

Anticipate and reflect

Experiences aren't truly yours until you think about them, analyze them, examine them, question them, reflect on them, and finally understand them. -- Warren Bennis

My favorite word in the English language is *initiate*; nothing ever gets done until someone acts. My second favorite word is *reflect*. Wonderful things happen when we take the time to think deeply about important ideas and experiences.

Reflection is at its best when it is preceded by anticipation and experience. Here's how the three terms can complement each other.

- *Anticipate* — before you experience something, think about what you are about to do. Why are you doing it? What do you hope to accomplish?
- *Experience* — experience life: read a book, visit a museum, have lunch with a friend, make a sales call, build a deck, interview for a job.
- *Reflect* — after you experience something, contemplate on what happened. What did you learn? What should be the follow-up? Reflection helps make sense of experiences.

The 10/60/30 formula

In all life-experiences, allocate a certain percentage of time to these three elements: anticipate (perhaps 10%), experience (perhaps 60%), and reflect (perhaps 30%). The percentages can be adjusted for different activities.

For instance:

- Reading a book—spend a few minutes anticipating what you hope to learn from the book, read the book, and then reflect on what you have learned. This formula might be 5/60/35.
- A business appointment—think about what you hope to accomplish in the meeting, have the meeting, and then reflect on what transpired and the next steps of action. These percentages might be 15/65/20.
- Vacation—research where you're going, bon voyage, and at the end of each day reflect on what happened. These percentages might be 10/70/20.

The best reflection involves dialogue with others in which we help each other make sense of life.

Learning will be greatly enhanced when you devote even a small amount of time to both anticipation and reflection.

Summary

What? - Reflection is an essential element of learning, especially if it is linked to anticipation and experience.

So what? - The discipline of reflection will enhance your life.

Now what? - Using the 10/60/30 formula, integrate reflection into your daily life.

Leaders - Make reflection an integral part of all action. Analyze everything.