Ten Tips for Productivity in 2010

By Vivienne Anthon, FAIM

As the new year approaches, it's time to consider what we can do differently or what we can do a little bit more of.

1.   Pausibility

That's right…not plausibility but pausability – the ability to pause and to refresh and recharge. Slowing down is the new currency and über busyness is gone as a badge of honour. It leaves no time to think productively.

Researchers have suggested that a 20 to 40 minute nap can result in a 35% increase in productivity and a 50% increase in decision making—who wouldn't want that?

Naps

o   http://www.sleepsecrets.org/tag/effects-of-power-nap/

o   http://www.sleepdex.org/naps.htm

Sleep Pods

o   http://3critical.wordpress.com/2008/03/19/google-nap/

o   http://www.mbf.com.au/Wellness/GeorgeStCentre/SleepPods

2.   Clarity

With so much information around us and potentially drowning us, managers need to strive for clarity. Yes…that's right—the key to productivity is to find clarity in the clutter.

In a world of managerial mutterings clarity of expectations, instruction and deliverables is essential.

In his latest book, *Bendable Learnings,* author Don Watson gives us some ripper examples of management babble. One example is of a federal minister giving a speech at the Hume Dam:

> "…[the] two years prior to the election of this government were the driest two years in the terms of the Murray river in history…So this is an historically dry circumstance we all find ourselves in." (p. 4)

Watson's point is that instead of calling a drought a drought, the minister called it "an historically dry circumstance".

The key – be concise and clear up and down the line.

3.   Consistency

Scott Ginsberg (a.k.a. the Name Tag Guy, http://www.hellomynameisscott.com/landing.aspx) believes that consistency is better than one rare moment of greatness. And he's right. Productivity is closely linked to consistency—the ability to deliver what you say you will, when you say you will to the standard you say you will. This applies to outcomes and communication, particularly at change over or transition points between projects, staff or even rosters. There's no use having four of the best 100 metre relay runners in the world if they can't consistently pass the baton.

So beware the rare and work on your consistency every day.

4.   Connectedness

In an increasingly cyber world, we need to address the concept of connectedness—how we connect with others and how we use technology to connect.

Humans have an innate drive to connect. Without it we fail to thrive. What are you doing to meaningfully connect your team when it seems so much easier to send a one dimensional email?

On the other hand what are you doing to connect through social technologies such as:

o   Facebook – http://www.facebook.com/pages/Australian-Institute-of-Management-Qld-NT/181303841232?v=info

o   Twitter – http://twitter.com/aimqld

o   LinkedIn – http://www.linkedin.com/groups?homeNewMember=&gid=2276330&trk=

o   Youtube – http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVWkFDAuOjc

Matched with appropriate human connection these tools can leverage your presence and connections.

5.   Courtesy

What? Manners linked to productivity? The answer is absolutely! Productive interactions are based on positive relationships. It's a fact people want to work with people who are likeable. If you are likeable (not a pushover or sycophant) people will do things with you and for you.

Those entering the workplace need to know that the little things count… because they always count. So says Barbara Patcher who has made a living out of teaching courtesy and etiquette. Her website is 'salesy', but her monthly e-newsletter has some great tips.

o   http://www.patcher.com

o   http://ezinearticles.com/Manners-in-the-Workplace-and-Success&id=760620

6.   Awareness

Productivity is linked to an awareness of what is happening inside your organisation **and** in the fast moving world out there.

While some trends move with the speed of a glacier (for example demographic trends such as those found http://www.abs.gov.au) other trends are a picture writ large of a future just around the corner. Trend reports can prompt and provoke you into thinking. Business trend reports such as the McKinsey Global Institute (http://www.mckinsey.com/MGI/) or the Economist Business Intelligence Unit (http://www.eiu.com/index.asp?rf=0) provide business data.

Trend watching sights provide the weird, the wacky and the wonderful. However they often make us aware of what's in store in the not too distant future. Try:

o   http://www.trendwatching.com

o   http://www.trendhunter.com

o   http://www.springwise.com

o   http://www.spyfu.com   – to become aware of what your competitors are doing on the web.

o   http://www.fastcompnay.com – everything about every thing at warp speed spotting

o   And lastly, http://www.instructables.com – an open source site to make you aware of how to do anything at all.

7.   Sustainability

It seems sustainability is a must have for every self respecting organisation.

But what does it mean and how is it linked to productivity when the recycled copier paper costs more than the bleached stuff.

Quite simply going green is not going to go away (so long as you don't engage in greenwashing (http://www.greenwashingindex.com/).

The reality is that the best people, customers and employees, want to be associated with sustainable practices and will make decisions about their employment based on their green assessment.

A shout out to the NSW city of Bundanoon whose no bottled water policy has bought them fame and fortune (http://www.smh.com.au/environment/water-issues/rees-bans-bottled-water-20090709-ddw2.html).

8.   Phraseology

Words count. It's what you say AND how you say it. The power of words to esteem and affirm should not be understated AND it pays!

Visit Scott Ginsberg's site for his downloadable Ebook "127 Phrases that Payses" (http://hellomynameisscott.articles.aspx) and roam through the words that make people feel good. There's heaps of other great resources on this site. You have to give your email address.

People who feel good are productive!

Positive phraseology includes steering well clear of phrases that are dead set idea killers. The team at Wotif, the innovation company, identified the 10 best ways to kill an idea in their book *Sticky Wisdom.*

1. "Yes, but…"

2. "We've tried it before…"

3. "That won't work because…"

4. "Have you really thought about the implications…"

5. "We don't have the time for this right now…"

6. "Put it down on paper…"

7. "Exactly how much is this idea of yours worth?"

8. "Please do a cost benefit analysis and then we'll talk about it…"

9. "OK, I hear you but we've just invested millions in doing it another way…"

10. "That's fine in theory, but it doesn't work like that…"

The Wotif gang suggest these phrases instead:

1. "Tell me more."

2. "Why are you so excited about the idea?"

3. "How's it different to the way the world is now?"

4. "How did you get the idea/where did it come from?"

5. "What would it look like?"

6. "What do I stop doing in order for what you're suggesting?"

7. "How would I tell someone else the good things about this idea?"

8. "What would the positive consequences be?"

9. Trackability

What gets measured matters or what matters gets measured—take your pick. But in the name of productivity there's a tendency to measuring and tracking everything that moves! The result…metrics, reports, graphs, scales and stuff that doesn't inform practice and doesn't add value. Too much already! Most people can't digest the deluge of data.

To be productive you need to focus on a few key metrics that everyone gets underpinned by rigorous processes that the experts deploy. If your frontline employees or those serving internal customers can't tell you what the key metrics are and WHY they matter, you're not tracking to productivity.

10. Innovation

Innovation is leveraging creativity to add value. It is about the implementation of ideas, the majority of which occur at the frontline of an organisation.

As Albert Einstein once said "difficulty creates opportunity" and your frontline staff rather than those in the C suite are exponentially more likely to innovate.

As Steve Lundin, the author of *FISH!* (which has sold seven million copies world wide), wrote in his new book *CATS: The Nine Lives of Innovation*, at its core all innovation is personal. Organisations don't innovate, people do!

There's so much out there in the innosphere…

o   http://innovation.alltop.com/ – all things innovation and the links are great

o   http://www.ovoinnovation.com – white papers and success stories are well worth a look if you can get past the commercial stuff—love the tag line—"Innovate on Purpose"

o   http://www.gamesforthebrain.com – ways to give your brain a work out…any time…

o   http://www.mindtools.com – creativity tools to check out

o   http://www.thinksmart.com – go to the idea gym workout and mouse over the icon— affirmations and reminders on stuff you already know

o   http://www.innovationtools.com – all things innovation and creativity quotes

o   http://www.gocreate.com – self proclaimed creativity centre of the universe

o   http://www.24-7innovation.com – selling training but the articles section is good

o   http://www.creativityatwork.com – more creativity stuff than you will ever need with a visual arts bent

o   http://www.creativeadvantage.com – worth the drilldown

o   http://www.leadertoleader.org/sitemap.html – innovation of the week newsletter but you have to subscribe