



## ▶ ForwardThinking<sup>™</sup> Gentle Reminder



Brought to you by Managing Thought as a gentle reminder about the power of focused thinking to help you achieve long-lasting success in work and life.

Volume 8

### **Focus On What You Want, Not What You Don't Want**

You may have heard it said, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." The results we achieve – bad, good, or significant – depend on what we focus on in each moment. Focusing our time, energy or money on the wrong things in these challenging times is something we can't afford to do. Do you know what you are focused on in each moment? Are you focused on what you want? Or on what you don't want? Do you even know what you want? This Forward Thinking Reminder offers guidance on how to transform negative thinking and focus on what you want to achieve significant results.

In my experience, most of us are not aware of what we want in each moment. We haven't even thought about it. We are busy reacting—in fight, flight, or freeze—and not focused on what we want. And most times, particularly in challenging times, we are focused on what we don't want – and we don't even know it.

When we know what we truly want—what is significant to the long-lasting success of our organizations, our lives, and our relationships in any given moment—remarkable things start to happen. We open the door to our highest awareness and creative ideas emerge on what to do next and how to do it, goals become clear, and we make great decisions. We calmly and purposefully move in a direction that serves our purpose. We don't waste time, energy, or money. We focus our thoughts, actions, and reactions on what matters. We become inspired and we inspire others. We achieve significant results.

When we are thinking thoughts of fear, self-doubt, worry, criticism, judgment, anger, frustration, anxiety, negativity and other disempowering fight, flight or freeze thoughts, we are not focused on what we want.

When we are thinking about the money we don't have, the job we lost, the skills we don't have, the payments we can't afford, and the sacrifices we have to make, we are focused on what we don't want.

As organizations, when we are thinking about cuts we have to make, costs we need to slash, cash we don't have, customers who aren't buying, banks that won't lend, and decisions we are forced to make, we are focused on what we don't want. And when we are thinking that we don't want to be viewed as a commodity, the economy is bad, my organization isn't innovative, my people aren't engaged or I don't like this or that about my suppliers, again, we are focused on what we don't want.

And if we are thinking about surviving in the short term, then we are focused on what we don't want, because we want to thrive.

Unfortunately, thinking about what we don't want does not define what we do want. If we are saying we can't afford to pay for college, this does not move me one step toward going to college. If we are saying we don't want our organization's products or services to be viewed as commodity, this does not move me or the organization in any direction other than being viewed as a commodity.

If we haven't defined what we want as a student, then we have no idea of what to do to make going to college a reality. If we haven't defined what we want as an organization, then the organization has no way of knowing how to be or what to say and do in each moment of each day that results in our customers viewing our products and services as something other than a commodity. And there we stay. At home and uninspired. Commoditized and uninspired. Victims.

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Can you recall looking at an optical illusion? Do you remember how you immediately saw one thing? Do you remember how you could see something else after you read the instructions or someone else pointed it out to you?

When we are focused on what we don't want, that is all we see, and our ideas and decisions are based on what we don't want. When we know what we want, we give ourselves the ability to imagine new possibilities and generate ideas on how to be and what to do or say in each moment to make it a reality.

So when we catch ourselves thinking, "We don't have money for college," for example, we can start wondering in a curious, the-possibilities-are-endless kind of way: "How could we fund college?" or "I wonder how we could learn what we intend to learn." Or if we catch ourselves thinking, "We don't want to be viewed as a commodity," then we can begin to wonder "How could our customers and prospective customers view our products and services.?" By invoking the state of wonder, we begin to achieve clarity and to receive ideas on what do next and how to do it to move us in a new direction.

When we are faced with the reality of a lay-off or cost-reduction, we can think about what we want as an organization, on what truly matters to each of our constituents – our customers, suppliers, employees, and investors – to powerfully effect the reductions, survive, and thrive.

When we are faced with the reality of a job loss, or income-reduction, we can think about what truly matters to ourselves and our families – and what is the highest and best use of our time, energy, and money.

Here are some steps you can take to keep you focused on what you want:

- Notice you are in a state of fight, flight, or freeze, take a deep breath, focusing on the exhale, and ask yourself, "What can I say or do right now for the greater good?" or "What can I say or do right now that's of highest service?" or "How can I help?" The answer that comes to you shifts your focus to one of vision and purpose, curiosity and possibility.
- Notice when you are focused on what you don't want, exhale deeply, and re-invoke the state of wonder. Before you go to bed, take a shower, exercise, or do something you love, take a moment to wonder about what you could want, let it go, and notice the ideas that come to you.
- Before you make a telephone call, write an email, have a conversation, or open the door to go into a meeting or go home at night, take a moment to ask yourself what truly matters to you, what is the result you want.
- As an individual, make it a practice to think about what you want, what truly matters to you, that brings about a life well lived for you and your family. (You may want to take the free [Managing Thought Self-Assessment](#) to help you with this.)
- As an organization, make it a practice to think about what truly matters to each of your constituents – your customers, suppliers, employees, and investors. Think about what you do, how you do it, how the organization can be of highest and best service and richly rewarded. Think about what resources, human and otherwise, are required to execute this vision. Be sure to think in the short-term and long-term.



**MANAGING THOUGHT**<sup>®</sup>  
A WAY OF LIVING TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL AND BUSINESS SUCCESS<sup>®</sup>

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- From these ideas, choose what's significant and generate more ideas, choose what's significant, etc. to hone in on what you truly want and get to the point of seeing yourself in this new view.
- Tell the story. You know you are focused on what you want when you can fully describe what you are doing and how you are being in the moments of your day that moves you in the direction of what you want. When every member of your family or your organization can tell the story of how what they do contributes to their individual success and to your family or organizations success. When you can tell the story of how each asset you own, each dollar spent, and each resource that you use, human or otherwise, contributes to the results, the fulfillment of what you want.

With practice, it becomes easy and natural for you to ask yourself what is significant to you and others before you say or do anything. Give it a try, and notice the powerful impact this has on the results achieved because you are focused, grounded, and proactive versus reactive. Notice how inspired and energized you become.

The investment we make in focusing on what we want brings returns to us as individuals and as organizations a thousand fold. We have a tremendous opportunity to cement our character and culture, focus on what truly matters, improve performance, achieve greatness, and thrive.

May you achieve long-lasting personal and business success.

MANAGING THOUGHT

*Mary*

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**Mary J. Lore** is the founder and president of Managing Thought, LLC, which helps individuals and organizations develop self-awareness and change how they think and conduct business to attain long-lasting success. She is an internationally recognized leader, public speaker, executive mentor, and author of the award-winning book [Managing Thought: Think Differently. Think Powerfully. Achieve New Levels of Success.](#) and audio book [Managing Thought: How Do Your Thoughts Rule Your World?](#) Mary also serves an expert resource for Vistage International, also known as TEC, the world's preeminent organization for the personal and professional development of CEOs. Information on books, DVDs, keynotes, workshops, coaching, e-columns, podcasts, and on-line tools can be found at [www.managingthought.com](http://www.managingthought.com).