

New Year's Resolutions
THE STOP DOING LIST

Suppose you woke up tomorrow and received two phone calls. The first phone call tells you that you have inherited \$20 million, no strings attached. The second tells you that you have an incurable and terminal disease, and you have no more than 10 years to live. What would you do differently, and, in particular, *what would you stop doing?*

Such a “stop doing” list should be considered when making annual New Year resolutions. When done honestly it can become a mechanism for disciplined thought about how to allocate the most precious of all resources: time.

The start of the New Year is a perfect time to start a stop doing list and to make this the cornerstone of your New Year resolutions, be it for your company, your family or yourself. It also is a perfect time to clarify your three life circles, mirroring at a personal level the following three questions:

- 1) *What are you deeply passionate about?***
- 2) *What are you genetically encoded for - what activities do you feel just “made to do”?***
- 3) *What makes economic sense - what can you make a living at?***

Those fortunate enough to find or create a practical intersection of the three circles have the basis for a great work life.

Think of the three circles as a personal guidance mechanism. As you navigate the twists and turns of a chaotic world, it acts like a compass. Am I on target? Do I need to adjust left, up, down, right? If you make an inventory of your activities today, what percentage of your time falls outside the three circles?

If it is more than 50%, then the stop doing list might be your most important tool.

The challenge is “making your life a creative work of art.” A great piece of art is composed not just of what is in the final piece, but equally important, what is not. It is the discipline to discard what does not fit - to cut out what might have already cost days or even years of effort - that distinguishes the truly exceptional artist and marks the ideal piece of work, be it a symphony, a novel, a painting, a company or, most important of all, a life.