

Leadership Barometer 188 Taking Extra Time Robert T. Whipple, MBA CPTD



There are many situations at work where taking extra time will pay off. It sounds funny to say because the scarcity of time is one of the biggest issues for all professionals. Availability of time is the root of most conflict between people.

The trick is to know when an investment of time will pay off in time saved down the road. It is up to leaders to make that judgment. What factors should they

consider as they decide?

Factors that impact when taking extra time is a wise move

1. **Observe the current use of time.** You can judge for yourself the number of occasions where people are basically spinning their wheels. They get all worked up over an issue and spend inordinate hours arguing their case.
2. **Check the alignment of activities.** A large percentage of time wasted is trying to get various groups aligned. There must be a clear vision that is supported by all. You need to have strategies in place to achieve the vision. In addition, you need agreement on the tactics and measures.
3. **Determine the level of trust.** When trust is low, people spend a lot of time protecting their turf or fighting useless battles. Measure the trust in your group and see if you are satisfied. Take the extra time to improve the level of trust and it will pay off in time saved.
4. **Don't get blinded by the busy work.** Sometimes the problems come in at such a rate that they begin to stack up like cordwood. There is no time to deal with yesterday's problem because there are three new ones today.
5. **Coach people who spread gossip and rumors.** Many people spend more time spreading lies than doing their work. Identify these individuals and coach them to reduce that practice.
6. **Assess the level of teamwork.** When teams display parochial views and fight over what is right, it is time to intervene. An improvement in team cooperation will translate to major savings in wasted time. If people are resistant, it is time to do some form of team building.

Identify periods of time to work on the culture

I know many corporate situations where they are out of control with the use of time. When I suggest that they need to go offline for some soul-searching with a good facilitator they balk. "You have no idea how busy we are here. Taking time away from the daily challenges will bury us." With that attitude, there is little hope they can break out of the cycle that is killing them.

Carve out time

The most productive groups have carved out at least 15% of their time to work on their culture. Doing this actually resolves the issues that make the groups inefficient.

Many groups play "whack-a-mole" with crises and problems every day. When one issue is resolved, another one pops up. This practice goes on day after day until it actually becomes the culture.

Conclusion

To break the cycle, earmark at least a day every month to step back and take the time to make changes in a thoughtful way. Seek out a coach who is not part of the chaos and can see what is going on. Making this investment reduces the whack-a-mole problem and allows groups to function better together.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.