

Begin with the End in Mind, '7 Habits of Highly Effective People' (extract) – Steven Covey (1989)

All Things are Created Twice - "Begin with the end in mind" is based on the principle that all things are created twice. There's a **mental or first creation**, and a physical or second creation, to all things. Take the construction of a home, for example. You create it in every detail before you ever hammer the first nail into place. You try to get a very clear sense of what kind of house you want... **You work with your mind until you get a clear image of what you want to build.** You have to make sure that the blueprint, the first creation, is really what you want, that you've thought everything through... You begin with the end in mind.

'To begin with the end in mind' is to begin today with the **image, picture**, or paradigm of the end of your life as your frame of reference or the criterion by which everything else is examined.

Each part of your life – today's behaviour, tomorrow's behaviour, next week's behaviour, next month's behaviour – can be examined in the context of the whole, of **what really matters most to you**. By Keeping that end closely in mind, you can make certain that whatever you do on any particular day does not violate the criteria you have defined as supremely important, and that each day of your life contributes in a meaningful way to the **vision** you have of your life as a whole.

"To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination."

It means to **know where you're going** so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.

It's incredibly easy to get caught up in an activity trap, in the busyness of life, to work harder and harder at climbing the ladder of success only to discover it's leaning against the wrong wall. It is possible to be busy – very busy – without being very effective. People often find themselves achieving victories that are empty, successes that have come at the expense of things they suddenly realise were far more valuable to them. People from every walk of life – doctors, academicians, actors, politicians, business professionals, athletes, plumbers – often struggle to achieve a higher income, more recognition of a certain degree of professional competence, only to find that their drive to achieve their goal blinded them to the **things that really mattered** most and now are gone.

How different our lives are when we really know what is deeply important to us, and, **keeping that picture in mind**, we manage ourselves each day to be and to do what really matters most. If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster. We may be very busy, we may be very efficient, but we will also be truly effective only when we **begin with the end in mind**.