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CHUCK TALK: Is the 'time thief' stealing away real opportunities?

Stop getting ready to get ready; tackle the critical initiatives

BY CHUCK MACHE

I'm not an expert on time management systems, but I do know that if you are really after making productive forward progress, you often are faced with the feeling that there isn't enough time in a day to get everything done.

For some it is true. They bite off so much that Superman himself couldn't move quick enough to knock off everything that they set out to complete in a day, or a week for that matter. For others though, I believe there is another issue – and it has to do with the time bandit that is stealing their day away. Their precious real time is being eaten by either less important tasks or their own fear of what it really takes to complete the more difficult issues.

I ran into a friend of mine the other day and he said, "Too many people are always getting ready to get ready. Talking about it, planning for it, thinking about it, writing it down, but they're just getting ready to get ready. They never get to getting it done, especially on the difficult and important things. Just do it." Now this guy is definitely a successful doer, whose career as a get-it-done guy I truly respect.

As is always the case, his comments rolled around in my head for a few days. Let's assume we aren't talking about people who have terrible work ethic and just don't care.

Do we avoid critical issues because of our aversion to doing what is difficult? Are we not disciplined enough to attack the core issues that are the most meaningful to improvement? Do we really not have time to get important things done? Do we just procrastinate, choosing instead to hide behind a wall of reactive, day-to-day issues so that we can later claim, "I just couldn't get to it."

Or maybe we're just scared to do difficult things, preferring to occupy our time with that which we are comfortable.

So let's shoot right to the truth and let me ask a couple of questions. When it comes to getting things done, do you find that you spend time:

-- Making a list on a pad of paper, or on your computer and printing it out. This list has the important initiatives that need to get done, but you find that at the end of the week those initiatives didn't get done. You were disciplined enough to make the list, keep the list with you, refer to the list dozens of times during the week and in fact underlined or traced over those tasks several times during the week, but they didn't get done.

-- Were you involved in several meetings about an important issue during the week, had several conversations on the phone and email, sought feedback from important peers and superiors, did research to validate your thinking, but at the end of the week you didn't hit your timeline?

-- Were you absolutely busy all week long, putting in solid effort and getting things done, but these important issues, these real meaningful opportunities, just don't get done because, after all, you are buried and the velocity of the issues coming at you are making it impossible to attack the critical things?

At some point, if you really want to be an impact player in whatever you do, you have to get off of the practice field and get into the game. Get out of the practice room and get on the stage. Walk from the driving range to the first tee and let it rip.

There is a thief among many of us that is stealing our real time and keeping us from making a real impact. And as usual, that thief is us. If you stop getting ready to get ready and actually just do it, you will advance your issue faster than anything that you have written down, met on, researched, pondered, analyzed or planned for.

As I've said, I'm not an expert on time management, but I do know that people are famous for hiding behind the fact that they couldn't get something done because they were too busy. At the end of the day, I don't believe that we do anything that we don't want to do – at least for very long. We might say we're too buried to get something done, but the truth is, we choose to do what we want to do. We've allowed the thief to steal our time and have chosen to work on the easy things. Show me someone who is picking off real problems, focusing on advancing real issues, targeting meaningful revenue opportunities, solving core organizational problems and has taken the less important issues off of their plate to conquer the difficult, and I'll show you someone tracking toward tremendous success. In their world, the thief is repelled.

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Chuck Mache, president of Chuck Mache Communications, is a speaker, executive coach and consultant. His work is dedicated to helping companies and individuals break through to their next level and he is the bestselling author of the "The Four Kinds of Sales People: How and Why They Excel and How You Can Too." Learn more and sign up for Chuck's complimentary monthly newsletter at www.chuckmache.com.