



Self Awareness SHOULD Be At the Top of Every Leaders List....Is It On Yours?

Concerned about your stress levels, and of those around you? It's been a challenging few years for business, and consequently a challenging few years for those who are managers and leaders in businesses. And, for those with the entrepreneurial flair, leading their own charge in the business world, stress may seem to be running the show.

I have been a leader in business for decades and for the past 10 years I have been blessed to be an Executive Coach to many key leaders in organizations. While I have personally and professionally experienced the ups and downs in an economy, the current times seems to have presented one of the most enduring and impactful down turns to many globally – certainly in my life time. I am seeing stress levels still at an extreme high.

Some businesses appear to be in recovery of late, some still feel they have another couple of frustrating years ahead. And, then there are those who have kept chugging along with little or no impact.

Of course there are those organizations that seem resilient to the downturn and have enjoyed continued growth in these times. They are rare, but are out there.

There is a huge BUT here... whether your organization is in recovery, or has come up the other side, or has remained buoyant throughout, stress is most likely still at extremes for you and other colleagues. There is a massive shift that has taken place over the last number of years. I am certain that what now drives our communication and research – technology – has a big piece of ownership in creating greater complexity of roles for leadership. Technology has put the world at our door – has made “connecting” a much easier process and that’s a wonderful thing. We have broadened our scope and marketplaces for customers, products, vendors, employee resources, knowledge and processes. While seemingly for best practises and staying ahead of the curve, this comes at a tremendous cost beyond monetary returns and values to the leaders. What leaders must now balance in their daily lives far exceeds the demands on a leader from the 70’s, 80’s and even the 90’s now. Stress levels go up as the many more competing priorities demand attention in our rapid-paced world. And... magnify that stress dramatically when business is in a downturn.





From a practitioner's role, I make many interesting high level observations and reflect on what is behind the challenges of today's leaders, and most importantly how can I help them make a difference for self as leader. While as an Executive Coach I customize my approach with each client engagement to meet their needs, there are some "tools of the trade" that I tap into in order to assist in driving up awareness in my client, particularly around stress levels at work and at home. While being more effective at managing email and phone calls, being a better time manager, getting on top of conflict etc. all helps... I am speaking at a much deeper level... a level that lets us understand what manifests stress within each one of us.

After my years of dealing with leaders it is glaring to me that until the leader gets underneath the problem and better understands self in this regard, the stress levels will continue to resurface and impede performance. By this I mean, influencing and/or altering a leader's perspective, impacting their decision making capacity, strangling creativity, influencing reaction, judging relationships, impacting leadership styles and have one show up in a way that unconsciously or consciously has one seeking to protect self at work, in family and in community. Until a leader is prepared to partake in work that overcomes the self – authoring the inner pieces at work that allow for the inner voices to have the strength to run the show – this will not change. When operating in stressful environments this is magnified and can be most difficult to see let alone manage. We are operating at such a tremendous pace... who stops to reflect? And if you do, I applaud you!

Reflecting has great value, and we must find the time as leaders to do so. And that means finding that time for solitude – undisturbed treasured time – a rare commodity these days. Or perhaps you are comfortable with a mentor or coach who facilitates this kind of time for you to do your thinking. Reflecting is one part in the equation, moving to decision-making and a course of action brings all this to life.

So... find that space of solitude... step back and reflect before you make your decisions whenever possible. Put yourself on your calendar. Block out an hour twice a week. Close your door and just do your thinking. And if that seems impossible, then try 1/2 an hour twice a week. Leading "on the fly" may be ripe for course correction time and time again, only adding to stress levels that are already likely in high gear.

What leadership style do you default to most often when your stress levels run the show? How welcome is that style for those around you? Inspiring? Or devaluing?

What are you prepared to do to hold yourself accountable to being "a leader at your best".

I subscribe to these words of wisdom... The quality of the life you lead is proportional to the quality of the questions you are prepared to ask yourself and then act upon.