

CEO Tip of the Month: Presence Pays Off!

by Guido Quelle

I don't need to be a fortuneteller to guess that your calendar is full of any number of important dates. Nor do I need a crystal ball to tell me you don't always succeed in living up to your own standards for dealing with every topic in sufficient depth.

Tasks that involve mental work can literally be done anytime; thanks to electronic media we can contact anyone at any time, and those tasks that take less time than we expected leave holes in our schedules that are rapidly filled by new ones.

And that's exactly the snag. Your goal shouldn't be to do as much as possible, as quickly as possible; instead it should be to schedule those appointments that allow you to be confident (or at least more confident) that your growth strategy will succeed. But in order for this to bear fruit you have to be "present," which not only calls for your physical presence, but also your mental clarity and attention.

Here are four tips on how you can increase your presence and with it your effectiveness:

1 Go to the source

Too many topics are uselessly discussed in the boardroom. If there are production problems that are holding you back, go to the machine to clear up the problem. If Development isn't making any headway, go to the developers to talk about the bottlenecks. If Logistics can't handle the upcoming transition, go to the warehouse, to the pickers and packers, to shipping and receiving. If Sales is having trouble with a sea of customer complaints, take a day or two to visit the sales region in question. You'll see that your presence will help to find solutions. The important thing is not that you find the solution, but that your employees do, and that the whole company learns something for the future on the basis of the solution.

2 Don't hesitate to cancel appointments

As CEO, you can't afford to attend appointments that do you no good. Send a replacement, cancel or at the very least, try to get the best out of the appointment, e.g. by changing the location. If you do attend, make sure you're not distracted and can completely concentrate on the matter at hand.

3 No guilty conscience

A guilty conscience is never a good adviser. If gaps open up in your calendar, count yourself lucky and enjoy. Don't define your effectiveness in terms of how full your calendar is. And don't have a guilty conscience just because for once you have an hour to just collect your thoughts in peace and quiet; it's vital to the success of your company.

4 Define the results of a meeting beforehand

What results do you hope to achieve with a given meeting? Do the participants know? Communicate the results you expect in advance so the participants can prepare accordingly. During the meeting itself, focus solely on those results. A lack of focus will get you nowhere. Far too many meetings have an agenda, but no goals. The agenda is input; goals are output.

Could we add more points to this list? Of course. But the CEO Tip of the month is meant to be compact!

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