

"A rational man never leaves his interests at the mercy of any one person or single client. He may need clients, but not any one particular client. He may need customers, but not any one particular customer. He may need a job, but not any one particular job."

-Ayn Rand

**LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER 1
From Where You Are To Where You
Want To Be
By Robert Ringer**

Theories, Obstacles and Signals

Looking Out For Number One

Weight-And Balance Happiness Scale Theory

Everyone has a built-in computer which automatically weighs every known choice in any situation and chooses the option that will bring the most happiness.

The tricky part lies in making sure the computer is fed rational thoughts. As long as the scale functions properly, you will spend most of your life feeling good.

Volcanic Ash Theory

Happiness is where you find it. Don't be carried away by illusions of idyllic happiness somewhere in the distance. Only you know what makes your heart sing and what makes you cringe. Never make a decision based on an emotion that somewhere off in the sunset lies a haven where your every dream can come true.

Absolute Moralism Theory

Absolute moralists take it upon themselves to decide what's right or wrong for everyone. If an absolute moralist suspects that you don't make your choices on the basis of rational self-interest, then he will bombard you with advice on what you should do. Eliminate any and all unsolicited moral opinions.

Law of the Harvest Theory

You get out of anything a return which is in direct proportion to whatever you have put in.

In other words, nothing worth achieving is ever easy. The key consideration is simply whether whatever you are aiming for is worth the price that you will have to pay to own it.

Changing Circumstances Theory

The one absolutely certain thing in life is that the circumstances will always change. What is not known is when they will change. Be flexible in your planning so that changes won't unduly upset your plans. Failure to do this means you're constantly caught off guard and struggling.

Theory Of Sustainance of a Positive Attitude Through Assumption of a Negative Result

Since most things in life will not work out due to factors beyond your control, it's realistic to assume the worst in any situation. That way, you won't be devastated if the law of averages holds and plans don't work out. Prepare and hope for the best but realistically expect the worst possible result. Be prepared to take full advantage if it does work out, but assume it won't to be on the safe side. View short term losses as losing a battle while you focus on winning the war.

Avoid short term patches at all costs. Analyze the price of whatever you want to achieve in life. Once you've made up your mind to go after that prize, pay the price required and get it over and done with. The sooner you pay the price, the sooner you can start enjoying the rewards.

The Perspective Hurdle

Theory of Relativity

Few people take the trouble to consider facts in a relative light; until one does, one cannot intelligently settle on a proper course of action. Having problems is nothing new, but keep in mind they are only problems in your mind. In the big picture, personal problems don't feature at all. Every problem should not be faced like it is the end of the civilized world. You need perspective. When problems are in proper focus, you'll often find they're not as significant or insurmountable as you first thought. The term "problem" is relative, not absolute. Never let problems stop your forward progress.

The Reality Hurdle

Theory of Reality

Reality isn't the way you wish things to be, or the way they appear to be, but the way they actually are. Either you acknowledge reality and use it to your advantage or it automatically works against you.

Is's versus Ought To's Theory

The degree of complication in any person's life corresponds to his insistence on dwelling on the way he thinks the world ought to be rather than the way the world actually is. An "ought to" life is based on fantasy rather than fact. It's easy to fall into the trap of creating illusions intended to pass for reality.

The world is full of Mr. Magoos and ostriches. Mr. Magoo's do have the ability to perceive reality correctly but refuse to do so. Ostriches also refuse to perceive reality correctly, and instead choose to live in a fantasy land. Whenever any person speaks of reality, keep in mind he is speaking of his perception of reality.

The People Hurdle

I've Got My Act Together Theory

The more someone dwells on a point (particularly if volunteered for no reason), the better your chances of being right if you assume the opposite.

You-Won't-Get-Credit-For-It Theory

Don't do anything for the sole reason that "it's the right thing to do" if there's no benefit to be derived.

You'll soon find that nobody except yourself really cares about what you do.

Plastic Glass Theory

If you base your actions on custom and tradition alone, the likely result is that you will pay in lost pleasure and increased pain. As long as you're not bothering anyone else, there's no law of nature that says you have to obey man made rules. Do the people who insist on the conventional way offer to pay for you? Of course not.

Self-Indictment Theory

Never undress yourself in public by wearing your problems on your shirt sleeve. Make people work hard if they want to give you a hard time. Don't make it easy for them by providing ammunition.

Pinspotter Theory

Life is like a giant pinspotter in a giant bowling alley. Over the long haul, most people end up exactly where they deserve to be. In the final analysis, work hard to look after your own best interests. Leave others to sort themselves out.

Anti-Neurotic Theory

Ignore all the neurotic remarks and actions of normal people and all remarks and actions of neurotic people. If the neurotic persists, eliminate him from your life. Dealing with a neurotic is a no-win situation. Trying to talk rationally with them will only wear you out. Neurotics are people with an emotional disorder. Don't try and reform them, keep them out of your life altogether or pay a huge price in misery and pain.

I'm Crazy / You're Sane Theory

If you attempt to carry on a relationship with an irrational person, given enough time they will make you feel like you're the neurotic one. A truly miserable life is one that is at the mercy of a neurotic person. You'll eventually become totally out of control if you allow a neurotic any input into your life.

The Crusade Hurdle

Life Complication Theory

Given a choice between an easy way and a complicated way to do anything, most people will choose the complicated route. Crusades are groups calling for aggressive action to forward any idea. These are an easy way to gum up your life. If you have enough self-respect, you will always refuse to be grouped in with the blanket traits of any crusade. Above all, maintaining control over your own actions and destiny is the objective of looking out for number one.

Confused Thinking Theory

When a person's philosophy takes a sudden and dramatic shift in the opposite direction, his reasoning is suspect. Either his present or previous thinking was clearly confused. How can you tell which was the confused thinking and which is correct? The more time you spend caught up in crusades, the less time you have to be truly effective. Crusades get messy and are ultimately counter-productive for anyone trying to get the most out of their own life. You should face the reality that for most groups, your participation won't make the slightest bit of difference. You're far better off to spend time on projects where you can be vitally involved.

The Financial Hurdle

One-Success-Is-Worth-A-Hundred-Failures Theory

If you aren't willing to make the effort and pay the price by being prepared to accept failure along the way, you've effectively put yourself in a position where you cannot ever actually succeed. Failure is, in fact, an indicator of the effort you are putting in and your willingness to pay the price of success.

World Owes Me A Living Theory

Any person who has the absurd notion that some nebulous world owes him anything is destined for a lifetime of failure, bitterness and frustration. Excuses are standard operating procedure for anyone who is unwilling to pay the price of success. Excuses complicate life. In the final analysis, everyone gets some good and some bad breaks. The trick lies in concentrating on how to effectively use your talents to obtain the financial success you desire in the shortest possible time doing something you enjoy.

Out-Of-Step Theory

As a general rule, a person's chances for success increase the more he's out of step with whatever everyone else is doing. The stock market axiom is that the public is always wrong. Never be intimidated into conforming with everyone else. The real rewards are available only to the independent, the rational and the imaginative. Whether you like it or not, there is a price to be paid for everything you wish to accomplish in life. If you fail to face this reality, you only succeed in making things harder for yourself. To avoid paying the price means to settle for something which is just a cheap imitation of what you really desire.

Zip The Lip Theory

If you've got something good going, keep it quiet. The safest way to operate is behind the scenes. The best way to let others know what you're doing is to chalk up a solid list of achievements. Whenever you start big noting by bragging about the wonderful things that are happening, you're just asking for trouble. Base your ego on achievements rather than crowd adulation.

Tend To Theory

Most people have a tendency to believe their own public relations stories. Never fall into the trap of believing yours. Never try to be anything you are not. A person whose ego is out of control and who's heading for "egoruptcy" generally:

- Raves about how well they are doing.
- Speaks incessantly about all the deals in progress.
- Dwells on past accomplishments.
- Rapidly and grandly expands offices and trappings.
- Never stops talking about what he owns.
- Drops names of people he knows all the time.

Often, making a fuss over a very minor point is just a person's ego interfering with their own best interests. Confrontations only slow you down. Concentrate on the essential points, and refuse to be sidetracked by irrelevant issues.

Film Festival Theory

There is a bitter snob element in any industry that is so hopelessly out of touch with reality that it considers commercial success is irrelevant by comparison with the critical acclaim of a small and elite industry group.

If you are focused on clearing the financial hurdle, the ego-stroking acclaim of industry critics is totally unnecessary. This is the equivalent of feeding the ego and starving the pocket -the exact opposite of what you're really after.

The real key to rational financial decisions is to always think and act in your best long-term interests. Most people spend large amounts of time patching things together short-term, which means a little further down the road they are patching again. It is far more effective to think ahead, solve a problem once, pay the price that is required and move on. Think of it as a "slow, fast way" to succeed.

In the long-term, always consider the interests of any other person who is involved. Short-term, you may be able to get away with all kinds of manipulations, but over the long haul, value-for-money is the only solid foundation on which to build any enterprise.

Remember your job security is only an illusion. The real long-term security in life lies in your own abilities. Whatever investment you have made in your mind, your education and your experience reflect directly on the value of your abilities. If all else fails, those whose talents are in demand will always have the greatest trading power in any situation.

The one thing that makes the big dollars is tapping your creative abilities. Keep things as simple as possible. Anything that will detract from personal and concentrated creative thinking should be avoided religiously. This requires the self-discipline to avoid distractions, an ability to keep your life focused and a consistency in purpose. You cannot be effective in any business endeavor if your personal life is in turmoil.

Waiting-To-Be-Discovered Theory

The majority of people are too unaware of what's going on around them or too obsessed with some failure they've suffered to recognize the incredible opportunities which continually come along. These people sincerely believe someone will come and put their name up in lights. It's uncanny how the biggest events in a person's life tend to come when they are least expected. You can either take the ball and run with it or spend a lifetime mulling over missed opportunities.

Leapfrog Theory

Leapfrog to exactly the point on the business ladder where you think you belong and start operating. If you've correctly paid the price, you'll be a success. If not, you'll soon fall back to where you should be.

You don't need credentials, the approval of others or an okay from any discouragement fraternity to scale up your operations and operate on a higher level in business. You also don't need to fight your way through the pack. Simply jump to wherever you instinctively know you should be operating, and start.

Scared Money Theory

When you're operating on money you can't afford to lose, it's not only hard to be convincing but it is also hard to make rational decisions. It's almost impossible to avoid being intimidated by someone with resources behind him.

The only ways to offset the negatives in this situation are:

Be exceptionally good at your job. People recognize and respect talent on the way up. If you have absolutely nothing to lose, people pick up on that. With courage and preparation, you can make it clear you are playing your own game to win.

Sure Theory

To be sure your objective will be given its best possible shot, take matters into your own hands and don't expect help from anyone. There will always be a discouragement fraternity who can tell you why something can't be done. The instinctive thing is to listen to the experts. The profitable thing is to take control, and make sure that your project gets a fair shake.

Financial Geometric Growth Theory

This is a two sided theory that can work for or against you. On the positive side, money makes more money. On the negative side, when you're in a cash squeeze,

everything falls apart. Being cash rich draws the best people and the best deals to you. Thus you gather positive momentum from the success breeds success phenomenon. You have staying power, and an ability to leverage yourself further and further ahead.

Legalman Proper Use Theory

The only time to ever use a lawyer is when you want to back out of a deal but you're too embarrassed to say so. If you're serious about wanting to do something, keep the lawyers as far away as possible.

Touchies and No-Touchies Theory

Once you have it made, the wise thing to do is to have two piles of chips - one marked "Touchies" which can be used for cars and risk investments, the other marked "No-Touchies" which is used only for necessities and which is never put at risk. That way, if everything goes wrong, you won't have to start again from scratch. You will always have your No-Touchies to fall back on.

The Friendship Hurdle

One-To-A-Box Theory

No matter who you are, what you've accomplished or who you know, in the final analysis when you go down for the final count, you'll be in that wooden box all by yourself.

Like it or not, you came into the world alone and leave the same way. The trick is to hit the right balance. Most people have a social life (which includes interacting with people you like) and a solitary life. There are some things - like thinking, reflecting and planning - which are most effectively done in solitude, while other things are best done with others. If you don't enjoy your own company in those moments of solitude, most likely others won't enjoy being with you either.

Friendship is not an on/off sort of proposition. It's a matter of degrees. You have different friends for different reasons. They fill your needs and you fill some of their needs - the basis for an excellent value-for-value relationship. A friend should be someone you admire and respect. A favor you do for a friend should be something you do because your Weight-And-Balance Happiness Scale tells you it's in your own best long term interest. Sacrificing for a friend is a conscious, rational selfish action on your part, a goodwill gesture to a friend who gives you pleasure.

Never judge a friend by the amount of money they are willing to lend you, or that you are willing to lend them. When a person borrows on the collateral of a friendship, it's usually a pretty good sign they weren't actually a friend in the first place.

The real barometer of a friendship is how they react when things go against you. Are they still in your corner, or have they jumped ship with all the nay-sayers? This is a much more important measure of friendship than the traditional criteria of how much money they are willing to lend you. (In fact, if money was all that was holding your friendship together, it wasn't much of a friendship to begin with.)

You would always expect a friend to disregard any negative comments another person may make about you. That means you need to pay a friend the same compliment, and take no notice of secondhand comments about them which are different from your firsthand experiences.

When trying to cultivate friendships, make sure you advertise your real self. If you put up a good front just for the sake of gaining a friendship, you will only end up with people you are uncomfortable with anyway. Your life is totally out of control when you start acting differently whenever you're with a different group of people.

When making friends, remember there's only one of you. Don't try and be all things to all people. And keep in mind that ultimately, there's one factor beyond your control - the other person may not want you as a friend. At least it cuts both ways -you don't have to become a friend of anyone you don't choose either.

The simplest way to destroy a good friendship is to fail to allow for the fact that friends aren't perfect. At one time or another, even your closest and best friend is going to irritate you. If the friendship is worthwhile from your standpoint, you should be able to overlook these down times. Bearing a grudge doesn't help, either. If you don't expect anything of your friends, then its that much easier to be forgiving.

The easiest thing in the world is to make commitments. The hardest thing is to keep your commitments. Use the word "yes" sparingly, and only on those occasions where you are willing to follow through and pay the price. It's usually much easier to say no at an early stage of any project than to extract yourself later on.

If you make the tactical mistake of trying to solve everyone else's problems, the result is usually that you will end up being blamed for every problem in the world.

One way to lose friends is to constantly be the bearer of bad news. Another is to always talk about your own shortcomings in public. Or you can stop respecting yourself and let loose. And finally, to destroy a good friendship, take liberties and walk all over the feelings of your friend continually.

Crummy Friendship Theory

A crummy friendship is one in which you consistently give more than you receive. If you somehow get into a crummy friendship, cut it off before it gets out of hand. Even if you've made an error of judgment and committed to something that hasn't panned out, you don't have any obligation to live your life in misery. In the final analysis, you should always take matters into your own hands and actively seek out people for friends who will add value and enjoyment to your life. Hiding among the millions of people out there are some great sorts who provided excellent value-for-value. Your odds of finding these people for friendships are not as long as you might think. You just have to be willing to pay the price to establish a worthwhile value-for-value association.

The Love Hurdle

Boyfriend Theory

Whenever you run across a woman who intrigues you so much you light the wrong end of your pipe, try to keep calm. Don't get too carried away. Assume two probabilities:

- (1) She already has a boyfriend/fiancé/husband.
- (2) He's big, hairy, mean and can do a lot of damage.

The basic building blocks of a rational love relationship are admiration, respect and rational selfishness. You're just asking for problems if you don't establish a value-for-value footing right from the start. People don't owe you love. You earn the exact amount of love other people feel. Both sides to a relationship won't be deriving the

same benefits. That's the good thing about love - it has many, many dimensions. The key concept is that you give good value in return for whatever you take out of it. Do that consistently and you won't go far wrong.

Boy-Girl Theory

There is a basic human weakness inherent in all people which tempts them to want whatever they can't have and not to want whatever is readily available.

Better Deal Theory

It's human nature that once you have a deal sown up, you always wonder about the possibility that there is an even better deal just down the street.

These last two theories can really mess up a genuine shot at true happiness if you allow them to take too dominant a position in your thoughts and actions. The obstacles that will try and trip you up in clearing the love hurdle are:

Worrying about what others think.

When you start worrying about what other people think, you put yourself in a no-win situation. You will always be able to find some people who like your love interest and some who don't. The thing is any of your friends who encourage you won't have to live with the mistake, nor will they provide a replacement if they advise against your choice. The key issue is what do you think? Have enough self esteem and maturity to get beyond the trophy hunting stage and into the value-for-value mode. That's definitely where the long-term benefits lie.

The Boy-Girl Obstacle.

Sometimes, your mind can play tricks on you and make you start liking another person simply because they give you a hard time. This is a sucker syndrome, that leads directly to a lifetime of pain and regrets.

The Better Dealers Obstacle

This is a person whose better deal instinct is so out of focus that he is afraid to do any deal for fear something better is about to come into view. Obviously, to live this way forever means you miss out on a lifetime of pleasure and happiness. Simply does not make sense.

Emotions.

Emotions can cloud reality and shatter logic if left out of control. You have to force your rational thoughts to take precedence over emotions.

The "Falling-In-Love-With-Love" Obstacle.

When being in love becomes an end in and of itself, you create even more problems for your quest for the real thing. That doesn't work out too well in practice, as you're always making a good start but never getting down to the nitty-gritty.

The Transformation Obstacle.

When you try to imagine the person you are with is someone else, you're violating one of nature's basic laws and building your life on a mirage. Not too stable when the inevitable storm starts to blow up. It's far better to build on the solid foundation of respect and admiration.

The Opposites Attract Obstacle.

In reality, when opposites get together, not much happiness is generated. One side or the other is consistently required to give ground to the other. The end result can be an awful lot of wasted time and missed opportunities to find the real thing. Being in love is hard enough already without the handicap of having no common ground whatsoever.

The "Jumping-Before-Testing-The-Water" Obstacle

People have a natural tendency to be on their best behavior in the early stages of a friendship or relationship. Beware of this, and don't make too many promises too early - that's just asking for trouble. Taking it easy and build a solid foundation before trying to touch the stars.

If you find that you're having a hard time clearing the love hurdle, start by looking in the mirror. Are you really paying the price to get out and advertise your personality traits among people who are in a situation to respond. The real thing in love is not automatically bestowed - you have to earn it, and usually have to have the lumps to show for your efforts before it will make an appearance.

It takes a lot of self esteem. True love is an expression of the qualities you most admire in another person. In a lot of ways, that is an accurate reflection of the same character traits you admire in yourself.

The easiest way to mess things up when you have the real thing is to forget that the other person is human. That means you have to cut them some slack, and acknowledge that from time to time things won't go exactly as planned. In fact, in real life, things hardly if ever go as planned. You have to be willing to give the other person the benefit of the doubt at times and keep working at building up the relationship. Then you can move forwards and upwards.

When you do have a good thing going, don't lose your awareness of that fact. Think value for value and you can't go too far wrong.

Crummy Love Theory

A crummy love relationship is one in which you consistently give more than you receive. If you get into a crummy love situation, cut it off before it takes too much of a chunk out of your life. Just because you've invested years in a love relationship doesn't mean you should waste more. Your happiness can never be totally in the hands of another person. Take control of your own destiny, avoid being intimidated by feelings of guilt and have enough faith in yourself to keep looking until you get into the ideal value-for-value association with a lover.

The signals that indicate you're in the wrong place when trying to clear the love hurdle are:

Hassling.

If you're with someone who has their unhappiness plug pulled, no matter what you do is wrong. It's a can't win situation - move on quickly.

The Compromise Signal.

If you feel that you don't get good value for the value you contribute, that's a pretty good signal it's not the real thing. Move on and look for a better situation in which you can be happy most of the time.

The Looking Signal.

If you're still looking even though you're in a relationship, something's missing and you'd be much better to move on and look for the real thing energetically and honestly.

The "Everything's Fine" Signal.

Never stay in a situation simply because you don't bother each other too much. You're missing out on all the fireworks and passion that can be achieved.

The "Perfect Marriage" Signal.

Usually a smokescreen over serious underlying problems. Illusion versus reality. When you're lucky enough to find the real thing, keep working at it. Be rationally selfish. Don't just go through the motions. When you clear the love hurdle, live each moment to the fullest. Keep the scales balanced and build a solid value-for-value foundation.

It all adds up to pleasure - the ultimate object of looking out for number one.