

# Your Primary Aim

## Putting your life first



SNAPSHOT

The E-Myth Mastery Program

Module 1: Foundations of E-Myth Leadership

Business Development Process: LD-0020

*"...business needs a lifting purpose greater than the struggle of materialism."*

—Herbert Hoover

### Definition

Your Primary Aim is about your life, not your business. Your business is simply one of many important aspects of your life.

Your Primary Aim is the essence of your purpose in life. It is a brief statement summarizing whatever it is in you that is the source of your vitality, your commitment, your passion.

Your Primary Aim isn't about material things. It's about life.

### Why Do You Need to Understand Your Primary Aim?

Understanding your Primary Aim gives you the ability to live your life intentionally — rather than randomly — by making conscious choices that are consistent with what is most important to you. It helps you set your life's real priorities and puts your business in its proper perspective. It enables you to understand where the real purpose of your life lies, and how better to serve that purpose.

### The Primary Aim Discovery Process

List what you don't want in your life

List what you do want in your life

Set priorities and bust barriers

Write your own eulogy

Write your Primary Aim

### Key Points

The Primary Aim is intensely personal. It's all about you.

There is no such thing as a right or wrong, a good or bad Primary Aim. There is only what is true for you.

The keys to understanding your Primary Aim are to explore what you do *not* want your life to be like, to decide what you *do* want your life to be like, and to discover the self-imposed limitations that get in the way.

Money, status, power, possessions, and winning are not the essence of a Primary Aim. It's deeper than that.

The best indicator that you have discovered your true Primary Aim is your emotions. If you don't feel energy, enthusiasm, commitment, and a sense of "Yes! That's me!" you haven't found your real Primary Aim.

Primary Aim is not "New Age" pseudo-psychology. It's pragmatic. It's real world, and it's a proven way to put your life in perspective. It anchors your leadership and your decision-making with a solid understanding of what is and is not important.

Maybe this will help me understand my Primary Aim.



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## E-Myth Worldwide

Putting the Pieces Together

Santa Rosa, California, USA

# Your Primary Aim

## *Putting your life first*

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*"It never fails to amaze me how disconnected people can be from what should be the central issue of their lives, which is of course...LIFE."*

*"A business without life is no business at all. But I can easily imagine a life without business."*

—Michael Gerber

## It's About Your Life

Your Primary Aim is about leading a life that is consistent with your innermost desires, core values, and beliefs; A life that "feels right" every day; that gives you a deeper sense of fulfillment and meaning with every year that passes; A life you live *intentionally* rather than randomly.

In that simple statement lies the key to living a happy, fulfilled life. A life that is meaningful to you. A life in which your business plays a significant role, but far from the only role. A life of joy. And probably not the life you're leading now.

Your Primary Aim is your innermost driving force. It's the source of the vitality, the commitment, the vision you need to get the most out of your life and to create a remarkable business in the process. It is that which, more than anything else, gives you a sense of direction and purpose, motivates you to your highest levels of energy, and sustains you over the long haul.

## The Elusive Primary Aim

The vast majority of people aren't in touch with their Primary Aim. It's there, within all of us, but most of us simply haven't made the discovery. At least not yet.

Is it really *that* important? Well, yes, it is.

Understanding your Primary Aim gives you the ability to live *intentionally* rather than accidentally, to *shape* your life rather than live whatever life happens to you. In fact, that's the *only* reason to bother discovering your Primary Aim. Otherwise, you can simply live randomly, take your chances, and settle for whatever joy and whatever pain come your way.

Your core values, beliefs, and desires shape your Primary Aim. But most people don't understand their core values very well, and many have false impressions of their true core values. We've all known people who have worked for some high level of achievement only to find that, having reached it, their success is hollow, somehow unsatisfying. We've also known people whose lives, whether

successful in the conventional sense or not, experience deep satisfaction and a joyful contentment. The difference is that, in the first case, “success” was not consistent with their Primary Aim. In the second case, their Primary Aim was served.

It seems odd that so many people aren’t very aware of their Primary Aim because we all have a built-in barometer to tell us (if we pay attention) when we are in touch with it, and if we touch it in negative or positive ways. The barometer? Our feelings. Our emotions. Why is this important? Because our emotional barometer can help lead us to our Primary Aim.

We just have to listen.

## Primary Aim Is More Pragmatic Than You Think

Primary Aim is not some “New Age” trend or the latest self-help gimmick. We’re talking about *you* and what you really get your kicks from. We’re talking about a fundamental part of you. The part of you that propels you through life joyfully.

## Red Herrings in Your Search for Your *Real* Primary Aim

Money, status, power, competition, possessions, celebrity—none of these are the real driving forces in your life. They can all be important in their own way, but in themselves they aren’t driving forces in your life. But they can be red herrings that distract you in the search to understand your Primary Aim. Your Primary Aim is something deeper, more fundamental, more *you*.

## How Do You Determine Your Primary Aim?

There is a process that will get you to a clear understanding of your Primary Aim, but it is an intensely personal process. Some people breeze through it easily, some are challenged and go through bouts of confusion and self-appraisal before they understand what their Primary Aim is all about. Virtually everyone learns from it.

The end result is to create a force for guiding your life and the important elements within your life, among them, your business.

## It’s All About *You*

Your Primary Aim is unique to you. It’s about what you truly want for yourself. It’s not about the obligations you have to others, and it’s not about what others expect of you.

Think only about yourself and what you want your life to be like. That’s difficult for many of us. We are accustomed to putting

others first or taking responsibility for them. Isn't that what a parent, a boss, a friend does? For the moment, let go of all these responsibilities and "shoulds." Indulge yourself and think in terms of your own self-interest. Think in terms of dreams and fantasies. Reach for what *you* want.

Feel free to let your wishes soar without embarrassment, self-consciousness, or concern for the expectations of others.

## Look for the "Fire"

It takes careful thought to discover your Primary Aim, the one that fits you uniquely, the one that provides a sense of direction and purpose, and the one you feel "in your gut." It's easy to come up with something that "sounds good" and that "should be" a good Primary Aim, but doesn't really motivate you. It would be a mistake to go through the thinking and the worksheets provided, just to arrive at a Primary Aim that seems okay, but that in your heart-of-hearts just doesn't have the fire of your most heartfelt purpose in life.

Look deeply and honestly into yourself, figure out what you really want from your life, condense it into a brief statement, and use it as an internal guiding light as you plan and manage your business.

## The Primary Aim Process

The Primary Aim is a matter of discovery, not invention. You don't create your Primary Aim. It already exists within you. The Primary Aim Process is a way of discovering what is already there.

For most people, the process involves new ways of looking at themselves and their lives. It asks that you question your assumptions about life and your own core values. It *requires* that you use your feelings—your internal barometer—to guide you. It is an intensely personal experience, a process that gets you in touch with what is truly and fundamentally important to you.

You start the Primary Aim Process by quickly making lists of what you want and do not want in your life. Then you apply your thoughts and your feelings to the lists, narrowing them down to the most important do-wants and don't-wants. Next, you identify what gets in the way of your Primary Aim, and finally, you do some writing that results in a brief statement of the essence of your Primary Aim. The process can be intense at times, but it's almost always rewarding.

And it's one of the most valuable things you will ever do for yourself.

It's a five-step process:

**1 What you don't want.** Make a long list of what you *don't* want in your life. Don't think too much about each item. If you have difficulty making a list, you can use the questions (provided in the Worksheet section) to stimulate your thinking. When it is complete, go back over your list. This time think carefully about each item and be aware of the feelings it stirs. Circle the items that trigger the strongest negative emotions, the things you most want to *not* be part of your life. Don't circle more than a few items; focus on the most important ones.

**2 What you do want.** Quickly make another long list of what you *do* want in your life. Stay away from material things and money—they have little or nothing to do with your Primary Aim. As before, go back over the list and circle the items you most want to be part of your life. This time, circle the items that have the strongest attraction, the strongest positive feelings. Don't circle more than a few items—one, two, a half-dozen at most.

**3 Prioritizing and barrier-busting.** Copy the circled items from your *do-want* list onto a new list. As you do, think about each item and try to rank them in order of importance. Then for each one, think about what it is that gets in the way. What blocks you from having your *do-wants*? Finally—and this is important—identify your self-imposed limitations. What barriers do you put in your own way with limiting beliefs about yourself and with counterproductive habits?

**4 Write your eulogy.** Think of that far-off day when you are gone and all the people who are most important to you are assembled at your memorial ceremony. You get to write your own eulogy. What do you want it to say? What do you want to be remembered for?

**5 Write your Primary Aim.** In the fewest possible words, write a statement of the essence of your Primary Aim. Try for a phrase or a single sentence that describes what you want your life to be like in order for it to express what's most important to you.

The worksheets at the end of this booklet will guide you through the process.

### The Primary Aim Discovery Process

List what you  
don't want in  
your life

List what you  
do want in  
your life

Set priorities  
and bust  
barriers

Write your  
own eulogy

Write your  
Primary Aim

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## What *Don't* You Want

Often it's easier to know what you don't want than what you do want. A good way to begin the search for your Primary Aim is to become very clear about all the things you know you don't want. Make a list. Don't stop writing until you've put down everything you can think of.

There is a basic premise at work here. It says that focusing on what you don't want creates more of the same. These things you know you don't want are probably things you think about frequently. You probably play them over and over again in your mind. The result is that you are mentally "rehearsing" them, practicing them, reinforcing them.

In sports and music, there is a technique called "visualizing." The athlete or musician mentally goes through the right motions in preparation for the actual event. It has been proven to be a powerful technique for improving performance, and the same technique works for improving any other aspect of your life.

But there is a dark side. If your habit is faultfinding and focusing on what goes wrong, then your mind stays on the negative, and even though you wish for the positive, you are mentally rehearsing the negative. It's a tough habit to overcome. After all, if you are told not to think about a pink elephant, what's the first thing that pops into your mind? If you are repeatedly told, or tell yourself, to avoid something, what stays on your mind?

So why do we start your Primary Aim exploration by focusing on the negative? It's a way of reaching or discovering what you really do want. Once you have a clear picture of what you don't want, it can be a simple process of reversing the items to determine your truest wants.

## What *Do* You Want

When do you feel most free? What is it that make you feel most in touch with yourself? What gives you the greatest sense of fulfillment? Everyone has had moments of peak experience. What are those moments for you? What do you want your life to stand for? What's *really* important to you? This is what your Primary Aim is all about.

Again, you start by making a list. Think about what you appreciate, what is important to you, the parts of your life you treasure, what gives you your deepest sense of satisfaction. If your list fills up with material things, dig deeper. Your Primary Aim isn't about "stuff." It's about being alive.

## What Gets in Your Way

Here's a prediction. As you make your list, you will think of some things you will be tempted to ignore because, "That's not realistic for me." Or "Who am I to want that?" Or "That's not something a person like me should want." Or "I don't have the ability to [whatever]." *Do not impose limitations on yourself!* For the most part, limitations turn out to be more imaginary than real. And even completely unrealistic wishes, if they are heartfelt, tell you something about your core values that's valuable to know.

Consider, for instance, David Moss, a 63-year-old owner of a successful auto repair shop in Ohio. David yearned to ride the space shuttle. It was a heartfelt, deep-seated desire of his, but an impossible one. So he didn't add it to his do-want list. But he did mention it in a conversation, and it turned out to be an important hint about his Primary Aim.

It turns out that being in space, looking back at the Earth, had qualities that were important to him, and that he imagined would be intensely gratifying—qualities having to do with being in touch with grand ideas and widespread importance. He learned, after some discussion, that he could get some of that same feeling of gratification and fulfillment by doing public benefit work in highly visible positions with charitable organizations. He even found a way to involve his business in contributing to this "higher cause." His self-limiting perception of the impossibility of space travel had blinded him to a *real* source of gratification and the wide range of life experiences that could be truly satisfying to him.

The point? Don't ignore heartfelt desires simply because they seem impossible, undeserved, embarrassing, inappropriate, or not within your grasp. Dig within yourself for the source of the emotion behind the desire, and see where that leads you. More often than not, it will lead you to a new source of fulfillment.

## Your Personal Objectives Should Be Consistent with Your Primary Aim

Once you've identified your Primary Aim, how do you live day to day in a way that brings it to life? Personal objectives are an effective way to do it. If your life is like a puzzle, and your Primary Aim is the key to the big picture, then *personal objectives* are the pieces of the puzzle.

Personal objectives are the specific things you want to accomplish within a defined period of time. As you think about

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your life in the next six months, the next year, the next five years, and longer, you can create any number of personal objectives for getting what you want out of life. The pattern of your personal objectives shapes the pattern of your life. If you choose your personal objectives carefully, they keep you in harmony with your Primary Aim. The Personal Objectives Worksheet at the end of this document will help you establish personal objectives for yourself.

## But How Does Your Business Fit into This Picture

Your business is an important vehicle, maybe the most important vehicle, through which you can achieve your Primary Aim. If it is to contribute to the life you *want*, however, your business has to serve your Primary Aim.

It can happen in either of two ways. You could choose to develop your business in such a way that it frees you to pursue other interests, or the business could *itself* be a reflection of the very essence of what's most important to you in life. E-Myth Worldwide, for instance, is just such an enterprise. Michael Gerber created it as one of his personal objectives, one that contributes greatly to the realization of his Primary Aim. E-Myth Worldwide brings the benefits of effective management to small businesses around the world while at the same time serving as a profitable enterprise and rewarding place for its employees to work. You can imagine the joy and satisfaction it brings to Michael Gerber's life.

## What Really Matters Is...

If you have come to the conclusion that the discovery of your Primary Aim is one of the most important things you will get from E-Myth Worldwide, then you get the point. It may seem a bit odd that in order to get your business in shape, you first have to look within yourself, but it's not really odd at all. When all is said and done, the bottom line—have we said it enough?—is you.