



November 2019

Volume 24, Number 11

As the holiday season revs up, what are you doing to slow down? How do you temporarily escape from your to-do list? Don't just fly through the motions this year as you try to stay afloat of your personal and professional responsibilities. Pause, reflect, and recharge in order to give your clients, customers, and team members your best.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Kristin

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#### **DON'T WALLOW IN LEADERSHIP WOES, WALK!**

In this ever so chaotic world, I can feel in a state of overwhelm. Too much to do (do I even *know* all the things I have to do?) in so little time. My mind whirls, my blood pressure is elevated, and I wake up in the middle of the night bothered by the unknowns and the undone. It is in that moment of overwhelm, you have a choice: Continue to wallow in the confusion OR to take a "[tactical pause](#)."

I've talked about this in a previous post, encouraging you to 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.

Lately, I have embraced walking more than the park bench. "Bonnie Smith Whitehouse, an English professor at Belmont University in Tennessee, offers this Latin phrase: *Solvitur ambulando*. Loosely translated, this means, 'It is solved by walking,' and by 'it' Whitehouse means practically anything", according to Ephrat Livni, Senior Reporter at Quartzly. Whitehouse argues that "walking is a way to be more present, ease anxiety, spark creativity, increase productivity, and detox from digital overload (that is, if you don't walk with your face in your phone)."

Since I made a recent resolution to walk 10,000 steps per day, I can attest to greater clarity on days that I walk versus days that I don't walk. I have even taken a page from Steve Jobs and go on walks with my team members. Of course, they work virtually, so I encourage them to "walk with me" – and my phone is in my pocket and buds in my ears (versus my face in my phone!).

When in overwhelm, go take a walk. After all, in the words of the poet Simon

Armitage, “You never come back from a walk feeling worse.”

### **PANEL MODERATORS: YOU MUST HAVE AN EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

As the panel moderator, you have prepared for an amazingly powerful panel discussion. You’ve thought about the panelists, created an interesting format, and curated provocative questions. But your work is not quite done. Take a moment to think about your contingency plan – what you will do when the “unexpected” happens.

Will the panel address a controversial topic? Has the presence of the panelists incited disruptive behavior at other events? [Carol Cambridge](#), a workplace violence expert says, “Controversial speakers or controversial subjects such as immigration, animal rights or even oil drilling can provoke violence.” Are the panelists being stalked by an ex or a fan? Cambridge continues, “You would be surprised by the number of speakers who have found themselves in this type of terrifying situation. Make sure your meeting professional [and panel moderator!] is aware of the threat.”

Prior to the event, think about your response to a number of situations. Crisis expert [Gerard Braud](#) calls this your “Vulnerability Assessment,” in which you list all of the crises your organization, or you as a panel moderator, speaker, or meeting professional are vulnerable to during an event. This is just the first step of his 5 Steps to Keep a Situation from Becoming a Crisis at Your Next Meeting, which you can [learn here](#).

Specifically, think about your response to these five different emergency situations:

- **Social disturbances:**
  - Heckler(s) or protestor(s) – a person who intentionally interrupts the panel with derisive, aggressive, or objectionable comments
  - Downright crazy people – a person who disrupts the panel through disruptive behaviors
  - Gate crasher(s) – a person who is not invited to attend the event and should not be granted access to the room
- **Medical emergencies** – a person who is ill, injured, exposed to a toxic chemical spill or contamination, or even dying
- **Facility malfunctions** – the lights go out, limited/loss of communication, structural collapse, toxic chemical spill
- **Terrorism** – a bomb threat or active shooter
- **Acts of God** – any force of nature that keeps the panel from proceeding as planned e.g. earthquake, fire, flood, hurricane, tornado or other natural disaster.

During your discussions with the meeting organizer, ask for their Emergency Action Plan. Some organizers will look pleasantly surprised and offer to email it to you. They will smile to themselves and think, “Wow! That panel moderator sure has his or her act together! No worries here...I am confident that we are in good hands!”

Other meeting organizers will sheepishly admit they don’t have one. That’s okay! This is not the time to make them feel guilty – just ask them these questions:

1. Based on your understanding of the event, the speakers/panelists and the audience, what’s the probability of any of these things (see above) may happen? Most will say, “low,” but some panels face more adversity than others. Never take *any* of this for granted.
2. If something like this DID happen, how would you like me to proceed? Listen carefully, take notes, and then follow up with an email outlining the steps you agreed upon. You have just done them a favor by creating the start to an Emergency Action Plan!
3. As a fallback to the blank stare/deer in the headlight response, say, “Unless otherwise

directed, here's what I will do in the event of an emergency:

- I will do my best to ensure the health and safety of the event participants.
- I will remain calm and keep the attendees informed as best as possible.
- I will phone the venue's safety/security number, notifying them of the situation.
- I will text you (the meeting organizer) at the cell phone number you give me.
- After the event, I will send an email to you summarizing the incident and provide any information I have."

You will also want to add to your session checklist a couple of items:

- Note the indoor relocation and outdoor evacuation stations.
- Note the nearest exit and evacuation route from the meeting room.
- Note the meeting organizer's cell phone number and the location of the house phone as well as the extension to call in case of emergency.
- Especially when speaking in a foreign country, know the emergency number for contacting the police.

No one wants, nor expects these things to happen. Yet, as a panel moderator, you can expect the unexpected! And as Gerard Braud would add, "Fail to plan, plan to fail."

## **FROM THE BOOKSHELF: BEYOND BRAND DISTINCTION: WHAT MAKES YOUR COMPANY ICONIC IN THE MARKETPLACE**

In my strategic facilitation work, companies are continually struggling with branding – what makes them different and stand out in the marketplace. Scott McKain in his book, [\*Iconic: How Organizations and Leaders Attain, Sustain, and Regain the Ultimate Level of Distinction\*](#), outlined an extremely helpful model he calls the Four Levels of Business Distinction:

1. **Sameness** – there is no compelling difference between you and the competition other than price. You are seen as a commodity.
2. **Differentiation** – when customers perceive something about your product or service that is unique from the competition.
3. **Distinction** – a higher level of differentiation in that they have created an advantage of such an extraordinary level of significance that customers are attracted to them.
4. **Iconic** – you are considered to be irresistible to customers in your marketplace and compel interest and admiration across a wide spectrum.

This is a useful model for organizations to identify their current state – and then where they want to be positioned in the minds of their customers. McKain shares compelling strategies and stories to attain each level – without talking about the usual suspects: Starbucks, FedEx and the Ritz-Carlton (thank goodness!).

He shares great insights from companies that we may not know, but all can relate to. These are brands that are iconic in their marketplaces – for example, he talks about the Fairmont Princess which happens to be in my hometown! And yes, the Fairmont Princess IS an iconic hotel – built on a specific strategy to BECOME iconic. Didn't know that before, but now makes complete sense.

This book gives me hope – and it is a MUST READ for anyone who wants to deliberately and intentionally craft their brand strategy.

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