



Live Your Strengths

Welcome to the March 2009 edition of *Live Your Strengths*, the monthly e-newsletter from In Search of Excellence.

In this Edition:

Key Systems for Work and Life

Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge: Systems for Your Work Life

Key Systems for Work and Life

Throughout my newsletters, I have frequently written about the importance of knowing what are your key strengths and how they should become the basis of your most valuable and profitable activities.

But I often hear from clients that they have difficulty finding the time to focus on these activities. As a result, they usually end up spending time in areas that are not very meaningful to their profitability or to the quality of their lives.

There are a couple of ways to overcome this problem. One solution is to figure out what activities or responsibilities you need to let go of to have the time and energy to focus on your strengths (see last month's newsletter for more on this topic).

Another solution is to set up *systems* that will allow you to more quickly accomplish important tasks. Unfortunately, many people resist putting systems in place because it sounds boring or because they feel their days will become too routine.

The reality is, however, that the creation of even just a few simple systems may save you large amounts of time and help you improve your performance.

Think about your own work – what are the key activities that allow you to build on your strengths and bring added value to your organization? Now consider what information or resources might make these activities easier or faster for you.

Are there reports that you could analyse to make better decisions about ordering, scheduling, and so on? Are there multiple pieces of information that, if organized into one document, could greatly reduce the time it takes for you to carry out a task?

As a simple example, my husband and I have a farming operation that requires the cultivation and maintenance of more than 25 individual properties, spread out across various locations. A few years ago, we decided to systematize our processes around the land management part of our business. Through this process, we created a simple

map/diagram (in our basic word processing program – nothing fancy), which visibly showed the location of each of the farms, the lot/concession data, as well as a few key pieces of information such as how many acres are at each farm, whether we owned or rented the property, etc.

Although we originally created this map for our own planning purposes, it has saved us incredible amounts of time and frustration since then. We have been able to use it with multiple suppliers for ease of deliveries, insurance issues, and even to create emergency plans for our employees.

This system originally took about 3 hours to create and, because it is in a simple format, takes only a few seconds to update when needed. But it has saved us hours of time and frustration.

So now it's your turn. Where are you needlessly spending time and effort that could be assisted by a properly managed system? This edition's Monthly Challenge will help you get started to identify areas at work that may benefit from a system. However, systems are just as important outside of work, so April's Monthly Challenge will focus on creating systems for your personal life.

Remember, the goal of these systems is to help you become more effective and efficient. So, don't feel overwhelmed by the process of creating documents, running reports, developing procedures, etc. For now, identify only the 1 or 2 *most important* areas to create your new systems and implement them fully before starting on any new ideas.

Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge: Systems for Your Work Life

Begin with your key strength areas and your most valuable activities – look for 1 or 2 systems that would make your life easier. I have found that most successful systems revolve around one or more of the following areas:

- Creating a usable set of information
- Resolving an issue in the physical environment
- Lessons learned from recurring events

Here are a few questions to get you started:

Creating a usable set of information

What kinds of information would make your decision-making more efficient in this area? Are there monthly/quarterly reports you could run? Are there people you could meet with on a regular basis to learn key information for your decisions?

Perhaps you have all the raw data you need in front of you but are regularly spending time trying to convert it into a format that will allow you to analyse it more effectively? What would it take to develop a system that would present the data in a usable format that works for you?

Resolving an issue in the physical environment

Are you using a filing system that doesn't make sense to you? Different personality types typically like to have things filed in different ways. Perhaps you inherited the system from the person who previously held your job and it takes you too much time to find important documents? Start from scratch and organize it in a way that is logical to you. The goal should be to be able to find any filed document in less than 2 minutes.

Is your office set up in such a way that you constantly have to get up to reach for something? Observe your activities over the course of a week and identify obstacles in your physical environment that are preventing a smooth workflow.

Lessons learned from recurring events

Do you host an annual/quarterly event that could benefit from some detailed recordkeeping? Have you ever found yourself asking "When did I need to contact the media last year to inform them about this event?" or "Who was the supplier I worked with last time?" If so, you could likely benefit from developing a quick checklist of important contacts and a workflow that shows exactly what needs to happen and when.

Do you meet people at networking functions and then fail to follow up effectively with them afterward? Perhaps you need to develop a follow-up system that will easily allow you to record each person's contact information and figure out next steps for re-connecting.

Do you repeatedly get asked the same questions from clients/customers? Perhaps it would make sense to create a list of answers to frequently asked questions that you can easily cut and paste into emails and then tailor as needed.

These are only a few of the many places you could start to add systems which will make you more effective every day. Be creative in developing systems so that they work for *you* and don't be afraid to keep modifying your system until it provides you with exactly the right information or assistance you need.

Could you use some guidance to achieve your goals? Call Denise for a free 30-minute coaching session to make 2009 your best year yet!

Cheers,

Denise Cornfield-Furlong

In Search of Excellence

www.insearchofexcellence.ca

Tel: 519.923.9968

Fax: 519.923.9997

"Creating the Path to Your Potential"

Subscription Information

Do you know someone who would be interested in receiving the *Live Your Strengths*

newsletter? Please feel free to pass it on to those in your network.

Privacy Policy: I never rent, trade or sell my email list to anyone for any reason whatsoever.

Want to subscribe to this newsletter? Visit www.insearchofexcellence.ca for an easy on-line registration page.

Creating the path to your potential

In Search of Excellence
RR#1 Proton Station, ON N0C 1L0
Email:
denise@InSearchofExcellence.ca
Phone: (519) 923-9968

© 2009 In Search of Excellence. All rights reserved.
If you no longer wish to receive e-mails from
In Search of Excellence please [click here to unsubscribe](#)