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One of the keys to achieving results - follow-up

Lately, I've worked on or have seen several projects that have lacked significant follow-up, and it was apparent how critical this step is to achieving results and so I'm devoting a lead article to the subject.

The best plans are useless without follow through and follow-up. I've found it quite amazing the number of highly paid, intelligent leaders that do not value or do not make the time to follow-up. And the results show it there is a significant difference between what is achieved with follow-up vs. without it. It is possible that the objective is achieved, yet when you compare the objective, the time, the cost and the resources, the project accompanied with follow-up will prevail. So, here are a few tips about follow-up.

First, the ideal scenario that yields the best results is when a plan, list or something similar is developed. It doesn't have to be fancy or use the latest technology (a scrap piece of paper with action items will likely suffice). This will provide the structure for your follow-up. It is somewhat similar to the value of developing a process in an operations setting the foundation.

Second, prioritize your follow-up. It isn't necessary to follow-up on everything. If you are working on a project, prioritize the tasks. Then, follow-up on only those critical tasks (perhaps on the critical path, meaning there are other tasks that are dependant on the task, or just those that you think are "A" in priority). If you follow-up on only the tasks that are key, the people related to those tasks will intuitively realize the implied importance and prioritize accordingly. Additionally, the more you are able to explain why the specific tasks are important/ why you are following up, their value, etc, the more the people responsible for the tasks will understand and value them themselves. On the other hand, if you followed up on every task, it would just become a nuisance, and you'd likely be ignored.

Third, follow-up. Think function not form. It doesn't matter whether you follow-up via email, phone, via a fancy software or whatever. What matters is that you follow-up. You will achieve the best results if you change your follow-up style to the person you are following up with. For example, if you are following up with someone who reads email voraciously but doesn't typically talk on the phone, send an urgent email. On the other hand, if you are following up with someone who enjoys talking with people (regardless of whether he/she has email), pick up the phone. When you follow up, make sure to follow up in advance of the due date on critical tasks and critical path items. This gives the person an opportunity to remember and plan for the task. I've found that 99% of the people will complete the task with this type of follow-up, whereas, without the follow-up, I might receive a 50% completion ratio, mainly due to conflicting priorities and busy schedules.

It isn't complex, expensive or requires capital investment to follow-up, it just requires a bit of energy, yet, it yields significant results. So, give it a try. I bet you'll be amazed by the results.

Lisa's Tips: Travel Tips

Since I'm currently on vacation in Hawaii, traveling with family members who typically do not travel, it has become clear that travel tips I take for granted can be quite helpful more than I realized previously.

1. Keep lists It is easy to forget things that seemed obvious yesterday. Lists can be used for many purposes packing, your activities/ tasks (our tour person commented on how organized we were, yet all we did was keep a list so we didn't get confused between the days who knows what the "majority of her guests" typically do), a get ready quickly in the morning list (this is a critical one for business trips!).
2. Update your travel experience as often as possible as my consulting mentor says, he has more status than the pilot and it comes in handy. My airline status has come in very handy in the last month, as I was the only person to get out of Dallas a day after a huge storm (everyone else was still standing around the gate agents, trying to work out whether they'd get home 2 to 3 days later, as I slowly walked away, trying not to draw attention to myself). There are many ways to utilize status with airlines, hotels, etc. Make sure to utilize it to the fullest and in a way that is best for you. Also, note that it is often times possible to combine and/or share status among partners, which can be quite handy if you do not travel often. Even if you don't have or can use your status, be friendly and get to know the people. When I traveled frequently to NC, the lady in the hotel knew my preferences and waited for my late arrivals, put calls through to the workout room at midnight and provided excellent service.
3. Find something to be productive and/or enjoy your travel experience. For example, I find an area in the airport to work on my laptop, read a book, make a phone call or something else productive and/or enjoyable while passing the time. Actually, there was a time when I got so many emails completed while flying (without interruption!) that I couldn't keep up when I didn't travel for a few weeks in a row! Of course, I think the people who worked with me dreaded when I synced my email.
4. Pack light -- I used to insist on carrying around a huge suitcase until I discovered how much easier it was to travel with a carry-on suitcase, and I started saving up to an hour each time. Mix and match outfits, use the amenities the hotels provide instead of carrying your own, etc.
5. Plan in advance -- get directions, pay attention to your baggage claim number (I wasn't used to listening for that information since I carry on baggage, and we wandered around Honolulu with 6 tired people with a few who have 'bad' knees/ feet for much longer and further than necessary!), confirmation numbers etc in advance. Take food on the plane if you are traveling in coach and know you might be hungry. Bring a sweatshirt if you get cold on airplanes.

Recommended Reading

"[*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*](#)" by Steven R. Covey, it is a classic book on the key habits and/or attributes required for personal and professional success. Although much of the book is obvious if you think about it, I thought there were several insights offered as well. It can also be utilized as a practical guide for change.

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