

## “Rocks & Sand” From Stephen Covey’s “First Things First”

One day an expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students. As he stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers he said, "Okay, time for a quiz." He then pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed Mason jar and set it on the table. He produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them one at a time into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "Really?"

He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing it to work down into the space between the big rocks. Then he asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was on to him. "Probably not," one of them answered. "Good!" he replied.

He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand and started dumping the sand in the jar until it filled the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?" "No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good."

Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things in it!" "No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point."

"The truth this illustration teaches us is that **if you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all.** What are the 'big rocks' in your life? Your children, your loved ones, your education, your dreams, a worthy cause, teaching others, doing things that you love, your health; your mate. **Remember to put these BIG ROCKS in first** or you'll never get them in at all. If you sweat about the little stuff then you'll fill your life with little things and you'll never have the real quality time you need to spend on the big, important stuff."

So, tonight, or in the morning, when you are reflecting on this short story, ask yourself this question: **What are the 'big rocks' in my life? Then, put those in your jar first.**

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***This is a fitting analogy for entrepreneurs who try to “do it all.” The ‘sand’ isn’t necessarily small stuff as it pertains to your business. Sand can actually be a necessary and critical component in keeping your business running (invoicing, networking, marketing, and managing the details). But you can’t do it all and if you spend all your time in the sand, there will never be room for the big rocks. Free up your time so you can successfully manage the priorities for your business and your life.***