

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

Some New Year Resolutions

It is that time of the year again, when we are all suffering a little bit of burn-out after 12 months of hard pushing whilst having to contemplate how we'll do it all over again in 2006.

Before you get too depressed at this thought; too full from festive food and your 2.5 beers to think productively about the year ahead, I thought I would write an article urging you to spend some time reflecting on how you can improve your performance next year.

Consider this a new year's resolution wish list, on ways that could help you get more from your work and reduce stress. Don't attempt them all – adopting one and actually implementing it is a lot more useful than dreaming about them all.

Set yourself goals

Amazing how that over-used interview question on what personal and professional goals you have for the next one to five years still seems to catch people out. Does that mean we are mostly content with just drifting along? At work, you should attempt to break down your annual goal (many of these are now defined into set objectives/targets/KPIs where you work – but feel free to add your own!) into weekly or at most monthly goals. Get into the habit of setting aside time (even if it's just 30 minutes) every week to review how you are doing. On a weekly basis cut the goals into daily 'to-do' lists and tick off each item as you complete it. This should give you a sense of achievement, but remember not to over-load how much you imagine you can get done in one day – there will always be stuff that pops up unexpectedly and needs your immediate attention.

Try to analyze how much time you waste at work in unnecessary meetings, chats, emailing and attaching the paper mountains on your desk in an attempt to find important documents. Once you realize how much time you waste on what, try to change things for the better!

Keep learning

If you are no longer learning, then please get someone to check your pulse to see if you are still alive! Investing in learning some new skill, or keeping up to date with the latest changes in your field, is never a waste. It will make you more effective as a person, more of an asset to the organization and a key support to your colleagues. Never allow yourself to stagnate; so choose an area of development for yourself, and convince HR why they should sponsor you, or take the initiative and leave to do it yourself. If you are still not convinced you have the time or money to do this, start by buying a relevant book to hopefully convince yourself that your chosen area of development is worthwhile to pursue.

Create more "me" time

If you have been working too hard this year, one of your resolutions ought to be to spend more 'quality' time with family and friends. I believe this time away from the office will have a positive, not a negative impact on your performance. Why am I so sure? When we are in the office, we get so caught up in the day to day fire fighting that we often forget to step back and review things holistically. We often do not get time to absorb learning; or things we could do differently; or compare where we have reached as against where we want to be. In short, we cannot see the woods for trees. Time is spent reflecting in invaluable, but impossible in a work based environment. So go on, take regular long weekends; if nothing else, you'll be re-energized to come back and attack your work afresh.

Stay well

There is no need for me to repeat those same old lectures; so I'll summarize. Quit smoking; stay fit. Limit yourself to 2.5 beers if driving. Breathe some fresh air. After all, you are of no use to anyone when dead.

Go on, set yourself a new year's resolution and let me know how you get on.

Madeleine Dunford
Managing Director
Career Connections

