



Taking the “Busy” out of Business *How to Achieve More By Doing Less*

I'm sure you've wondered at times how you can keep up as your volume of work increases. It can be stressful as your quantity of e-mails, phone calls, paperwork and meetings grows larger and larger. And increasingly, these days we are measured by the *results* we deliver, and not the time we've spent delivering them.

What does *busy* actually mean? According to Webster dictionary, *busy* can mean “engaged in action”. However, it is also defined as “full of distracting detail”. And we have all heard of the busy fool! You need to be *productive*, not just busy. Do fewer things well, and you are on the way to being less busy and much more effective and productive. Yet we are reluctant to examine this urge to be busy.

One of my clients had a computer crash and rang me in a panic. “All my emails have disappeared from my inbox!” Clearly she was very worried what would happen next. Although her IT department was able to restore her inbox quite quickly, she was actually pleasantly surprised to find that she could exist for *a whole morning* without being busy with her emails. Things got sorted without her; and if something was important, people contacted her by other means. She also found that the less busy she was, the more her productivity actually went up!

5 Tips for Becoming Less Busy and More Productive

1. **Outsource:** Delegate those things you do which can be measured in units of time, or tasks which fall outside of your area of strengths. This leaves you more time for planning and innovative thinking; for what Steven Covey calls Right Quadrant Thinking. This is important at all levels and in all sizes of business, from the solopreneur who needs to be more creative and innovative to get the edge, to the executive who needs to keep abreast of trends and create strong visions for his organisation. Being busy at any level is just too distracting.

2. **Create Your Own Work Pattern:** We are all individuals, with different mental and physical biorhythms. Understand when you are at your most productive, reflective and sociable or communicative. Design your day around your biorhythms and personal needs. Create your own daily framework that will support you and your needs. Being stuck in a 9 to 5 paradigm is one of the reasons that many soletraders, especially mumpreneurs, find the going tough, as they try to follow the traditional work patterns at home.

3. **Have a “Stop Doing” list:** Challenge any tendency to workaholism, as Jim Collins suggests in *Good to Great* (Harper Collins 2001) by having a daily Stop Doing list. Saying “I am too busy” often hides a multitude of non-positive behaviours like workaholism, avoiding reflection, trying to impress the boss, ostrich mentality, fear of letting go, being a control freak. Fred Gratzon, author of *The Lazy Way To Success*, goes one step further. He advocates doing less to achieve more, “It is the lazy person, using his or her creativity to avoid work, that drives all progress in society.”

What's one thing you could stop doing today, that would have a positive impact on your time management, health and quality of life?

4. **Work Smarter, Not Harder:** If you run a large company, you may need to find a Lean or Six Sigma expert to introduce some lean principles into your organisation. However, even the solopreneur can benefit from implementing lean principles. Often small changes can leverage huge results. A simple place to start is to examine any problems, bottlenecks in production, or time wasting processes, by using the continuous improvement (CI) formula, DMAIC or Define-Measure-Analyse-Improve-Control. Even the first step of defining the problem can have enormous positive psychological benefits when you are busy and stressed.

5. Focus on your Strengths: Your Strengths form your most effective path to the *productive* expenditure of time and energy. Unfortunately, most of us are so indoctrinated at an early age, that we waste our time eliminating our weaknesses instead of focusing on our strengths. Champions of the “Strengths Revolution” such as Donald Clifton, Marcus Buckingham and Tom Rath have developed an impressive approach to discovering your strengths, based on their findings analysing data collected by Gallup Management. They conclude that playing to your strengths is more satisfying, more enjoyable and more effective.

Finally, remember that your greatest and most precious resource is Time. Don’t waste it being busy!

Resources:

www.positivelives.co.uk/resources

www.strengthsfinder.com

www.marcusbuckingham.com

Steven Covey: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Simon & Shuster)

Jim Collins: Good to Great (Harper Collins 2001)

Marcus Buckingham: Go Put Your Strengths To Work (Free Press)

Fred Gratson: The Lazy Way to Success – How To Do Nothing And Accomplish Everything (Soma Press)

Biography:

Lisa Rossetti is a Strengths Coach, coaching busy people who want to get to the top and into fulfilling roles, without losing themselves along the way. Specialisms: strengths, transitions, career building, teambuilding, leadership. For enquiries contact: www.positivelives.co.uk

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