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Compleat Cookshop offers a full range of cookware and has many special deals this month, including 30% savings on electrical pizza pans. Come down to 65 Strand Street and see the full range

How to Business Blog Without Being Unprofessional

by Chris Garret

Writing on your blog is not gossip. While you could get plenty of traffic from your industry by spreading juicy tidbits about your competitors and colleagues you will more likely grab yourself a bad reputation rather than more work or industry profile.



Language can be an issue. I am not talking about swearing and such, most business people would know better than to drop bad language into a marketing tool. What I mean is tone and sophistication. You have to fit the voice to the audience. Of course I am pretty laid back here on this blog, while there are quite a few CEOs reading they tend to not be the stuffy stiff necked types (I know, I get emails from them!). You have to tune the language you use appropriately.

The best type of posts you can make, particularly in a service industry, is successful case studies.

- What was their situation like before?
- What were their goals or problem?
- How did you work with them?
- How did everything work out?

Most clients would be glad of the publicity, you just need to speak to them and get permission. Obviously some will not want specifics mentioning (particularly figures) or even to be named. That's all fine. What matters is results and that you provide enough detail to be believable.

Talk to your clients about it and you won't get into trouble. Going behind their backs is when you start getting into the sticky stuff.

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“Could this have appeared on a competitors blog with no major changes?”

The same is true when you want to write about exciting happenings in your own business. I imagine bloggers at Apple and Microsoft have a real hard time keeping mouths shut. There will be policies on what can and can not be talked about. If not, get some. Fast. Many companies have footers on their emails

- * NOT to be repeated or reproduced
- * OK to email to company
- * OK to email outside company to specified individuals
- * Freely distribute

Most of all, what makes you different to all the other businesses they could go to?

You can do the same and add a tick box for blogging if freely distribute doesn't cover that. Most business niches have news, tactics and events that are safe to blog about. This though is mostly filler. You can get that stuff anywhere. To make it more valuable you need to dig deep and find your hook or angle on it.

The best solution, if you haven't already got a rich source of content to draw on, is to create some news. Could you run a competition? A survey? Interview some industry figures?

These don't need to be massive ventures, scale to fit. While one past client of mine had a terrific success year on year with a global survey that was mentioned in television and newspapers around the world, another simply surveyed their own clients and as well as producing an excellent PR story also learned a great deal about what their customers look for and feel.

Bottom line you need to answer the question; “Could this have appeared on a competitors blog with no major changes?”. If the answer is yes you have a bland post and you need to work on it some more. Just remember you can be interesting without being unprofessional. Focus on your reader. What is useful to them? How have you or your products helped people and businesses just like them? Most of all, what makes you different to all the other businesses they could go to?

Chris is a frequent Blogger on Corporate Blogging Visit him at www.chrisg.com



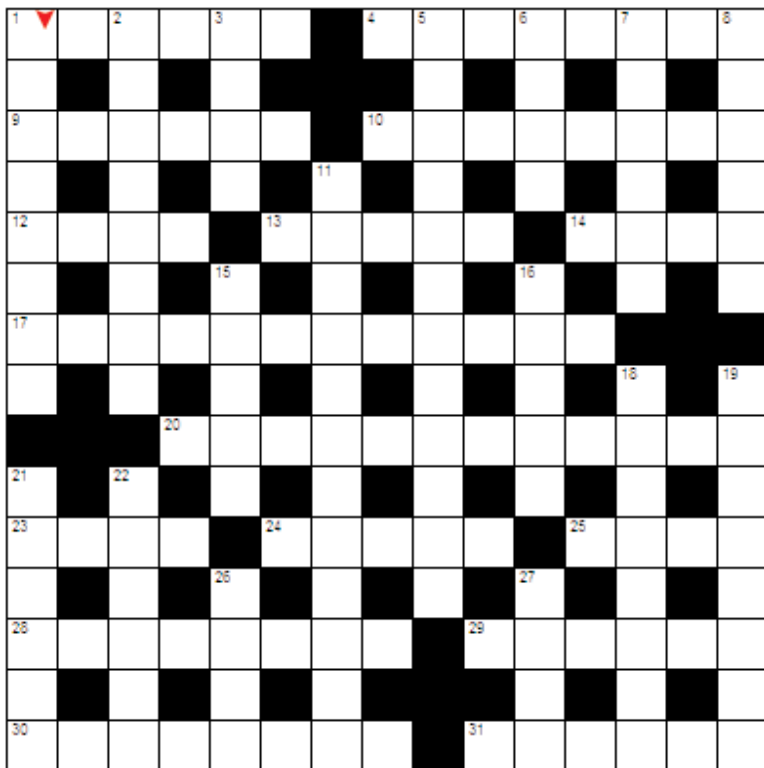


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Cryptic 15x15 Crossword - July 2007

Across

1. Journey through south east earns promotion (6)
4. Underwater weapons to identify in rivers (8)
9. Cockney's not very bright and the French male is not faithful (6)
10. I'm assuming contract is a matter of principle (8)
12. Bandage mangled right hand (4)
13. Short case (5)
14. Have I left the world behind, taking this? (4)
17. Consequence of lot including mineral if in (12)
20. Sing 'Bring back my bonnie to me' for retailers' convention (4,2,6)
23. Sort of bean makes odd stony jam (4)
24. Selective diner, for example, in front (5)
25. Reporting quick look at small dog (4)
28. Uneven odd piles (8)
29. 27 maybe, not 28 - hard to change (6)
30. Protection of old city inside Canterbury, perhaps (8)
31. Take north for river in trailer when coming (6)

Down

1. Standard program used for cashmere, say (8)
2. Takes back wrecked car with smile (8)
3. Hide shower (4)
5. Radical landlord takes time for special occasion (3,6,3)
6. Still led down entering a dungeon (4)
7. Is taken in by those against sounds (6)
8. Likeness I presented with cheerful greeting (6)
11. Detect oxygen, for example? No, try neon (5,7)
15. Refuse bad health centre (5)
16. Witches use charcoal on their stove (5)
18. Leading lady, ERB (5,3)
19. Improper use of church in order (8)
21. Songs of the south among tropical trees (6)
22. Self-portrait, perhaps, show nothing if short-sighted (6)
26. Pile as one in (4)
27. Press this for God's gift to women (4)

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Top 20 Motivation Tips

These Motivation Tips are courtesy of Ben Franklin a blogger who writes about wellbeing at <http://zenhabits.net>

20: Chart Your Progress. Recently I posted about how I created a chart to track my progress with each of my goals. This chart is not just for information purposes, for me to look back and see how I'm doing. It's to motivate me to keep up with my goals. If I'm diligent about checking my chart every day, and marking dots or "x"s, then I will want to make sure I fill it with dots. I will think to myself, "I better do this today if I want to mark a dot." Well, that's a small motivation, but it helps, trust me. Some people prefer to use gold stars. Others have a training log, which works just as well. Or try Joe's Goals. However you do it, track your progress, and allow yourself a bit of pride each time you give yourself a good mark.

Now, you will have some bad marks on your chart. That's OK. Don't let a few bad marks stop you from continuing. Strive instead to

I want to go running, I might think I can run 3 miles at first. But instead of letting myself do that, I start by only running a mile.

19: Hold Yourself Back. When I start with a new exercise program, or any new goal really, I am raring to go. I am full of excitement, and my enthusiasm knows no boundaries. Nor does my sense of self-limitation. I think I can do anything. It's not long before I learn that I do have limitations, and my enthusiasm begins to wane. Well, a great motivator that I've learned is that when you have so much

energy at the beginning of a program, and want to go all out — HOLD BACK. Don't let yourself do everything you want to do. Only let yourself do 50-75 percent of what you want to do. Plan out a course of action where you slowly increase over time. For example, if I want to go running, I might think I can run 3 miles at first. But instead of letting myself do that, I start by only running a mile. When I'm doing that mile, imagine that I can ride it even further. I can do more! But I don't let myself. After that workout, I'll be looking forward to the next workout, when I'll let myself do 1.5 miles. I keep that energy reined in, harness it, so if I want to go running, I might think I can run 3 miles at first. But instead of letting myself do that, I start by only running a mile. When I'm doing that mile, I'll be telling myself that I can do more! But I don't let myself. After that workout, I'll be looking forward to the next workout, when I'll let myself do 1.5 miles. I keep that energy reined in, harness it, so that I can ride it even further.

More motivation tips next month.

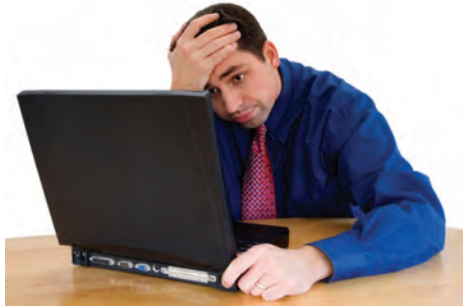
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Fear Easily Becomes Inertia

By Judi Perkins

I found a very depressing site the other day. It came up when I googled the phrase "I hate my job."



Individuals such as these are one reason why I teach people the system of how to find their perfect job. When you understand the science and psychology behind what's involved in the search, you begin to realize it's not only possible to achieve it, but it's doable in a short period of time because you are the one controlling - through your mental attitude and ensuing choices - both the process and the outcome.

The most common reason some people fail to make a change is fear – usually fear of change combined with landing in the same miserable type of environment. It's like the person who's been dating a long time and always winds up with a jerk. Pretty soon you just leap to the conclusion that that's the only thing around and don't realize that's a fallacy. A shift in perspective and you can say, "Hey, maybe the problem isn't something else. Maybe the problem is me."

And once you've stopped blaming circumstances outside yourself, then you can take responsibility, be open to finding a new way, and watch your search unfold in a dramatically different manner.

So fear of leaving, fear of change, fear of landing in the same situation again, fear you'll never find a decent boss, that you won't be paid well or enough or more, that it will be too far to drive (the list goes on) are all underlying - and often unconscious - reasons why change doesn't happen.

It's the belief that "There's nothing out there," and "What would I find that's different/better than this?" that's part of the problem. But that belief perpetuates itself. In other words, as long as that's what you believe, you're not going to look.

What you think, what you say, and what you believe is what you manifest. How will you find anything if you don't look? Or if when you look, you find something wrong with every opportunity that catches your eye?

"Oh I could do that! No, probably too far to drive."

"There's something....yeah, but they're not going to pay me as much."

"Hmmm - what about this? No, that sounds like it's going to be a lot of hours."

And as this goes on for weeks at a time, nothing changes. You find a way to sabotage every potential opportunity or optimistic thought about changing companies.

But that's entirely normal. Underneath all that is self-doubt, anxiety, fear of rejection, fear of having made the wrong decision, and once you're into the process - fear of having botched the interview, feeling as if you are botching the interview process – right now. Why not just blow it off? After all, you've got a job that pays.

Some have no problem getting started but can't seem to follow through and finish. When you begin, you think of all the reasons why you want to leave. Then as an offer seems impending, you think of all the reasons why you want to stay. So you stay, and find that nothing has changed. You still want to leave, only now you're kicking yourself for having turned down a job you worked so hard to find.

The best way to conquer fear is to walk straight into it. When you want to go, write down the reasons why and what isn't satisfying about your job. List the characteristics of the environment and job you want to be in. As you get toward the end of your search and find yourself with an offer in hand, go back to that list of what you don't like about your job. Know that the job you're leaving isn't going to change, and that's why you are. Because once you've made the switch,

and a renewed confidence takes its place. And once you've committed yourself to a new path, the new becomes the old and familiar, and you'll wonder why you ever contemplated staying at that other place that made you so miserable.

If you've done your homework on what you want, if you've done your prep before the interview, if you've been honest with yourself and the hiring authorities, you could find yourself in a job you love. And there are a lot of people like that. Just google "I love my job" instead of its alternative. Which site would you rather have an entry on?

Prior to starting VisionQuest, Judi was a search consultant for 20 years in the contingency and retained markets. Visit her website at <http://www.findtheprec-tjob.com>

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B.Z. Toons

www.bztoons.com

by Brian Zaikowski



The Hidden Cost of Content Management

By Nathan J Pledger



Web Sites can contain thousands of pages. Maintaining this amount of information can be difficult, and a costly expense on your employee's time. The individual(s) who is responsible for the task of maintaining a web-site will need to be able to publish new content, maintain existing content, delete old content and manage access to content. This onerous task tends to occur in a Content Management System (CMS) A CMS

is an application that manages the creation, maintenance, publishing and access of content, typically, web-site data. One would think that such a system (which ranges in price from Free to tens of thousands of pounds)

would reduce the cost of entering and maintaining web page data. I think this is wrong. Consider an average web-site, of about 100 web -pages. This site has static content (privacy policy, downloadable content, etc), dynamic content (news, photographs, etc.) and a shop. A CMS solution is used to manage the site.

Your Cheque, Sir.

In its initial stages, the Web Site is conceived either by an external client or within an internally sourced idea or project. We won't attach a cost to this. Note that these are internal costs, so £600 per developer-day markup is not considered. I'm charging this at salary rates, as many

web-sites are internally generated and managed.

After conception comes design. Design requires initial mock-ups to be created, test-cases for usability (prick up your ears, Designers) and concept pages. A decent Designer retails at about £25,000 - £30,000 per annum. Let's say two weeks were spent on the designs start to finish, so that is £1,041 (£25,000 divided

The Web is awash with a myriad of content management solutions, but they don't necessarily help employee efficiency.

by 12 months divided by 2 weeks). Following design, we need to settle on our CMS solution. This requires input from the design team, the development team and management. Take one

designer at £25,000, a developer at £25,000 and a manager at £35,000. A series of four meetings, each with all parties present, lasting for an hour would then probably cost us about £100. But let's add another £100 expenses, such as accommodation for sales reps, flights, etc.

We have our CMS! The cheque has gone through. An enterprise level CMS can start cheap and end expensive. Let's say £20,000 for a professional, mid-range enterprise solution.

CMS solutions can be very complicated beasts, and we need to make sure we are going to get the most out of it. We need training. And training isn't cheap. We need to train our editors so they can edit the content and our developers so they can

extend on the CMS to provide custom content. A training day is going to be about £600. Probably a week of those should see us right. Add £3,000 - think of it as an investment in your people.

Let's just stop and recap our costs so far:

- £1,000 for designer time
- £200 for sales meetings
- £20,000 for our enterprise CM solution
- £3,000 for training our team for 5 working days

Cost so far: £24,200

The CMS now needs to be installed and configured. Most are pretty simple to set up, just copy it on to your web server, change some configurations and you're off. I'll probably write this cost off...

This CMS allows editors in different departments to create and maintain content according to their role, each of these copywriters might earn between £18,000 - £25,000. Great! Users feel empowered, they are given training on the CMS, which ultimately enhances their careers and content is no longer subject to the bottleneck while IT publish "low priority" content in the midst of their "high priority" development.

We have an empty CMS, we now need to get the design working and navigation working within the site. This can be horrendously complex or stupidly simple, depending on how the CMS application was written! This is going to need the techies on this task, and a few days of techie time comes in at £70 per developer (again, I'm quoting salary rates, not charge rates). I think we could probably do with two on this one, so the training for the two

techies can be used to the max. That'll be £210 please, Sir, for 2 developers over 3 days. (I think I am being quite conservative here, it certainly took me longer to figure out using some of the CMS's I have used!)

Our site is now structurally implemented, but is quite, quite empty. We have a whole bunch of specified content. Some of the content is pretty simple, in terms of Title and Text; other content requires a bit more effort. The title and text content is about 50% of the site. We can hand that right over to our copywriters straight away. So 50 pages to our team of two copywriters will probably cost £250, assuming each page takes a half hour to type in and format.

Now we have the clever stuff to implement. We need to implement photographs, according to photographers license permissions and relevance of content. We need to publish news feeds according to topic and have that dynamically presented in a moving ticker tape. We need to integrate into our back office to implement a shop and provide dynamic company information, such as stock quotes and contact details of staff on the move. Well, no content management solution will do *all* that (not out of the box anyway), so we are going to have to budget some IT time.

We have two developers at our disposal. They are quoting about 4 weeks to do all this content, end - to -end, though I suspect they are applying the "IT multiplier", which gives them time to make a few mistakes (they tell me they are essential proof of concepts that didn't work out) and recover within their project plan. That gives us 15 days of 2 developers @ £25,000 pa - a snip at £2,800

We're nearly there, but before we do, we'd better test this thing. Better add a week of testing and proofing. So that is 5 days by one person @ £25,000 pa which gives £350.

My developers are moaning they need a new server to accommodate the new CMS, but I ignore them on the grounds of budget constraints and they had a new server last month. So, let's work out the bill:

- * £24,200 (balance brought forward)
- * £210 initial development (site construction)
- * £250 copywriter time to get the "static" content in place
- * £2,800 development time for 2 developers working on the more advanced extensible aspects of the CMS
- * £350 ... oh yeah, testing and proofing by one person for a week. Gives us a nice figure of £27,810. Ouch!

My argument is that if we take away that content management solution, we are no worse off. So let's dismantle this web-site.

Saving: £0 on Designer time

Our artistically-oriented designers are separate to the CMS, so we can't cut corners here.

Saving: £200 on Sales meetings

No more wining and dining to spend our money means we have more money to spend internally, and it doesn't waste anybody's time.

Saving: £20,000 Content Management

The web site has a lot of content that was edited in the content management solution, but what content really needs that level of functionality? We know that 50% of the content is relatively static, so surely



a flat form of Title/Text should do for this? And what of the dynamic content? Seems to me we had to develop something for that anyway, so what have we gained? £20,000, now

Saving: £3,000 Training

No Content Management System: No Training. Investors in People can wait till the next project/issue. "CS231: Conscientious working", perhaps?

Saving: £210 Initial construction

We're starting to get technical now. My developers tell me that they want to use ASP.NET, which comes with some raw aspects of content management built-in, something called Master Pages and XSL. Anyway, apparently, it won't be too big a problem to build a site from scratch, But it will cost more of their time. They tell me

Cost £700 for initial development phase

Saving: £0 Copywriter time for "static" content

We still need the copywriter team to put the content in to the site, so we make no savings there. Maybe I could lean on their manager to get them to work faster.

Saving: £0 (?) on Development Time

The dynamic content will definitely need developer time now we have no CMS in place. Probably about the same time, to be honest. Although, I'm told that because the developers don't have to work within the requirements of the CMS application and are free to work as they like, within their own framework, it might even finish earlier. I've promised them a beer if they can pull it off.

Saving: £0 on Testing and Proofing

We cut no corners here! No matter the content management solution, it must still work!

Let's consider our revised bill:

- Saving: £0 on Designer time
- Saving: £200 on Sales meetings
- Saving: £20,000 Content Management
- Saving £3,000 Training
- Saving £210 Initial construction
- Cost £700 for initial development phase
- Saving: £0 Copywriter time for "static"

content

- Saving: £0 (?) on Development Time
- Saving: £0 on Testing and Proofing

That gives me £5,100.

That's a saving of £22,710.

If Content Management Systems still sound a good idea, then go for it. I'm all for their convenience and reliability. Buying a CMS, you know the testing has been done, you will have support and you are investing

My argument with CMS's is not only their prohibitive cost, but also that they offer a false economy in terms of developer time as much as cost. Consider a Shop in a CMS. Ordinarily, this could take a developer a couple of weeks to implement a basic shop and get it into a testing stage. But this is a scenario where they hold all the cards: they control the database, the data structures, the code, the presentation. Everything is theirs. They know how it all works and can work with it accordingly. That is not the case in a CMS. A CMS brings with it constraints in terms of security, presentation, content availability, etc. Each CMS accesses it's data in a different way, some present more hoops than others. You actually reach a point where it takes longer to develop for a CMS than without.

Seems to me that it is cheaper, AND quicker to write a web-site without a CMS. With great components from the likes of Telerik, and you can build your own basic tools behind your web-site to facilitate users' interaction with data and content. This surely is where Web 2.0 should be taking us ... a leaner, cheaper web.



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Continuous Improvement

By R Mercer

"If you could change one thing what would you choose?"

People tend to choose something big, ambitious and often unrealistic, difficult or even impossible to achieve. This question has its place, especially during a strategic review, but what about the rest of the time? An alternative question that could produce greater benefits to the operational side of your business would be: "If you could change one hundred small things what would you choose?"

Big changes usually create big resistance as people are naturally cautious or sceptical of radical change. Small changes are easier to find, take less time to implement, cost less and often the people who are aware of them are those we hear from least i.e., those doing the job!

This approach is also known as "Continuous Improvement". Its purpose is to make gradual improvements at little or no cost, using your knowledge, not your money.

Brief History of Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement has its roots in the Japanese philosophy of "**Kaizen**". The idea of Kaizen is "to take apart and put back together in a better way". The key to this approach is that improvement efforts are on-going, no matter how good the process, system, product or service may already be. The business landscape is continually changing too, and in a highly competitive environment this approach makes a great deal of sense. There are clear parallels here with the world of motor sport. At the premier levels, for example in Formula One, **successful teams constantly strive to improve the tiniest**

aspects of performance, even if they are already the best. Only by constantly re-creating and continually improving everything that they do, can they hope to stay on top.

Manufacturing industries in particular have adopted continuous improvement as a way of maintaining or improving their competitiveness. Increasingly however, other business sectors are beginning to see the benefits of this type of approach, and the finance sector in particular.



What Continuous Improvement Is Not

Continuous Improvement is not consistent with the often heard saying "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". Continuous Improvement is not a campaign. For it to work as intended, it must become part

of the company culture. It is not a top-down management driven process, neither is Continuous improvement a replacement for strategic thinking. It is best suited to improving the operation of a company. Done well, it will become part of the company culture and part of the thinking of every employee.

If your company operates in a highly competitive environment, you need to continually improve to stay in business. If you often hear the following at your workplace then you really need to take a closer look.

- "We've always done it this way"
- "We know there's a better way but there's not enough time to fix things"
- "We're stuck in fire fighting mode"
- "I don't get paid to think"
- "It's someone else's problem"

Departmental rivalry is also an indicator of the requirement for improvement. Due to competing demands for limited resources, individual departments can develop a 'Silo' mentality. This is another form of 'someone else's problem' and can be very harmful to the effectiveness of the business as a whole.

How To Go About Continuous Improvement

Successful Continuous Improvement starts with the following:

1. Start by questioning current practices – challenge the Status Quo
2. Discard conventional fixed ideas
3. Think of how something can be done, not why it cannot
4. Do not make excuses
5. Do not seek perfection
6. Do it right away even if it will only achieve 50% of target
7. If you make a mistake, correct it immediately
8. Throw wisdom at a problem, not money
9. Ask "Why?" and seek root causes
10. Don't ask workers to leave their brains at the door

So how does one perform continuous improvement? Well firstly it must involve those that 'do' the work. By asking for ideas and by listening to those that know how the job is currently performed you will achieve a much greater buy-in from your teams. Secondly, you need to avoid diving straight into 'solution mode' before your goals and objectives are set out. One of the best ways to avoid this is to use a proven framework such as the cycle of Plan, Do, Check and Act known as PDCA.



In the **Plan** phase, you assess where you are, where you need to be, and you identify potential solutions for closing the gap. Many improvements are triggered by dissatisfaction, for example, a thought that something could be organised better, something that fails often, or a customer complaint.

In the **Do** phase you test potential solutions. You put your plans into action and measure their effectiveness.

In the **Check** phase, you examine your measures and check whether the plans you tried have had the results expected, and that there are no unforeseen negative consequences. Did your plans move you closer to your objectives?

The **Act** phase is about ensuring that any positive gains are 'locked in'. Updated processes and procedures are established to become the new standard. If the objectives established at the plan phase have

not been achieved, then you return and go through the cycle again. If you have achieved your objectives, then you return and go through the cycle again and think up some new ones!

In larger companies it may be beneficial to create a continuous improvement group. The purpose of the group is to champion the cause of continuous improvement, and to help to spread the word throughout the organisation. The group should be made up of representatives from each area of the business, and should not be limited to management grades. As you are aiming to effect a cultural change then there must also be input from the human resources team.

The ideal candidates for the group are the natural innovators and agents for change who are present in every company. Fortunately they are easy to spot – they're the ones who always question why we do something a particular way.

Ideas that make your company better are worth rewarding, if you have performance related bonuses at your company then ideas and improvement should certainly be recognised.

With new starters you need to impress upon them early that continuous improvement is part of the role. This should be part of all new starters' induction process. In fact it will be worth asking related questions at interview time when selecting suitable candidates.

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The intangible benefits will include a more involved workforce, greater staff motivation and increased job satisfaction.

Why should you adopt it?

The simple answer is, Results. Because part of the process involves the measurement of improvement, one of the outcomes is the factual knowledge that an improvement has resulted in benefits. These could be savings in time, money or effort, or in the reduction of waste or energy used. These are the tangible benefits of the creation of a continuous improvement culture.

The intangible benefits will include a more involved workforce, greater staff motivation and increased job satisfaction.

About the Author:

Robert Mercer runs an IT Management Consultancy called KDR Ebusiness Ltd. Robert has over 22 years experience as an IT professional in a variety of roles and industry sectors.

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There are few things more important than a sense of control. Without it you can feel like you are going crazy as new demands get placed on an already fragile system.

20 Ways to Bring Order to a Busy Life

This article was provided by Scott Young of <http://www.scotthyoung.com>

If you can bring a bit of order to the chaos you can regain that sense of control. Here's twenty quick strategies for getting control. Don't try to do all of them or you'll end up procrastinating. Just use one or two of these strategies to get a broader picture of what needs to be done, what to do next and to get the motivation to start.

1) Make a List

Start writing a list of all the things you need to do. Don't sort or prioritize yet. Just keep writing until you have a sequence of activities that need to get done. Making lists can give you a feeling of control because you now have everything that needs to get done in your hands. If the list still seems too large, move to one of these other techniques.

2) Journal it Out

Open a blank word document and write out your thinking. This will help you make sense of everything you feel you need to do. Journaling is a much better planning tool than just thinking through problems.

3) Find the Next Action

A quick strategy is just to find out what needs to be done next. Focusing on the immediate action may not be the best long-term strategy, but it will bring you temporary order. By making decisions only about what to do next, you can break through procrastination.

4) Determine What You Want

Why are you doing it in the first place? Get clear on your desired result. This may be a clean house, an empty inbox or a finished report. With clarity you can work backwards to figure out what needs to be done. Fuzzy goals create confusion and stress.

5) Get Your MIT

Find your Most Important Task. If you only had time and energy to do one thing, what would it be? Do this task first. Even if you can't finish or the rest of your day is in confusion, you will have handled the critical.

6) Eliminate the Unessential

Draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper. At the top of one half write "Critical" and in the other write "Non-Essential." Take your list of tasks and put the most important half in the column marked "Critical" and put the rest in the other side. Even if you need to do both sides, focusing on the first column will help you prioritize.

7) Put it on One Piece of Paper

Take all your planners, calendars, and various to-do lists and write out what needs to be done on one piece of paper. Merging all your to-do items can help you see what needs to be done in one source.

8) Use the Power of "No"

Have the courage to say "no" to poor uses of your time. It may seem selfish to tell people that you can't help them, but it needs to be done. Endlessly trying to fulfill



the demands you make on yourself and others give you is a recipe for burnout. Don't tell them you will try if you don't have time. Just say no.

9) Ask, "What Would Happen if You Stop?" Figure out your worst-case if different items on your list don't get done. What happens if the dry-cleaning doesn't get picked up? What happens if you don't come into work? What happens if you don't answer e-mail? This can be a last ditch effort to prioritize what will hurt you the least when you are completely overwhelmed.

10) Schedule It Take tasks and write them on your calendar. Scheduling can be useful to spread a sudden lump of work. If you're coming off sick-leave or a vacation, scheduling can help you spread an unusually tight schedule. Just make sure you don't abuse it or you will go into a time debt where to-do items continually get pushed into the future.

11) Timebox It Find one activity. Set a deadline of 30-90 minutes and complete it. With a timebox, the activity must get finished within the box or it doesn't get finished at all. This can control procrastination and force you to speed up your work.

12) Make a Daily Chunk Carve out what you want to tackle today. If you have weeks worth of work piling up, simply chunk off what you feel you can handle today. This can help you focus on immediate tasks so you don't procrastinate the entire mound of work.

13) Find Your Critical Six I once heard a great story about this technique. A young man walked into the office of a powerful executive of a steel company in the early 20th century. He told the executive he could triple his productivity. All he asked was that the executive would later pay him what he felt the idea was worth. The idea was this:

Each day you write the numbers one to six on a piece of paper. Then write out the first, second and up to the sixth most important tasks of the day. You then begin on number one. Even if you spend the entire day on that one task, there was no way you could have been more productive using any other system.

A month after his speech the young man received a check from the executive. It was worth ten thousand dollars.

14) Unplug Distractions Turn off every source of distraction. Unplug your internet, turn off e-mail alerts, shut your door and ask people not to disturb you. Take your phone off the hook and turn your pager off. Shut the window and turn off any distractions. Close any unused windows on your computer. Give yourself complete focus in ordering and working on your next task.

15) Outsource Although delegation isn't always the best strategy for getting work done, it can be useful with chronic cases of excessive

tasks that consume the most of your time that don't need your personal attention. Pay someone to cut your grass or get your mail.

16) ABC's

Sort your tasks into three piles labeled A, B and C.

- * A tasks are your top priority. They are tasks that will have an impact on your life over five years from now. This could be opening an investment account, spending time with your kids or writing a business plan. Not always urgent but very important.

- * B tasks are your second priority. They are tasks that have an impact over a year from now. Saving for a vacation, replacing a broken appliance or creating an organizing system for your computer could fit here.

- * C tasks are your last priority. They are tasks that aren't going to matter over a year from now.

Spend at least half your time on A, 30% on B and no more than 20% on C tasks.

This may yield an opposite set of priorities than some of my previous suggestions, but I believe it is best to handle situations of chronic overwork. Focusing on the urgent is only useful when you receive a sudden burst of new work, not when busyness is a continual aspect of your life.

17) Meditate on It

Take some deep breaths and focus your mind on what needs to be done. Meditation can help you remove some of the anxiety you feel about your work and put you into an effective state.

18) Post It

Grab a stack of Post It Notes and write out a task on each one. Paste them to a wall and take them down when they are complete. This is a more visual system for people who don't like linear to-do lists.

19) Reframe

Change how you are representing the task in your mind. If you are telling yourself you have a "mountain" of work to do that might be causing you to procrastinate. Focus on your workload as a "pile" or "stack" and you can see it as achievable.

20) Roll the Dice

Get moving right away by picking a random task and just start working. Endless time spent ordering can be a symptom of procrastination. Employ a, "Ready, Fire, Aim," by working immediately and sorting out priorities later. This can help you build momentum before you start philosophizing over what needs to be done.

This article was written by Scott Young. You can get more articles like this at <http://www.scotthyoung.com> or see his book, 'How to Change a Habit,' at <http://www.scotthyoung.com/how-tochangeahabit/>

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