The key to good management? Play to your strengths

By Bob Selden

Becoming a good manager takes time and patience. It's great when we get some initial training, but that doesn't always happen. To start, check your current status as a manager—how effective are you now? There are many self checklists available on the web. You should also consider having a 360 degree review completed. Once again, there are many good ones on the market.

Once you have an accurate picture of your strengths and weaknesses, start by focusing on your strengths—what are you really good at? What do others say that you do well? Consciously focus on maintaining these. Put a note in your personal diary to ensue that you review one of your areas of strength at least once a week. As Peter Drucker once said "Most people think they know what they are good at. They are usually wrong. More often people know what they are not good at, and even then more people are wrong than right. And yet, a person can perform only from strength. One cannot build performance on weaknesses, let alone on something one cannot do at all."

Now for your weaknesses—how do you manage these? Many of these are things that you will not easily change. Often managers spend an inordinate amount of time and energy trying to

change things about themselves that they are unlikely to be able to change. But, there are some short cuts. My advice is to look at how you might best manage (not necessarily change) your weaknesses. For example, in my own case, I am not good at following up on detail type things. Therefore when I am working with a team, I find someone else who can do these for me. If I am working by myself, I make sure that I have a good diary system that keeps reminding me to do these things.

Additionally, for each of your weaknesses, ensure you have a good reference or support (process, person, network) that you can access when you need it. As a suggestion, list out each of your weaknesses and against each list a:

* tool, technique or process that you

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Complacency leads to workplace safety risks

… and more

Strengths: A good team makes a leader stronger

will use regularly and / or consult when the going gets tough

* person to whom you can turn for advice from time to time or when faced with a difficult situation

* book reference that will help get you through your challenging moments.

From my experience, many of the problems managers encounter with managing their weaknesses have to do with the people issues. For example, being too assertive (or not assertive enough), managing conflict, giving (or not giving) appropriate feedback, and so on. One of the best references I would recommend for the is *People Skills; How to assert yourself, listen to others and resolve conflict* by Robert Bolton. Every manager, no matter what style or level of proficiency they have, should have this reference book on their desk for when they are faced with that difficult people issue.

Two more things you should consider to help in your progress toward becoming a good manager. First, have a good personal management plan. This should include not only your job priorities, but also your planned personal development actions and your team leadership activities.

And that brings me to the final point: team leadership. Sometimes you will have the opportunity to select all or certain members of your team. As well as their ability to do the job, new team members should be selected for:

* their ability to fit into the team and

* for the diversity they can add to the team.

You can do this informally (perhaps with the help of your team) or by using a profile such as the Team Management Profile (see Team Management Systems www.tms.com.au/) or the Belbin Team Roles Profile (www.belbin.com/). Even where you don't have the option of selecting your team, it's a good idea to conduct a team exercise using a profile such as the Team Management Profile to assess the team's preferences and in particular, any gaps that may cause the team to perform at a less than optimal level.

And one final piece of advice - plan to undertake some form of formal training / development at least every 18 months. This will not only help you learn and develop your management skills, but often also provides a much needed dose of self motivation or energy surge.

Bob Selden is the author of "What To Do When You Become The Boss," a self help book for new managers. He also coaches at the International Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland and the Australian Graduate School of Management, Sydney.

Use forklifts safely for everyone's benefit

Forklifts are excellent labor saving devices. They save time and reduce the likelihood of injury associated with manual material handling activities. However, forklifts can become very dangerous if operated by a reckless or untrained operator. All operators should receive safety training prior to being allowed to operate a forklift.

Forklift accidents tend to be very serious, involving both personal injury and damage to property. These accidents can be avoided if operators use some common sense and follow safe operating procedures. Do not operate a forklift until you have been properly trained and authorized to do so.

Basic Forklift Safety

Here are a few common safety rules to follow during forklift operation:

1.   Use the seat belt. It will keep you secured in the seat in the unplanned event of a tip over.

2.   A parked forklift should have the forks flat on the floor with the controls set to neutral and with the parking brake set.

3.   A forklift is considered to be "unattended" if the operator is more than 25 feet away or if the forklift is out of the direct vision of the operator.

Unattended forklifts should be parked with the power turned off.

4.   When operating the forklift on inclines, the load should always be on the uphill side of the incline. Drive forward going up the incline. Drive backward going down the incline.

5.   When traveling without a load on the forks, keep the forks approximately four to six inches off the floor.

6.   Never allow anyone to walk underneath a raised load.

7.   Stop at all blind corners to check for other traffic in the area. This includes other forklifts and pedestrians. Honk your horn and look before you proceed.

8.   If carrying a tall load that blocks your forward vision, drive in reverse and turn your head so you can see where you are going.

9.   If operating around other forklifts maintain a three-forklift length distance between forklifts and never attempt passing.

10. Never drive a forklift up to the back of a person who is unaware that the forklift is behind them.

Beef up your SEO by avoiding these errors

By Nick Keeping

In today's digital age, having a strong online presence is more important than ever. With over 3.5 billion searches per day on Google alone, businesses cannot afford to neglect their search engine optimization (SEO) strategy. However, implementing a successful SEO strategy can be challenging, especially for those who are new to the field. There are several common SEO mistakes that businesses make, which can negatively impact their website's search engine rankings. In this post, we'll discuss the 10 most common SEO mistakes to avoid, along with tips on how to avoid them.

Neglecting Keyword Research

One of the most critical SEO mistakes businesses make is neglecting keyword research. Keyword research is the process of identifying the search terms that users are typing into search engines to find information related to your business. By targeting the right keywords, you can increase your website's visibility and attract more qualified traffic. To avoid this mistake, start by identifying the keywords that are relevant to your business, and then use tools like Google Keyword Planner to find related keywords and phrases.

Overstuffing Keywords

While targeting the right keywords is essential, overstuffing them in your content can actually hurt your rankings. Keyword stuffing is the practice of using your target keywords excessively in your content, hoping to trick search engines into ranking your website higher. However, search engines are now smarter than ever and can easily detect keyword stuffing. To avoid this mistake, use your target keywords naturally throughout your content and avoid overusing them.

Ignoring Title Tags and Meta Descriptions

Title tags and meta descriptions are HTML elements that provide information about your website to search engines and users. They play a critical role in helping search engines understand what your website is about and can influence whether or not users click on your website in search results. To avoid this mistake, make sure that each page on your website has a unique and descriptive title tag and meta description that accurately reflects the page's content.

Failing to Optimize for Mobile

With over half of all internet traffic coming from mobile devices, optimizing your website for mobile is no longer optional. Mobile optimization involves designing your website to provide an optimal user experience on mobile devices. This includes using a responsive design, optimizing page speed, and making sure that your website's layout is easy to navigate on small screens.

Not Having a Clear Site Structure

Having a clear and organized site structure is critical for both users and search engines. A clear site structure makes it easier for users to find the information they are looking for and helps search engines understand the hierarchy of your website's content. To avoid this mistake, create a clear and logical site structure with categories and subcategories that accurately reflect your website's content.

Forgetting About Internal Linking

Internal linking can help users navigate your website and discover related content, and it can also help search engines understand the relationship between your website's pages. To avoid this mistake, make sure to include internal links within your content, pointing to other relevant pages on your website.

Ignoring Content Quality and Relevance

Creating high-quality, relevant content is essential for SEO success. Search engines prioritize websites that provide valuable and informative content to users. To avoid this mistake, make sure that your website's content is well-written, informative, and provides value to your target audience.

Skipping Alt Tags on Images

Alt tags are HTML attributes that provide alternative text descriptions of images on your website. These descriptions are used by screen readers to assist visually impaired users in understanding the content of the image. Additionally, alt tags can also help search engines understand the context of your website's images. To avoid this mistake, make sure to include descriptive alt tags for all images on your website.

Neglecting Social Media

While social media signals do not directly impact your website's search engine rankings, social media can still play a critical role in your SEO strategy. By sharing your website's content on social media, you can increase your website's visibility, attract more traffic, and build backlinks. To avoid this mistake, make sure to include social media sharing buttons on your website's content and actively promote your content on social media.

Focusing Too Much on Rankings

While ranking higher in search engine results pages is undoubtedly essential, it should not be the only focus of your SEO strategy. Instead, focus on creating valuable content, providing an excellent user experience, and building high-quality backlinks. By doing so, you will not only improve your website's search engine rankings, but you will also build a strong online presence that attracts and retains users.

In summary, SEO is a critical aspect of any digital marketing strategy, but it can be challenging to navigate for those who are new to the field. By avoiding the common SEO mistakes we've discussed in this post, you can optimize your website and improve your search engine rankings. Remember to prioritize keyword research, optimize your content for mobile devices, create a clear site structure, and focus on providing valuable content to your target audience. By doing so, you can build a strong online presence that attracts and retains users and ultimately drives business success.

Micronutrients are vital for good health

By Suborna Fermi

Vitamins are essential micronutrients. There are 13 common vitamins, and each of them are necessary for the body organs to function properly on a daily basis. And lack of these crucial vitamins can cause serious health complications.

Vitamin deficiency is a very common health concern these days that millions of people are suffering from. You can develop vitamin deficiency because of low vitamin intake and certain medical conditions. The effects of vitamin deficiency on the body can be very hazardous.

10 primary effects of lack of vitamins are:

Shortness of breath: Lack of vitamin B12 interrupts the production of red blood cells in the body. This causes complications in the transportation of oxygen throughout the body, which results in shortness of breath during regular activities.

Tingling sensation in fingers and toes: Vitamin deficiency has an effect on the nervous system, mainly on the nerve endings which leads to the tingling sensation in fingers and toes.

Numbness in hands and feet: Vitamin B12 helps to maintain the nervous system of our body, and lack of this vitamin can reduce the function of nerves in the body. Hence, you may feel numbness or less sensation in the hands and feet.

Vision problems: Vitamin A is very crucial for the protection of light sensing cells of the eyes. Lack of this vitamin may cause vision problems and even blindness in the long run.

Poor memory: Deficiency of vitamin D and B12 hugely impact the brain's memory recalling ability, which can cause memory loss and even Alzheimer's disease.

Bleeding gums: Bleeding gums is a quite common problem that is caused by rough brushing techniques. However, lack of vitamin C can cause bleeding gum issues. Vitamin C deficiency can also cause tooth loss in severe cases.

Mouth ulcer: Studies have found that mouth ulcers are the result of lack of vitamin B and iron in the body.

Brittle nails and hair: There are multiple reasons behind fragile nails and hair, and one of the reasons is lack of vitamin B7 which is widely known as biotin. Biotin mainly helps in strengthening hair and nails.

Hair fall: Hair fall or hair loss is one of the common symptoms of vitamin deficiency. Niacin and biotin are extremely important for the growth and strength of hair.

Poor wound healing: Multiple vitamins help in the wound healing process. Low levels of vitamin A, B, C, and D can cause slow wound healing.

What are the causes of vitamin deficiency?

Poor diet: As our body naturally does not produce vitamins, we derive them from the food we eat on an everyday basis. Our diet must consist of several vitamin enriched foods. People who are vegetarian can develop vitamin B12 and biotin deficiency, as meat is rich in these vitamins, and there is no plant-based source of B12.

Lack of sunlight: Vitamin D is extremely important to keep our teeth, bones and muscles strong. You can have vitamin D from different dietary items such as eggs, seafood, and dairy products. However, sunlight is one of the main sources of vitamin D. Lack of exposure to sunlight can lead to vitamin D deficiency, which can cause tooth loss, loss of bone density and osteoporosis.

Medical conditions: Certain medical conditions can make it difficult for your body to metabolize or absorb important vitamins. This can cause vitamin deficiency in the long run. Chronic liver disease, kidney disease, diarrhea, inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn's disease, gastric bypass can affect your body's ability to absorb vitamins. Many people with absorption issues develop vitamin B12 and vitamin D deficiencies, among others.

Smoking: Many studies have found that the chances of getting biotin, niacin, and vitamin D deficiency are higher in heavy smokers.

Alcohol use disorder: Too much consumption of alcohol can damage your digestive system. And a damaged digestive system can impact your body's capability of synthesizing vitamin B12.

Certain medicines: Certain medicines including cholesterol lowering medicines and steroids can restrict your body from absorbing vitamins completely. Calcium supplements and stomach-acid reducers can also inhibit absorption.

Pernicious anemia: Pernicious anemia disease is a kind of autoimmune disease which affects our intestine, causing decreased absorption of vitamin B12. This leads to deficient measures of healthy red blood cells.

If you are having any symptoms of vitamin deficiency, consult your general health care provider as soon as possible. Untreated vitamin deficiency can affect your body organs in the long run. The diagnosis of vitamin deficiency is usually not included in a routine health checkup. To diagnose any type of vitamin deficiency, your doctor would ask you about your symptoms and then would suggest you take a vitamin profile test. A complete vitamin profile test will help evaluate different vitamin levels in your body. Call your nearest diagnostic center to inquire about the cost of a vitamin panel.

After a diagnosis of vitamin deficiency, your doctor will give you medicines based upon which vitamin deficiency you have. Along with the medicines, you have to add vitamin enriched foods to your daily diet. To treat vitamin deficiency you have to eat a lot of fresh vegetables, fruits, eggs, milk, fish, seafood, and red meat. For healthy living, avoid smoking and drinking alcohol.

Avoiding heat illness: Know your PRF!

As summer approaches, it's important to remember the danger of working in hot conditions. All workers need access to water, shade, and protective sun gear when working in the heat. But did you know? Some workers handle heat stress less effectively than others. Heat intolerance happens for a variety of reasons. Make sure all workers know if they are more susceptible to heat by sharing their PRF, or personal risk factors. Personal risk factors for heat intolerance include:

- Obesity

- Diabetes

- High blood pressure

- Heart disease

- Lower level of physical fitness

- Use of certain medications such as diuretics (water pills) and some psychiatric or blood pressure medicines (Some medications can result in a worker's inability to feel heat conditions and/or the inability to sweat, so symptoms of heat stress may not be evident.)

- Alcohol use

- Use of illicit drugs such as opioids, methamphetamine, or cocaine

The above list is not comprehensive. Other medical conditions can also predispose workers to heat-related illnesses.

Employers should recognize that not all workers tolerate heat the same way. Workplace controls should focus on making jobs safe for all the employees. An occupational medical monitoring program can identify workers who are at increased risk of heat illness, while maintaining the confidentiality of workers' health information.

When heat hazards are present, workers should receive training about personal factors that can make them more susceptible to heat-related illness.

When in doubt, workers should talk to their healthcare provider about whether they can work safely in the heat.

Physiologic Monitoring

Workers' bodies produce automatic responses to cope with heat stress. Heart rate increases. Sweating becomes more profuse. Eventually skin temperature and core body temperature rise.

These physiologic responses can be measured by workers or employers. Physiologic monitoring has several advantages over other methods of monitoring heat stress:

Physiologic responses provide a direct and individualized measurement of each worker's response to heat stress.

Physiologic measurements can be used to monitor the worker's level of heat tolerance. Impermeable clothing, such as chemical protective suits, prevents cooling by sweating and may contribute to heat illness at lower temperatures. Environmental monitoring does not give an accurate indication of these workers' heat stress. Physiologic monitoring, such as heart rate measurement, should be used to determine whether their heat stress is too high.

Heart rate is the easiest physiologic parameter to measure. A timepiece is the only required equipment. Workers can be trained to count their pulse. More sophisticated devices, such as heart rate monitor wristwatches, are also available.

Some employers also monitor weight changes during a work shift as a measure of water loss from sweating.

Body temperature can be measured by thermometers. Oral, skin, and aural (eardrum) thermometers are less invasive than core body temperature measurements. Caution should be used when interpreting temperature measurements, because environmental heat might affect some thermometers.
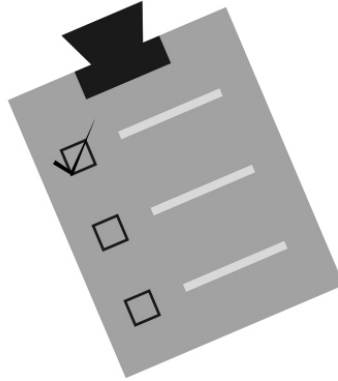
Your time is valuable… don't waste it!

By Fitzgerald Mujuru

Often we look back at our careers and start seeing things we could have done better, habits that we could have developed that would have given us a better output and winning outcomes. One of the things I have learned over the years is that time management on its own is a myth. What works is life management and when that is in place you will develop principles that will determine what you do; when you do it: and how well you will do it. One of these principles I now embrace as a result of this insight is that making appointments and demanding that others do the same when dealing with you will make you more productive. I did not arrive at this place in one day. It was a gradual journey.

One of the disadvantages I had early in my career was having an office in the Harare Central Business District in Zimbabwe where I come from. While it was a convenient location for business, it was also tempting and convenient for anyone who wanted to drop in and say "hi" during business hours. I soon realized that I was also guilty of dropping in on friends for social visits at their workplace too because, at the time, I didn't feel there was anything wrong with it. This practice was disruptive to work as there are only eight hours to work in a day. Equally, I used to receive personal phone calls and also make personal calls on the work landline speaking endlessly to friends about anything and everything. This was before the wide usage of cellphones came into being. The alternative was the now antiquated phone booth. Blame it on youth, ignorance, whatever, it was just unacceptable to entertain social in-person calls or phone calls at work. Something had to give as I was falling behind on important deadlines and work tasks. It was at that point that I decided to keep socializing outside working hours.

Lessons learned from this experience:

1. Developing life principles will determine your time management principles. It helps you with what you should prioritize at any given time.

2. There must be a clear separation between home and work. Keep your social life separate from your work life especially during your work shift.

3. Even now with cellphones in widespread use, discipline yourself to make private calls during scheduled breaks only.

4. Treat others the way you expect to be treated. If you find it inconvenient to have friends visiting you at work, chances are they also find it distracting when you do it but they may not have the guts to tell you.

The other challenging experience finding myself in many meetings at work and I was lagging behind on my high-payoff activities which my actual performance was measured on. You may agree with me that sometimes the meetings at work do not end. One must decide which meetings to prioritize. The performance review at the end of the year does not focus on all these things but the "key deliverables." I am sure many of us identify with this. I attended a personal development seminar where we were taught that we should spend at least 80% of our working time focussing on high pay-off activities, that is, those activities that bring the results that we are aiming for in the place of employment. The other 20% would account for menial, less important but necessary activities. disciplined time

Lessons learned from this experience:

1. There are meetings at work that add value to what you do and there are others that would be nice to attend but don't contribute much to your output. Discern which ones are absolutely necessary to attend.

2. Always keep a diary. This helps you prioritize. You cannot rely on your memory and it is true that what gets written down gets done.

3. Do an audit of how much time you are spending in meetings and ask yourself how many of these are contributing directly to your key deliverables.

4. I learned to say no to meetings I had not agreed to in advance. This helped free up a lot of time.

5. How we handle and plan for meetings affects productivity whether one realizes it or not.

What does this have to do with the importance of making appointments and keeping them? I would say everything. Making and keeping appointments is an important factor in any business, career, or even personal things we need to do. We spend more time in meetings than we realize. It is even more important in times like these when we work from home and we have to self-supervise and self-manage. These skills do not come naturally but can be learned. I hope I have helped in some way to put you on a path that will make you more organized and effective.

Fitzgerald Mujuru is a business consultant, marketing strategist, speaker, and coach with over twenty years in marketing and sales He has released 4 books and published more than 200 articles online.

SAFETY ... IT PAYS

Complacency leads to higher safety risks

By Deb Potter

Every day in the United States on the average, 15 workers lose their lives as a result of injuries or illnesses related to their work—that's more than 5,700 people.

These people leave behind families, friends, and co-workers.

The single most common cause is complacency—an attitude that "it won't happen to me."

Complacency Kills The Entire Organization

Too often, individuals and companies become complacent when it comes to safety. Managers are satisfied with mediocre safety performance and do not work to improve the environment by raising safety awareness and eliminating the potential for injury. Employees are content and are not attentive to their work environments. They become convinced that management is not concerned about safety. They begin to think they are not responsible for their own safety. Over time, the entire organization gives little meaningful attention to safety.

The result is that employees begin to get in a hurry and take shortcuts on the job. They are more focused on production and getting the job done than getting it done safely. That attitude becomes an organizational norm. Near misses go unreported. No one wants to take the time to fill our forms and employees don't understand the connection between sharing information and eliminating injuries. Managers do not pay attention to reports, so they become unimportant. The number of injuries increases and they become more severe. Everyone becomes frustrated. Employees blame management and management blames employees, yet no one is willing to take action to improve the situation.

Unfortunately, it often takes a fatal injury to cause everyone to focus on safety.

Don't let this happen to your organization.

The Complacency Trap – Don't Become Distracted By Pressing Issues

Research shows that many incidents occur because people are distracted and do not pay attention to their environment and what is going on around them. Managers often fall into the same trap – they become distracted by pressing issues such as the organization's need to increase productivity, improve quality, and raise profits. They stop paying attention to the importance of safety in the organization and become blinded to the fact that the lack of attention to safety performance is injuring the organization in the long run. In other words, they become complacent.

When managers and supervisors do not make safety a top priority in the organization, it is easy for employees to make personal safety a low priority. Then incidents and injuries occur with increasing frequency.

There are two things that must happen to avoid this potentially deadly situation.

1. Managers must renew their commitment to the safety process

2. Employees must get involved in meaningful safety activities.

OSHA CORNER

Please visit the following address on the web to download helpful safety posters, guides and pamphlets for a safer workplace.

https://www.osha.gov/publications

State of California
CAL OSHA
Department of Industrial Relations

Action: Encourage sustainable change

Managers – Get Committed!

It takes more than just saying you are committed to safety – you have to put actions behind your words.

Managers can demonstrate their commitment to safety in a number of ways.

First and foremost, managers must follow the company's safety rules. Then, regularly attend safety meetings. Also consider the following ideas:

- Take time to walk around and talk to employees.

- Visit employees in their workplaces whether on the shop floor, in the field, or in the office.

- Talk about your personal concern for safety, and then listen to their concerns.

- Take personal action to correct unsafe situations and follow up to let employees know the outcomes.

- Make it a point to personally review all reports of near misses and injuries.

When managers review reports of injuries and near misses, it demonstrates the information's importance. Follow up on the reports to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to eliminate the causes of incidents in your organization that could result in larger, bigger direct hits. Take care to ensure that your follow up is a positive action rather than a punitive one.

Integrate safety into all aspects of management planning. During the organizational planning process include safety goals and objectives then ensure that the budget includes appropriate items for safety improvement.

Communicate your organization's safety performance expectations goals, objectives to the management level and to your employees.

To encourage a sustainable change in the safety culture of your organization, make it a point to review your organization's progress. Enable employees to get involved in the safety process. Identify areas where employees can become actively involved in the safety process and encourage their participation by allowing work time for appropriate activities. Ask employees with specific skills or interests to participate in safety improvement projects. Then recognize their involvement and efforts.

Managers at all levels of the organization can have a profound effect on the safety culture of an organization by following these suggestions. Once they see their supervisors and managers taking safety seriously, employees in turn will be more committed than ever. And, nothing energizes an organization's safety improvement efforts more than employee involvement.

Other Ways To Get Employees Involved In Your Organization's Safety Planning and Process:

First, make employees aware of how they can get involved in the safety process. Involvement can come in many different forms. Encourage employees to get involved in the following activities and others:

- Reporting all unsafe conditions

- Attending safety meetings

- Serving on employee safety committees

- Planning and leading a safety meeting

- Participating in incident investigations and facility walk-throughs

- Engaging in conversations with supervisors and managers to share improvement ideas

Employees whose ideas and involvement are valued will increase safety performance faster than employees who are simply following the rules.

Create opportunities for employees to contribute ideas and information that will lead to safety improvement.

Stamp out Complacency to Create a Safety-Focused Organization

To create a culture in your organization where injuries are a thing of the past, remind everyone that complacency is a dangerous thing —it's a killer.

Find ways to pique employees' interest in finding ways to make safety improvements. Create motivation for positive change in the organization by believing that it's possible to have zero injuries in your organization and communicating that belief to employees. Show employees the relevance of working safe to their jobs, careers, paychecks, and, most importantly, their families.

This will create an environment where everyone at every level in the organization will increase their commitment and their involvement in making the workplace injury-free. The result is that everyone can go home every day to their families without injury.