



Reflection

As one year ends and a new one begins it is only natural to want to reflect on what we have accomplished. Unfortunately, busy professionals today don't afford themselves the time to reflect. Many look at the past year as if it were months ago and not just a few weeks. The holidays are a blur and we are looking towards the future. Visioning is important but equally so is taking stock in what went well and how to make adjustments for improvements.

When clients come to me seeking a change in the way they review and plan their development, I often suggest that they consider the following three steps: first, identify some type of coach; second, create personal time; and third, begin journaling as a way to review and measure success.

Coaching helps you slow down enough to take stock in the past, which will enable a more thorough planning process for the future. What would it take for you to sit, reflect and journal about the past year in order for you to make the present as successful as it can be?

The answer to this question is personal. For some it would require scheduling an appointment with their coach, others can do it with friends over coffee and some can just find quiet time on Sunday morning to review and reflect. Regardless of your approach consider creating some plan and remember it is never too late to start. In fact, successful professionals have regularly scheduled meetings with themselves? on their calendars as a way to constantly stay on top of their success.

If you are going to use a coach make sure you are clear about your objectives. To make your sessions valuable you need to identify with your coach what it is you are looking to accomplish. Your coach should be able to assist you in creating a plan that will help you realize your goals. One of the biggest benefits of using a coach is their outside view of how you operate and process information. They help keep things grounded especially when things are not going as you wanted or planned them to go. Many times they are more objective than a trusted friend and often more reliable than Sunday morning. When using a coach, you know that the time you use with your coach is time that is just for you. The coaching sessions are designed for you and your professional development. Whether you choose to invest in a coach, meet regularly with a friend or have the discipline to carve out time for yourself, the

important thing is that you are taking stock and planning for your future. When was the last time you slowed down enough to really consider what you have achieved? Our lives are rich with activities, some that we choose and many that we don't. Quite often when we think we have time to reflect it is quickly taken up by a request for another activity.

If you are one of those do everything type of people and cannot seem to find the time to reflect and take stock or if you are just looking for different ways to begin a reflective practice consider this small exercise. Find 10 minutes in your day, some get up a little early, others find it over lunch and yet some find the evening more accommodating. Once you have found this time sit and let all the thoughts going through your mind calm down. If you have ever done this you will know that it can be very challenging and for some rather frustrating. The important thing is that you are trying and remember it is only for 10 minutes. The truly amazing part of this exercise is not what you experience while doing it but what you experience afterwards. Regardless of what runs through your mind or how frustrated you may become you will find that over time things seem clear, your breathing is relaxed and thoughts or behaviors that once bothered you go unnoticed. This activity in conjunction with a meeting with your coach can really boost your reflective capabilities.

As you establish a good coaching relationship and find that personal time to reflect for 10 minutes a day then the journaling will naturally follow. This may not be an immediate action but over time you will want to begin recording key points that you discussed with your coach or other thoughts that emerge while you are sitting in silence. Your journal will serve as your reminder of all you do and all your accomplishments. Many managers use their calendars as a journal source, others use their personal data assistants (PDA's), while yet others find it better to have a special notebook set aside for this activity. Whatever you choose make it easy for you. Be creative and try something different. If it works you will feel empowered, inspired and most importantly be able to track and share your success.

Eric Lutzo earned his Masters of Business Administration from Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. Eric is the founder of Forward Thought, a coaching and leadership development practice. (www.forwardthought.net)

Email: Eric@ForwardThought.net