



EARLY TO RISE

Premium Edition Life Lived Well

“Slip slidin’ away, slip slidin’ away, You know the nearer your destination, the more you’re slip slidin’ away” – Paul Simon

What I Learned This Week

This happens to all of us in one facet of life or another. What starts off strong often ends up slip sliding away.

It could be the diet we started so strongly on January 1st has become a shell of its former self by Super Bowl weekend. It might be your attempt to reconcile a relationship, a promise you made to a loved one to be home in time for dinner more often, giving your word to call more often, to be there for someone. Or it might have been that your plan to set aside money for a rainy day has all but dried up.

We make great plans while God laughs.

Life gets in our way.

“We work our jobs, collect our pay, believe we’re gliding down the highway, when in fact we’re slip slidin’ away,” sings Simon.

Your editor is not immune to the slippery slope. This week I realized that one of my personal strengths was slip sliding away.

But first, the story about how it became a personal strength in the first place.

In 2005, as a young man addicted to email, I used to marvel at Michael Masterson’s articles describing how he did not check email until 5pm. To me, this was better than a magic trick. How could anyone possibly do this? But Michael had a good reason for doing so. Not checking his email allowed him to get more work done. And as for all of those “problems” that people were emailing about? Well, not replying simply encouraged people to solve their own problems rather than relying on him.

And so I took his advice to heart. Slowly but surely I chipped away at my email time. It went from being the first thing I looked at when I woke up at 4:30am (back in my personal trainer days), to something I could delay until 7am. And then from 7am I fought for every minute until it was 8am. Finally, it seemed to settle on a plateau of 9am. In fact, in my original “12 Rules for My Life”, rule #3 stated, “I do not check email until 9am.”

But I knew I could do better. Recently I had a copy of my rules laminated and included in my daily document review ([see them all in this video](#)). In this latest version I updated rule #3 to 10am. That new email time worked...for a while. But then my travel schedule got busy. I was in different time zones, and my email schedule started slip sliding away. Soon I was back to 9am.

I needed to “sharpen my saw”, as Dr. Stephen Covey wrote in “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”. It was time for a period of mental rejuvenation. Fortunately, I was inspired by a recent interview received in my monthly Glazer-Kennedy Inner Circle Diamond Level Membership.

The conversation between host Dave Dee and Henry Stevens, author of HourADayBook.com, got me fired up to shift my email session to later in the day. But not back to 10am. No, this time I was going to model Mr. Stevens, and wait until 12pm before checking and responding to any email.

Now you have to understand, while noon might still seem early to some people, by that point in the day I’ve been up for 8 hours. For a “normal” 7am riser, that’s the equivalent of checking email at 3pm. I’m still not at Michael Masterson’s 5pm time slot, but I’m almost there.

Just as importantly, I set a deadline of 6pm as the cut-off for reading any email that day. No more checking email at 8pm and getting wound up about something that can – and should – wait until the next afternoon.

I’m able to do this because I have a team in place to handle the large amount of email that I receive. First, I have an assistant that checks for emergencies, and then sorts the email into various folders (I believe you can set-up Gmail and other email systems to do this automatically...however this isn’t an option in the service I use).

In his interview, Stevens also brought up a factor that was missing from my system, one that might have been allowing my dedication to slip away. That missing factor was having either a punishment for failure or a reward for successfully sticking to the desired behavior. I’ve since implemented these for my email schedule.

If I give in and check email before noon, my punishment is to go without reading the website and blogs of great authors that I enjoy each day at lunch. My reward for sticking to the plan is feeling of great accomplishment, for I know that I’ve been a better steward of my time and that more essays have been writ and products created. That feeling of product completion is a great reward for me.

Since implementing this new email schedule, the results have been overwhelmingly positive. My writing production has almost doubled and my work-related stress has decreased (not that I was under enormous pressure, but it’s a great feeling to get my newsletters done far ahead of deadlines).

And most importantly, this time I’m sticking to it. No more slip slidin’ away on my goal of waiting until noon to check email. It’s now a rule with both punishments and rewards.

I believe in the power of rules and personal philosophies because they make everyday decisions a lot easier. As Dan Kennedy wrote recently in one of his weekly faxes to Glazer-Kennedy Diamond Members, “*This is why Ayn Rand made such a defense of*

philosophy. Each person needs one. A thought-out, developed, challenged, and ultimately settled on set of fundamental decisions made once that do not need made again, that can govern other decisions. If there's no concreteness to this, neither direction nor discipline is possible."

Another virtual mentor of mine, Dave Kekich, agrees. As he states in Credo #39, "***By adhering to a strong honest philosophy, you will remain guiltless, blameless, independent and maintain control over your life. Without a sound philosophy, your life will eventually crumble.***"

Don't let your good habits slip slide away from you. Write out your personal philosophies, your rules to live by, your big ideas for life, or whatever it is that you want to call them. You need them.

Just as I believe that waking up early makes almost everything better, having a set of well-defined personal philosophies makes every decision quicker and easier. Add these to your life today.

What I Read This Week

Have you ever read a book where you thought, "*This is it. This is what I've been looking for almost my entire life.*"? It's when you discover that someone else is thinking exactly the same way as you have been, but this is the first time you've seen the ideas clearly articulated. I'm experiencing this phenomenon with the book I'm reading right now.

It's called, "***Family Fortunes***", and it's written by Bill Bonner and his son, Will. Bill is the founder of Agora, Inc., the publishing company that originally owned (and still has part ownership in) Early to Rise.

Family Fortunes is about making your wealth last. It's an Empire-builder's book. It's not about saving your money for retirement. Instead, it's about turning your new money into old money, so that it lasts for generation upon generation. The book also describes the importance of creating family rituals, structures, and values that also last for hundreds of years. It's an odd way of thinking in today's "I want it now" world, and not surprisingly the Bonners spend a fair amount of time arguing about the importance of delayed gratification, a topic that I covered in a [recent ETR essay](#).

Family Fortunes speaks to me because I've always felt like I would have been comfortable living in the 1950's, in a small conservative town in America. Perhaps Mayberry, I don't know (maybe not *that* small of a town). But there's something I find deeply satisfying about the combination of a traditional family upbringing and the dedication to building a successful family business. It's the perfect combination, creating a legacy that would generate significant wealth and at the same time a large family that stuck together.

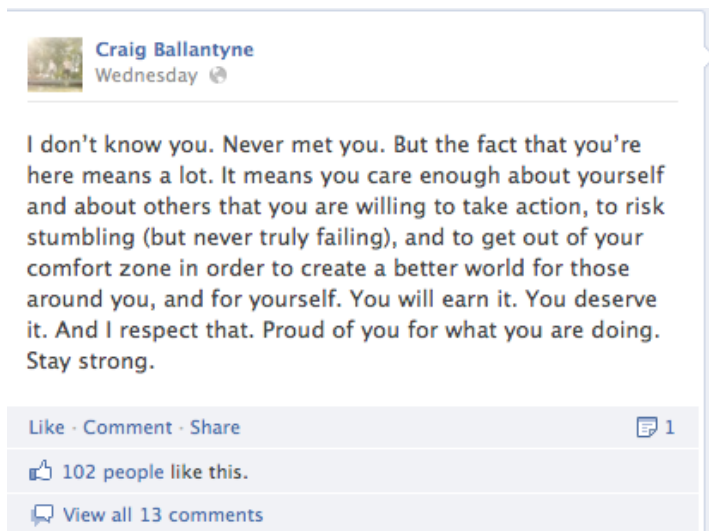
Again, the whole concept seems out of date today. But that's why it's so intriguing.

Now I'll admit, I'm far from achieving both end goals – significant wealth (as *Family Fortunes* requires more than just million dollar businesses) and a large family (having a dog does not count, not even a crazy dog). But perhaps, like most people that are struggling to make every “click”, I was just missing this last piece of the puzzle. Chapter Two, simply called, “*The Family*”, has given me some A-Ha moments and made me re-evaluate some of my relationships.

Frankly, I'm not sure how many ETR readers will be as interested in [Family Fortunes](#) as I am. But this is certainly going to be one of the most influential books I'll ever read in my lifetime. Essentially, it's the blueprint for almost everything I want to achieve in life.

Quote of the Week

There are certain days when circumstances align and thoughts come to my mind that connect deeply with readers and Facebook ‘fans’. I'm trying hard to be able to replicate this creativity, but the moments have been like slippery fish. Still, when these thoughts pop in my head, I write them down on my omnipresent Blackberry, so as not to lose the “particular articulation”, as Michael Masterson once said. Here is this week's example.



What's New and Useful At ETR This Week?

1) New Addition to Our Team

There's something about the energy of youth that I love being around. It's what draws me thousands of miles away from my home each summer to teach at the BlackSmith Liberty and Entrepreneurship camp. Last year, a young man named Gary Young sat amongst our students. One line from Matt Smith propelled him to change his life course.

That line was, “*If there's one thing you must do, it's study direct marketing.*”

Gary has now left law school to work for Early to Rise and helping us on our One Million Transformation Mission. He brings passion and enthusiasm to our projects. It's a contagious energy to be around.

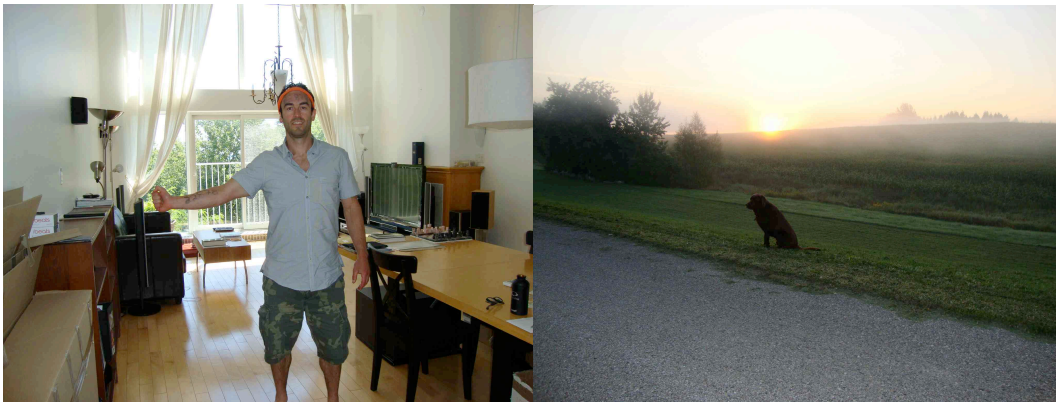
We welcome Gary to the team, and look forward to helping him grow as both a marketer and person through living the Early to Rise core values.

2) 1-Day ETR Day Plans

Gary will be at our 1-Day Early To Rise event in Denver, on Saturday, October 20th. There will also be 77 Virtual Mastermind members in attendance. And soon you'll be hearing about your chance to join us. Stay tuned.

3) Twice as Tough

I finished up my 2nd Tough Mudder race last Saturday. It was easier than the one that Jeff Schneider, ETR Director of Operations, and I did back in June in Colorado. I'm grateful that my soreness disappeared after only 2 days instead of 4. And I've earned my second orange Tough Mudder headband (on my head in the photo, bottom left...but you probably can't see my race number on my arm that I'm holding out).



This photo is taken in my condo in Toronto. That's the table I sit at every morning at 4am to write the daily ETR essays, and parts of this message, too. Oh, and the other photo is of ol' Bally the Dog out on the farm after one of our morning walks. Right after the photo he sprinted off chasing an invisible varmint. It's amazing he was able to sit still at all. Good dog, Bally, good dog.

Have a great week – and live life well.

Sincerely,
Craig Ballantyne