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# CHUCK TALK: Splintered attention leads to lack of focus and growth

by **Chuck Mache**

When I see underperformance in a company, I look first to the resources dedicated to meeting a goal.

We've all heard the phrase "Jack of all trades, master of none." Too often I encounter individuals in companies that have multiple mission-critical responsibilities.

While this may bode well for a small company, it is also many times exactly what keeps a company small. In what appears to be a well-intended move to streamline efficiency and keep overhead low, important disciplines are getting commingled and the results are almost always below expectations. This type of splintered attention almost always leads to lackluster results.

Here is an example:

I have a client in Southern California who was struggling with revenue growth. Setting the key strategies aside for a moment, I always look to the leadership of the company. Exactly what are they doing to drive revenue? In this example, his sales manager was also in charge of the operations of the company. In theory, this two-headed monster was supposed to split his time between both operations and sales. In reality however, it was the operations that was taking the majority of his time.

If all we have in a day is real time, and all of his real time was being sucked up by operational issues, then how could he proactively pursue driving revenue?

As a result, the salespeople were poorly managed and the environment wasn't conducive to revenue growth. The truth is the results in both operations and sales were below expectations because of the leader's inability to dive totally in to one of the areas. One person wearing too many hats will really cap growth.

This is the challenge that all small businesses face and it's not an easy one to deal with. However in this case it wasn't such a small business, but I assure you, it wasn't going to grow much either.

I can't tell you how many times I have run into this. Salespeople are in charge of growing the business. Over and above keeping their clients happy, there are usually two key strategies involved in this. Go get more from their existing clients that have potential and go get new clients.

In some cases, the new client growth opportunities are tremendous in comparison to growing their existing ones. Yet in reality, many salespeople will spend the bulk of their time with their existing clients.

Why is this? Partly because they are stuck in a comfort zone, and partly because they are poorly managed. Mostly, however, it is because there is a problem with the strategy that is splintering their attention and keeping them from getting new clients.

The caution flag should be raised if any of the following is taking place:

- Leaders are not 100 percent dedicated to driving the business.
- The organization chart has managers responsible for more than one mission-critical department.
- The front line doers are not spending real time on the issues that are mission critical.

If you really want to grow, make sure good people are 100 percent dedicated to a single purpose in their jobs, and then help them do it better. In my experience most people tend to dwell where they are comfortable, even though opportunity for growth is in the uncomfortable.

Good leaders and managers get their people to live in the uncomfortable. Take away the splintered attention and get more results.

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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](http://www.chuckmache.com).