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SHE THINKS **BIG**

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Energy Ouput:

Find Your Zone of Extraordinary Achievement

As you prioritize, keep in mind Michael Hyatt's basic premise, "achieve more by doing less."¹ This relies on people doing more of the work they love and are good at, and less of what they don't love and aren't good at. In his "*Freedom Compass*," every task or project falls into one of the following four zones: "*Distraction*," "*Disinterest*, "*Desire*" or "*Drudgery*."² He makes a strong case that working within the Desire Zone is what makes people truly productive and able to focus.

This type of thinking makes a lot of sense. However, I think the situation is a little more complex – especially for entrepreneurs.

In Chapter 8 of *She Thinks Big*, I mentioned that as an entrepreneur, you're not just a consumer of energy; you create it — you're a power generator. **Your activities can not only produce great results for you, but they also produce results for everyone around you** by creating more opportunity.

Think about it like this: If your own actions lead to scaling up your business and hiring more people to perform a great service or sell a great product that benefits more people in the world, then you've created opportunity — more jobs, more opportunity for customers to achieve their own goals, etc. It's the same in your personal life: When you're building great relationships and helping others connect, you bring them opportunities they wouldn't necessarily have. You and your family have more quality time together; you and your life partner can connect with and support each other better, and your colleagues, friends, and extended family can gain from you bringing them together with others for their mutual gain.

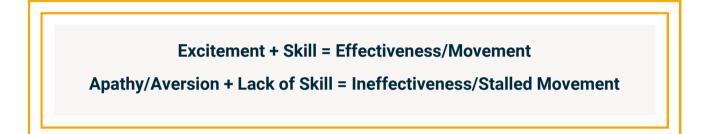
It makes sense that when you're working efficiently, you're achieving more of these things. When you're doing the right things efficiently, **you get into what I call the Zone of Extraordinary Achievement, where you set up a cycle of success** that builds on itself to create momentum more easily.

To help make decisions about what kinds of activities lead to better efficiency, I like to use a system to assess whether a person should be doing an activity or not based on a few simple criteria.

How the Zone of Extraordinary Achievement

The Zone of Extraordinary Achievement operates on **three principles: your personal energy** (excitement/aversion), your skill level, and the activity result based on your priorities. It's similar to Hyatt's concept, but with a third dimension — whether the task moves us closer to achieving our goal.

The first part relates to energy and movement:



It makes sense that when you're excited about something (i.e., have high energy input) you're going to bring high energy to the task. However, if you aren't skilled at it, you may be excited about it, but you might not be as effective as you would if you had the skill set.

But whether or not you have movement isn't the only consideration. The next part has to do with **whether the task achieves any of your important priorities**.

Movement + Priority Area = Extraordinary Achievement Movement + Non-priority Area = Non-achievement/Busy Work

Movement toward something might seem like achievement, but if it's not taking you toward something you want, it's not really achievement. This kind of non-achievement is also known as "busy work."

I see so many clients make the mistake of just settling for any kind of seeming "progress." Remember the dopamine hit from crossing something off your list? That can get addictive. But meanwhile, if all your real goals — things you've wanted to do for years — are languishing there unachieved, it doesn't matter what you've crossed off the list. The progress you seem to be making isn't toward the meaningful goals you truly want to achieve... and thus, it's not the progress you *want*.

That's why **it's important to keep not only movement, but destination, in mind**. More on that later — but first, let's look at how to assess whether you should do an activity or not.

Find Your Jone

Based on the equations we just looked at related to energy, skill, and movement, here are the four Big Components to consider for each task to see whether it will put you in your Zone of Extraordinary Achievement.



Will this activity move me or the business forward? How much will it move things forward?

This is the very first question you need to ask because if the answer is "no," the activity probably isn't important — at least, not right now. Even if your answer could become a "yes" in the future, treat it as a "no for now."

The second part of this question, when you're looking at everything as a whole, is "How much will it move things forward?" Some activities will naturally have greater impact than others, so you may want to prioritize them over others. However, you may not, due to other reasons. None of these questions give you a "final" answer by itself; they're meant to be considered together.



How do I feel about this activity? Do I come at it with enthusiasm and energy, or does it take all my energy?

Do you bring excitement to the task because you enjoy it? Or do you dread doing it? Tasks you love are things you would do whether someone pays you or not. Tasks you dislike are sheer torture — what Hyatt calls "drudgery." You hate doing them, whether you're good at them or not. If you had a choice, you'd give them up in a heartbeat.

I measure this "energy input" based on a scale from "Power Producer" to "Black Hole."

Power Producer: "I will do this any day whether you pay me or not, and I am energized just by the thought of doing it — this energy shows up as ideas, products, innovations, more business, money, excitement, jobs, etc. Why am I not doing this every day, all the time? This is really fuel for me! I want to do it!"

You can also think about power levels here. **Some tasks produce more enthusiasm than others.** Could the energy it brings power a big city? A town? A house? A small electronic? As long as it's in the positive, it's a Power Producer.

Black Hole: "I hate doing this. I dread even thinking about it, and it seems to have its own time sphere. No matter how much I focus on it, I move so slowly that time seems to stop. I have aged 20 years doing this during the last five minutes of regular time. How can I never have to do this again?"

If your "energy meter" goes into the negative when you consider this task, it's a Black Hole. Like the Power Producer, **the Black Hole effect can also be measured in levels** — but these are levels of "suck." Maybe it just sucks a little life out of you, but you still feel accomplished when it's finished — the effect of a thumbtack-size Black Hole. Or maybe the task sucks not only the energy, but the life out of you and everyone else for miles around. Time slows, gravity bends, planets get sucked out of their orbit, and light seems to disappear from the world while you're doing it. That's a galaxy-sized Black Hole — get away now.

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Am I good at this activity?

There are things you may feel like you need to do, and which do move your business forward, but you're just not good at them. If not, it's probably taking you much longer to do that activity than it would take someone else to do it.

Asking this question isn't just a simple question of efficiency, though. **Some things you might not be good at could be things you need to get good at** for whatever reason. That's why answering this question in a vacuum by itself doesn't help you decide whether you should keep doing the activity. However, as you'll see, once you look at it combined with the other elements, you can make better decisions.



Could someone else do this activity instead of me?

Are you the only one who can do this activity, or can someone else do it with the same or better results? **Don't think about whether you have the resources yet;** just think about whether it's the type of work you can delegate if you did. (Whether you have the resources is actually another question — if you don't, it's your opportunity to Think Bigger about getting them.)

Also, as with the other questions, answering this one by itself doesn't give you the whole picture. Just because someone else could do the activity, that doesn't mean you shouldn't do it. It just gives you a piece of the picture to include in your decisions.

The main thing this question's answer gives you is **an option to delegate something**, but until you put everything together, you won't know whether to take that option or not.

The Extraordinary Achievers' Decision Matrix

I've put these questions into a matrix to show you what to do with specific combinations. Notice they're sorted based on the order of questions and on an either/or answer. In reality, some answers are not just "either/or." For instance, **two things may move your priorities forward, but one will do so much more than the other.** This matrix just simplifies the process so you can quickly get to the most important criteria for making the decision.

Since the questions are ranked by order of importance, they give you the important ways to think about the decisions.

The Chemistry Experiment: Putting the Ingredients Together

When you put the questions together, you start to notice that this matrix is really a tool to help bring out the important elements when making decisions, but there is no "formula" for making the "right" decision.

To understand how it works, let's examine examples of how the answers work together to help you make decisions in different situations.

Example One: Carly's Dilemma

Carly runs a small consulting business. She wants to upgrade her business's website, which would allow her to improve her SEO, attract more customers, and offer better payment options. Based on her projections, all of these changes will bring in more revenue.

She designed her current website herself a few years ago when just starting her business, and she's been the one maintaining the site ever since. Though she's not really up to date on the latest web design trends or options, she actually likes doing web design and she's been wanting to learn more about it, so she decides to take a course and do some research on ebusiness payment software. This way, she can set up the new site herself and save thousands of dollars over contracting someone else to do it.

Based on the Extraordinary Achievement Criteria, is Carly's decision a good one?

1. It moves her priorities forward, so it meets that criterion.

2. She likes doing it, so it's a Power Producer for her.

3. She's somewhat good at it, but she'll need more training, which is why she's taking a course. She also needs more research to know what platforms are best for taking payments.

4. She's the only one in her company who can do it, but she's definitely not the only person who could do it in the bigger picture. Plenty of other individuals are in that field, and they are probably far more up to date on the current trends and options.

In this situation, though Carly likes this activity, the main aspect is whether it would be more advisable to delegate it. To think that through, she'd need to ask questions such as, how long is it going to take her to do the work vs. someone else trained in the field? **What projects will it take her away from** that she is the only one who can do as CEO? If she delegated the website upgrade, would she get the same or better results?

What are the potential hidden costs of not delegating vs. the cost of delegating?

- If the site takes her 20 days longer to finish, that's 20 days of potentially lost revenue the new options and SEO could have been generating.
- Every hour devoted to the website is time not spent on other important tasks only Carly can do – potentially missing out on other revenue-generating strategies. Can she afford that?
- It's a big learning curve. How many hours will she be investing in training for it, and will those hours be recouped by also improving or helping her achieve other goals in the future? Or are they invested in a silo that won't improve her ability to do or achieve anything else?

Example Two: Liz's Big Decision

Liz owns a small high-end clothing boutique. She loves interacting with customers on the sales floor, but she has limited time for that, and she has four excellent salespeople. Should she give up her sales time and focus on other things? Let's put it through the test.

1. Sales generate revenue, which does move Liz's business forward.

2. Sales work is one of Liz's biggest Power Producers. She loves people, and helping them find what they need gives her tons of excitement and energy.

3. Liz is fantastic at sales – as good as or better than any of her sales team. She is actually an expert in sales and holds training for sales teams as a side gig.

4. Liz isn't the only one who can do sales. Her team is excellent — she's personally trained all of them and they've been with her for years.

Should Liz continue doing sales? It seems like something she could delegate.

However, let's go back to Question 1: Do sales move Liz's priorities forward? Yes. But now, we must look at other hidden factors about how it does so.

Liz realizes that her sales activities don't only generate revenue – they do other things, too.

During her day, Liz must do some tasks she doesn't really enjoy as much but it doesn't make sense to hire them out right now. If she gives up her sales time, which she only does for about an hour a day, **she'll be spending about 70 percent of her time on those tasks she's not that fond of.** Her sales time actually inspires her to power through those.

In addition, she's extremely intuitive from a big-picture perspective in a way her sales team isn't. She realizes that interacting with customers allows her to intuitively predict trends specific to her clientele far ahead of her competition. **Her strength in this area is a major force behind her business success**, and she can't afford to lose that advantage. With these considerations, it would be foolish of her to give up her precious sales time!

You can see how the matrix allows you to think through decisions, but another key is knowing as much as possible about yourself and your Big Picture and being willing to listen to your instincts as well as try new things. Sometimes, you may just go with your gut, and that's okay too.

Beware of Shiny Objects and Energy Ampires

There are two kinds of activities to look out for as you're making decisions about what to do with your time: Shiny Objects and Energy Vampires.



A Shiny Object looks like a Power Producer, but when you look at the whole situation, the activity is just a distraction because it **uses all the energy it creates.**

As with Carly's situation, it doesn't provide enough long-term return for the time investment for whatever reason. Focusing energy on it robs your energy from productive activities that you like.

Shiny Objects happen to everyone, so they're not a big deal if you can recognize when you're caught up in one and be able to let go. But sometimes they aren't so obvious. We want to do things we love or are curious about, and we don't think about whether we should be the one doing them. Sure, the task is important — but it's just not important for the CEO to be doing it.

Carly's example is one type of Shiny Object, but another example involves activities we're so excited about – and great at! – that **we forget to consider whether they're actually moving us forward** at all.

For example, my friend's son loves video games, and he's great at them. However, he's also in college studying business. So, if he spends four hours each day playing video games instead of studying, even if he achieves a Highest Score position on the game's Leader Board, is that achievement moving him forward on any of his main goals? It's actually taking time away from studying and setting him back on achieving his goals.

Don't get me wrong — it's fine to have hobbies or side interests, which you do when you have extra time. But you must be disciplined. For instance, my friend's son doesn't have to totally give up video games. He could maybe schedule a two-hour session each week for them, as long as he's completed all his priority tasks for that week. Then **they become a reward instead of an obstacle**.



Energy Vampires are on the other side of the spectrum. They are those Black Hole tasks that you do for whatever reason, but they **just suck the life out of you.** Yet you feel like you can't escape them.

For instance, suppose Janet has been doing her own bookkeeping for a few years now as she built her business. She has a certain system that allows her to track things easily for tax and other purposes, and she's really proud of how she set that up. The problem is that **while she's good at this activity, she doesn't really enjoy doing it**, and she's now reached a point where her business has grown to a scale that's making it more difficult for her to keep up with the bookkeeping.

However, she doesn't have time to show someone else her whole system, so she just keeps doing it even though it's taking her time from other important activities she really needs to do. She feels she doesn't have time to hire anyone else to do it, let alone train them in her system. So, every night, despite wishing she had more family time, she spends two hours at the office just trying to catch up on her bookkeeping and goes home in a grumpy mood. By the time she gets there, she's missed dinner and her kids are already in bed, so she doesn't get to see them much except on weekends.

Janet seems to be making decisions that are furthering her overall goals — but looking more closely, you can see **she's sacrificing one goal to achieve another**. What she needs to do is give up her idea that her system is the only good one and either hire or contract someone else to handle her bookkeeping. The choice whether to add payroll staff or contract someone as 1099 labor would be based on the specific situation, but the gist is that she should delegate the task.



Note: As a manager, you also must be aware of others' Shiny Objects and Energy Vampires. If someone on your team is doing an activity they love, but that isn't moving the business forward much, **you're paying them to do something with little or no return for the business**. In the same way, if you've assigned a task to someone for whom it's an Energy Vampire, you're not going to get the best performance from them no matter how hard they try, and **that's going to discourage them over time, leading to low morale**.

The Order of the Questions Is Moor on

You've probably realized by now that the order of the questions is no accident. Whenever you're considering how to prioritize or assign different activities within your Eisenhower Matrix, if you **ask the questions in the order in which I have them**, you'll save a lot of headaches.

Asking whether something moves you forward at the very beginning helps prevent Shiny Objects from distracting you at all. When they do sneak in, you can easily identify and eliminate them or reduce them to rewards, hobbies, etc.

Identifying whether something is a Power Producer activity helps you identify potential Energy Vampires right away. **We get stuck doing these when we don't allow ourselves to prioritize our real feelings.** If you hate doing something, it doesn't matter whether you're good at it. Forcing yourself to do something you hate because you "should" or because "you've always done it" doesn't give yourself permission to see any other options. Being a martyr is no way to run a successful, satisfying business.

When you note your skill level as part of the decision, you start to get a better sense of whether to delegate it or not. That decision gets more complex. If a task moves your business forward and you love doing it, but you're not good at it, the next step is to look at the long term. **Would getting good at it benefit you in the long run**, or is it a skill you can develop in someone else? If you feel it's something you really need to develop, it's worth investing the time in. If not, you'll know you're justified in delegating it.

And finally, your time is limited, and the amount of time you're putting toward different things is going to change based on the whole picture. This decision matrix helps you look at your current situation and make quick decisions. If an activity moves your priorities forward, is a Power Producer for you, you're great at it, but others are also good or great at it and you have limited time to do it, it's something you may want to delegate more of — or as with Liz's situation, your gut might tell you to do otherwise. Either way, you'll know quickly.



When you put all these elements together the right way, they create a cycle of Extraordinary Achievement. You start hitting a "sweet spot" where you consistently put your energy toward the most important things that also not only give you energy but also create more energy and opportunity for those around you. Not only are you achieving extraordinary things, but you're doing so extraordinarily efficiently, and so is everyone else! Not to mention that this kind of situation tends to create a culture of achievement, where everyone is excited and passionate about doing great things.

This is how to build momentum by maximizing your Zone of Extraordinary Achievement. When you know how to do this, your team and other relationship cultures will naturally help keep your momentum because you've worked to build them that way. That old saying, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts," really does apply.

¹ Michael Hyatt, Free to Focus (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2019), Chapter 2.

² Michael Hyatt, Free to Focus, Chapter 2

Extraordinary Achievement Decision Matrix

Moves Priorities Forward/ Must be done?*	Is It a Power Producer or Black Hole?*	Am I Good at It?*	Can Only I Do It, or Can Others Do It?	Resulting Output Level	Recommended Action
Yes	Powered Up	Yes	Only I	Тор	Zone of Extraordinary Achievement: Do as much as possible
Yes	Powered Up	Yes	Others or I	High	Do, but delegate if conflicts with Zone of Extraordinary Achievement or High Priority Learning Activity
Yes	Powered Up	No	Only I	Mid-High	Do as High-Priority Learning Activity
Yes	Powered Up	No	Others or I	Mid-High	Potential competitor for other tasks: Delegate (or keep as Low-Priority Learning Activity if time for it)
Yes	Black Hole	Yes	Only I	Mid	Energy Vampire: Minimize need for it as much as possible
Yes	Black Hole	Yes	Others or I	Mid	Energy Vampire: Delegate
Yes	Black Hole	No	Only I	Low	Energy Vampire: Minimize need for it and treat as Low-Priority Learning Area
Yes	Black Hole	No	Others or I	Low	Energy Vampire: Delegate
No	Powered Up	Yes	Only I	Negative	Shiny Object: Eliminate or keep as low-priority/future potential
No	Powered Up	Yes	Others or I	Negative	Shiny Object: eliminate
No	Powered Up	No	Only I	Negative	Shiny Object: eliminate
No	Powered Up	No	Others or I	Negative	Shiny Object: eliminate
No	Black Hole	Yes	Only I	Negative	Eliminate completely
No	Black Hole	Yes	Others or I	Negative	Eliminate completely
No	Black Hole	No	Only I	Negative	Eliminate completely
No	Black Hole	No	Others or I	Negative	Eliminate completely

Energy Input/Effects

Energy Output (Based on Component Combinations)/Actions for Best Outcomes:

= Positive/Energy Increasing

= Negative/Energy Neutral or Reducing

= High Output/Best Way to Increase/Sustain = Low Output/Best Use of Big-Picture Strengths

= Neutral/Negative Output/Best Way to Prevent

*Note: Degree should also be considered when deciding best actions (for instance, how much does this particular activity move priorities forward? Or, how much of a Black Hole is it for me? Etc.).