Organizing **Your Projects**

Part 4 of The **Learning Effectiveness** Series

How do you choose your projects? Matching your choices to a list of goals may not be the best approach when you include the roles you have into the decision matrix.

Books that suggest creating lists of goals have it backwards. First choose your roles, then choose your projects. Goals come last. How do you choose your projects? Before deciding to undertake a project it needs to fulfill these three criteria:

1. It needs to provide major support to one of your roles

2. It needs to fit within your calendar

3. It needs to be consistent with your value system

Roles as a husband and parent include the need to provide for your family. If you need extra income, a second job should be evaluated using The Project Evaluation Table, a simple method to evaluate possible projects.

The Project Evaluation Table

If you wish to tutor in the evening, you will earn extra money, which supports your roles as a spouse and parent. Since you can limit it to a few hours weekly, so as not to interfere with family time, that is consistent with your roles as a spouse and parent. You are a straight arrow, but that's okay, because tutoring fits in with your value system as well. Therefore, you write yes in each cell in the first two columns. So tutoring passes the test.

Project:	Role	Role	Role
Support the role?	?	?	?
Fit in the calendar?	?	?	?
Consistent withvalues?	?	?	?

Example: Project Evaluation Table

Project: Tutoring	Spouse	Parent	Role
Support the role?	Yes	Yes	?
Fit in the calendar?	Yes	Yes	?
Consistent with values?	Yes	Yes	?

Now Bob calls. He knows a teller who copied the key to the bank and overheard the combination to the safe. He needs help to rob the bank. Robbing a bank supports your role as a provider, but a no response is placed under spouse and parent because those roles come with implicit ideas of behavior, and robbing a bank does not fit those ideas. Robbing a bank is quick, and does fit into your calendar, but is not cons tent with your values. Robbing the bank

Project: Rob the bank	Spouse	Parent	Role
Support the role?	No	No	?
Fit in the calendar?	Yes	Yes	?
Consistent with values?	No	No	?

does not satisfy all three criteria, so it is not a project for you.

Let's take a more complex example. Dave's roles include: husband, parent, engineer, drummer, and reader. His band has been offered a one month tour and Dave wants to go. Dave needs to discuss this with his wife. Each individual has dreams, and in marriage these must be contemplated together. Though Susan does not want to play in a band her life is bound up with Dave's. They have a good marriage and she does not want to hold Dave back from something he would like to do. Consider the ques-

tion of support in the role of marriage both ways— is Dave supporting his wife and/or is his wife supporting him? Both parts of a couple need to agree for the answer to be yes. Touring with the band is fine on Susan's calendar and is consistent with the values that support their marriage.

Project: Touring with band					
	Husband	Parent	Engineer	Drummer	Reader
Support the role?	Yes	No	N.A.	Yes	N.A.
Fit in the calendar?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Consistent with values?	Yes	Yes	N.A.	Yes	N.A.

Next is Dave's role as a parent. Though consistent with the love of music Dave tries to instill in his children, ages twelve and fourteen, a month of touring does not support Dave's role as a parent. Dave was adopted and vowed he would never leave his children for a significant length of time, so that earns two no responses. We will return to this role.

Touring in a band has no relationship to being an engineer, so we write not applicable (N.A.). Since he has accrued six weeks of vacation time, that is no problem. Similarly, there are no issues of values when it comes to his being an engineer. Obviously, his role as a drummer receives yes responses. Dave loves to read. Being a drummer receives two N.A. responses in this role, but touring leaves him more time to read than when he is working, so that receives a yes response.

Initially Dave decided not to go on tour, because that will not support all three criteria in his role as a parent. However, he spoke with the agent and the rest of the band and they agreed to tour in July, when Dave's kids and wife, a schoolteacher, are on vacation. Now the family can travel together and going on tour is consistent with Dave's role as a parent.

> **"** *...the Project Evaluation Table allows you to choose projects in an objective manner because you can visualize if a project fulfills the three criteria for a more important role...* **"**

It is best to have yes responses for the three questions for all roles, but this is not always possible. When considering projects, record all your roles in the table in order of priority, from left to right. Dave ordered the importance of his roles as follows: husband, parent, engineer, drummer, and reader. If drummer was his first priority and being a parent his last, he could have decided to go on tour straight away (we are not suggesting that would be a good re-ordering of Dave's roles). The point is, if you have all yes responses for your most important role(s) you may decide to take on a project even though it may contain no responses for less important roles. In case of conflicts, the **Project Evaluation Table** allows you to choose projects in an objective manner because you can visualize if a project fulfills the three criteria for a more important role even though it does not for a less important role. The next issue will discuss how to organize your projects.

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