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Glenn Livingston, Ph.D.

Laser Focus and Accomplishment



John Chancellor, CPC.

The
New York
Times

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John Chancellor is a *Double* Certified Professional Coach and author of two books ("*Designing Your Life*" and "*The Hungry Entrepreneur--Why so Many Business Owners Fail to Achieve Their Goals.*") Mr. Chancellor's original degree was in business from Tulane University in New Orleans, and he has since accumulated over 40 years experience in management and consulting working with companies ranging in size from small start-up mom & pop businesses to mid-size companies up to \$50 million in revenue. Originally trained as a psychologist, Dr. Glenn Livingston has helped literally thousands of clients. Along with his wife Sharon, he's sold consulting, teambuilding, and workshops to big names like AT&T, Nextel, Panasonic, Whirlpool, Novartis, Lipton, Colgate-Palmolive, Kraft, and Panasonic. Their work, research, and theories have been seen in major media publications like The New York Times, Entrepreneur Magazine, Crain's NY Business, AdWeek, America West, and more!

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- Find Time to Spend AWAY from Your Family. (*Get More "Me Time"*)
- Learn to Play an Instrument
- Keep Commitments in Personal Relationships (*Improve your marriage, family life, etc*)

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BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

Glenn: Hey! This is the good Dr. Glenn Livingston. I'm here with John Chancellor. How are you, John?

John: I'm doing terrific. How are you?

Glenn: I'm doing terrific also. I'm excited to be talking about accomplishments with you today, because we all have dreams. What do they say? A goal without a deadline is just a dream?

John: That's correct.

Glenn: I would say that a goal without a deadline and a real plan to get it implemented step-by-step with systematic progress all along the way that -- it's still a dream. Even a goal with a deadline is kind of a dream because we can all blow through deadlines. But, if you're really going to produce and accomplish, then, you're going to need to have a plan. You need to have a productivity plan. John is very unique and an interesting man. He's a long-term business coach. John, am I allowed to say how many decades? Or does that make you feel too old?

John: Oh no, no. It's perfectly fine. I've been in business for about 40 years. Most of that was coaching, consulting, helping people. The formal first certification was about 10 years ago, a little over 10 years ago where I became a certified coach. But before that,

I had actually been doing consulting, mentoring, and coaching. I've been doing that for 40 years.

Glenn: You've been around the block.

John: A time or two.

Glenn: You're very familiar what it takes for professionals to accomplish, what gets in the way of their plans, and that kind of thing. Then, when you decided to go through our coach certification alliance for a second certification, what we focused on was helping you really narrow down your niche, and focus on a niche. You like to tell people what you chose?

John: I chose productivity, getting things done, accomplishing things. Because, one of my favorite quotations, I'm a big fan of quotations, but one of my favorite quotations was by Ralph Waldo Emerson. He said, our greatest need is someone who can make us do what we're capable of doing.

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One of the things I've observed quite often is that very few people live up to their potential. It's not because they don't have the skills or talents. It's because being human, we don't always do what we should do when we should do it.

Glenn: That's absolutely true. Accomplishment is not necessarily human nature.

John: That's correct.

Glenn: Because I don't think people realize that. I think people think there's something wrong with them. Why are these other people so far ahead of me? Why can't I seem to make progress? They don't realize that it's only natural to choose the thing that's easier. It's natural for water to seek a ground, take the easier, softer road. High achievement, high accomplishment, really, is not the easier, softer road. There's nothing wrong with you for not accomplishing. I think that's the first step that we all have to get into our head, that it's -- if you really want to be a high achiever and get phenomenal things done and accomplish amazing things in your life and business, that something has to be different to take you off of the natural human path; for water to seek a ground, to do what's only human nature. It's easier to eat donuts than get on the treadmill.

John: Absolutely.

Glenn: Of course, there are some people who eat donuts while they're on the treadmill.

John: That seems counterproductive. But, I'm sure it's true.

Glenn: John specializes in productivity and accomplishment. You kind of caught me by surprise, because I was really just thinking about John as a -- I mean, he's one of my favorite clients, but about him just as a client. We've done an interview before. He's really well read. He's one of Amazon's top 1% of reviewers or something like that. Top 100 reviewers.

John: Top 500. But, it's less than the top 1% but it's top 500.

Glenn: Okay, well, thanks for making me an honest man. I was just thinking of John in that perspective and just kind of enjoying having him in the program. Then, when I saw what he was actually doing and some of the results that people were getting, his early clients. There was a guy who had a book contract and he couldn't get his book done. He's getting that done. There's someone who was developing a meditation program and had to organize their workshop. John, you can correct me if I'm misquoting this in any way.

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John: No, you're correct.

Glenn: I don't know if there's someone that worked with you specifically for weight loss. Then there's a woman who worked with you because she couldn't get herself to do the necessary routines so she get a better night's sleep. John started to tell me about the results he was getting. He said, "Glenn, you know, I think that we should offer this as a service to your list because the people going through the coaching alliance, they really need to get a lot of stuff done to become a successful coach. Everybody thinks the alliance's terrific. Sometimes they're a little nervous that they just don't know how to get everything done." I thought that was terrific. But I said, "You know what, John? Before we do that, I'd like to hire you myself, for five or six sessions." Which has now turned into, like, 10 or 12 sessions because I don't want to stop.

I've got some goals that I procrastinate because of human nature on myself. For me, it has more to do with just kind of keeping things clean and organized. I'm pretty good at being my own taskmaster for business, although I'm starting to think that I might want to have a couple of business close deals as well. But, I thought, today, John, we could talk about what's really unique about the process. Why is it different than having a taskmaster? Let's just take weight loss for an example. Everybody and their dog have at one time or another said to a buddy, "Hey, I got to lose 10 pounds. You want to lose 10 pounds? Let's go on a diet together." I don't know that I've ever heard one of those stories that really worked out in the long run, have you?

John: Actually, no, I haven't. I think I'll go back just a step before that. You may have touched on it a little bit. But, there's something basic about our not wanting to be held accountable by anybody else. If you think back to your childhood, your mom or dad was always after you to clean up your room, get your homework done. Your schoolteachers were after you to you to get things done on time. We, just as humans, do not like to have to answer to somebody else and to have somebody else have control over our lives or have too much influence on our lives. The basic human status to want to be autonomous, that we want to have full control over our lives.

The idea of working with a friend sounds good but it doesn't work. Part of the reason it doesn't work is because we really don't want to give that control to a friend. We think that if we become accountable to a friend, that they're going to be telling us what to do, or they have more control over us than we'd like. It doesn't work starting for that reason. I've even tried it myself to be accountable to another friend. It's just too

casual. The friendship trumps the accountability. We don't take it serious. There's not enough structure in it.

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Glenn: Because what are you going to say to your friend when your friend says, "I ate donuts instead of getting on the treadmill this week."

John: I'll tell you what you're going to say because I've said it before. Well, you know, that happens. Life happens. Some things just come up. We have to expect them. It's okay. You'll do better next week. That's typically what happens. The other thing though that happens is your friend has something more important to do. You don't have a strict schedule for checking in. You'll start off pretty good but it rapidly fades away.

Glenn: The third thing that can happen, I want us to get into the difference between an accountability coach and a taskmaster. Because, a taskmaster, you think of the ancient Greek ships where there was a guy with a whip, keeping pace. If someone didn't pull their weight...

John: They got whipped.

Glenn: They got whipped, right. That's not really what an accountability coach is. Because my experience with that type of thing is that you just start avoiding the taskmaster instead of the task, or both. With a friendly relationship, the difficulty is neither one of you have enough power to really enforce what the agreement is. In a taskmaster relationship, it's almost sadomasochistic and a team dynamics which cause them to avoid the task, cause them to avoid the taskmaster. What you really need is a skilled professional who knows how to establish the relationship so that you genuinely want to please them, that the professional becomes important to you. So that, It's more about, "I get to" than "I have to".

John: Absolutely.

Glenn: Just say a little bit more about that. Say a little bit more about your understanding about the difference between a taskmaster and a professional productivity coach.

John: The taskmaster is making you do something. The productivity coach is allowing you to fully embrace what you want to do, what you choose to do, getting you to identify and acknowledge the reason you want to do it, understanding the reason behind it. You have to have a strong "why". If you want to lose weight, why is that important to you? You got to keep that front and center. Then what they're productivity coach is going to do is help you realize where the resistance is. The taskmaster is trying to make you do it whether you want to or not, whether it matters to you or not. The coach is trying to help you see where the resistance is, and then, help you find ways to overcome that resistance.

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But, I can't tell you not to be afraid or I can tell you not to be afraid. It doesn't do any good. If you are not doing something out of fear, my telling you. "Hey, it's nothing to be afraid", has absolutely no value. But if I help you see that and help you find ways

to lower that fear to get around that resistance, then you can do the task. Not can do it, you will do it. You'll enjoy doing it. You'll feel the sense of accomplishment which is very important. You have to feel the accomplishment.

Glenn: Let's maybe go through an example. I wouldn't want people to get the impression that this is the only goal you could work on. It just happens to be what I'm working on with John. Most people are choosing like more financially relevant goals or more very significant health goals. This last couple of weeks, what I have been working on you with is wanting to keep my car clean. I got to tell you. I'm almost 50 years old. I'll be 50 years old in a couple of months. If anybody remembers, I think it was Linus from the Peanuts, where they had like -- if you looked in my car, you would say, "This is not that psychologist, marketer, PhD guy that I respect so much on the Internet. This guy's a pig."

John: Pigpen was the character.

Glenn: Oh, pigpen, sorry. I remember telling you that I really would like to keep my car clean. We talked about a couple of different ways to do it. We talked what it really meant to me. I wanted to keep up my image. It just made me happy to walk into the car without it like its smelling like mold, or having all these clothes in the back, or dogs' hair, anything like that. You really explored the problem with me. The first solution we came to didn't really work. The first solution was the idea that I was going to pay someone to detail the car for me on a regular basis. The reason that didn't work for me was because I'm feeling very time-pressured. I didn't want to have to coordinate my schedule with another person's schedule at that time.

Then, we decided that really, what was stopping me was when I was done with my drive. Sometimes, I'd gone and hike that 8-hour mountain and come back for two hours in the car. I was really tired. If I could just take 2 minutes and wipe it down with a cloth and take out anything I don't need. You asked me what would be necessary to do that. We talked about the resources. I had to have, seems kind of silly, but I had to make sure there was a towel and a bottle of water there, so I could wipe it down. How was I going to remember to do that? I said, "Well, I'm going to put a note right next to the car where I pull in in the garage. So that every time I pull out of the garage, I'm going to remember to do that. I don't remember if we talked about this directly or its insight that I had. But, I realized that sometimes, when you have an overwhelming task, especially with regards to cleaning up, it's

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overwhelming to say you've got to get the whole thing clean right away. But, it's easier to say, "I'm just going to leave it a little bit cleaner than I found it." Every time I go in, I'm going to leave it a little cleaner than I found it. Before you know it, it's going to be spotlessly clean.

We talked about the resistance. Why is this going to be a problem? How are you going to remember? There's some kind of tangible, physical thing I would have to do to track it. Lo and behold, now, I have a really clean car. I'm wondering, could you highlight the elements of that process that really applied to any goal that you want help someone accomplish?

John: I think the first thing is the goal has to be meaningful. It has to be yours. Then, you have to understand the resources that are necessary to accomplish that goal. Resources can be time, money, people, information; depending on the goal. Then, you have to understand what obstacles might prevent you from working on that goal.

Obstacles, I have found that most people, when they have a goal, there have been situations in the past that parallel that or similar to that. I get them to explore, what happened in the past that derailed them. What came up for them that kept them from accomplishing that goal. That probably is going to come up again. If that doesn't come up, something will. If you don't make contingencies for it, if you don't plan on it, when it comes up, you're going to be totally thrown off track. You'll be derailed.

You have to work with the client to figure out what could come up that would derail the goal. Then, get them to plan on contingencies. If you have thought through what might come up, when it comes up, you're prepared for it. You can handle it. If you haven't thought through what's going to come up, you're not prepared for it when comes up, it knocks you for a loop. You give up. That is the crucial step in it. Then, obviously, you have to schedule it. Set aside a time for it, block out a time for it. You need some trigger that's going to say, "Okay, this is what you do." When you drive in in your garage, and see the sign, and you're going get out of the car, that sign is the trigger for you to take action. The last thing you need is some way to keep track of your progress. If you just say, I'm going to do a task, but do not track your progress, you're not going to be successful in it.

Glenn: We improve what we measure, right?

John: Absolutely.

Glenn: What gets measured gets managed.

John: That's correct.

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Glenn: The amazing thing to me, first of all, is how different that is from just having a friend that's says, "Hey, I want you to whip my butt if I don't lose 10 pounds this week." But, secondly, this all happens in 15 minutes a week. This is not a depthful, long, soul-searching psychoanalytic session. This is a very, very focused, what's the goal; why is it important; what are the resources you need to accomplish it; what's stopped you in the past; how are we going to measure it; what's the trigger going to be; are you willing to commit to this?

It's amazing to me how quickly you can make progress doing that, just the fact that you can do it in 15 minutes. I always train in a psychoanalytic tradition. We would ask someone the same questions but we'd be looking for these kinds of deep characterological issues that were preventing people from accomplishing what they wanted to accomplish. I think I'm more experienced -- by the way, as a psychoanalyst, I started to realize that you couldn't assume a characterological problem before you assess whether there was an educational deficit. My way of understanding why this process works, I'm still a fan of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, but why this process can make radical behavioral changes when psychoanalysis for a year or two

might not even make a dent, is because it's so laser-focused on that one goal and the behaviors and the resources and the environmental stimuli that are necessary to make it happen. I'm actually very, very excited about it. I have not had one client complain about it so far. They're all really happy. I've been doing a little bit of testing internally. We gave it to a handful of clients. I'm just really, really excited about it.

John, is there anything else that you think people need to understand about how this works or why it works? Or, do you want to talk to them a little bit more about how they can get it if they want to?

John: I would like to maybe give a couple of semi-case studies or just a couple of examples, if that's okay. I have a client who's writing a *For Dummies* book. I'm sure you've seen them. Those are all published by Wiley. It's a franchise, the *For Dummies* things. They have extremely rigid qualifications that the author has to adhere to. When I started working with this client, his writing process was very casual. He had no structure to it. He had no way to measure what he was accomplishing. He was very stressed because he didn't know where he was, didn't know if he was going to be able to meet the deadline. He was in a very stressful situation. We started working together. We're doing it in 15 minutes a week. Now, he has a definite writing schedule, but it's flexible because things happen. But, he does have a definite schedule. He has a tracking system so he knows where he is. He knows whether he's on track or whether he's falling behind. What's really happened is when I first started working with him, he was extremely stressed and nervous about whether he was going to get the book done. Now, he's very comfortable and confident. He knows where he is. As a

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result, he's writing much better. All of his businesses is much better because there's not this constant stress about the book hanging over him. It's just been absolutely amazing to me, the change, in a relatively short period of time, that this client has experienced.

Glenn: It's really marvelous.

John: I have another client that is a medical doctor and a researcher. When we first started working together, she was extremely stressed also. The clinical time was eating up into the research time. She didn't have the time to devote to the research that she really loved. She had no automated way of patient follow-up to disseminate information or to collect information on how they were doing. She had no tracking system for her important tasks. She really didn't have a set of goals. She was reacting to life and to her practice and everything else. Well, since we started working together, she's developed a set of goals. She's developed a tracking system for her tasks. She's giving adequate time now to strategic planning. She's creating a patient information follow-up system that will allow her to give patients the information they need in a more automated format; one that they can consume and one that saves her time. Again, it's amazing, the progress that she's made in a relatively short period of time. Now, I have to say that both of these clients are highly coachable. They're not at all resistant

to this. They have embraced this with open arms but they've been ideal clients. They've been shown amazing progress.

Glenn: A little bit more about that. What makes the client coachable through this process? What do they need to be willing to do? What does their motivation have to be? Contrast that to someone who isn't coachable.

John: To learning, to accepting new ways, to realize that what they have been doing in the past wasn't working. They have to be open. Oftentimes, we get attached to our way of doing things. If you're attached to your way of doing things and will not let go of the way you want the world to be, I think you're probably not coachable. If you're open to new things, if you're open to saying, "The way I've been doing is not working." If you realize that and accept that, and then, you're open to doing things a new way, you'll accept the coaching and do very well.

Glenn: It's one of those things that most people say -- if you ask people, "Are you teachable? Are you open to new ways?" Everybody's going to say that they

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are. It's kind of like when I would try to explain to people that there's not really a quick fix for something. I mean, there actually is a quick fix for some things. But, if a couple would come to me, they were on the verge of divorce, and they really weren't really communicating well. I would say this is going to require some sustained effort and communication strategies. It's not something you're going to learn in a night, go home, and be able to do. It's going to take some time to put together. They would all say that, "Oh, they don't believe in quick fixes. They totally understand." But, when it came down to it, they really, really wanted a quick fix. They were very frustrated that I couldn't give it to them. It was a rare client that really understood what it took.

John: I will say this. What we try to do is actually give quick fixes but small quick fixes. I, obviously, did not accomplish this major change with either of these clients in one or two sessions. What I gave was an overview of where they were when they started and where they are now. But, we started by working on very small tasks each week. As you move each task, all that grows upon it. They only had to be open to one task at a time. That's one of the things about this is we do not try to do multiple goals at a time. I found it doesn't work. We try to sit small manageable goals, work on them one at a time, then, it works well.

Glenn: Put your toe in the water and --

John: Test it.

Glenn: Test it out. Then, put another toe in the water. Before you know it, you're swimming.

John: You're swimming, absolutely.

Glenn: Well, is there anything else that I should have asked you or that we need to tell people so they understand what productivity coaching is? I'll tell people that this is very affordable because it's done in 15-minute blocks. That, we take people on for a productivity blueprint session. You don't kind of jump in and say, "Yes, I'm ready to go" and "Can I come Wednesday nights at 8:00". You come for one session as a blueprint session where John or one of our coaches will explore with you what your specific goal is, what you think is holding you back, why you haven't been able to accomplish this before; give

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you a little bit of perspective, give you some direction and a blueprint for accomplishing it on your own if you really want to. Then, from there, you can figure out what the best schedule, who the best coach is for you, that kind of thing. But, John, is there anything else that we need to cover today?

John: I think that covers it. I love it. I'm excited about it. It gets results and it get results very rapidly. Less painful than a lot of other methods that you might have. Because it's so laser-focused, it's very economical for the results you get. It's probably one of the better deals around.

Glenn: I would agree, 100% agree. Okay, well, John, thank you very much.

John: You're quite welcome.



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