

What Habits Are You Forming in These Challenging Times?

Description

Research shows it takes about two months for habits to become automatic. While none of us know the timeline for getting back to “normal” (whatever that may mean), it’s pretty obvious that we will likely have at least two months of altered business environment.

This raises the question: What habits are you forming during this time of transition? Whatever we’re doing over the next couple of months—whether we’re practicing new behaviors or old familiar ones executed in a different setting—is likely to stick. That’s why we need to pay close attention and get very intentional about who we want to be in the future.

“Depending on what they are, [our habits](#) will either make us or break us. We become what we repeatedly do.” —Sean Covey

For example, some of us may be focusing on health, maybe drinking more water and going for a walk every day. (For sure, we have become more diligent hand washers!) Others are moving toward becoming lifelong learners. They are reading more and attending more webinars and master classes.

On the work front, most of us are communicating more with employees. And we’re embracing technology like never before. (Most experts feel the working from home trend isn’t even a trend anymore: It’s our new reality. Even the last holdouts are realizing employees can be just as productive working from home—if not more so!)

Businesses are now over the initial shock of coronavirus changes and are hunkered down, finding new ways to work. While this time is hard, I suspect we will see some massive changes that stick around. Between American ingenuity and entrepreneurial resourcefulness, there will likely be some real innovation during this time. Ask yourself, *How are we innovating and finding new ways to do business?* Remember, what you do right now is likely to stick!

Here are some habits you might want to hardwire:

Clear (and frequent) communication. With everyone working in their separate homes, it’s impossible to communicate too often. Leaders need to be certain employees are focused on the right things and that there are no misunderstandings. Hold frequent (virtual) meetings and encourage people to ask questions if they aren’t sure.

Creating a sense of psychological safety. Is it comfortable for employees to tell you the truth and take risks? In times of uncertainty and anxiety, we need to make sure our people feel “safe” enough to speak up when something is wrong. Creating this sense of safety is a good habit to hardwire as we move ahead. It is deeply linked to team effectiveness.

Being more agile and flexible. It’s important to make good decisions in the moment with the best information you have. Nothing is certain, and it’s easy to fall victim to analysis paralysis. Don’t let this happen. Life rewards decisive action. Seize opportunities as they present themselves—but also pay

attention and be ready to course correct if needed.

Openness to virtual work options. When this pandemic is over, we may find people aren't eager to come back to the office. Working from home is often more convenient, and with the right mindset and work habits, employees might be more productive. We'll likely see people coming together for meetings at times and working from home other times—the best of both worlds.

Getting comfortable with technology. We will see the acceleration of the digital transformation. This is forcing our hands to embrace technology as a critical business tool. Videoconferencing will be the way of the future. Get good at it. (Even my team is using Zoom for strategy meetings!) Are there other technology solutions that you might embrace?

Working on your business, not *in* it. You've likely spoken with customers and cemented relationships. Chances are you've also given serious thought to the structure of your business, what needs to change, and where you are most profitable. Keep doing this! We need to regularly step back and determine whether what we're doing makes sense.

Keeping employees tied to mission. If you're like many leaders, you've likely talked more about this during the past few weeks than ever before. A strong sense of meaning and purpose is a crucial part of employee engagement. When we create it inside a company, people just do better work. Plus, you've probably noticed that, despite physical separation, your team is closer than ever. Keep this going!

Grace under fire. Relationships are defined by how we behave under stress. Tough times can put a strain on relationships, but they can also forge stronger bonds if handled the right way. When your team sees you pull things together, it's a huge credibility builder. If they see you fall apart, it can create a trust deficit that's hard to recover from, even when things settle down.

The interesting thing about times of challenge is that they give us a new perspective. We have a chance to pause and take a good look at our companies, our relationships, and ourselves. Are we different today from a few weeks ago? Who are we becoming? Do we like what we see? Is there anything we need to change moving forward?

Aristotle said, "We are the sum of our actions, and therefore our habits make the difference." Let's look at the habits we're creating and make sure they are taking us to a place we want to go.

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