

Expanding the world's understanding of commitment

— *what causes it and how to achieve its healthiest, most productive benefits*

by Kurt Wright

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Commitment

Until one is committed there is always hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. I have learned a great respect for one of Goethe's couplets;

*"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."*

W.H. Murray
The Second Himalayan Expedition
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Clear Purpose Management, Inc.
Lone Tree, Colorado

Mission Statement

To develop the world's richest store of wisdom and understanding about the causes and benefits of wholehearted commitment—when experienced in its healthiest, least stressful and most highly productive form—and to make this understanding available to business leaders around the world for their use in improving the performance and

profitability of their organizations and in making the world a better place in which to live and work.

The unfocused person is characterized by consistently poor performance.

EXAMINING FOCUSED ENERGY

Commitment is the process by which our various energies, talents and abilities become focused (are brought into alignment). It is this focusing or alignment process that transforms us from unfocused “bars of iron” into motivated, highly productive “magnets” capable of achieving our most ambitious goals. As our first graphic illustration of this concept, we use the plain bar of iron below with its diffused and unfocused energy to symbolize a person who is uncommitted, unmotivated and unproductive. [see PDF of this article for images]

Our second illustration represents a bar of iron to which an external source of negative energy is supplied to make it an electromagnet. The diagram symbolizes a person who is negatively motivated by **fear** or **threat**. The bar of iron (person) retains its negative electromagnetic power (motivation) only as long as it remains “plugged in” to the negative energy source (fear).

To motivate this type of person, managers must provide a support structure that includes penalties for nonperformance.

This originates from:

Inhibited Thought Processes

Poor Self-Discipline

Avoidance Driven Commitment

Compulsive Task Orientation

Our third illustration represents a bar of iron to which an external source of positive energy is supplied to make it an electromagnet. The diagram

symbolizes a person who is productively motivated by **logic**, **intellect** and **willpower**. The bar of iron (person) retains its electromagnetic power (motivation) only as long as it remains “plugged in” to the positive energy source (willpower).

To keep this type of person motivated, it is important for managers to structure an environment that includes many tangible rewards for desired performance.

This originates from:

Inflexible Thought Processes

Rigid Self-Discipline

A Will-Power Driven Commitment

A Rational Goal Orientation

The compete/win, reward motivated person is characterized by intermittently high and low performance. A Fear Driven Electromagnet

The threat motivated person is characterized by restricted, inhibited performance. A Will-Power Driven Electromagnet

Our final illustration represents a permanent magnet (such as Alnico) that requires no external force to keep its internal energy in alignment, or focused. At the end of a thousand years, for example, Alnico still retains 99 1/2% of its magnetic alignment. This diagram symbolizes those high performers who enjoy a permanent, internally self-sustained form of commitment through the power of having clearly identified the purpose or mission in their life.

Such “purpose inspired” people find their competitive advantage is quite naturally sustained

through their high level of self-motivation.

They also tend to progress steadily toward developing and using their fullest potential. “Purpose inspired” individuals are “permanently focused” and can maintain high levels of performance over long periods of time without needing to draw on outside sources of creative energy. They also have relatively little risk of burnout from extended periods of high performance.

This originates from:

Permanently Aligned Thought Processes

A Relaxed Self-Discipline

A Purpose Inspired Commitment

An Intuitive Results Orientation

A Permanent Magnet

The ultimate strategic thinker is characterized by sustained high-level performance.

Purpose At Work In Nature

The wedge of geese, as they journey south for the winter and north again each spring, provide us with a wonderfully clear illustration from nature of the difference between purpose and goals, and how each work.

Purpose *is the intangible, intuitive force that pulls and guides the geese toward their final destination.*

Goals *are tangible, measurable destination points in either South America or Canada toward which the geese are being pulled by their purpose.*

With a bit of effort we can observe, calculate and predict with some measure of certainty the yearly goals of a given wedge of geese. Any attempt on our part, however, to define the intangible driving force or purpose that keeps the flock of geese together and moving steadily toward their goal amounts to sheer speculation at best.

At Clear Purpose we use the wedge of geese to symbolize the ultimate spirit of teamwork and commitment that can be achieved in business through skillful practice of its intuition-based strategies and disciplines for asking right questions.

COMMITMENT OBSTACLES

Our completed Life Purpose statement is intended to help us achieve the healthiest, least stressful, most productive form of COMMITMENT possible in our lives. Now, we will address five principal obstacles that can block us from becoming fully committed:

1. Commitment obstacle number one results from the use of detachment as a defense mechanism. Detachment is a mechanism for separating ourselves intellectually from pure feelings we either don't understand or have transformed into negative emotions. It is a self protective response that is automatically triggered whenever we assign negative value to facts, thus generating negative emotions that we judge must be controlled or suppressed.

Notice that detachment and commitment are polar opposites.

Thus, whenever we choose to feel threatened or vulnerable, we automatically limit our ability to commit ourselves. Below are listed four other opposites of detachment, in addition to commitment. Review them carefully for clues on how to become a more fully committed person.

Solution: Once we free ourselves from assigning negative value to facts, detachment can no longer be an obstacle for us. Much of the material in this workshop is directed toward this end.

2. Commitment obstacle number two occurs when we are too strongly oriented to keeping all of our options open. A typical approach when this condition is an obstacle for us is to stand back and survey all possible options, hesitating to pick one and commit to it, for fear of missing out on an even better option that is sure to come along.

Solution: We must simply remind ourselves that commitment always leads us through some type of a passage where we soon discover a new panorama of more and better options.

Commitment does not surrender options. Commitment leads to options.

3. If our intellectual and emotional intensity happens to be at the high end of the scale, we tend to look at things from many angles at once rather than straight on. This ability often causes us to stumble over **commitment obstacle number three**, which occurs when we complicate our lives by seeing from too many angles everything that is wrong. This can be an even greater commitment obstacle when learning is our drive source. Our multi-dimensional perception—when used defensively—causes us to be uniquely aware of everything that is missing or wrong with what we are looking at. And, we don't commit to blanks and errors.

Solution: We must learn to recognize when our multi-dimensional perception ability is interfering with our ability to commit.

We must then learn to re-focus our thinking on what is right instead of what is wrong.

This allows us to break through commitment obstacle number three.

4. **Commitment obstacle number four** is especially troublesome for those of us who have a powerful need to be in control. The control perspective often traps us into viewing commitment as the giving up of, or loss of control—a condition that corresponds with one of our greatest fears. Such individuals can also have problems with delegation when it is viewed as giving someone else control (even the thought of which is abhorrent).

Solution:

We must continually remind ourselves that commitment is, in fact, the only available means of gaining true control.

5. Commitment obstacle number five occurs whenever our perspective of our lives is too short sighted.

Solution: Please attempt to complete the following three statements:

I plan to reach at least age _____ before I die.

This means I will live until at least the year 2_____.

This gives me at least _____ years in which to achieve all of my remaining goals.



Kurt Wright, author of *Breaking the Rules* says: There's an old saying that we teach what we need to learn. My career has been one of teaching people how to bring out the best in themselves and others. This focus of attention grew out of a decision made in 1970 to spend the rest of my life seeking to understand what each of us is like at our very best. I observed that there were far too many studies of what is wrong with people and too few about what is right with people. *Breaking the Rules* thus

summarizes the findings from this 33-year study of what each of us is like when we are at our very best, and how to be that way more often.

During the study it became clear that people who operate at their best most of the time didn't learn to do so by looking outside themselves for answers. For this reason, I resisted the idea of writing a book about my findings. It seemed to me that it would be too easy for a book to reward readers for looking to me for answers. I was unwilling to do that.

Eventually I found a way to write so there is not a sentence of advice in the entire 320 pages of *Breaking the Rules*. In lieu of advice, I have attempted to capture and model throughout the book a unique mentor-coaching process that shows up in the background of every visionary leader I have studied.

I hope you enjoy the book and benefit richly from reading it.