

BEING a perfectionist can make life very complicated, for you're always seeking to attain the unattainable.

Perfectionists often find it difficult to contemplate being otherwise. And yet, the fear of not doing things perfectly can paralyze us. Here are some thoughts and questions for people suffering from perfectionism.

• **How much does perfectionism interfere with your life as you would like to live it?** Does it make you happy?

• **You know that you cannot really be perfect.** Do you know that fear of not being perfect can lead to procrastination so intense that it may become paralysis? Even if not that extreme, it can lead to the inability to start projects, and the inability to finish them.

• **Did you know that the makers of traditionally superb Persian rugs always added a flaw to each carpet?** They believed that only the Creator can create perfection, and for them to try to do so would be unduly arrogant. The deliberately added-flaw was an admission of their humanity and their humility.

• **What would happen if you chose not to be perfect** - to accept minor imperfections in yourself and your work? Would the sky fall? Would there be serious consequences? What would they be?

• **Who originally told you that everything you do has to be perfect?** Does the opinion of that person still have the right to run your life? To ruin your life?

• **We are in control of our lives to the extent that we make choices.** Do you *choose* perfectionism, or does it feel more like a compulsion? If perfectionism is not your choice, how can you move toward the acceptance of yourself as you are, including minor imperfections, as a conscious choice?

Words of Wisdom

"It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either one of them."

-Mark Twain

Take Control of Your Time

by Gregory P. Smith

Don't waste your valuable time on non-essentials

TIME MANAGEMENT is one of those skills needed in today's 24 - 7 work life. A person who can't manage time hurts teamwork.

Poor time management makes for a poor salesperson. A teenager who doesn't show up for work on time will get fired. Best of all, managing time well reduces stress and anxiety. Included here are a few time management tips I've picked up over the years.

• **Know what is important.** Clearly define the most important aspects of your job and the effort that generates key results. If you don't know what that is ask questions such as, "What has the greatest impact or value on your staff members or clients?" "What will increase sales?" Focus on the 20 percent that generates 80 percent of the results.

• **Prioritize and make "To Do" lists.** Now that you know what is important about your job make a master weekly "To Do" list. Write an "A," "B," or "C" next to each item based on importance. At the beginning of each day make a daily "To Do" list. Stop and think — which item absolutely must be completed today? This does not include items you'd like to get done today, but only the item(s) that have to be completed today.

• **Avoid the "feel like its."** Poor time managers base their actions on their feelings and moods. You know the type, "Yea, I know the building is on fire, but I just don't feel like leaving right now." Effective time management is more about habit than feelings. Most people do the easy and simple elements of their job first ... like reading their email, scanning the newspaper, cleaning off their desk etc. Good time managers do what is important first, regardless of their feelings. As Nike says, "Just Do It!"

• **Schedule your biggest project for your peak energy period.** It took me many years to figure out not everyone is a morning person like me. I hop out of bed before the sun comes up ready to head off to the office, while others don't hit their stride until 3PM

Therefore, during your peak energy period focus your mental and physical resources on the largest projects.

• **Learn to delegate.** A person who refuses to delegate will likely be very busy, frustrated and heading for burnout. It is not necessary for a manager to personally handle every item. One very successful regional sales manager readily attributed part of his success to the fact that he trusted his administrative assistant to handle routine items that did not require his personal decision. This left him free to concentrate on working with sales personnel outside the office.

• **Toss it or file it.** Follow the rule to touch paper only once. Know what is important and throw away every piece of paper you don't think you will need. If you want to keep it spend 10 seconds filing that important paper now rather than 30 minutes searching for it later.

• **Use folders to prioritize your work; sub-divide files.** If you are a paperless office, use your computer to sub-divide files. For example, I created electronic folders for my articles titled, "Articles for 2003," and "Articles for 2004." This way I can quickly find what I am looking for. If you have paper files use colored folders to see which jobs need your immediate attention. I use red folders for hot projects and client files. Yellow folders are for new ideas and projects. Blue folders tell me this is for research. Get the idea?

• **Be realistic and stay flexible.** One way to set yourself up for a panic attack is to plan an unrealistic amount of work for one day/week/etc. Use your common sense to recognize when you have over-scheduled yourself. Don't get so organized where you become unapproachable.

SOURCE NOTE: Gregory P. Smith is a retention expert and shows businesses how to build productive work environments He is the author of the book, Here Today, Here Tomorrow: How to Transform Your Organization From High Turnover to High Retention

The Fallout From Downsizing

WORKFORCE REDUCTIONS have become business-as-usual in many organizations.

That generally puts HR managers and their already-too-busy staff smack in the middle of handling the fallout.

Providing soon-to-be-downsized employees with the services of an outplacement firm can help to delegate the handling of the psychological and economic pain associated with workforce reductions.

It also demonstrates the company's compassion and commitment to helping downsized employees find employment, provides a distraction and forward momentum for departing employees, and tends to reduce employee-related lawsuits.

There are economic drivers as well: Twice as many companies that used outplacement and career transition services following a downsizing reported an increase in productivity within 12 months compared with companies that had not used the services, according to a recent survey.

In the study, sponsored by DBM and conducted by Linkage Inc.'s Center for Organizational Research, some 1,200 HR managers responded to questions about business results and workforce performance following a downsizing covering areas such as lawsuits, unintended turnover, productivity, profitability, stock price, absenteeism, employee morale, media coverage, recruiting costs, and employee satisfaction. Companies that had used the services were 28% less likely to be sued than companies that had not, and 78% that used the services did not receive any legal backlash at all. Choosing the right outplacement firm is an important part of a smooth workforce reduction initiative.

SOURCENOTE: For a copy of the full report OUTPLACEMENT CONSULTING AND CAREER TRANSITION SERVICES: THE IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS, contact Sally Barnes at sally_barnes@dbm.com or call 203-961-7705.)



The Way I See It...

"THANK YOU for calling the CUSTOMERS DON'T MATTER, UNLIMITED, FREE, PHONE HOTLINE.

"If you would like to speak to someone, please wait until I have listed our many irrelevant options and then you may press a number that I won't tell you before putting you on hold for at least the next 5 minutes after telling you all this useless information then telling you that *'all our operators are temporarily unavailable.'* And if you are really lucky, we will inform you just how many other callers are in front of you after having been as patient as you and going through the exact same process of boredom therapy called screening."

One positive aspect

I think there is one positive aspect to this all-too-familiar scenario. At least the operator who does eventually 'delight the customer' by answering in a children's TV presenter's voice will *know* the mood of the incoming caller. I don't have government statistics on this but in my personal experience, nine calls out of ten that I make to these automated call center numbers require my waiting for the last option before talking to the operator.

My favorite

I think my favorite call was an after hours call to a 24-hour hotline. After about 6 button presses through all the options I was given a different number to call.

Unfortunately they didn't tell me that this wasn't a 24-hour number. On getting *through* to the answer machine they asked me to dial the 24-hour hotline number. *And* I was trying my *hardest* to spend some money with this company!

So why do companies do it? Simple. Because they have been shortsighted in putting activity cost control before (harder to measure) soft benefits, such as customer satisfaction and long-term creation of value.

Have they forgotten, or just disregarded, the age-old adage, *'It costs ten times more to win a customer, than to retain one'*? The people who implementing these wonderful technically advanced systems are simply receiving incentives on the wrong things.

We simply measure everything we possibly *can* measure, and forget about the rest and the implications. What is the cost-benefit of operator cost reductions over customer irritation?

Recent surveys show that customers have to be 'delighted' in order to have *any* loyalty to staying with a supplier. Doesn't cut the mustard Being 'satisfied' just doesn't cut the mustard. Annual budget cycles just add to a company's short-term view. Budget gaming, top-down targets, unit cost reductions year-on-year, capital expenditure approvals, long-winded procedures and authorization required to spend anything that wasn't predicted 18 months ago. This is where the owner of a small- or medium-sized business (SMB) can step back and breathe a sigh of relief. Delight in the knowledge that the corporate chains of indecision do not shackle you. You have the opportunity to be flexible... to respond to the here and now; ...to take advantage of opportunities with 'internet speed' without the need for expensive decision-support systems; ...to be able to act on threats immediately; ...to make 'common sense' decisions without a forty-three page business plan and cost benefit analysis to back it up; ...as long as you know your game plan; ...as long as you understand what truly adds value to your customer, your prospective customer and to your business; ...as long as you have decided what level of risk you can afford to take; ...as long as you run a well-oiled machine; ...as long as you know where you are going. The 'Small' in SMB doesn't have to refer to the size of your vision, ambition or success.

Take heed, corporate giants! David is just around the corner and he *is* 'the real thing' and he **will** 'just do it'!

SOURCENOTE: I am indebted to Stephen Adams A.Inst.I.B., Managing Director of Davis Adams Limited, based in Godalming, Surrey where they focus on managing for value and linking strategic plans to operational actions, for these succinct and pithy observations on Call Centers.

The innovator is not an opponent of the old, but a proponent of the new.

- Lyle E. Schaller

