



The

Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

Broadcast Management

Plug Into Your Future by Unplugging from the Present

By Daniel Burrus

What if there was a way to predict the challenges your organization will face, even stopping them from ever happening? Short of having a reliable crystal ball, most people believe such a concept is impossible. In reality, you can solve tomorrow's problems today – you simply need to give yourself time to do so.

GAINING CONTROL OF WHAT IS AHEAD

The fact is that in today's marketplace, change is coming at us fast – and it is only getting faster. That means organizations will be facing more problems than ever before.

Most problems or changes come from the outside in – external factors that impact the organization and work flow. Changes that come from the inside out are far more controllable, but changes that come from the outside in are often out of our control.

This causes people to react, crisis manage, and continually put out fires. As such, crisis managers live in an uncontrollable world, while opportunity managers have a handle on their future.

The only way to gain control of your future and avoid the increasing number of problems is to ensure that as many changes as possible come from the inside out – that both you and the organization make a change before the marketplace dictates a major shift or change in direction.

UNPLUGGING

The key to becoming an opportunity manager is to have the discipline to unplug from the present at least once per week, and instead plug into the future.

This means taking an hour and not looking at the economy, the stock market, the balance sheet, the sales numbers, or any of the things that are part of today's world. Rather, it is a time to plug into the future, because that is where you are going to spend the rest of your life. It is where you are going to make all your money and job security from this moment forward.

Since you will be living in the future, does it not make sense to give that future some thought every now and then? If you are ready to solve tomorrow's problems before they occur and see the new opportunities change brings, take the following steps.

1 - MARK THE OPPORTUNITY HOUR IN YOUR CALENDAR.

In order to make sure you take the time to plan, you need to put the time in your calendar. Make an appointment with yourself just as you would for any other important business meeting. This is important, because if you do not put it in your calendar, you will never take time to plan. You will be so busy putting out fires that you will never get to it.

If you think you do not have time to do this, that is only because you are in a habitual crisis management mode. The only way to get time back is to spend the time to stop those problems from happening.

The first step is to ascertain whether you are dealing with a cycle or a permanent change.

RECOGNIZING THE TYPES OF CHANGE

The good news is that most changes are cyclical rather than permanent. For example, home values will always rise and fall, the stock market will always fluctuate between bull and bear, and a company's sales will continually ebb and flow with the seasons. Those are all cyclical changes that are a bit easier to deal with – provided you know how long the cycle will last.

Sometimes, though, changes are permanent. Permanent changes, even those that are small, can have a devastating effect on a business. For example, someone gets an iPod and starts listening to music on that device rather than buying CDs or listening to the radio. That person now has all her music with her at all times. That is a permanent change, because she is not going back to music on CDs, and may change her listening habits regarding radio.

What permanent marketplace changes are on your organization's radar?

2. SOLVE PREDICTABLE PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY HAPPEN.

During your hour ask yourself, "Based on the direction I see things going, the trends I see happening, and the market cycles I am aware of, what are the problems I am about to have? And, equally important, what are my co-workers' predictable future problems?"

Then determine a strategy to solve those problems before they occur. Keep in mind that a future problem represents a future opportunity.

For example, if you are implementing a new strategic plan, predict the problems the plan will create and solve them before they start. Identify those who are likely to fight the change and why – and then develop solutions for their concerns beforehand.

It is all about becoming more anticipatory. If you do not take an hour a week to look at what is about to occur, you are going to keep doing what you have always done, until you inadvertently go off a cliff.

Rather than be a crisis manager and only react to problems as they occur, you want to be anticipatory, identifying opportunities, and capitalizing on them.

3. LOOK AT THE FUTURE OF YOUR PROFESSION.

In addition to looking at your industry and organization's future, you also need to look at the future of your employment.

Based on all the things you are seeing with your organization and all the technological changes out there, how are you going to be doing your job or career in the next few years? If you can start to see the future of your career, you can chart your own course, identify problems before they occur, and solve them proactively so you end up ahead rather than behind the curve.

YOUR FUTURE AWAITS

No matter who you are or what you are doing, an hour a week is doable. Before long, you will become addicted to that hour and will expand it. And when that happens, you open yourself up to a whole new world of possibilities.

So do not wait for your future to unfold randomly, only to end up in some place you do not want to be. Instead, invest an hour a week into your company and/or yourself and watch your success grow.

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Dan Burrus is considered one of the world's leading technology forecasters and strategists. He is the founder and CEO of Burrus Research, a research and consulting firm that monitors global advancements in technology driven trends to help clients better understand how technological, social and business forces are converging to create enormous, untapped opportunities. Dan developed the first cell phone business application that allows the user to generate a business plan; the "Competitive Advantage Business Strategy Builder." For more information, please visit: www.burrus.com

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