

Six Most Important Things List

From *Miracles Happen* by Mary Kay Ash



Early in my sales career, I heard a story that was to have a lasting effect upon me and the way I work. The subject was time management, and the story concerned Ivy Lee, a leading efficiency expert, and Charles Schwab, president of a then-small company called Bethlehem Steel.

Ivy Lee called on Charles Schwab and said to him, "I can increase your efficiency and your sales if you will allow me to spend 15 minutes with each of your executives."

Naturally, Schwab asked, "What will it cost me?"

"Nothing," Lee said, "unless it works. In three months, you can send me a check for whatever you think it's worth to you. Fair enough?"

Schwab agreed, so Lee spent 15 minutes with executives from the struggling young steel company and asked them to complete a single task. Every evening for the next three months, each executive was to make a list of the six most important things he had to do the next day. Finally, the executive was to rank the items in the order of importance.

"Each morning, begin with the first item on the list," she told them, and scratch it when it's finished. Just work your way right down those six items. If you don't get something finished, it goes to the next day's list."

At the end of the three-month trial, efficiency and sales had increased to such an extent that Schwab sent Lee a check for \$35,000. Now, that's still a lot of cash for such a small amount of work, but in today's money, \$35,000 would probably be the equivalent of \$350,000.

I was very impressed with the story. I thought that if such a list was worth \$35,000 to Charles Schwab, it was worth \$35 to me. So I pondered the moral. I took an old envelope out of my purse and wrote down the six most important things I had to do the next day. And I have continued making that "\$35,000 list" every single day of my life.