

## Leadership Milestones

Milestones are important. We all know that. I just want to argue that they are perhaps even more important than you think. And I want to introduce you to my term that I call “The Art of Milestoning.”

I live on a farm in Vermont, and I also have a house and do a lot of business out of Boston. To be specific it is 178.3 miles from my house in Vermont to my house in Boston. Because I don't like a particular traffic choke point, what that means is typically when I go from Vermont to Boston, I leave somewhere between 3:15 a.m. and 3:30 a.m. That is not exactly my favorite time of the day.

And so part of being able to survive the trip, developed to be sure over a period of time, is milestones. There is a specific person's house down the road from my house that is exactly 17.8 miles from home. What does that mean? I have hit the 10% mark. All the way along I've got these things. I know where the 25 percent point is. I know where the 50 percent point is. There's a restaurant and a place to go to the bathroom there. And even though it's not open when I pass it in the morning, I still say, oh my God, I've made it to the restaurant with the bathroom, even though I can't go into the bathroom. I'm halfway down the pike.

There's the point when there are fifty miles left. There's the twenty-three mile point. Every single one of those points is a critical milestone that keeps me awake, that keeps me going. Now the point is it's not like there's a milestone every ten miles, there's a milestone every fifteen miles, there's a milestone every half hour. It is a process of art. The ones that are precisely spaced, so that it will keep my energy and my morale going and so on.

I'm sure that's far more than you are interested in relative to my Vermont to Boston trip. But, the point is every project consists of milestones. That set of milestones typically

consists of tasks. I'm arguing it's very, very, very malleable. First of all, people need a small win, they need a small win within the first forty-eight or seventy-two or ninety-six hours. Fine. So redesign the first task so the task is small enough so that a piece of the task can be done in ninety-six hours. And that is the game, in the best sense of the human game, that you play all the way through.

Design the milestones to keep people excited, to keep them engaged. Celebrate the living dickens out of the smallest ones, as well as the biggest one. There is an art that is almost a science, if you are in fact a student of social psychology, to designing perfect milestones. Please become a milestone-er extraordinaire. It's really exceptionally important.