

From the author of the *Wall Street Journal*  
National Bestseller *The Trust Edge*

# THE DAILY EDGE

Simple Strategies to  
Increase Efficiency  
*and Make an Impact  
Every Day*

DAVID HORSAGER



You are reading an excerpt from  
**Berrett-Koehler Publishers**

Our books challenge conventional thinking,  
introduce new ideas, and foster positive change.  
If you sign up for an account on our website,  
you may purchase our books at a discount.

**[www.bkconnection.com](http://www.bkconnection.com)**

## What People Are Saying about *The Daily Edge*

“David’s book is a quick read that could change the efficiency in your entire life! This transformation will leave you with more time!”

—Steven Schussler, founder of Rain Forest Café,  
author of *It’s a Jungle out There*

“*The Daily Edge* is the proverbial ‘spoon full of sugar’ for productivity ailments! David’s tips are easy to digest and offer a variety of sound tactics to affect positive change in all aspects of one’s life.”

—Karen Skirten, former Corporate President, Executive Women International

“If you’re going to be successful in the C-Suite, you can’t afford to waste one day, one minute, or one encounter. David Horsager gives you the edge you need to be at the top of the business food chain.”

—Jeffrey Hayzlett, primetime television and radio show host and  
bestselling author of *The Mirror Test* and *Running the Gauntlet*

“David is simply the best at explaining useful tips and methods in understandable and engaging ways. Get *The Daily Edge*!”

—Marcy T. Rogers, M.Ed., President and CEO, SpineMark

“David takes the skills of the successful and reveals in easy-to-follow strategies how to take control of your daily routine. Jump start your career by devouring this book now. I highly recommend it!”

—“Famous Dave” Anderson, founder of Famous Dave’s of America, Inc.

“Powerful and actionable, this guide gives you practical tips you can use right away! Leap to the next level with these strategies.”

—Rory Vaden, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Take the Stairs*

“David is right on. His tips are simple, applicable and powerful. His technique to dive deeper until you have a clear action plan is brilliant!”

—Jill Blashack Strahan, CEO, Tastefully Simple

“As a professor looking for that competitive advantage for my students, David brings common sense into common practice. As a leading expert in trust, David now expands into the area of productivity. My students will have the ‘edge’ when it comes to their professional development.”

—Dr. Karel Sovak, Associate Professor, Gary Tharaldson School of Business

“These strategies are as clear and usable as they are wise.”

—Willis Turner, President and CEO,  
Sales & Marketing Executives International, Inc.

“*The Daily Edge* challenges personal growth and provides a blueprint for organizational trust and productivity. We use David’s strategies in our football program to build strong habits essential to leadership both on and off the field.”

—Peter Haugen, Head Football Coach, Gustavus Adolphus College

“Skyline Technology Solutions uses David’s national bestseller *The Trust Edge* and we can testify to the difference it makes. We’re eager to get *The Daily Edge* into everyone’s hands and see its impact in our organization.”

—Anthony F. Diekemper, CEO, Skyline Technology Solutions

“*The Daily Edge* is a sure-fire hit to keep your team positive and working on trust-building actions. His quick tips and strategies plant the seed for you to cultivate and harvest for years to come!”

—Kent M. Senf, COO, C&B Operations

“Horsager balances two seemingly opposing objectives—maximizing productivity and maintaining healthy relationships. Any leader who wants to experience this balance must get this book!”

—Dr. Alan Zimmerman, author of *The Payoff Principle: Discover the 3 Secrets for Getting What You Want Out of Life and Work*

“David Horsager’s common sense approach to managing time has inspired me to be more efficient in my work and everyday tasks.”

—Mike Hajek, Director of Contracts and Marketing,  
National Joint Powers Alliance

THE  
DAILY  
EDGE

*This page intentionally left blank*

# THE DAILY EDGE

*Simple Strategies  
to Increase Efficiency  
and Make an Impact  
Every Day*

DAVID HORSAGER

Author of the National Bestseller  
*THE TRUST EDGE*



BK®

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.  
*a BK Business book*

# The Daily Edge

Copyright © David Horsager

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the publisher, addressed "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," at the address below.



**Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.**

1333 Broadway, Suite 1000

Oakland, CA 94612-1921

**BK**

Tel: (510) 817-2277, Fax: (510) 817-2278

[www.bkconnection.com](http://www.bkconnection.com)

## Ordering information for print editions

*Quantity sales.* Special discounts are available on quantity purchases by corporations, associations, and others. For details, contact the "Special Sales Department" at the Berrett-Koehler address above.

*Individual sales.* Berrett-Koehler publications are available through most bookstores. They can also be ordered directly from Berrett-Koehler: Tel: (800) 929-2929; Fax: (802) 864-7626; [www.bkconnection.com](http://www.bkconnection.com)

*Orders for college textbook/course adoption use.* Please contact Berrett-Koehler: Tel: (800) 929-2929; Fax: (802) 864-7626.

*Orders by U.S. trade bookstores and wholesalers.* Please contact Ingram Publisher Services, Tel: (800) 509-4887; Fax: (800) 838-1149; E-mail: [customer.service@ingrampublisherservices.com](mailto:customer.service@ingrampublisherservices.com); or visit [www.ingrampublisherservices.com/Ordering](http://www.ingrampublisherservices.com/Ordering) for details about electronic ordering.

Berrett-Koehler and the BK logo are registered trademarks of Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

First Edition

Hardcover print edition ISBN 978-1-62656-595-1

PDF e-book ISBN 978-1-62656-596-8

IDPF e-book ISBN 978-1-62656-597-5

2015-1

Project manager and copyeditor: Heidi Sheard

Cover designer, text designer, and compositor: Heidi Koopman/Purpose Design



## Dedication

*To Nate*, who has the Daily Edge,  
but not at the expense of relationships.



*To Lisa*, who manages  
our home and four children  
with diligence and grace.



*This page intentionally left blank*

## Simple Strategies

<b>Tip 1.</b> 90-Day Quick Plan.....	1
<b>Tip 2.</b> DMA's: Difference-Making Actions.....	7
<b>Tip 3.</b> Power Hour.....	13
<b>Tip 4.</b> Focus.....	17
<b>Tip 5.</b> Decide Now .....	21
<b>Tip 6.</b> SEEDS First .....	25
<b>Tip 7.</b> Manage Your Energy .....	29
<b>Tip 8.</b> Log It .....	33
<b>Tip 9.</b> Excellence, Not Perfection.....	37
<b>Tip 10.</b> Plan Tomorrow Today .....	41
<b>Tip 11.</b> Energize .....	45
<b>Tip 12.</b> Go Ready .....	49
<b>Tip 13.</b> Efficient E-mail .....	53
<b>Tip 14.</b> Phone Habits .....	57
<b>Tip 15.</b> Maximize Meetings .....	61
<b>Tip 16.</b> Flight Plan.....	65
<b>Tip 17.</b> Wake Up .....	69

<b>Tip 18.</b> Clear Desk .....	73
<b>Tip 19.</b> Automate .....	79
<b>Tip 20.</b> To-do List ABC's .....	83
<b>Tip 21.</b> Master Faster .....	87
<b>Tip 22.</b> Mind Mapping.....	91
<b>Tip 23.</b> Back Up .....	95
<b>Tip 24.</b> Go Paperless .....	99
<b>Tip 25.</b> Shortcuts .....	103
<b>Tip 26.</b> Don't Go Gadget.....	107
<b>Tip 27.</b> Don't Get Hooked.....	111
<b>Tip 28.</b> Optimize .....	115
<b>Tip 29.</b> Bundle.....	119
<b>Tip 30.</b> Get Un-stuck.....	123
<b>Tip 31.</b> Stock Up .....	127
<b>Tip 32.</b> Say No .....	131
<b>Tip 33.</b> Reflect .....	135
<b>Tip 34.</b> Habit Change.....	139
<b>Tip 35.</b> People First.....	143

## Acknowledgments

Audience members and clients have inspired the writing of this book, and many others have helped bring it to completion. I thank my close friends and advisors Loren Horsager, Joe Kimbell, Scott Lundeen, and Jason Sheard. A big thank you to the two Heidi's on my team. Heidi Sheard is a dear friend and my wonderful editor. Heidi Koopman is my fantastic designer who captured my vision on this project and took it to yet another level. Thanks to Jeevan Sivasubramaniam and the incredible team at Berrett-Koehler Publishers. Heartfelt gratitude to my core team, Ryan Naylor, Reid Velo, and Anne Engstrom—they are trusted colleagues and fulfill our mission at Horsager Leadership, Inc. with passion, integrity, and humility. I am grateful to God for my amazing wife Lisa and my four children who support and inspire me every day.

Thank you to the organizations and audiences who have invited me to speak and consult—many of you inspired, tested, and ultimately revealed the level of productivity that comes when one has *The Daily Edge*.

**The Daily Edge (*n*):** The advantage or edge gained when priorities are clear and there is a daily effort to act on those priorities.



## The inspiration for this book

came from learning and implementing several techniques that radically changed the way I do work and live life. It all started when I took some time off. I began reading several books on productivity and time management, which

made me become more aware of how people use their time. I watched a great leader use time so effectively, yet, not at the expense of relationships. Those experiences inspired me to develop and implement the techniques featured in this book.

While I never intended to be a productivity expert, people who attend my presentations and seminars have asked me to expand on this topic of productivity. Perhaps one of the reasons why my message is appealing is the simplicity of my approach. This book is unique in that it isn't long on theories or philosophical ideas. Instead, it is packed with tips that I've gathered and used in my own life. They have made a huge difference for me, and they can do the same for you.

*The Daily Edge* will provide you with practical ways to **be more efficient and effective while honoring relationships**. Each of the tips has been passed on from a friend or learned from reflection after a busy day. Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Pappas". The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.





*Tip 1*

# 90-Day Quick Plan



Eighteen years ago a man challenged me to not complain for 90 days straight. I couldn't complain about anything, not food, not the weather, nothing. That changed my life. Some people say you can change a habit in 21 days. I question whether that is long enough. While 21 days may be too short, an entire year is too long. Think about it, most people can't keep their New Year's resolutions for even two weeks. People often think, "I have all year to get going on that." **90 days is a sweet spot.** It is a short enough time frame to stay absolutely focused, and yet it is long enough to get more done than most people get done in a whole year. When I lost my weight, the first 90 days were the most important. In those three months, I lost thirty-three pounds, but more importantly, my thinking about food, exercise, and how I spent my time was transformed. Everything changed in 90 days.

Most strategic planning is done at an off-site retreat, yet provides little momentum toward action. Instead of an annual planning session, try

making a 90-Day Quick Plan. Every 90 days we encourage everyone on our team to create a 90-Day Quick Plan. It gives leaders and teams an actionable framework that provides clarity and leads to tangible results both personally and professionally.

Here's how to make it work. Pick an area of your business or life that you'd like to address, and then ask six questions. *The plan should take less than 30 minutes to create.*

**Question 1: *Where am I?*** If you do not know where you are today, you cannot know where you would like to be in the future. (If you are doing a 90-Day Quick Plan as a team, ask, "Where are we?" and use "we" in the following questions as well.) Ask this question and you will be able to quickly identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. For example, where am I in my relationship with my kids? Where am I in my health? Where am I in comparison to expected sales? Where are we as far as the number of people we are reaching with our message or product?

**Question 2: *Where am I going in 90 days?*** Remember, it is not one year or five years like many strategic plans. Thinking about your answer in question 1, where would you like to be in 90 days? Write a clear, quantifiable (numerical if possible) goal. You will likely accomplish more than you thought in just 90 days!

**Question 3: *Why am I going?*** If the "why" is strong enough, the plan does not need to be perfect. If a building is burning and my kids are in it, I don't need to know every detail—I'm going in because my "why" is so strong. When your team is motivated and unified, they'll do the little things differently. They'll stay passionate and focused, and they'll finish.

**Question 4:** *How are we going to get there?* How? Keep asking how? until your team commits to taking specific actions.

**Question 5:** *How are we going to get there?* I press people to ask how? until they have come up with a specific action they will take starting today or tomorrow at the latest.

**Question 6:** *How are we going to get there?* I have found people must ask how? at least three times before they are clear enough. It may take asking how? seven times in order to get enough clarity. The point is don't stop asking how until you or your team has decided on a specific action that will be taken starting today or tomorrow.

## **Making It Happen**

I remember when I really got this idea of asking “how?” three times. I was training and consulting with one of the biggest health care organizations in North America. They needed change! They were losing funding and patients. We were toward the end of our Trust Edge Experience. One hundred fifty top people including the CEO and senior leadership team were all seated at round tables. Each table had defined a specific challenge they were going to tackle. I remember asking one table full of top leaders about what they needed to take action on in order to grow and be more trusted. The table leader said, “We need to be clearer.”

I said, “How will you be clearer?”

After brainstorming with his group, the table leader said, “We are going to communicate more.”

I said, “How?”

After more brainstorming, he said, “We are going to hold each other accountable.”

I said, “How?”

The table, seated with bright minds and fine leaders, had to be pushed three times in order to realize they needed a more specific action plan. They worked together to create a plan for communicating more often and more clearly. An important piece of their plan was how they were going to hold each other accountable to this effort. They were able to start following their plan the very next day.

On a personal level, when I decided to lose weight, I kept asking “how?” until I went from “eat less and exercise more” to defining fifteen specific actionable ideas I could implement on a daily basis.

With greater clarity around your 90-day plan, you will gain the trust of your team and bottom-line results will follow.

---

“The most pathetic person  
in the world is someone who has sight  
but no vision.” —Helen Keller

---



To watch David teach the 90-Day Quick Plan, go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQsZRU8TW-4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQsZRU8TW-4)

However beautiful  
the strategy,  
you should  
occasionally look  
at the results.

—Winston Churchill

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## *Tip 2*

# DMA's: Difference-Making Actions



**H**ave you ever had a day in which you worked really hard but felt like you didn't get anything done? Many people look at their to-do list and get so overwhelmed that they end up doing nothing! The DMA strategy gives powerful clarity. It works beautifully especially once you have your 90-Day Quick Plan. It was inspired by a strategy successfully used by Charles Schwab of Bethlehem Steel Company, the first American to earn a million-dollar annual salary.

DMA stands for Difference-Making Actions. **DMA's simply give focus and intentionality to do the most important things every day.** This simple strategy will increase results like nothing else. Make a habit of doing DMA's on a daily basis and your impact will multiply.

Here's how it works:

### **The DMA Strategy:**

1. First thing every morning, take a sticky note.
2. At the top, write your most important current goal.
3. Then write the numbers 1-5 down the page.
4. Next to the 1, write the most important thing you could do today to accomplish that goal. Then write the next most important thing under 2, and so on.
5. You now have a list of the 5 most important things you could do today that would make the biggest difference in accomplishing your goal and ultimately fulfilling your organization's mission.

When you write your DMA's, make sure they are FUN:

**F = First priority first.** List your tasks in order of priority and then do them in order. Don't start working on the second task until you have finished the first one or you have come to a roadblock that requires someone else's help. Your DMA's are the most important actions for the day! Don't attempt more than five, or you might get overwhelmed and do nothing. If you can't boil them down to a few simply stated tasks, then you probably need to restate your goal.

**U = Under the main vision and current major objective.** DMA's are the five most important actions you can specifically take today to move your organization forward. They must come under your main vision and help accomplish your most important and current priorities!



**N=Number attached.** It is not a DMA unless there is a specific number attached. In other words “Calling more prospects” is not a DMA, but “Making 10 sales calls” is. “Organizing your office” is not a DMA, but “Organizing for 20 minutes” or “Cleaning out 2 drawers” are DMA’s. Difference Making Actions must be quantifiable.

It is important to note that *DMA’s are based solely on what you can do*, not what others need to do. In other words, “Calling three people” is a DMA as that does not rely on whether anyone answers or not. However, “Selling 5 gadgets” is not a DMA as it relies on what others must do. If you consistently do your DMA’s, great outcomes will follow.

Each time you complete a Difference-Making Action, put a line through it. Believe it or not there is great satisfaction in seeing that sticky note at the end of the day with five lines crossed through your most important tasks. I once had an intern fresh out of college who was invaluable to our organization. Every day he accomplished his DMA’s and then left that sticky note on his cubicle wall. Each day he added his next sticky note with lines through his accomplishments. Do you think he needed to be micromanaged? No way! There was proof on the wall he was doing Difference-Making Actions that moved our mission forward every single day.

## Helpful DMA Hints

**Be focused.** When you write your DMA’s, make sure that they are focused. Your DMA’s are the most important actions for the day—you shouldn’t have any more than three. If you can’t boil them down to a few simply-stated tasks, then you probably need to restate your goal.

**Be clear.** Your DMA's should be clear and quantifiable. The focus here is on activities, not outcomes, so be sure you know exactly what you are going to do. "Make ten sales calls," or "spend one hour on the website" is much better than "sell more," or "work on the proposal."

**Be realistic.** Your DMA's will not be effective if you can't actually do them. Don't write down that you would like to write five proposals every day, if you know realistically you can't finish more than two.

**Be committed.** Lastly, build your day around them. Now that you have them, make sure you prioritize them over all other things, meetings, e-mails, and less important tasks. I often have my DMA's done by 11 a.m. because I do them first. The rest of my day can be structured as needed, but I first did something important that will make a significant impact on my organization and the lives of those we serve.

***Example:** A salesperson who wants to make \$10,000 in commission every month might know from experience that he will need to find four new clients. And to find those four new clients, he needs to set one appointment each day, which he should be able to do by making 20 sales calls. He now has a strong DMA: Make 20 sales calls each morning. By making this the most important part of his day, he can learn to focus on that goal without being distracted by incoming phone calls, meetings, and other items that are urgent, but less important.*

---

Never mistake motion for action.

—Ernest Hemingway

---



To watch David teach the DMA strategy, go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCuxFKaTmls](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCuxFKaTmls)

Simplicity  
boils down to *two steps*:  
Identify the  
essential.  
Eliminate the rest.

—Leo Babauta



### *Tip 3*

## Power Hour



Writing down your DMA's is one thing, but getting them done is another. Despite our best intentions, we all know how quickly those priorities can be set aside in order to deal with the most urgent tasks.

In my office and many others, having a “power hour” has been a great way to keep at what is most important. It's so simple, you might be surprised at how well it works. So what is our secret? One quiet hour every day.

**For 60 minutes each morning, we don't do meetings, phone calls, or e-mails.** We don't take any interruptions. Messages go to voice mail and the inbox fills. Some would say, “You mean you won't take a call from a client to serve them?” No, we won't take a call during that hour so we can serve them even better. Unlike many offices, we can really focus, concentrate, and serve others best by actually getting something done for them. We focus on the activities we identified as most important to our long-term success.

Here's how to make it work for you:

- **Go public.** Let everyone you work with know you are setting aside an hour a day. Informing assistants, customers, and colleagues of your plans will leave them less likely to disturb you.
- **Share the idea.** In my office, everyone gets a quiet hour. That way, we don't interrupt each other, and we all get more done.
- **Be consistent.** Use the same time every day for your quiet hour if you can. It will allow people who work with you to get used to your routine and help reinforce the habit in your mind.

Try this method for a while, and I guarantee you will be surprised at how much you can accomplish in just 60 minutes. Not only will you make headway on your biggest projects, but you will find that by getting the day off to a strong start, you might feel energized to accomplish more in your remaining time.

---

Constantly distracted workers in busy offices  
are able to focus on a task for an average of 11 minutes  
before they're interrupted. —a University of California study

---

All things  
are ready,  
if our minds  
be so.

—William Shakespeare





Thank You For Reading

Did you like this excerpt? Tell us your thoughts:  
**[bkcommunity@bkpub.com](mailto:bkcommunity@bkpub.com)**

**Berrett-Koehler Publishers**

Copyright © 2014, All Rights Reserved.