

Session 3.9 | Sustainable Life and Work Habits

In Module 2, Discover, we talked about Finding the Right Tools for developing your leadership skills and we looked at 5 Fast Action Steps to help you intentionally develop your skills.

In this session, we are starting a new Module and we're going to look at - How can we effectively apply the learning? It's one thing to have the right tools, but in our busy chaotic life and work, how do we effectively apply the learning?

So go ahead and download the Worksheet for this session so that you can follow along with us through the session.

Many leaders tell us that they're consuming so much leadership information that they don't have time to apply the learning.

So the question for us was:

Why do we struggle so much to apply the learning? There's a number of reasons for that. Let's look at just a few:

1. Investing in Others.

This sounds interesting because we already spend so much time investing in other people that setting aside time to invest on ourselves is difficult. We feel like we're stealing time away from other people in order to invest in ourselves and we have a hard time justifying that.

In just a few moments, we're going to show you how to invest in yourself without sacrificing your job or home life.

The important thing is for you to be aware that you first must start investing in yourself. You can't pass on to others what you do not already possess. And you can't lead others if you're not already leading yourself.

So it begins with investing in you. And you are already doing a great job with this because you've invested your time and your energy and made a monetary investment into this Fast Track. SO GOOD JOB! You're already moving forward.

So the first reason that we struggle to apply learning is because we're already spending so much time investing in others.

The second reason which probably is no surprise to you because again you're here already is:

2. Busyness & Distraction.

You and I have very little margin and so we live every day and we work every day with some level of distraction and overwhelm some level of busyness. And for many of us, it's significant; it's the world that we live in.

So we've learned in our work with high-performing leaders all over the world that the primary reasons that leaders struggle with time & focus or busyness and distraction at work are for two reasons: productivity and priorities.

1. Productivity. We don't know how to get more done.
2. Priorities. We don't know how to effectively manage our priorities.

Now here's what the problem is. When you and I hear that, we hear that we struggle with productivity and priorities like, Wait a minute, I've been leading for years. I've been leading for maybe decades.

If there's anyone that understands productivity and priority is, it's me.

And that's the challenge - we think we do.

But I want to look at these individually and give us the opportunity to ask the question, Do you/I understand productivity? Do I understand how to get better results? and Am I leveraging priorities? Do I understand the unbelievable power of setting my own priorities?

First of all let's look at:

Productivity - which is how to get better results. And as I've said there's a secret to it that I'm going to share with you.

First of all, I don't have to tell you that occasionally people struggle to get stuff done - particularly we avoid those tasks that are tough to complete. You have team members that struggle with this, at times you struggle with this. Maybe family members that struggle with this. And by the time that people realize that they're behind, the problem or the project has become almost overwhelming or unmanageable!

Since I am primarily a task-oriented person, accomplishing task or achieving goals is more natural for me than it is for people who are naturally people-oriented. Over the years, I have learned a number of principles that'll help leaders to more effectively accomplish tasks and reach goals.

This may not be natural to you. It doesn't mean that you can't take the same principles and apply them to your life and work and glean nuggets of truth or wisdom out of them. And so I would encourage you take these concepts and apply them in a way that makes sense for you.

Five ways to get more done:

1. Focus on achievable tasks.

It's really impractical for me to personally attempt tasks that require skills or experience that I do not possess myself. When you have an idea or responsibility that's beyond your expertise, consider delegating it to somebody else that's better equipped or better skilled to handle that task or project. Then empower them to accomplish the task more effectively. Free yourself to focus your energy on the tasks that you can accomplish and you're passionate about. In fact, you want to spend time doing only those tasks that only you can do and do well.

Many of us are working on projects that we don't think anyone else in our team or within our organization will do because they seem like really tough things to us. And so we take those projects on ourselves instead of asking people, instead of delegating them to people who may be more inclined or more likely to be able to accomplish them effectively.

2. Prioritize.

Prioritize - once you identify the tasks that are achievable, then you need to prioritize them. Within an organization, it's best to prioritize them around whether it's the mission, or vision, or core values, or strategy of the organization. If the task doesn't correspond or if it's irrelatively small task, then, for you, it's likely that it should be near the bottom of your to-do list, if on the list at all.

When you're thinking about prioritizing and you've set up a kind of a structure for how you're going to prioritize things, if it doesn't fit neatly into one of those things, the question for you is "Should I be focused on this at all, or should this belong to someone else?"

3. Do the simplest tasks first.

This is all about the snow ball effect if you've heard that concept before. Do the simple tasks first.

When prioritizing, consider completing the simplest tasks first. As you complete the simple tasks, what you do is create momentum that encourages you and energizes you and others around you. You will find that you have more energy and more excitement about your work and about the project. As you gather momentum, others will also jump in and help because most people like to be involved in creating positive change.

As you are able to get momentum by doing some of these simpler tasks first, you get more and more support by people who are energized and encouraged to help you along the way.

4. Do your least favorite tasks early.

It took me a little while to figure this one out and I am still not super successful at it. But identify the tasks and responsibilities on your list that are your least favorite and do them early. Get them out of the way. If you don't, thinking about having to do them and dreading getting to them will drain the life out of you. In fact, seeing them on the task list will make you want to get up from your desk or get away from your work just so you don't have to think or worry about getting them done. But when you do accomplish them and you get them out of the way and you do it early it allows you to passionately approach your other responsibilities.

5. Hard work and positive results facilitate a fun, casual work environment.

Those that work with us have heard me repeat this over and over again. When it's time to work, let's work smart and work hard (in that order). When you do, you will greatly reduce your stress level and the anxiety of those around you. This doesn't mean that we can't have fun in our work; in fact, we have a lot of fun doing our work especially when we're productive. What we work very hard at doing is working hard and working smart while we're working. That way, we can take plenty of time away from the work so that we can join those people and those things that are most important to us.

When you apply these five concepts to your work, you'll be significantly more productive and when your team applies these principles to their work, they'll be significantly more productive.

The byproduct is a healthier team environment - more margin, better connections and relationships, greater fulfillment in your work, and higher productivity.

Again, if you haven't yet, take a moment right now to download the Worksheet on this page and complete the action steps for this lesson.

Next Session

In this session, we looked at the first reason leaders struggle with time and focus. In the next session, we're going to look at another reason why leaders struggle with busyness and distraction and the secret for dealing with it.

In the meantime, remember, you don't have to get it perfect, you just need to take the next step.

I'll see you in the next session.