

8 Days of Change

Day #6

Notes and Directives from Phil Kaplan In accordance with the Be Better Principles

Day #6 falls on a Sunday.

Before I provide the directive, I want to share the evolution of my ritual *Sunday night* experience. It began long long ago . . . in a land far far away.

Well, not really all that far away, but definitely long ago.

Let's roll back about 15 years . . .

It was 1994. I was on the road, in cities other than my own, 20 out of every 30 days.

I was single, and fully committed to my business. My trainers felt like family and I was immersed in training, empowering, doing seminars, and media appearances.

I had many romantic interests, all of them fun, flirtatious, and not a one of them causing me the least bit of stress. I was often called a workaholic, at times a Peter Pan, and quite often told I was afraid of commitment. The reality was, I loved what I did for a living, I found extreme reward, and I was thoroughly enjoying the ride with few distractions.

Anyone who chose to enjoy the ride with me was welcome, as my commitment was solid. My commitment at the time was to my staff, my customers, my clients, and everyone connected with what I knew to be a noble mission helping thousands of people. I was promoting my books and programs and maintaining an insane but thrilling schedule that could never have been adhered to were it not for that genuine passionate addiction.

I'd usually be on an airplane by Monday afternoon and get home Thursday night or mid-day Friday. I would do appearances and TV and radio shows and books and programs would be shipped out of my office to fill orders all over the world. On Fridays my assistant Kira would fill me in on the sales for the week and we'd usually have a celebratory lunch or dinner, often with whatever trainers were free to join us.

My weekends were purely social. Saturday morning I'd do my radio show, and then it was off to the gym, and then the beach. The rest of the weekend was purely spontaneous.

Saturday nights were fun, just fun, and whether I went out with my buddies or went on a date, I was able to shut out "work." Then came Sunday . . .

Sunday morning was often something recreational, like a bike ride, volleyball on the beach, and then by noon I'd either be out on a friend's boat, enjoying the local cafes and restaurants (constantly sidetracked by exceptional people watching). During football season, by 1:00 PM I'd be watching football at the Davie Ale House or at Flanagan's on Las Olas beach. Sunday was the ritual cheat day, and there wasn't a Sunday that didn't include pizza and . . . during football season . . . Captain Jack's buried treasure brownie sundae (an Ale House special).

I loved my weeks, I loved my weekends . . . and then . . . came Sunday night. It would hit me around 8:00 PM. I'd start thinking about the week ahead. I had to be at the airport. What city was I going to? Who was I going to see? Did I unpack my suitcase from the week before? What did I have to bring with me? What did I have to have prepared? Where was I doing a seminar? Did I complete my Power Point presentation? What bills had to be paid? When did sales tax and payroll tax need to be reviewed? Were there any sponsors for my radio show I had been neglecting? How many seats were sold for my next seminar? Did I have enough inventory to handle sales? Were there any clients I was neglecting that needed a phone call or an appointment? Was my staff on target? What staff issues had to be handled with immediacy?

I'd get into bed around midnight and toss and turn with my thoughts beating me up. Somehow, Monday morning I'd wake up and enter my week and I'd handle all of it, but I couldn't seem to convince myself on Sunday night that I was ready for the week. Although I genuinely loved my business, I also loved the ability to step away from it on the weekends, but the stress of Sunday was agonizing. I almost felt I'd be better off working straight through the weekends to avoid the Sunday night anxiety. It really was severe . . . and oddly painful.

One Sunday I was sitting on a boat, docked on the intercoastal with my friend Kenny, and he put down his Corona and checked his watch. He told me he had to leave at 5 to go to the office.

"You work on Sunday night?" I asked.

"Nope. I free my head on Sunday night so I don't have to work until Monday."

It was one of those moments where you just feel as if something played out for your benefit. From that day forward, at 5 PM on Sunday, I sit down and review the week ahead. In fact, back then, I rented 2200 square feet in an office building on West Oakland Park Blvd, 20 minutes from my home, and I loved opening the locked office building, being the only sole in the entire building, sitting at my desk, putting on some music, and planning my week. I know as I share this it sounds burdensome, but it was the opposite. It was liberating. By 6:30 I was done, my head was clear, I could go out to dinner, or to a movie, or go home and read a book, visit with friends, or connect with someone on the phone just to catch up and chat. Best of all, I could go to bed easily completely ready for the week ahead.

I'm not asking you to adopt that habit, but I am suggesting that completing a directive on a Sunday shouldn't feel like work. I have a sense, from my own experience, that for you, doing this exercise today will feel good, and it will prepare you to put things in motion tomorrow with a sense of ease and control.

So . . . get to it and know you'll sleep well with exciting dreams tonight!

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Today's first of two directives will ask you to tap into your memory and awareness, to visit your creative spirit and organizational skill, and to take one action of your choice that commits you to follow through on the project the directive invites.

Don't read ahead. Just do the first directive as it's laid out.

Directive #1 – Part A

Begin compiling a list responding to the following prompts. The list is intended to put you in touch with opportunities that exist around you, but you might not have noticed. More importantly, you'll learn more about yourself and your marketing strength from this exercise than anything else you ever do.

First . . . rely upon your memory and insight. Respond to the following prompts with a name or brief answer:

1. A client that you lost, and you're not sure why
2. A client that you lost, and you do know why, although you realize there's a possibility that client can return
3. Another client that trained with you for a period of time, but not long enough to see a genuine result
4. A client that you worked with who started to see results, and has since found some excuse or reason why he or she "took a break" from training

5. Someone who you felt was just about ready to commit, but didn't . . . yet
6. Someone who mentioned to you that they have a friend or acquaintance who should train with you but hasn't yet made the introduction
7. Someone who you really know should commit but just doesn't seem interested enough . . . yet
8. A single product, something that costs between \$15 and \$70, that you believe every client should invest in (it can be a consumable product, such as a meal replacement or post-exercise supplement, or a one-time purchase such as a kettlebell, a medicine ball, or a heart rate monitor)
9. A person you see at least twice per week that you've never spoken to about his or her fitness program
10. Someone you know who has at least 4 employees
11. Someone you know who is a recreational exerciser or a weekend athlete but to your knowledge is not involved in a structured exercise program
12. Someone you know who provides a complementary, but not competitive service or a complementary product that would be willing to reward you for referrals
13. Someone you know who is a friend, is a bit of a ham, has a strong personality, and would be happy to do you a favor

14. Someone who has asked you frequently for fitness advice, but you, for whatever reason, haven't thought of asking to become a paying client

15. Someone you know who probably couldn't afford your services with any regularity, but would be extremely committed and could pay a reduced amount

Next, you're going to tap into your creative spirit and organizational skill:



Directive #1, Part B

This Directive is leading you toward organizing a small event, perhaps a dozen people gathering for an hour. Where can you do this? That's what you're about to figure out. With the initial list compiled, in Part B of this directive you're going to trust your brain to come up with a few options that are reasonable for you to pursue. I'll get you thinking in the right direction.

Consider a place that would be comfortable for you and for your guests. It's up to you what, specifically, you want to create. It can be a seminar, a wine and cheese gathering, a food tasting, a cooking lesson, or anything else you can think of that would prove comfortable and fun. Before you answer, realize that as the critical part of this event, for 20 minutes, you'll have to organize the group into a circle where they'll sit and discuss an issue or answer questions. With only that information, list three options for a venue, ideally places you can gather for a nominal investment, or perhaps, without charge. Most people initially think of a hotel conference room, but that will run you a few hundred dollars unless you have some connection or some favors to cash in. Think, not of what is conventional, but of the resources you have.

Three options:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

WARNING: Don't jump ahead until you have three possibilities. Avoid "but" and "can't" and I promise you'll be able to come up with three possible venues, even if you've made it to this point and have come up empty so far.

Think.

A group ex room at an off time? The local library? Your home? A friend's home? A happy client's home? A local restaurant where you know the owner or manager? A friend's office? A park or pavilion? The clubhouse at a real estate development? List three possibilities before you go on.



Directive #1, Part C

How can you get food and beverage for a nominal fee . . . or without charge? That's a question you'll ponder and resolve as you progress through this Directive.

Can you barter a few training sessions for some sandwich platters? Can you offer promotion in exchange for a restaurant's supplying of appetizers? Is there a wine retailer in your area who will supply wine and cheese in exchange for promotion, or feedback on new wines (wine tasting)? Do you have clients who can prepare and provide healthy meals?

Think of the options before you move on. Of course, one options is you can simply buy some platters from the deli department of your local grocery store or supermarket.

I'll pull this all together in a moment, but before I bog you down with details, I want you to tap into available resources for guests, venue, and now food, with an open mind.

Come up with three ideas or possible options for a resource to feed your guests.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Directive #1, explanation

OK, here's the deal. We tend to form our own opinions and hold on to them, and among our opinions we tend to decide or assume what we send out. In other words, we conduct ourselves as we believe we should, we stay the things we believe we should say, and we assume we are putting out a given message or perception. Most of us have only have, as reference, our own thoughts, in trying to determine what others think of us.

When we market, we put forward what we believe are our best attributes. Wouldn't it be valuable if we could read other's minds, understand what they're receiving in terms of our intended message?

A focus group is an incredible vehicle for getting at the truth, or in this case, getting at honest perceptions.

Here's where others can help us. Those people who opted to become clients did so for a reason. They perceived that you would be of value in some regard. Those people who met you and didn't become clients likely had another opinion. As an example, clients might have thought "valuable," others might have thought "expensive." Imagine how much you'd become empowered if you knew when and why you were sending out the "expensive message, and better yet, if you knew how to change it midstream?

Directive #1, Additional Details

Here's the assignment. You're going to, using the list you just compiled as a prompt, pull together a focus group. You don't have to call it a focus group, although you can. How you do it is up to you. You want to round up a group of a dozen people, many of them prospects for your business, and open up an honest discussion.

I don't want to give you rules here.

I want you to create your own experience.

If it goes well (and it will), you'll gain some insights that will help you better recognize your value and better attract and keep clients, and you'll also add some clients to your roster before the brief event ends.

Before we get to the final elements of this directive (and one more to follow), I'll share some ideals that will optimize the event and the outcome.

Ideals for Bringing this Directive to Fruition

- Ideally, the entire event lasts 90 minutes.
- Ideally, people consume a bit of wine and fun food, just to create a relaxed environment
- Ideally, there's some background music and something to prompt light discussion
- Ideally, the people in the room comfortably mingle
- Ideally, you participate as a host for the bulk of the event, but you leave the room for the focus group so people aren't hindered by your presence in sharing honest opinions

Some ideas to strengthen it:

- The item that you identified as **item #8** in your list . . . consider selling it to your clients. You might introduce it at this event. Try to work an arrangement where you buy 6 at a reduced price so you can sell it at retail and make a few bucks. It will allow you to put a few extra dollars in your pocket, and . . . it will serve as a first step in yet another way to increase \$\$ per client action.
- The business that you identified as **item #12** may offer you a potential sponsor for your event. You might find someone to pay for the venue and/or the food in exchange for distribution of promotional materials or the opportunity to present to the group for 10 minutes.
- The person that you identified as **#15** could be someone you invite to train with you at a discounted rate in exchange for being granted the ability to document results, post them regularly in real time, and at the conclusion of 12 weeks, you'll have permission to use photos and testimonials in all of your marketing. If you can establish this relationship, introducing "The Challenge" at the event keeps everyone, even if they don't immediately commit to training with you, interested in progress, and as this client achieves impressive results, interest among the group increases.

I will not give you the details of your event. The questions you're raising are good ones. You have the ability to get the answers. Many of them simply require decisions. You can do this and benefit from it. Without providing any specific details that might limit your creativity, I'll add an additional bit of clarity as to what you'll want to unfold.

At the 60 minute point, you'll want to have everyone sit in chairs arranged in a circle. You'll want to do a brief and sincere presentation revealing what you believe are your best assets and unique attributes. Don't name or list those attributes. Just reveal them. If you're passionate, let your passion come through. If you're committed, let your commitment come through. Talk about whatever you believe will best connect the group with whatever elements will most compel or magnetize them to you. Explain that your intention is to deliver the most value possible to as many people as you can help, and thank the group for helping you to understand how to better do that. Then, ideally, tell everyone in the group that you'll personally call them the following day to thank them one-on-one, leave the room (and the building) and have someone else (the person you identified as **#13**) conduct the 20-minute session.

The idea is for the moderator to elicit honest dialogue, and . . . to ask questions and not offer any responses. Make sure you either choose someone who will do an exceptional job of relaying the results to you, or else have someone else taking notes. You can use an audio recorder, but if you do you'll have to announce that it's being recorded and it might affect honesty to some degree.

Here are the types of questions you'll want asked:

- Those of you who opted to train with _____, why did you choose him (her)?
- What other options were you considering and what if anything was the primary factor that made you feel _____ was a better choice.
- Those of you who had an opportunity to train with _____ but haven't yet committed, what could he (she) have done to spark your commitment?
- What words would you use to describe _____?
- What would you say to others who were considering training with _____?
- What might make _____ a better trainer or a more obvious choice for people seeking a fitness or weight loss result?
- What do you believe _____ can do for you?
- What, if anything, would you want _____ to know about a mistake he (she) is making either in business or in his (her) marketing and communication?

I know this seems overwhelming. It seems like a lot of work. It seems like it might put you on the spot and embarrass you. It seems as if people might share things that might, when you hear them, be emotionally hurtful.

You know what you have to do.

Get ego and F.E.A.R. out of the way.

I have not steered you wrong yet. Trust that I lead you forward with purpose.

You won't appreciate the value of this exercise until you do it. It can prove to be a pivotal turning point in taking your career to an entirely new level of excellence.

Directive #1, The Final Piece

Finally, in completing the directive, before you put this aside for the day, do one thing that commits you to following through. You'll want to conduct this focus group event within the next 21 days. Whether it's calling someone to invite them, or scheduling a meeting with someone who can provide a venue, or calling whoever is going to be the moderator, do something now that is a step toward making this happen. Don't run the risk of procrastination shutting this down. If you're clear on a venue, or clear on a few specific guests that you can call right now, make what ever calls lock you in to follow through.

One More Directive Follows

Directive #2:

Identify three elements of the dream (your dream). The dream is simply the outcome you know will bring you joy, the outcome that will make you happy. Identifying these three elements will bring you a step toward greater clarity on what your future holds.

Something you'd own that you don't own right now

Something you'd have the power to do that you have not felt the ability to do before

Describe, in a paragraph, what a "day you love" would consist of, purely dreaming, putting any limitations aside

Put the paragraph you create in Directive #2 somewhere you can read it every evening before bed and every morning upon rising.

All you have left to do is follow through . . . and until tomorrow when we connect again . . . Be Better!

Phil