

Don't be neurotic. Be Efficient!

Is your business running at peak efficiency?

EFFICIENCY

An efficient person accomplishes very much in a short amount of time with a minimum of wasted effort.

Efficient: 1. Having a direct effect; causative. 2a. Acting or producing effectively with a minimum of waste, expense, or unnecessary effort. B. Exhibiting a high ratio of output to input. (Latin efficere, to EFFECT)

--*American Heritage Dictionary*

Defining the word, unfortunately, won't teach you how to be efficient. Furious activity alone, for example, doesn't equal efficiency. The office worker stirring up a blizzard of flying paper at his desk may be producing nothing but confetti.

THE KEY TO EFFICIENCY IS CONTROL.

No one becomes efficient without understanding and using control. Whether you are calculating a job estimate for a waiting customer, trying to finish a job on a clients' automobile, or being swamped by a barrage of ringing telephones, you must exercise control. Control of your actions, your materials, your equipment, the communication lines related to your job, and most importantly, control of your own thinking.

Efficient production requires that you're able to command your immediate environment. And if you are shooting for an increase of business or a greater amount of responsibility, you must demonstrate control of an even wider area.

When a guy can't control a small section of the assembly line he can't complain if he's not promoted to the foreman's job, which involves controlling the equipment and production of many people.

THE CYCLE OF ACTION

To understand control we start with what I call the "Cycle of Action". Every action you undertake, from cleaning a car, changing the oil and fluids in an automobile, or advertising and promoting your business to grow to the next level is composed of three distinct parts:

1. Start
2. Change
3. Stop

You start a fire burning, you change it by adding wood or raking the coals, and you stop the fire by extinguishing it.

Every activity in life is a cycle of action; some are lengthy and involved, such as running a business; others may be brief and uncomplicated as in the treatment you give a piece of junk mail.

CONTROL

CONTROL IS THE ABILITY TO START, CHANGE, AND TO STOP.

A concert pianist demonstrates superb control over every key on the piano. He strikes the desired note, holds it and releases it accurately to produce inspired music. He executes thousands of these cycles while playing a composition.

Much too often the word control hits us with a negative jolt. We hear the words rent control, wage control, price control, all of which generally means “stop”. Stop the raising of rents, wages, or prices. Even traffic control signals are called “stoplights”, not “go lights”.

Good control consists of much more than stopping. The person able to start a job, see it through quickly and effortlessly, then completes it demonstrates good control over his work. He’s not leaving a trail of incomplete cycles of action in his wake. This is a sure sign of inefficiency.

BECOME EFFICIENT

Begin by listing all of your incomplete cycles of action. Next to each item indicate whether or not you intend to finish that project as originally planned. Now dispose all of the projects you don’t plan to complete. Throw them out. Give them away. Sell them. Hire someone else to finish them for you. It doesn’t matter how you do it just get them out of your life. Next, examine the projects remaining on your list. Assign which ones are the priorities and get to work on them. Don’t take on major new projects until your entire list is checked off. This is the beginning of efficiency. Make that list. Assign priorities. Complete those old cycles.

CYCLES WITHIN A BUSINESS

Keeping any business alive requires proper control of many smaller cycles involved with getting customers, ordering supplies, manufacturing the product, meeting delivery deadlines, collecting money, keeping records, paying bills, hiring, firing, promoting personnel, research and development.

Every cycle of action follows this important principle: **WHEN GROWTH STOPS, DECAY BEGINS.** When a business or company is not growing it will contract. If the product is mediocre someone will invent a better one. If it is superb others will imitate it. No business person should ever assume he has reached a plateau of security.

You must constantly assess and update cycles within your business. Obsolete cycles should be phased out, new cycles started and the most successful current cycles maintained and strengthened. New customers must be reached, new materials and supplies investigated, more efficient production developed, and personnel periodically reviewed. Products, record keeping, pricing, equipment all must be kept up to date.

A person afraid of change resists starting something new or ending something old. His business gradually slips behind. Another person hung up on change compulsively alters everything. This can cost a company a considerable amount of money.

The whole idea of constructive change is to keep modifying your operation toward greater profit and lower cost. Find out what is working successfully and strengthen it. Isolate the more costly and less profitable aspects of your business and change them.

It never ceases to amaze me how many otherwise brilliant business people do not fully understand these concepts and apply these simple principles.

SUMMARY

If you find your business and/or your environment overly confused, clean up all of your old, unfinished cycles of action, devoting your full attention to each current project. Select a cycle of action and complete it. Then take another. As you do this you will notice the confusion disappearing. Empty out that basket, attack that cluttered desk, purge that chaotic stockroom, and wade through that bulging equipment closet.

Disorder robs attention and will destroy your space. It's hard to get things done; you'll find yourself wanting to leave. So if your office looks as if it should be condemned, begin by restoring it. The efficient person lives and works in clean, organized, and uncluttered surroundings. This is the path to success!

Once you've established good order and disposed of that nagging collection of unfinished cycles, go treasure hunting through your neglected dreams and dig out those ideas that promise rich rewards and begin growing your business to the next level. You do have time for it now!

- DJM



David J. Mazarella is the President and CEO of Mazzarella Car Care Systems, LLC (MCCS). MCCS is a privately held company involved in manufacturing and marketing automobile appearance products to the car care industry and auto enthusiasts. David J. Mazarella can be reached directly at (617) 569.9092 or by E-mail at djm@MazzarellaCarCare.com or visit him online at www.MazzarellaCarCare.com