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Planning for Productivity: 4 Unsuspected Pitfalls to Combat for a Successful 2019

With the holiday season upon us, and the year beginning to wind down, many business leaders are shifting their focus not only to finalizing their 2019 strategic plans, but also to determining their own personal and professional aspirations for the coming year.

In establishing goals, many executives will understandably look to their strengths first, seeking out opportunities to build upon the traits that made them successful in the first place. However, while that can certainly be an effective strategy for continued self-improvement, it's also important to recognize that there's an often-overlooked tipping point where too much of a positive trait can actually begin to hinder one's productivity.

As you work to finalize your goals for the coming year, we encourage you to do so with a heightened awareness of the four potentially costly pitfalls below, so that you can identify and combat them early to best position yourself for a fully-productive and fruitful 2019:

Too Much Drive.
Business leaders, by nature, are highly-motivated and driven individuals; however, at a certain point, that drive can become a problem if it keeps a leader from knowing when to stop investing time and energy. Failure is a part of success, and the best leaders know when to harness their drive and accept that it's time to move on to something else. Those who become overly fixated on only one idea or solution lose the creativity and flexibility required to innovate, often missing out on potential new opportunities as a result of having their blinders on. As *Small Business Trends* advises, "Make sure you get uncomfortable from time to time; it can help you create something you can't yet fathom, but could fundamentally improve your business."

An Insatiable Pursuit of Excellence.
Every leader wants to succeed, but those on a quest for perfection will inevitably run into issues if they can't discern when good is good enough. Not only can the pursuit of an

unattainable standard of excellence take a heavy personal toll in terms of added stress and anxiety, but it can also be counter-productive to successful project completion, costing valuable time and resources, and in some cases, keeping jobs from ever crossing the finish line. In a fast-paced environment, good often needs to be good enough, and final tweaks can simply be made as you go. At the end of the day, success is not reliant on perfection.

A Limitless Quest for Information.

Business leaders are faced with critical decisions on a daily basis, and when you consider their potential impact on both individuals and organizations, it's understandable that many leaders push to gather as much information as possible prior to finalizing their decisions. But while both hard statistics and expert opinions can provide valuable back up and help to rally the support of others, at a certain point, leaders also need to understand what information is truly necessary to make an informed decision. Identifying how simple or complex an issue is upfront can help in establishing the best plan of attack, and sometimes 70% of the information available is enough to make a decision, especially in time-sensitive situations. Conversely, having too much data, the wrong type of data, or too many opinions can overcomplicate and slow down decisions needed to keep businesses moving forward. As explained in *Forbes*, "Sometimes it's not about making the right decision, but just making a decision at all."

A Relentless Draw Toward Additional Work.

While many leaders equate being busy with being productive, *where* they are busy can be just as important as *whether* they are busy. It's up to leaders to decide and manage what activities deserve their attention, and typically their highest value is found when operating at 30,000 feet versus getting caught in the tactical weeds. Delegation is a critical skill, yet according to *Harvard Business Review*, "it remains one of the most underutilized and underdeveloped management capabilities," with most managers saying they are too busy to delegate and that it's more efficient to do the work themselves. If you are feeling overworked, or fear that everything will go awry if you step away, it's critical that you focus first not on *doing* the work, but on more effectively planning and managing your resources to ensure the work gets done.

So what does this all mean?

As part of your 2019 planning process, we recommend that you spend some time candidly assessing your strongest leadership traits so that you can accurately determine which ones are truly driving your productivity, and which ones may unknowingly be hindering it. It's important when setting goals to acknowledge that making strong headway is not always achieved by putting your pedal to the floor. Sometimes, strategically working to rein in certain habits can be just as powerful—or more—in maximizing your productivity and positioning you for a successful year ahead.

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