

## The 80/20 Rule – The Quiet Connection (Part 1)

**Category** General Series

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I introduced the concept of the 80/20 Rule in my book—*Respect: Gaining It and Sustaining It*—and illustrated its relationship, or connection, to the topic of respect. This connection has been a source of numerous discussions that I have had and inquiries (and commentary) that I have received over the past two months. Therefore, it is no surprise that this topic is a lead subject in Ektimis.

First, the amazing—when I talk to people about the 80/20 Rule, many claim that they have heard of it or are familiar with it. But then when you ask them to explain it they give it a long thought and ultimately stumble through a gyration of words that culminate in a short story that fails to describe the rule!

In its simplest form the 80/20 Rule states that in many events (or situations) 80% of what you observe (the effect) is due to 20% of all the possible causes of that observation. For example, if your mail (or postal) delivery person is supposed to deliver mail (letters) to your home between 2:00pm and 2:30pm every weekday, and you observe that he or she arrives late on many occasions, and you decide to investigate why. After three months of investigation you uncover ten (10) primary reasons that cause your mail delivery person to be late. Upon further review you determine that two (2) of the ten (10) reasons —20%— account for the delivery person being late 80% of the days when he or she is late! This is the 80/20 Rule in effect. My apologies to mail delivery persons everywhere!

The **80/20 Rule**, also referred to as the "**Law of the Vital Few**," and the "**Pareto Principle**" is a concept that states that 80% of the effects observed (in a given situation) are attributed to 20% of all the causes of the effect.

**Why** is this important? In the example I just presented, if you were the postmaster and you were determined to reduce the frequency of late deliveries by this one mail delivery person on your staff, in response to residents and business owner complaints, it would make sense to focus first on the two (2) primary reasons—the 20%—that account for 80% of late deliveries. This would enable you to address resident complaints quickly and efficiently, rather than dealing first with the reasons that "matter the least" and still left with the frequent problem of late deliveries.

**Now** how does this relate to respect between people? In *Respect: Gaining It and Sustaining It* I presented the six primary factors that influence (or drive) the way you attain, or lose, one category of respect—there are three distinct categories, or methods of manifesting respect. Two of these factors are: your speech/words (what you say) and your actions (what you do).

I then presented the following facts—and indeed a revelation that many people have acknowledged and continue to acknowledge—that over time:

20%, or less, of the things you say (your speech/words) are long remembered by others, and account for the positive or negative impression that people maintain of you.

20%, or less, of the things you do (your actions) are long remembered by others, and account for the positive or negative impression that people maintain of you.

In other words, much of what we say and do everyday is soon forgotten over time; however, a few of the things we say and do really stand out and leave a lasting impression that is either positive or negative. It is “these lasting impressions” that cause others to value you more—leading to a gain in respect, or value you less—leading to a loss of respect. Respect, as I demonstrated in my book, is all about valuation and worth.

In what types of situation do we then find ourselves where this 80/20 Rule is most evident? In any long-term relationship (marital, committed, friendship), a place of work—since we spend a good portion of our time in a workplace, a school or educational institution, a social group in which we maintain active participation, a public setting—if you are a public figure or a famous person, and of course within our family (immediate and extended).

Many of us go to a place of work daily or on most days, unless you are retired or you are a fulltime student. Take your workplace and recall one person that you know and have the utmost respect for—that is, someone you value highly—and another person that you also know but have little respect for. Compare these two individuals within the workplace setting in the following two areas: (i) what they have said (their words) and (ii) what they have done (their actions). Are there notable differences? What specific past words come to mind for each individual? What memorable actions come to mind for each individual? How long ago were these words uttered and actions performed? Did these and other past words and actions leave a lasting impression? Are these lasting impressions factors contributing to the level of respect that you have for each individual?

I will continue this discussion next time and highlight the importance of cultivating a positive “80/20 life story.”

## About the Author



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