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Business is back in full swing post-holidays, post-New Years resolutions, and your strategic plan is in motion. Perhaps all of this commotion has led to a bit of overwhelm, and you are running at a pace that can't be maintained all year. Perhaps you are trying to maintain too much control over your projects, your team's tasks, and your to-do list. This month's articles can help you to manage, delegate, and most importantly, take much-needed time-outs. And since there will always be more work to do, take a tip from the panel discussion article and have some fun along the way!

P.S. Be sure to check out my new address in the footer!

Kristin

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#### **PRODUCTIVITY TIP: THE TACTICAL PAUSE**

Have you ever been in a situation where you simply felt overwhelmed? So many things to do...392 emails to act on, seven people knocking on your door, and oh, you forgot to call your mother. All of which are demanding your time and attention. And in that moment when the world is swirling around you, paralysis sets in.

Oh yeah. That happens to me all the time. Well, not the seven people lined up outside my door, but you get the idea.

And in that moment, take a deep breath, walk to a quiet spot (a metaphorical "park bench") and take a few minutes to relax. Chill. Shake it off. Look at the sky. Notice how beautiful the world is. After a few minutes of quiet and solitude, pull out a piece of paper and pen. Write down ALL the things that are pressing down on you. Work and personal; list it ALL.

Interestingly enough, I often find that the "list" isn't as humongous as I had imagined! Now comes the triage: I figure out what I am going to do first, second, third, etc. as well as what I am going to "move forward" in my calendar – best to do on another day.

After this brief moment in time, I get up from my park bench, go back into the office and attack the list in my pre-determined sequence. Amazing how more productive I am

when I just take a brief moment, a “tactical pause” out of the day to get refocused.

#### **4 TELL-TALE SIGNS YOU ARE A CONTROLLING LEADER**

**by Joseph Sherren**

I often hear people say that change is difficult. However, I do not think that it is change that is difficult at all. In fact, I believe most people love change. If you think of it, people change their cars, change their clothes, change their homes, and some even change their spouses or partners.

I believe that adapting to change is easy, it is letting go of old stuff that is difficult – letting go of things that, in the past, have made you comfortable, happy, or successful. No one usually has a problem purchasing a new pair of shoes, but how difficult is it to throw out the old ones?

Our biggest problem is letting go of old ideas, old behaviors, and old beliefs. This is also the reason why many very successful companies end up failing; their ideas, beliefs, and behaviors that made them successful up to this point may be the same thinking that will cause them to fail in the future.

There are usually two reasons why people create companies and become entrepreneurs. One is to create wealth, the other is to satisfy a strong need for control. However, entrepreneurs cannot do both if they want to continue positive growth. The more a business grows in size or revenues – the more likely the founder will be ousted if control is their primary motivation. Think of what happened to Steve Jobs (Apple), Jack Dorsey (Twitter), Larry Page (Google), or David Neeleman (JetBlue). All ousted from the very empire they created because of their inability to let go.

#### **Leaders and entrepreneurs maintain control by:**

- 1 Continually telling people what to do. Most people dislike being told what to do, yet many leaders have been conditioned to believe that is their role. Giving orders will not inspire others to work harder, or increase their productivity.
- 2 Showing favoritism. Entrepreneurs often hire friends, past co-workers, and family members. That’s not a problem – until they favor those people over other employees. Every employee expects fair treatment.
- 3 Hiring the wrong people. Entrepreneurs pride themselves on making gut-feeling decisions which is expedient, however, when hiring talent, it is a recipe for disaster. Long-term success means that leaders must surround themselves with competent, committed talent. When companies use scientifically validated hiring assessments as a part of the hiring process, overall productivity and culture improves. However, talented high-potential people need to be given challenging jobs, trained appropriately, and empowered with control over how they do their work.
- 4 Being inflexible. Leaders are often unwilling to delegate the responsibility because it won’t get done “right.” Translation: “Right” usually means “my way.”

Not everyone thinks, acts, communicates, or works in the same way. People are different, and great leaders make special efforts to understand the differences in their people. They acknowledge those differences rather than have everything done “their (right) way.”

If your overarching need is for control, your company will never grow to its full potential. If you can let go and focus on growing the company, the opportunities are amazing!

## **UNIQUE PANEL DISCUSSION FORMAT TO BOOST EXCITEMENT**

Brian Walter, Founder of [Extreme Meetings](#) shares this unique format that will seriously grab the attention of your entire organization:

What is your excitement level when you hear, “We’re going to have a Q & A session with the executives from your company?”

If you’re an employee, you’d give it a 3 on a scale of 10 (if that!). You’ll get to raise your hand and ask live questions while someone from H.R. looks at you. On the other hand, if we say, “We’re going to take your entire executive team up there and we’re going to have the Hot Seat Panel. We’re going to have you anonymously write down on red flaming cards, the hardest question you could possibly come up with. And they said they’re going to every single one until there’s none left. Nobody leaves until they’ve answered every question.” Now, what’s the employees’ anticipation level? Closer to a 10!

If you want to get hired again as a moderator, you’ve got to mix it up a little bit. You’ve got to give the panelists an “out” by saying “We’re going to also give each one of the executives a pass card. At ONE time during the panel discussion, a panelist can say, ‘Actually, I’m going to pass on that question to the executive sitting to my left.’” They rarely do it, but when they get a really hard question they exclaim, “Oh, I’m going to.... Naah, I’ll answer it.” And we like them more because they have the courage to answer the provocative question during the panel discussion!

## **FROM THE BOOKSHELF: FASTER TOGETHER: ACCELERATING YOUR TEAM’S PRODUCTIVITY**

Laura Stack is the Productivity Pro and she has written several books on individual productivity, but this is her first [book on improving team productivity](#).

Since I am a professional meeting facilitator, I was particularly impressed with how she broke down the elements of team productivity into four FAST keys - each with three accelerators. There's a quick test to take to assess your team's productivity - and then you can use the book as a training guide or "owner's manual" into accelerating the performance of the team.

It's written in such a way that the team can take one key or even one accelerator and drive performance around it - assign the pages to read, then discuss as a team what they are doing well and what they can do better. It won't be just pie in the sky discussion, either.

Laura provides concrete and practical ideas to accelerate team productivity - some which you are already doing (yay team!), can tweak a bit to do better, or just plain ol' start doing. A team can go much faster together and even faster with this book!

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