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Australian American Chamber of Commerce San Francisco

Newsletter August 2014

“Nose Job”

Hello my fellow Australians (or friends of)!

In last month's newsletter I was talking about how having too many goals at once makes it far more difficult to achieve any of them, for reasons involving how our brains actually work. This is an incredibly common problem, and one that most people don't even realize they have. If you want to go back and read that article to update yourself, click here <http://bit.ly/1yX5zxM>

One of my recommendations was to strip back and clarify which goals are most important in your life and your business. The fewer you have at any one time, the better.

But what do you do if there are certain goals you don't want to throw overboard? They're important and you want them all! Or at least more of them than you know you can reasonably fulfill at any one time (admit it).

One answer is to read and follow “Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity” by David Allen. It's some of the best advice available and if you use his system it works. However, reading and applying his solution can take a few days of focused effort, which most people don't think they have (as they're too busy chasing many goals at once, she mutters dryly), or don't believe they can invest.

A simple system I use in addition to David Allen's is to go deep with focus. Even though there are many things I want to do..! and learn about..! and develop..! at any one time, I find it useful to write a list of what those topics or projects are, put them into some kind of logical order, and then commit a certain period to focusing on one at a time. An example of this might be, “August is the month of improving

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listening to my staff, September the month of speaking more plainly, October the month of apologizing for speaking so plainly”, and so it goes...

Some people like to have a theme for the year, like 2014 is their Year of Courage, or Integrity, or Restoring Health.

This can also be done on a micro level, for example “today I will only focus on sorting out this account” until it’s fully completed. And that means 100% completed, not 97% completed as perfectionists are inclined to do (so that they can perpetually fiddle around the edges, saying to themselves “it’s not quite perfect *yet*” well into 2015...)

The reason most people don’t think they have the luxury of being able to focus on just one thing at a time is because they are invariably surrounded by incomplete tasks that are barking at them for attention. Once we start to complete, and I mean really complete certain things, it’s amazing how life becomes clearer. Silence falls... you can hear the birds again...!

Finally, what are you to do with those other things in life that you’re not focusing on this day, week, month or year, but that are still important? I recommend:

1. List them.
2. Create files (real or virtual) and label them, e.g. Weight Loss, Expansion into Asia, Divorce (next year), Nose Job, Exact Revenge on Annoying Neighbor, or whatever it is that’s so utterly pressing in your life, putting all current relevant notes into these files.
3. On the front of the file or separate piece of paper inside the file briefly write up exactly when you are going to come back to this project and your current plan of attack.

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The reason it's so important to write down the recommencement date and plan of action for each project is that this is what allows your brain to take it off its list of 'unfulfilled goals' that you're holding mentally, outside of your awareness. Don't skip writing the plan. It's important. If you want the research evidence that proves this, email me and I'll send it to you.

Once you have the files, the contents, the dates to recommence each project, and your written plans of attack for that future date, diarize each project so you'll remember to come back to them, and put them out of sight, ideally filed.

I'm being a bit light with this, but what I'm referring to are proven, evidence-based approaches to freeing up your mental RAM ('executive function'), which will help you to achieve your real, pressing, present goals so much more easily.

That's enough for this newsletter. Have fun filing and see you next month.

Kate



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