



## Focusing on the 20% that Really Matters

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The 80/20 Rule, also known as the Pareto Principle, means that in nearly all cases, a few (20 percent) are vital and many (80 percent) are trivial. The 80/20 Rule serves as a continual reminder for me to identify and then focus eighty percent of my effort on the twenty percent of my tasks that matter the most to me. Do you spend 80 percent of your time and energy on things that are really important to you? Many of us don't, but if we remind ourselves often, we can swing the pendulum in the other direction.

Interestingly, the **80/20 Rule** can be applied to almost anything. Some examples include:

- 80% of clothes you wear regularly come from only 20% of what's in your closet
- 80% of the difficulty in achieving something lies in 20% of the challenge
- 80% of road traffic accidents are caused by 20% of drivers
- 20% of mail received yields 80% of the value
- 80% of a supervisor's interruptions come from the same 20% of people
- 80% of your measurable results comes from 20% of your activities
- Only 20% of a meeting's duration results in 80% of its value
- 80% of activity will require 20% of resources
- 80% of usage is by 20% of users
- 80% of a restaurant's turnover comes from 20% of its menu
- 80% of corporate pollution comes from 20% of corporations
- 80% of revenue comes from 20% of customers
- 80% of problems come from 20% of causes
- 80% of complaints come from 20% of customers
- 80% of sales will come from 20% of sales people
- 80% of work absence is due to 20% of staff
- 80% of customer complaints are caused by 20% of one's products or services
- 20% of your marketing efforts generate 80% of your marketing results
- 80% of managerial pain and headaches are caused by 20% of the causes
- 20% of your products or projects or customers will generate 80% of your profitability

It is true that for any particular situation the precise ratio can and probably will be different than 80:20, but the principle will apply nevertheless, and in many cases the actual ratio will not be far away from the 80:20 general rule.

The value of this principle is in reminding us to stay focused on the "20 percent that matters." When the blow horns sound off surrounding the "crisis of the day" and piranhas begin to chomp away at your precious time, remind yourself of the critical 20 percent you need to focus on. If anything on your list of activities and action items has to fall by the wayside and be left undone, be sure it isn't listed in that critical 20 percent.