

A Busy Body's Guide to Exploitation of Time

“Those who make the worst use of time are the first to complain of its brevity.”

- Jean de La Bruyere

When I ask colleagues how things are going the inevitable response is, “Busy. Way too busy.” Why is it people never seem to catch up? It is certainly not a prescription for success either career-wise, health-wise or in personal life.

Perhaps we should change the way we look at work. If we became unable to work, what would happen to those tasks on our to-do list? That question has an easy answer—someone else would do them. Get the point?

I am often struck by President Obama. Whether you agree with his politics, we can all learn from him. Here is a guy whose job is immensely larger than ours and the demands on his time must be enormous. Yet he comes across as relaxed and confident. “How does he do that?” I ask myself. The answer, I believe, is he understands that it is his responsibility to get things done, but not necessarily to do things personally.

I suspect he asks himself these questions throughout each day: Who knows something about this? Who is likely to have good ideas? Who is apt to have a different take on this? Who has more capability than I do? Who is able to do this as well as I can, or acceptably as well? Who can take this on? Who will grow by taking this assignment? What are the things that *must* be done by me?

Finding someone to take on a task for you is not to be confused with being unwilling to do it. Rather, it is an underappreciated aspect of leadership. Excellent leaders develop their people by the opportunities and experiences they afford them. The more work you personally do, the less capability your department has. While you are wildly rushing around personally attending to everything, your staff's development is stagnating.

There is an art to delegation and you need to practice it. Doing your own work has a certain comfort to it. Things are predictable. Whereas, assigning tasks can be disruptive. Control is given up, approaches are challenged, unsettling questions are asked and

perspectives are contested. But from discomfort comes new insight, thereby replacing status quo and subsequently taking you to unanticipated places of possibility.

No one expects you to do it all, but they do expect you to expertly use all of the resources available to you. Consider your staff as the workplace tools of your trade. When you assign work, make it theirs, not yours.

Be a partner and coach their efforts so their talent shines without you being the competition. Embrace inevitable mistakes as maturation learning opportunities. Remove roadblocks, provide supportive feedback and applaud successes. Require them to deliver well-considered, thoughtful, quality work. Then reward their growth with more responsibility.

Delegation is your key to a less stressful life. For professional growth it is important to approach your work from an executive perspective. Learn to leverage your skills and abilities. You will then have time to invest in your continued growth, such as having time for professional readings.

For instance, there are other secrets to career success and productive opportunities in this issue. You can learn how to gain time by closing audit issues more quickly, and how to plan consultant engagements, thereby making efficient use of time. In addition, you will better understand the current challenges of cybersecurity and changes to effort reporting, learn to design virtual care systems controls, and engineer career success.

The better you design effective and efficient controls, the less often things will go wrong and the more time you will have.

I leave you with the words of William Penn, “Time is what we want the most, but what we use worst.” We should all determine to do better. 

Kenneth E. Spence, Editor

newkes2@comcast.net

(603) 843-5583