

PWR: An “Adapt to Win” Framework

Don and Cathy Allsman from “Climbing Up” Completion Global, 2020.

Once you are committed to walking in wisdom, the following three-step framework Don developed (called PWR©) will help you revise your plans. This is an acronym for “Prepare, Work, and Review,” and it is designed to help you every time you face difficulty or changes in circumstances. A disciplined use of this tool will help you take control of your situation so you do not have to feel like a victim.

You can use PWR in major decisions and big projects that go on for months or years, or it can be applied to a simple decision that needs to be made in a few minutes. The outline below goes into greater detail for use in a major project, so when you apply it to a simple situation, make sure you do not get bogged down in the details.

PWR: PREPARE

Set the Context

“It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way” (Prov. 19:2).

1. The single most important aspect of adapt to win is to seek God. Everything starts by humbly seeking God and listening for His guidance. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4;6).
2. The next step is to understand the context. The context helps us interpret Bible passages; just as good decisions are made within a proper context. Seek to be like “the men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do” (1 Chron. 12:32).
 - A. Examine the history leading up to this event, then list what is happening in your situation. What led up to this decision or problem? How did you get here?
 - B. List the resources you have at your disposal.
 - C. List the issues that are beyond your control but affect this decision or project.
3. List 3-5 values that will guide you in making this decision. These are the non-negotiables, guiding principles, planning assumptions, or essential commitments that will guide your future decisions. For example, when the Expedition chose a location for the winter on the Pacific, they selected three criteria to guide their decision (close to game for food; near the ocean to spot a possible passing ship and supplies; a convenient place to refine salt from the ocean). This is a good example of how values will guide you in your decisions. Values are important because when you are overwhelmed with details, they help you stay focused on what is truly important. They help you say “no” to one thing but “yes” to another.
4. Write down the task or decision before you so it is clear. For Lewis and Clark, their task was *to find the best water route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*. Writing this down will make clear what you are trying to do. It is common to mix several different goals or

decisions together, which only causes confusion. It is best to separate them out and consider each on its own.

5. If you have a team around you, make sure you clearly communicate both the task and the values so everyone involved is on the same page. Clear direction minimizes confusion, so each person can make their contribution to the outcome.

Choose a Strategy

“A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps. A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it” (Prov. 14:15; 22:3).

1. Once you have set the context, with clear values and a defined task, the temptation will be to choose the first, most obvious strategy. Instead, dream about various options or get counsel from others until you get a variety of alternatives to consider. Suspend the tendency to jump into action. Take some reasonable time to consider the options. “Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance” (Prov. 20:18).
2. Once you have considered alternative strategies, the next temptation is to *try all of them*. Instead, narrow your options and evaluate them in terms of your available resources.
3. Finally, select the strategy from among the alternatives.

Give Assignments

“. . . He gave me understanding in all the details of the plan ... be strong and courageous and do the work” (1 Chron. 28:19-20).

Finally, make a to-do list so you (and your teammates) are not left guessing about the specifics of their assignment, including a due date. Do this for yourself and for others who are helping you. Make sure you schedule a time when you will review the results of your plan, which should be done at least every three months (quarterly).

pWR: WORK

There comes a time to stop planning and start working the plan. Planning is important, but you cannot evaluate the value of a plan until you test it in real life. Your plan will probably need to be changed right away. Winning sports teams know they will have to adjust their plans at half-time.

Watch for two opposite extremes as you adapt to win. One danger is a rigid commitment to the plan despite the changing conditions. The other is a lack of discipline to follow the plan that has been put in place. Some hold on too long; others give up too easily. There is no easy answer. It takes godly wisdom to know when to stay focused and when to go in a different direction.

You have to adapt to win in the middle of the battle.

PWR: REVIEW

As you execute your re-entry plan, make sure you review your progress periodically. You should do this frequently at first (daily or weekly) and then at least quarterly until it is complete.

Working your plan is tiring and time consuming, so you may feel like the last thing you want to do is review your activity. It is easier to assume (or hope) that what you did was effective. But fruitfulness requires relentless evaluation. Since friction occurs (things seldom go according to plan), it is important to review your results so you can make corrections going forward.

The United States military has a commitment to evaluating every mission, believing the most important part of a battle is the debrief. Margaret Wheatley said, “[The Army] has this wonderful process of learning from direct experience called ‘After Action Review,’ in which everyone involved sits down and discusses three questions: What happened? Why do you think it happened? And what can we learn from it?”ⁱ

Failures are inevitable, and even valuable, when you are willing to learn from them. The most devastating defeats can be fertile ground for improvement. Jack Welch said, “Crises teach us where the system is broken and how to repair it so it won’t break again...Disasters, in business and in nature, have the potential to make the organizations that survive them so much stronger in the long run.”ⁱⁱ

Perhaps the most important part of Review is to have a sense of humor. Because God is with you, you can relax. Even when the results are disappointing, your work has not been wasted. You cannot always see the whole picture of what God has in mind, but you can always find something to celebrate.

THE CYCLE

After REVIEW, go back to repeat the three steps of PREPARE: 1) Set the context; 2) Choose a strategy; 3) Make assignments. If you get bogged down, go back to your 3-5 values to help you. They serve as a compass when you get lost in the details so you can find your way forward.

Then WORK the plan, and then REVIEW the results. Prepare, Work, Review (PWR) is the simple structure that will help you adapt to win. You need to revise your plans because they seldom work out the way you think.

Dwight Eisenhower, leader of the Allied Forces in World War II, knew that the *process of planning* was more important than *the plan itself*. Plans can be thrown out, but the process of thinking and discussing imaginative ideas is critical. He said, “In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Conclusion to Part III: Adapt to Win

The Lewis and Clark Expedition was full of surprises, changes of plan and adjustments, but ended in victory and celebration. In the same way, you will need to revise your re-entry plans along the way, because of friction (seldom will things go according to plan).

Climbing Up requires that you recognize culture, remember your identity in Christ, and adapt to win. You can do it under the Lord’s guidance and provision, as Paul said, “And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

ⁱ Insight and Outlook. November 1996. The New Science of Leadership: An interview with Margaret Wheatley. <http://www.scottlondon.com/insight/scripts/wheatley.html>.

ⁱⁱ Welch, Jack. September 2005. The Five Stages of Crisis Management. Opinion Journal. www.opinion.journal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110007256.

ⁱⁱⁱ James Charlton, ed., *The Military Quotation Book* (New York: St. Martin’s Press 2002), 5.