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One hour

By Paperitalo Staff

I was recently talking to one of our own employees, about an objective we need to accomplish. The shorthand version of the conversation went like this, "If I had directed you, nine months ago, to devote one hour a week to this subject, think where we would be now."

Nearly everyone I know today thinks they are overworked. Not enough time for anything else. Yet, if one looks back to even last week, it is hard to determine where much of the time went. We are so busy being busy that sometimes not much is accomplished.

Yet, like I said at the start, take one hour over nine months, and what do you have? Almost forty hours devoted to a single subject. What is on your to do list, career-wise or personally, that needs a week's attention? There may be a number of things. Many of them may have been rolling forward for a very long time. It is obvious that, with discipline, they can be accomplished.

Long ago, I determined that in a small business, as I have been operating for over twenty years, the scarcest resource is not money, but time spent doing smart things. Time spent doing smart things can be monetized. Time wasted can never be recovered. As the leader, the most important thing I can do each week is be sure everyone on our team is doing smart things. If you do this, you don't have to worry about working more hours, working "harder" (whatever that means), or running out of time. These things only happen if you have been doing the wrong things or dumb things.

In large companies, the multiplying effect of one hour per week can be staggering. Motivate 39 employees to devote one hour per week to a specific objective for a year and you have just gained an extra employee. If you belong to an organization with 5,000 employees and you are only 50% efficient at doing this, and you have gained the effort of sixty employees, sixty employees your company already knows and has on board--no ramp up curve in learning about your company. I have mentioned here before a situation I encountered a number of years ago. It was when pulp and paper mills went through the effort of eliminating front office receptionists. It became quite popular to replace the receptionist with a phone and a telephone directory. One company I know stood out in that they did not do this. I asked the CEO why. He gave me an excellent response, "The people in each of our mills waste more time before lunch each day than a receptionist costs in a year. Why fool yourself into thinking this is a smart move? If the cost of a receptionist is discernible on your bottom line, you have much bigger problems than that."

This is not a person who wastes money, indeed, he has had the Midas touch at every mill he has ever operated. His point is a valid one.

If your area of responsibility is yourself, or a system of twenty mills across the land, it is worth thinking about the concept of one hour. Everyone who works for you has one hour. If that hour can be devoted to doing one smart thing each week, think what can be accomplished. ##