



LEADERSHIP ACUMEN

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Rejuvenate Your Leadership Drive!

‘Tis the season of disgruntlement!

After many chats in the past 4-6 weeks with executives in my network, I am reminded that May & June (in North America & Europe at least), are the months most likely to see people:

- Quit their jobs
- Ask for transfers
- Search for new opportunities
- Buy a new home
- End existing / start new relationships

And, while many actually make these shifts, many more contemplate them but don’t act.

It’s not really clear why this is so. Perhaps after slogging through winter and the school year, we let all the little things finally get to us and question the big things. Perhaps it is Spring-time and the coming summer that inspires growth and new beginnings. Or, perhaps the new fiscal year’s realities and challenges are becoming more evident and frightening! Suffice to say, if you are having similar feelings, you are not alone in your apprehension of possibly having a “breakdown” or making a BIG change – ‘tis the season!

Of course, as executives, our personal motivation level goes through up and down cycles like other humans. But many employees, clients and stakeholders look to us for their motivation and energy. So while low ebb may be natural at this time of year, we do need to get our own motivation pumped back up and get our leadership “drive” back in gear! If we have these feelings and simply push them aside, they will still linger just below the surface. We must address them if we are to truly rejuvenate.

Advice from the “Leadership Doctor”!

Dear L.D. –

My career feels like it is stagnating. This used to be such a great company to work for, now it seems everyone is walking around wondering why they stay. Should I look for a new job?

Sincerely, Disengaged and Depressed

Dear D & D -

Well the easy answer would be to tell you to “get over it”. As a senior executive you ARE the company – especially in the eyes of the employees around you. Maybe they are demotivated because you are!

However, let me honour your feelings and remind you – ‘tis the season! Now, let’s see how we might get you “unstuck”? There are a few questions that I have walked others through that seem to bring added perspective and insight to the situation. The first question is this...

Why Do You Work?

There are many different answers to this question! Of course, at one level we work to pay our bills, feed the family, and so on. But at the executive level, the main reasons may include:

- The challenge of building/leading a big, complex organization
- The ability to ‘save the world’ or a piece of it
- To innovate and create new products that are eagerly received by consumers
- To serve and nurture community, clients, employees around me. . .

Many different possible reasons. Why do YOU work?

If you would like to take a free on-line test to remind you of your preferences & personality type go to:
http://www.enneagraminstitute.com/Tests_Battery.asp#RHETISampler

[You might even spring for the \$10 full assessment version! I make no commissions on this - it’s just a fun and useful little indicator!]

It can be very useful for creating well needed perspective, to remember why we work. This alone can bring back your motivation, and is good foundation for my next question. . .

How Might You Re-Prioritize Your Tasks? - So you can get back to focusing on the things that excite you!

After a while our workload, plus the demands of others can become a little overwhelming. We put our head down and work harder to get through everything. But, the pressure to perform, and the demands keep coming – draining our energy.

Maybe, just maybe, you have let your “To Do” process slip, and the C-level priorities have taken over. So, re-focus. What are the most important things in your life and work? The “A” Priorities! Are you truly booking them / making time for them in your calendar, FIRST?

These can include high-reward, highly important projects; time with son, daughter and/or spouse; personal fitness/nutrition; and pet projects.

Have you identified and scheduled the next most important, B-level elements?

Make sure you are scheduling-in these key A and B priorities to your time management system, your “Outlook” calendar, etc. Also, double-check with your supervisor and colleagues to ensure they are in alignment with your priorities. Reaffirm your Performance Plan, Scorecard, or MBO for the year! Once these are in place, you can fit in the C Priorities (or not) as time allows.

Oh yes, try cleaning up your desk and office. This can be a cathartic exercise and make you feel like you are getting back in control of things.

These tips take a little extra time to put back into practice, but can have a big pay-off afterward!

Yours Lovingly, The Leadership Doctor

Moving Up – Moving On

Dear L.D. –

I've had some changes in my personal/family situation. Now I need to earn more money, have a predictable income stream and find an employer with a better benefits plan. Boost my income overall.

Signed, Desperate.

Dear Desperate –

It sounds like you might be in sales or the not-for-profit sector, or perhaps you are an entrepreneur/consultant with moderate success; or you might be a senior manager looking to move into the executive ranks. Clearly changes in your family situation are coming.

My first piece of advice is not to do anything drastic yet, even though you might be feeling, well, desperate! It is easier to find a job and make a good impression, not to mention making the right choice amongst various options if you can slow the process down a bit – even start searching for the new opportunity in advance of when you will need it. Often, your best opportunity may even lie within your existing organization!

You will need to get yourself organized for this hunt, even if it is internal. First and foremost be able to answer this question...

What 3 – 4 key talents/attributes do you have? Ones that are high value, somewhat unique, and with which you enjoy good self-confidence.

OK, write them down. Write them down in a manner that would convince someone else to pay you to use those attributes for their organization! Even executives can have difficulty with this – using buzz-words, or colloquial terms that really aren't impactful or differentiating. Consider how you would write a "Yellow Pages" ad for yourself as a leader. Tom Peters' recent book, "The Brand You 50" is a good resource for this kind of exercise.

Higher income usually means you will need to shoulder bigger responsibilities and/or deliver bigger results for a company. Some who have worked for themselves or in the NFP sector can find it difficult to move into the corporate arena with its emphasis on profits and performance or to step-up to a higher level of results achievement while working for someone else.

More stable income and excellent benefits can often be found in government/civil servant positions. You will need to be motivated by service to community, with a tolerance for process and transparency if you go this route. The pay is not always as high as in corporations, but there are other positive attributes.

So, search out an organization whose values and workplace culture are in alignment with your own. If you are going to work harder and possibly longer in order to earn more, then you will be better able to make the sacrifices required if you enjoy the people around you and the ‘brand’ you represent.

With greater power, income and prestige comes greater responsibility. Not only should you expect to work harder (you will need to step-up your efficiencies too), you will also likely be required to contribute volunteer service, attend social events, and travel. You will be expected to do your own homework, study the marketplace, understand the broader industry environment – basically ‘tune-in’ to more things going on around you. Next question. . .

How might you leverage your talents, interests, insights and natural motivation to provide added value to an organization?

Pull your resume together, build a leadership portfolio, investigate your target organizations, and practice putting your best foot forward.

Approach each opportunity *from the heart*. After all your research and preparation, go deep inside yourself. . .

Why & How are you willing to put your heart and soul into this opportunity?

Don’t worry if there is a little apprehension along the way, that’s natural. But, do think about why you would put all your passion and talent into the new role. Even if not asked directly in an interview, this energy will come through and serve you well.

You can also do this for your current environment and job too! Once upon a time, you probably had passion for your current role. With an extra bit of passion and commitment evidenced in your current job, you’ll get better references or perhaps even recognition and opportunity within!

Go get ‘em “tiger”!

- *The Leadership Doctor*

Take an Executive Time-Out

Dear L.D. –

I’m exhausted! Mentally, physically, emotionally, I’m spent. I’ve been working hard now for several years to turn the organization around and make sure it prospers.

The challenges never seem to stop however, and I’m really starting to wonder if I can carry on. It almost feels as if the Board and the organization are just “using me”, squeezing all my juices out, then to throw me in the trash when I’m empty.

Any help you can offer would be appreciated!

Yours Truly, Down & Out

Dear D & O -

Hang-in there my friend! Don't give up. But also, you can't continue on the same way either.

At this time of year my Spring allergies tire me out personally, bringing about similar feelings. In today's complex and fast-moving executive world, this is an all-to-familiar complaint – magnified it seems by this season!

I probably don't need to tell you, that you are of limited usefulness to your employees, organization and most importantly your family, in this state. My first piece of advice. . .

Take an Executive 'Time-Out'

This is different than a vacation! On vacation we go somewhere, usually engage family, and often further deplete our energy reserves in the process!

My personal favourite approach is to take a Friday, or a Thursday/Friday and go off to spa by myself. Golfing doesn't do it for me. A trip to the beach might work (but not if I have to travel far). A work-out or run is often involved. A hotel is definitely helpful so that no chores are involved.

You need total relaxation, some pampering (massage, good healthy food, etc.), and a way to draw energy back IN. I like to take a couple of trusty books:

- “7 Habits of Highly Effective People”
- My personal Journal
- A religious book – Bible, Koran, Torah, Book of Buddha, or related
(Yes, I read numerous different religious books!)
- A philosophical book – such as “Six Questions of Socrates”

Nothing work related, no business or other magazines.

In addition to the personal pampering, I'm seeking perspective. I might also meditate, or pray, or just fall asleep – a lot.

Then, I re-enter the 'real world' on the weekend so I can carry the 'glow' with me for a few days before going back to the office. So far, this strategy has worked every time!

My next piece of advice. . .

Get Your Fitness, Wellness & Nutrition Back On-track

See if you can adjust your schedule for the next 2 weeks to take a few half-days off. Come in late or leave early, so you can intentionally re-establish your exercise routine and go shopping for more appropriate foods.

With the summer coming-up, consider taking a number of Mondays off so you have a bunch of long weekends to re-energize.

My dear D & O – it is time to give yourself a break! Now!

Compassionately Yours, The Leadership Doctor

Survive to Thrive

As senior executives, a lot of people rely upon us to energize them, to “drive” the organization forward, and to set the example. We have to look after ourselves first if we are going to continue to lead others. Otherwise we get grumpy, make rash decisions, question our most important relationships, and even scare our staff.

Often, we push ourselves too far before we see the warning signs that everyone else notices. Then we risk having it all crash down around us.

‘Tis the season of disgruntlement; but hopefully the advice above gives you some ideas to get yourself and maybe a colleague back on track. Enjoy!

Exploring the Web!

This month, the connections below take you to sites with more perspectives, commentary and discussions of Executive Health and Wellness.

<http://www.spamagazine.com/new/advertorials/wsbanff.asp>

Spa Magazine – healthy living travel and renewal. Article on Banff Springs Willow Stream Spa.

http://www.greenhomeguide.com/index.php/main/feature_detail/358

Design recommendations for a healthy bathroom!

<http://www.medisys.ca/en/executive-health-services.htm>

Medisys is Canada’s leading provider of executive health and medical services to both men and women.

<http://www.holistichealthresearch.ca/fundinginitiatives.php>

Holistic Health Research Foundation of Canada

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/food_guide_e.html

Canada’s Office of Nutrition Policy & Promotion

<http://www.lowcarb.ca/atkins-diet-and-low-carb-plans/>

A site that summarizes and reviews all the popular diets of today, with links to details for each!

http://my.webmd.com/webmd_today/home/default

Web M.D. – A well known and credible source of information.

Banff Executive Leadership Inc. offers public and customized programming to improve Board Governance and Executive Leadership Practices. We also provide coaching and consulting services to Boards and Executives to help enhance their leadership practices. Please contact us if we can be of further assistance.

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