

What's *Yours To Do*?

And How Will You Find The Time And Energy For It?

By Mitch Saunders

You're not unusual if you look into the mirror and hear yourself saying: "At this stage of my life, I have all these different opportunities. My world seems to be expanding not contracting; but which of these options makes sense for me to pursue *now*? What am I *really* supposed to be doing? What's my 'call?' I've proven that I can accomplish lots of things. But I can't help feeling at times that I'm acting out someone else's script. What's *mine* to do?"

To discover what's *Yours To Do* will require discipline. But you're already asking the kind of questions that suggest you're ready to clarify what that might be, and to find the energy and time to make it a reality for you. In the words of Tagore, "The winds of grace are always blowing, but it is you that must raise your sails."

To identify what's *Yours To Do* requires that you look no further than what gives you the most enjoyment, what comes naturally for you, what 'juices' you up and what always seems to produce the most satisfying results. And the most amazing thing of all, is that once you acknowledge these areas in your life, they will be the very same things that make you unique; it's what fuels your leadership and energizes your creative and innovative capacities. It's the "secret sauce" that leads people to want to associate with you—people who call themselves your friends, your customers, your suppliers, your allies, your family.

How would you spot your unique gift/s? These are the distinctive ways that you bring or create value in almost any situation. You've probably been doing this since you were young. Others may recognize this in you before you do because this ability comes so naturally.

Let's look at a set of key questions that might help you unlock your understanding of who you are and how you can better serve:

- ❖ What is your unique way of entering a situation and making a contribution?
- ❖ What activities are you naturally drawn to, regardless of where you are?
- ❖ What are your distinctive abilities or gifts?
- ❖ What things in your life do you need to limit? Say 'no' to? Stop doing?
- ❖ How can you put your uniqueness to work and limit doing what others do as well or better?
- ❖ How might you use your 168 hours a week more wisely?

Your Uniqueness

One way to clarify what's *Yours To Do* is to practice naming your unique gifts. Here's a simple formula that requires thinking of active verbs and value descriptions.

Fill out this sentence:

"My unique gift is (*action verb*)...I do this by (*brief description of process you use to create value*)..."

Some examples:

“My unique gift is designing and articulating games, and setting up the rules, so all participants win.”

“I move in and out of different situations, asking ‘what’s missing, what else is needed for this particular conflict to be transformed?’ I name and model what’s needed; and encourage others to follow through over the longer term.”

“My unique gift is seeing all parts of the puzzle, what pieces are missing, and how the pieces fit together so the result is greater than the sum of the parts.”

“My gift is generating enthusiasm in people. I love to work with others and shift their attitudes from one of ‘this is impossible’ to ‘this could very realistically happen!’”

“My gift is bringing people w/ unique ideas together. I know many people and know a little bit about what they love to do. Often I meet someone with a vision or talent very similar to another person I met the week before. I’ll then hook these people up and then watch magic happen between them.”

How Can You Figure Out What’s Yours to Do?

Other ways to focus and clarify what’s *Yours To Do* include:

Ask: “What do other people say about you?” (Think of those who know you from different contexts, and who would say *positive* things about what you bring or catalyze when you’re involved.) What would they say you “always” do, in terms of how you contribute to a given situation? What would they say is different, or what kinds of results happen because of your involvement? You might even ask some folks who’ve experienced you in action to answer this question in writing. Then look for the recurring themes and images that appear in different people’s responses.

Distinguish: what’s *yours* to do from all the other things you *can* do. Try to avoid being trapped by your competencies or sideswiped by your shortcomings. Consider these four following kinds of activities that fill each of our days. We all do them and each category has distinct characteristics:

- ❖ **Yours To Do:** You have superior skill in this area, and a passion for using yourself in these ways. Doing these things *gives* you energy. Without prompting, you continually strive to improve in these areas. This way of contributing comes naturally to you, as if you were born to do it, and you recognize these kinds of activities across a range of settings. In other words, regardless of where you are or who you’re with, what time of the day or night it is, you just naturally do these things.
- ❖ **You’ve Mastered:** You do these things better than most people and others notice. You work at these things, though, because they don’t come as naturally. But you’ve mastered this arena. Although you have learned to speak this “second language,” it’s not your native tongue. It’s not exactly a struggle to get these things done, but in your heart, you know they don’t give you energy. In some important ways, they drain you. But you keep doing them because you’ve become so darned good at it. Your reputation may even be linked to these proficiencies.
- ❖ **You Can Do:** You *can* do these things and meet minimum standards. But many other people *could* do them and probably actually do them better. Or at least with less tension. When you engage in these activities, you think they’re tedious and repetitious. You yawn. You’re bored. Furthermore, when you actually concentrate on these activities, you begin to feel anxious. You wish you were doing something else and that keeps you from feeling inspired.

❖ **You're Not Meant To Do:** Your performance in this area is sub-par. Let's face it: you weren't cut out for this. Because of your "wiring" or disposition, education or experience, this is not an area of your greatest strengths. When you engage in these activities, you find yourself in conflicts. These activities are surrounded by a sense of frustration and stress.

The chart below offers you an opportunity to better see how you use yourself within each of these four categories. Take a few minutes to reflect on how the things you do, fit into each category. Actually list your activities and how you spend your time. I've added examples from my own experience to give you an idea of what some of these distinctions might look like.

Yours To Do	You've Mastered	You Can Do	Not Meant To Do
<p><i>Encouraging people to embrace and assimilate their unique way of being in the world</i></p> <p><i>Helping others to sense and influence what's trying to end, begin or mature underneath complex situations and conflicts</i></p>	<p><i>Facilitating team sessions that lead to performance improvement</i></p> <p><i>Attracting talented people to contribute to projects</i></p>	<p><i>Creating multimedia presentations, training manuals</i></p> <p><i>Attending to all the environmental details to ensure success for high stakes meetings</i></p>	<p><i>Administrative tasks such as filing, bookkeeping</i></p> <p><i>Highly technical tasks such as video editing, computer trouble-shooting</i></p>

How Do You Use Your Time?

Many traps as well as many benefits are associated with how you view time. You can, of course, have tremendous impact in the world without mastering the use of time, but you may pay a price. Time is one of the most precious resources we have as humans. If we truly honor and value time as our gift, we will learn to conserve it as well as spend it wisely. When we don't, our lives are not as deeply satisfying and we may, in fact, actually be impoverished. By learning how to anticipate and clarify how you intend to use this precious resource, you will increase your chances of fulfilling your deeper intentions.

In order to do this, think of time as a resource that's available for three different, but interrelated purposes: **Free Time, Show Time and Prep Time**. The basic premise here is that it is *your* job to set up the conditions that will increase your chances of fulfilling your intentions through wise use of time. For example, making sure that you focus on what's *Yours To Do* when it's time for you to show up in high stakes situations. This includes addressing conflicting expectations of those around you. You can approach each day, or periods of time in your life, in these three ways:

Free Time

This is your gift of time for rejuvenation and renewal. It is during this time, you can create a sustainable and deeply satisfying personal life, safely protected from incursions from work and maintenance "to do" lists. To use your *free time* effectively, you must create "work-free time zones," protected from phones, email, and work-related conversations and reading. During this time you will rejuvenate your body and mind, your relationships, your energy, and your perspective. Without this dedicated time for personal renewal, you will be more likely to forget your deep sense of purpose in life. Your creativity will dry up, and you are in danger of losing touch with those you love. It is also very possible you will become chronically fatigued or sick.

What have you learned about the conditions that yield the most sense of renewal? What mix of solitude and time to be with others works best for you? List specific activities that would be most nourishing and rejuvenating for your free time.

Show Time

This is the time when you're "on," doing what's *Yours To Do*. Think of it as theater. You're "on stage," in the spotlight, and your contribution is absolutely critical to the effectiveness of all those around you. The key to your performance will lie in completely focusing on what enables you to produce the greatest results. Anyone in the performance professions will tell you that it doesn't matter how skillful you are if you let your concentration lapse. During your *show time*, you are called to support others and deploy your unique gifts for maximum results. Everything you do in *show time* is about creating value and offering to others a unique experience. No one can sustain this kind of concentration indefinitely. This is why it is so important to set it up so that when you're "on" you are truly ready to realize the greatest results from what's *Yours To Do*.

What specific kinds of results are crucial for you to realize when it's show time? What behaviors and ways of thinking (about yourself, others and the situation) are most closely associated with what's Your To Do? What strategies do you rely on to help ensure "the right you" shows up? What kinds of conditions support you to show up fully, and what kind of circumstances limit or even disable your performance? How can you set up your Show Time to combine high intensity with opportunities to pause and reflect, course correct if necessary?

Prep Time

The secret to successful *show time* and *free time* is preparation. This is when you use your “back stage” skills and support systems to prepare, to learn your lines, to practice your movements. *Prep time* is when you set the conditions and circumstances that will enable you later to show up with your unique gifts and add the most value. High performers don’t leave this to chance! *Prep time* is often used for cleaning up “messes” (e.g., arrangements that bring out the worst in you; unfinished business/projects that sap energy); for proper delegations (transferring to someone else what’s not yours to do); creating the teamwork required for complex projects; and/or developing key capabilities. Filing, housework, home improvement, and other maintenance activities are handled in *prep time* because this has to do with setting up the conditions for full realization of *show* or *free time*. Sometimes, if you haven’t created a way to make enough money via what’s *Yours To Do*, *prep time* is devoted to building a bridge—using activities and skills you’ve mastered to cultivate the conditions (e.g., new arrangements, business model, customers) so you’ll be able to take more advantage of what’s *Yours To Do* in the future.

What kind of preparation will increase the chances that you bring optimal focus and readiness to your show time? Who else could you partner with—to cover those areas that are not Your’s To Do—to help ensure your efforts realize the best possible results? What kind of advance planning will help ensure that you take full advantage of the restorative potential of free time?

Because your *prep time* is so crucial to the other two, you need to concentrate on this area of your life in order to function efficiently and wisely.

Here are some of the things you can do and think about to enhance your *prep time*:

- A) As much as possible, reduce or even eliminate everything that drains you of your energy.
- B) Increase everything you love doing. If it works for you, do more of it.
- C) Schedule specific time for chores. Making time for maintenance activities ensures things don’t pile up. Having a specific time for these activities helps to limit this use of time.
- D) Set up parameters that will insure best results. Perhaps these questions will help you better plan your *prep time*, keeping in mind that it’s during *prep time* that you prepare for both your *show time* and your *free time*.
 - ❖ How many hours/days will you be devoting to your *free time* (this week, month)?
 - ❖ How will you prepare to make that happen?
 - ❖ How might you upgrade the quality of your home life?
 - ❖ How can you better share rejuvenating experiences with others?
 - ❖ What kind of vacations will truly refresh your body, mind and spirit?
 - ❖ What can you do to help ensure optimal conditions for your next *show time*?
 - ❖ What can you do to improve your revenue, generate more leads and opportunities?

Martha Graham once said:

There is vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is ONLY ONE OF YOU in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it.

It is not your business to determine how good it is or how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.