

Article from *The Facilitator*

Managing Processes Instead of People

One of the hardest things to do in business is to get work done through other people. It is even more difficult when you don't have direct authority over those assigned to complete a task, or to hold yourself accountable. Without a system or process you can find yourself becoming victim to interruptions, everyday work flow and the priorities of others.

When I ask people why they are not as effective or as efficient as they think they could be, common answers are:

- Not enough time
- I am not in control of my assignments
- Multiple priorities
- Interruptions
- Procrastination

People say they don't have enough time, yet they have all there is! No one is making more. The real issue is what you do with the time you have. Do you have a set schedule? Do you work daily, weekly, monthly and longer from a plan? Improving performance and results relies upon developing positive habits designed to drive those results.

Every working person has a boss. Even an owner has stakeholders, a bank officer, a corporate board or their own ethics and integrity to answer to. Communication is key to effective assignment management. Establish guidelines with your direct supervisor. Stop saying "yes" to everything if it is only going to cause stress or delay something else.

Multiple priorities can be negotiated. Timelines can be negotiated. Clarify your goals and expectations. If you physically don't have time to complete a priority task or project, let those who will be affected know as soon as possible. It is not easy to do, but it gives them the opportunity to reassign or help out if they can. Encourage others to do the same. If you are relying on others to do their part, set definitive deadlines and check on progress. When someone does not meet your expectation help them discover how to avoid getting to that point again.

A receptionist told me once that she could be much more effective if it weren't for all the interruptions: phone ringing, greeting visitors, multiple, short-term projects, etc. She was in the wrong position. Interruptions can be managed. Learn to shut your door if you need private time. Develop a sense of focus if you can't. Communicate to those frequent offenders and let them know the impact of their behavior on you. Schedule time away from a busy area if you need to concentrate on a project.

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Managing Processes Instead of People, *continued*

Everyone knows a serial procrastinator. They are predictably late and may even self-identify their proclivities as a means of thwarting your objections. Procrastination is a symptom which develops into a habit. You need to review the reasons for procrastination and determine the motivating factor or factors. A system of success can often reduce the impact of time delays.

Although there is no silver bullet—no immediate fix, participating in and using the information from a formal training program can help. No \$99.00, one-day program is designed to change behavior. A person needs a sustained set of information with time to apply specific methods to their work environment.

American Institute of Management has such a program which can be either held at your worksite or at the AIM Training Center. A public session titled *Improving Performance and Results* is scheduled beginning May of this year. Go to americaninst.com and click on the training calendar or phone your AIM representative at 712-322-1112 to schedule a time to discuss the details. You will learn skills to become more personally productive and how to coach the results you need from others. You will discover ways to manage processes, instead of people.

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