

Instructions for Using the RAP Planning Template

In my eBook on Power Affirmations, I also provide an outline of my Results-focused, Action Plan system (RAP). If you want more details about the RAP system as well as some great information on Power Affirmations, please visit <http://www.poweraffirmations.com>.

Most of my planning in the past has been by hand using the Daytimer planners. Recently, I've modified my personal system around a simple planning form that I created for myself in MS Word. As a result, I've found my planning process is even more organized and efficient than before.

In order to encourage you to use this planning process and to help get you started, I've decided to share the 2007 forms with you free of charge. To download the forms in MS Word format, just visit <http://www.poweraffirmations.com/planning-form/>.

The form is simple, but the idea behind the RAP system is profound. I think that using the RAP process is at least as important as using the Power Affirmations.

There is one file per month for the rest of 2007. As you will see when you open the file, there is only one page per file. I thought about creating a separate page per day, but decided against it for reasons that will become obvious.

On the upper left hand corner of each page, I have entered the day and date of the 1st of the month. Underneath the date, is an area where you can enter your current goals. In order to maintain your focus, I recommend concentrating on only 3-5 goals at any one time.

In the upper right hand corner, there are two small calendars: the first is for the current month, the second is for the following month.

Underneath these headings is the daily planning grid. This is the heart of the RAP system. The first column is for the past 24 hours. The second column is for the next 24 hours. Within the grid are separate sections for the 5 goals. You can use normal MS Word commands to adjust this table any way you want. For example, if you have only four goals, then delete the row for the fifth goal.

You can also change the number of rows per goal as needed. You will probably find some goals where you need less space on any given day, and some goals where you will need more.

I have two recommendations regarding space:

1. Always leave a few extra rows in each section in case you want to add/change the information during the course of your day.
2. Never use more than one page for your daily plan. Why? Because it probably means you are taking on too much for the day. You will be more effective if you focus on the “vital few” tasks that will really take you closer to the **achievement** of your goals than the irrelevant many.

Focus On Meaningful Results, Not Activity

The focus of this system is to guide you to making meaningful progress towards your goals, not to manage one or more “to do” lists. Often people who make themselves busy are wasting a lot of time and energy working on low value tasks that either shouldn't be done or should be done by others. Because they are always busy, they create the illusion that they are making real progress towards their goals. You are not likely to make much progress towards your goals unless you are able to relentlessly focus your efforts only on high value tasks.

When you get down to specifics, you will usually find that there are only a relatively few essential tasks that you need to excel at and/or that require your personal involvement.

Also, keep in mind that this is only one part of my planning system. I still have other planning documents that I create in MS Word for longer range planning and management of complex goals. Those documents are mostly bulleted lists organized around specific milestones or global goals/tasks. I'm not including any forms for those, because there's nothing special about them.

How I Use the RAP Daily Planning Form

1. I recommend setting up special directories that you will use for saving and organizing the forms. You are going to save a separate form for each day, so this will help you stay organized. The main folder I use is called 2006 RAP. In this directory, I create a separate folder for each month. For example, April, May, June, etc. You can add the year to the month if you want, but I don't since I already have the year in the main folder.

2. On the first day of the month, I open the template I've set up for that month. The reason there are separate templates for each month is because the calendars in the heading change from month-to-month.

If it weren't for the changing calendars, I'd only have one form that I'd use. I find having the mini-calendars readily available to be a critical resource. Yes, I could look at a calendar some place else while creating my plans, but I want everything I need in one spot.

3. I enter my current goals in the goals section of the header and in the sections of the grid.
4. When creating my daily plan, I focus on only one goal at a time. I first list what I've accomplished in the last 24 hours in the left column. Then I list what I plan to do in the right. To keep the plan neat, I type in this information. Yes, I could just print out the page, and hand write this information, but I find that there is something about seeing it typed out that makes it more organized and "official." There's another reason I'll get into in a minute.

I always leave a few blank rows between each goal in case I want to manually write in additional tasks/information during the day as I review my plans.

5. I keep my comments brief and abbreviate where possible. Each entry rarely goes past one line.
6. After you have completed your plan, save the file in the folder for the month using the date as the file name. For example, April 1 2006.doc. Leave out any punctuation in order to avoid problems with the file name. Spaces are okay.
7. Once I've finished the plan, I print it out and place it in a folder that has two internal pockets. You can purchase one of these at most office supply stores for less than \$1. In this folder, I also include a few other pages related to my plans such as my 1 year plan for my business (only 1 page) and my rolling 60 day plan (also only 1 page). I always have a few extra blank pieces of paper where I can jot down some notes or ideas as needed. I try not to put too much into this folder in order to keep the focus on my current plans.

The reason I recommend this simple folder over some fancy binder is that it is cheap, simple, and effective. If you have a large binder for your planner, there is often the tendency to pack it with all kinds of

personal items that are not directly related to your goals. It's okay to have a binder for that extra stuff (I do), but I think it is important to have your plan separate and easily accessible. Also if you use a colored folder just for your plans, you will find it's easy to spot on your desk. And it is really thin and easy to take with you.

I refer to my plan often during the course of the day in order to maintain my focus. This is one reason why it is critical to keep the plan to no more than one page. Anything more than that and it's much more organized to stay organized and focused (at least for me).

8. When you get ready to plan for the next day, start with the previous day's file. Just change the day and date in the upper left hand corner and save it with the new name right away so that your other file stays in tact. For example, when you plan April 9th, start with the April 8th file. This way you can copy the items you have completed into the "Last 24 Hours" column. This saves you time and gives you a sense of progress towards your goals. If you didn't complete a task (and still intend to work on it), you can just leave it in the right hand column. You may need to cut and paste it to a new row, but it saves you typing. This is the reason I didn't create a separate page for each day in advance.

So, go ahead and open the file for the current month and get started. It may not be a sophisticated software program and database, but I think you will find that this is the most effective planning process you have ever used. This process is about getting effective results, not being sophisticated.

It will also be the cheapest system you ever used. As long as you have access to MS Word on a computer, your only other expense is for paper and a binder. I suspect your cost will only be a few dollars at most. Compare that with ordering a pre-printed planning system from Daytimers, Franklin-Covey, etc. Once you add in a binder plus the pages, the cost for one of their systems is probably about \$50 to \$100 per year.

Make certain you check back with my website around November 2006. That's when I'll post the templates for all of 2007.

Make certain you share this free information with your friends and colleagues. It may just change their lives--forever.