boss and co-workers and sketch the Time Matrix for them. Ask which tasks, projects, or other activities belong in which quadrant. This can be a significant aha! moment as people come to realize how much time is being spent on less important activities. Also make sure to teach the Pause-Clarify-Decide process.
2. Use the language. As you and others refer to the Time Matrix at work, you will start hearing people use phrases like "Is this a Q1? Do I need to do it right now?" "Is this a Q3? Do we really need to do this at all?" "I think I'm in Q4. What can I do to change?" and "This is a Q2 priority. We need to spend our time on this." This common language helps people judge how much effort to invest in a task. When you see people emailing each other saying, "This is a genuine Q1," you'll know that the culture is starting to change.
3. Use Pause-Clarify-Decide together. When you are with someone and you are trying to figure out what to do, say something like, "Let's pause for a minute and clarify what is most important, then we can decide what to focus on." When you actually say no to one thing in favor of something else, this pattern becomes more and more legitimate inside your relationships and immediate work culture. When working with others, you will have to find ways of asking these questions that feel natural to you; this may take some practice, but it is well worth the effort.

IF YOU ARE THE BOSS If you are the leader of a team, you have an obligation to help people focus on what is most important. That is your job. The good news is that you also have a disproportionate impact on your team's culture. For instance, if you were to take some time in a team meeting and teach the Time Matrix along with the Pause-Clarify-Decide process, and give some sample clarifying questions that would be relevant to your team, you will have set a powerful foundation to move your team into Q2. If you follow through and allow people to challenge and reorganize what they are currently doing, your Q2 culture will become real. If you do not allow people to change their

focus, it will be a cause for disillusionment and dismay. Even worse, if you go around pitching Q1 and Q3 bombs at everybody, don't be surprised when they roll their eyes (literally or figuratively) when you ask them to focus on your goals. Part of being a leader is to recognize your own responsibility for your team culture. If you are serious about getting into Q2, here are some questions you might ask yourself: 1. Are my team's goals and priorities clear to everyone? 2. What am I doing (lack of planning, preparation, etc.) that puts people in crisis mode? (Q1) 3. Am I asking people to do things others should be doing? (Q3) 4. Are there reports, processes, or systems that are outdated and no longer necessary but are taking up people's time? (Q4) 5. Do I create a safe environment where people can challenge and change what we are doing in order to better achieve our goals? 6. Do I encourage people on my team to pause and clarify the value and impact of a new project or assignment before diving in to get it done?

IF YOU ARE NOT THE BOSS If you are not the leader of your team, don't worry. You can create a Q2 culture among the people you work with, even with your boss, as the following story illustrates. Laura had one of those difficult bosses. He kept lobbing stuff at her until, finally, it became too much. She realized that something would have to change, or she would have to leave, explode, or both! So she sat down with her boss and asked for his help in determining the priority of all the things he had assigned her. She suggested they use the Time Matrix as a way to categorize the things she was working on. As they went through her assignments, the boss put everything in Q1, meaning that everything was important and everything had to be done now! But the boss was no fool. When he saw the list, he began to realize that Laura wouldn't be able to effectively work on every task he had given her. So, together, they decided which quadrants the tasks should be assigned to, focusing on Q2. They used clarifying questions like "When does this really need to be done?", "What's the potential impact of this activity on our financial performance?" and "What if we didn't do this until next month?" They were then able to create a plan that worked better for both Laura and her boss. It didn't stop there. Laura's boss began to use the language with her and others on her team. In just a few short months, they had a framework—the Time Matrix—and a common language that helped them make better choices. Laura took this approach with a couple of her own peers as well, with similar results. While your own efforts to establish a Q2 culture may progress differently, our experience is that people will readily accept the framework and language when they see how it will benefit them. Spending some time to establish the mindset of importance in your immediate work relationships can have a tremendous impact on your own ability to control where you spend your time and energy.

RETURNING TO KIVA—IS SHE PRODUCTIVE? We started this chapter with a look at Kiva's day, then posed the question, "Is she productive?" Even though we've only covered Choice 1, we are in a good position to analyze a few of the activities during her day and determine whether they were in Q2. Let's also see where some Q2 thinking might help her change the game.

- **The Morning Email.** Instead of getting up and exercising as she had planned, Kiva rolled over and grabbed her smartphone, dealt with emails from the night before, checked a few off to get some dopamine flowing, and then, forty-five minutes later, started her day in a rush. This activity seems more like Q3.
- **Wrinkled Clothes.** This may be a small item and, in the final analysis, may not be that important to the quality of her day (unless she had a big client meeting), but how many of us have had this unnecessary stress in the morning? Clothes that had been cleaned and pressed ahead of time would have put her into Q2; instead, she's in Q1, trying to find out how to minimize a fashion error.
- **The Rushed Breakfast.** While a coffee and a bagel pass as breakfast for many of us, there are better ways to manage our sources of physical and mental energy throughout the day. This is important, because this energy fuels our ability to do everything else. Taking good care of yourself is definitely a Q2 activity.
- **The Numbers for the Meeting.** While Kiva intended to have the numbers ready the day before, an urgent request from Karl derailed her. Because we don't know if that request was important or merely urgent, we don't know if Kiva could have postponed or even declined to work on it. The skills from this chapter could have helped Kiva act on the important instead of react to the urgent. Regardless, she was not able to prepare adequately and created a Q1 need for information that she had to pass off to Kellie. Lucky that Kellie was there for her this time.
- **The So-Called Part-Time Art Professor.** Was he truly a nonentity compared to Kiva's uber-busy life? Or was he just organized enough that he had the freedom to choose a relaxed commute to work in the morning? If so, he's in Q2 and Kiva looks more like she's in Q1.
- **The On-Time Project.** At a high level, this looks like it's progressing in Q2. The project is on time and people seem to be delivering what needs to be done. Not knowing any more details, we'll assume the best.
- **The Troublesome Vendor.** There are, of course, occasions when vendors are just incompetent. However, what is it about this relationship that, if addressed in a Q2 way, might be improved? Could it be that Kiva's team never really scoped out the Web component ahead of time so that the vendor could prepare a reliable bid? Could there be some pattern of communication that would make the development flow more smoothly? Is Kiva's team simply reacting to other stakeholders and saying yes to every idea, regardless of its impact on the original scope and timeline? Scheduling time to plan, prepare, communicate, and strengthen an important vendor relationship makes it possible to accomplish the kinds of activities that are smack-dab in the middle of Q2. And taking time to do these things early could prevent a potentially devastating Q1 crisis in the future that could threaten Kiva's project.
- **Corporate Reports, Internal Politics, and Limited Resources.** This kind of stuff is part of every organization.

People need data, and there are always different people with different needs and agendas. The degree to which getting the data interferes with the important work that needs to be done (instead of supporting it) is an indicator of where the culture is on the Time Matrix. If it dominates a lot of people's time and keeps them from doing important work, then the culture is probably more in Q3 than Q2. Q2 cultures allow for open dialogue about whether or not reports are even necessary. They also provide a way to talk about competing-resource needs. In terms of the programming resources, Kiva might have had a conversation that started something like this: "My need is important and urgent. Can I keep these resources scheduled for this week if I guarantee you will have them next week?"

Headed for Home. When Kiva exits the office, what she does on the way home, what she eats, and what she does when she gets there are really her personal choices. Her activities could be in Quadrants 1, 2, 3, or 4. The key question would be this: If Kiva were to step back and look at the quality of her evening, would she say it contributed to her highest goals and priorities for herself? Was she feeling satisfied and fulfilled in the areas of her life outside of work? If so, then she's in Q2. If not, she may want to rethink how these areas of her life are playing out. To experience better results, Kiva doesn't need to be perfect or reach some unattainable level of productivity. She just needs to change her thinking, then modify one or two things at a time. If she uses the framework of the Time Matrix and the Pause-Clarify-Decide process to be more discerning, before she knows it, she will have moved much more of her time into Q2.

SIMPLE WAYS TO GET STARTED You can begin applying the principles and practices of Choice 1: Act on the Important, Don't React to the Urgent by taking any of the following simple actions. Pick the ones that work best for you.

- Make a copy of the Time Matrix and stick it on your desk or wall as a reminder to focus on Q2.
- Make a "7 days" card with seven boxes labeled with the days of the week. Commit to consciously using the Pause-Clarify-Decide process at least once each day. When you do, put a check mark or even a gold-star sticker (more dopamine!) in that day's box. When you complete the card, buy yourself a treat and celebrate your success.
- Make a list of clarifying questions you would feel comfortable asking yourself or others and practice them in a mirror.
- Post this question on a sticky note on your computer screen: "What is your return on this moment?"
- Take a couple of minutes in the morning and identify the one or two things that are your most important Q2 activities for that day. Write them on a piece of paper and slip it into your pocket. At the end of the day, look at them and see if you got them done. If not, ask yourself why.
- Identify a self-imposed Q3 distraction and make a strategy to deal with it.

TO SUM UP

- There are two basic parts of our brain: the Thinking Brain and the Reactive Brain.
- The results we achieve in our lives are impacted by our discernment.
- With practice, we can rewire our brain to become more discerning and less reactive.
- Becoming more discerning requires both a framework (Franklin Covey's Time Matrix) and a process (Pause-Clarify-Decide, or PCD).
- To be truly productive, we should minimize the time we spend in Q1 and Q3, eliminate entirely the time we spend in Q4, and maximize the time we invest in Q2.
- Remove any self-imposed activities in Quadrants 1, 3, and 4, reclaiming that time to invest in Q2.
- We can create a Q2 culture by speaking the language of importance and improve our ability to focus on Q2 together.