PRIORITY IDENTIFICATION

How To Identify Major Change Priorities From A Multitude Of Competing Issues

Meeting with a restaurant owner recently they described how they were arriving home daily after 1am, 7 days per week and had to be back on shift every morning. Needless to say they were feeling the personal strain of the situation. My suggestion was that they analyse when the quietest morning and the quietest evening was and then schedule the most capable staff person to manage these times in their absence. Instead of a seemingly insurmountable goal to get their life back, breaking it down to changing one thing now, to get one night to themselves and one morning to sleep in was immediate doable.

When asking a business owner or executive what their current major challenges are, the response is often "where do I start?" For some it is clear, for many others (not unlike the restaurant owner) the challenges are an overwhelming jumbled blur.

The place to start unravelling it all is to do a brain dump onto paper. In point form jot down *all* the issues you are currently faced with. This might be 20 issues or 200 issues – it doesn't matter.

Once completed prioritise the major challenges that are taking much of your energy and effort and/or are having significant negative impact. Then, play these off against each other seeking the highest priorities. Is coaching Jarrod in sales more important right now than fixing the IT issues? If its Jarrod's coaching then that will rise to the top. You then want to continue playing off each challenge against each other in order to whittle the list down. Ideally up to 10 priorities is ideal.

Then, within the top 10 you need to locate the source of the issue wherever possible. You might have listed the issues of increased customer complaints, lower profitability along with increasingly unhappy staff in one of your divisions. Seeking the root cause might lead you to the simple finding that the leader of that division has lost his way. This then rises straight to the top, giving you the highest priority change point to implement. Correct the source and you'll more quickly eliminate the issues.

Here is another way of looking at it:

Whether you have an organisation of thousands or a business of one, the principles are the same. List the issues, prioritise the most important and then drive the change process forward. As I have seen countless times when doing this with leaders, an hour spent on this exercise is incredibly well rewarded. Not only will your organisation be better for it, you might actually get to have a life outside of work and get to sleep in occasionally.

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