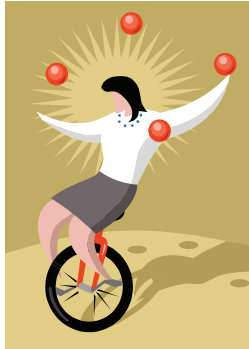


The Art of Multitasking



Henry Ford once said "It has been my observation that most people get ahead during the time that others waste time." Mary Petrovich, CEO of AxleTech International, is living proof of that philosophy.

Petrovich traces her talent for multitasking to her childhood. "My mother, a hairdresser, was a widow with eight children at the age of 30," she says. "Learning to be efficient was essential—it was a matter of survival for me. There was no way I could meet my goals in life without being highly focused."

"Four years ago, we had a \$150 million business that was losing money on most of its customer base," Petrovich says. "Since then, we have driven profits up 10 times and sales up two times without an acquisition." *Smart Business* spoke with Petrovich about the art of multitasking and the challenges of leading change.

Q: How do you lead change?

Get out from behind your desk and ask as many questions as possible. It is easy to recognize when your company is not operating to its potential. The difficult next step is to analyze where and how you are falling short. You need to identify the issues driving performance and determine the three to five things that need to be done.

Then, develop a systematic plan and stick to it. Much of this comes down to pure discipline. Listening to peers, customers and employees is essential. You have to figure out what it is you don't know before you can move forward.

Q: What was your most memorable business mistake, and what did you learn from it?

Not moving fast enough on the people issues. If someone does not display results-oriented behaviors and a sense of urgency, it does not matter how much customer and product knowledge or experience they have...or how nice they are.

You have to be willing to make the tough calls and not look back or question yourself. If your management staff cannot lead and get results, you must get them out of the way quickly. This is particularly true in a turnaround or an organization requiring dramatic improvement and cultural change.

Q: How do you get employees to buy in to your vision and help make it a reality?

First, you have to create a burning platform or reason to change. Then, you need to lead by example and get some wins that show your leadership style. These successes will demonstrate that the results under your watch are going to be much different than in the past. The people begin to trust you—you have to earn that. Early success breeds confidence and buy-in.

The culture had to change in order for AxleTech to be a success story. There is no pride in losing money. We had to revamp our sales strategy early on. As a smaller, more focused organization we had to move quicker and lose the large corporation mindset, which can be sluggish.

Q: What advice would you give a new CEO?

Surround yourself with high performers. Recognize your weaknesses and make sure your team does not have the same ones. For example, if you tend to overanalyze before making decisions, employ a management staff that moves quickly and is not paralyzed by data. Strive for a culture of execution and accountability, with a high bias for action.

There is no magic formula for success. It's a matter of common sense and mastering the fundamentals like blocking and tackling. However, the saying, "Common sense is not so common" is very true. Great leaders have undying persistence and handle setbacks by coming back twice as strong. They do not recoil or lose confidence when things don't go as planned.

Direct and regular communication is essential. I host town hall meetings with a "State of the Business" address along with time for Q&As. I do this at both the HQ and plant levels.

Q: How do you make decisions?

I manage by fact and make decisions quickly with the right small group of informed leadership team around me. We make decisions much faster than our competitors and move much more aggressively. It is a true competitive advantage for us. We are responsive. We also keep things simple: An attractive business opportunity is one that enhances our core competency and carries with it the potential to make lots of money.

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WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

"The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual."

Diversity refers to human qualities that are different from our own and those of groups to which we belong; but that are manifested in other individuals and groups. Dimensions of diversity include but are not limited to: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, work experience, and job classification.

Diversity as a concept focuses on a broader set of qualities than race and gender. In the context of the workplace, valuing diversity means creating a workplace that respects and includes differences, recognizing the unique contributions that individuals with many types of differences can make, and creating a work environment that maximizes the potential of all employees.



As companies do more and more business around the world, diversity isn't simply a matter of doing what is fair or good public relations. It's a business imperative.

Wide variety of corporations, however, don't yet realize that. The fact is evident in the numbers, which show that management ranks and boardrooms remain almost exclusively white-male enclaves. African-Americans made up 13.8% of the U.S. work force in 2003, but just 6.5% of managers, while Hispanics were 11.1% of the work force and 5% of managers. Whites, by contrast, made up 69.9% of the work force but 84.5% of managers--and dominate even more among top managers. Just 7.9% of top earners at Fortune 500 companies are women.

Something dramatically different, however, is happening at a select group of corporations with the broadest global reach. Top executives at these companies know they need a work force that reflects the changing demographics of their customers. Rather than try to hire a certain number of African-Americans or Hispanics and then encourage these groups to blend together and conceal their differences, they're trying to tap into the differences to capture new business and increase the bottom line.

Diversity is an inescapable reality for any corporation with more than 100 people, wherever it's located.

Companies benefit from diversity only if people of diverse races, ethnic backgrounds, gender or sexual orientation aren't required to act or think the same.

WHAT IS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION?

Born of the civil rights movement three decades ago, affirmative action calls for minorities and women to be given special consideration in employment, education and contracting decisions.

Institutions with affirmative action policies generally set goals and timetables for increased diversity – and use recruitment, set-asides and preference as ways of achieving those goals.

In its modern form, affirmative action can call for an admissions officer faced with two similarly qualified applicants to choose the minority over the white, or for a manager to recruit and hire a qualified woman for a job instead of a man.

Affirmative action decisions are generally not supposed to be based on quotas, nor are they supposed to give any preference to unqualified candidates. And they are not supposed to harm anyone through "reverse discrimination."

Upcoming Seminars:

Respecting Diversity in the Workplace

September 12, 2007 3:00pm — 4:30pm
September 13, 2007 8:30am — 10:00am

Improving Morale in the Workplace

December 4, 2007 3:00pm — 4:30pm
December 6, 2007 8:30am — 10:00am

COST (includes refreshments)

\$10 employees of contracted companies
Pre-registration and payment is
required and non-refundable