What blocks us from getting things done? (Nine common barriers and how to overcome them.)

Description

Iâ??ve been fortunate to meet and work with all kinds of people over the years: entrepreneurs, leaders and employees in companies of all different sizes and industries, elected officials and citizens in cities and towns across the country. And since I love to learn, Iâ??ve paid attention to what separates people who regularly meet their goals from people who donâ??t.

What I find is those who get things done (whether theyâ??re â??officialâ?• leaders or not) are action-takers, not excuse-makers. I have been both during my life. Thatâ??s probably true of most of us. And in my case when I stopped making excuses for why it couldnâ??t be done, solutions came to me. Not that I didnâ??t have to work hard to meet goalsâ??I didâ??but it was worth it in the end.

Today Iâ??d like to look at a few common barriers that get in the way of execution. I always say leadership is an inside job, and youâ??ll notice a lot of these barriers are mental and emotional. Our subconscious is a powerful force. We often donâ??t realize these barriers exist, or at least that they are impacting our work. But we all have themâ??and once we get them out into the light we can deal with them. Once we get our mindset right, we can usually achieve big things.

BARRIER: **Denial.** â??Thereâ??s nothing wrong with what Iâ??m doing.â?•

ACTION: **Surround yourself with people who care.** I worked with a woman named Beth Keane who passed away in 2013. I learned so much from her. One of her messages was we should have tough conversations with people when we see them making mistakes. She said telling someone they have spinach in their teeth is an act of caring. I believe this. When we surround ourselves with people who care enough to tell us the truth, it can push us out of denial.

BARRIER: **Rationalization.** â??Weâ??re different. That wonâ??t work for us.â?• (Terminal uniqueness)

ACTION: **Relate, donâ??t compare.** Thereâ??s always a solution and most likely itâ??s not far away. Itâ??s easy to rationalize how you, your company, or community are different (better employees, ideal location, etc.) and what works for others wonâ??t work for you. Itâ??s called *terminal uniqueness* and it keeps you from growing. There are always differences but there are also commonalities. Focus on the commonalities. Harvest best practices from others who are successful.

BARRIER: **Blame.** â??Itâ??s *their* fault (corporateâ??s, or the bossâ??s, or the governmentâ??s), not *mine*.â?•

ACTION: **Eliminate victim thinking.** When I look back at my first 31 years, I was stuck in victim mode. Nothing was my fault. Only when I had a â??moment of clarityâ?• and took responsibility for my own choices did things turn around. An ownership mindset is powerful. It frees us up to think creatively about solutions. When we stop feeling like a victim weâ??re more likely to look at those who are having success and benchmark what theyâ??re doing.

BARRIER: **Envy.** â??Why couldnâ??t *I* have gotten that promotion? Itâ??s not fair!â?•

ACTION: **Celebrate othersâ?? success.** Get intentional about shifting from a *scarcity* mindset to one of *abundance.* Thereâ??s plenty to go around. The best part is we can learn from those around us. Get to know high-achieving people and spend time with them. Make a habit of celebrating their victories and youâ??ll kick-start the emotional maturity needed for *your*success. Also, practice gratitude: when weâ??re focused on our own gifts thereâ??s little room to envy others.

BARRIER: **Uncomfortable with discomfort.** â??I am not comfortable doing that.â?•

ACTION: **Push through the discomfort and do it anyway. Disrupt yourself.** Discomfort provides valuable insights. I love the quote by Emerson: â??People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them.â?• Itâ??s a leaderâ??s job to be uncomfortable. Marketplaces shift, customer needs evolve, new technology emerges. There will be disruption. Its far better for your company to disrupt itself than to let the marketplace force changes on you. Being proactive, not reactive, will also let you strategize and better control the process.

BARRIER: **Reluctance to seek help.**

ACTION: **Just ask. Itâ??s the hardest part.** Sometimes weâ??re afraid to ask for help, even if we are in trouble, because we donâ??t want to bother others. As a result, we may ask too late. But most leaders are happy to help others learn and grow. They consider it a key part of their job. Also, great leaders know learning is a lifelong process. Whatever your job title, being willing to ask for help when you need it is a sign that youâ??re self-aware and coachable.

BARRIER: **Not understanding your value.**

ACTION: **Donâ??t over or underestimate your value.** Often employees donâ??t realize how important they are to their company. They assume no one wants to hear from them so they donâ??t share their ideas. Yet those closest to the work may have the best solutions. Likewise, some leaders may promote their own ideas without seeking input from others. This is the sign of an overinflated ego. We all need to develop the humility to see ourselves as we truly are: skilled at some things, not so skilled at others, yet always seeking to serve the greater good of the team.

BARRIER: **Turbulence in our environment.**

ACTION: **Keep the throttle down.** We all face turbulent times: a down economy, or a shift in the industry, or the loss of a key customer. Itâ??s during these times that we need to remember that people who win are those who donâ??t back off when things get uncomfortable. In the 1940s, U.S. Air Force officer and test pilot Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier because he was able to override the natural reaction to back off when the plane started to shake. He kept the throttle down. So can we. Power through the discomfort and fear until you meet your goal.

As leaders we run up against challenges and roadblocks every day. We always will. The key is in whether we let those barriers discourage and stop us, or whether we get intentional about moving past them. Iâ??ve heard life rewards action, and I believe it. When weâ??re willing to feel the discomfort and fear but do what needs doing anyway, things are a lot more likely to go our way.

Date Created
February 17, 2020

Author
quint-studer