

Slow down and pay attention

The inverse relationship between leadership responsibility and workload

Some top leaders associate being busy and overworked with status and success. We're all just so "busy" these days. In fact, we are "hammered." "Buried" with work. Desperately "trying to keep our heads above water."

But in management, there should be an inverse relationship between leadership responsibility and workload.

I propose that the higher you move up the organizational ladder, the less busy you should be. Your time should be spent working on talent development, strategic visioning and change management.

If you're a leader or CEO working 80-plus hours per week, ask yourself: "Am I surrounded by the best people I can hire? Should I be getting involved in all the tactical decisions? Could someone else do some of my work? Am I a control freak?"

Top leaders should focus on critical decisions and ensuring strategy is deployed across the organization.

A CEO is a "chief energizing officer" or a "chief encouragement officer."

Don't be a sacrifice

I once worked for a CEO who thought we should have 15-hour workdays, travel on weekends, spend hours in meetings, work during our vacations and take calls in the middle of the night. He did this because he thought his job description was to appear busy and overworked.

But quantity does not mean quality. Spending endless hours in meetings or controlling every decision doesn't improve efficiency and productivity.

A CEO should be an agent of stability, charisma and a calming force in the

organization. He or she should make sure that none of his or her people fall into this sacrifice syndrome. Make a point to delegate, empower and encourage. You can break the pattern of stress.

Finally, a CEO should have a few priorities that are critical to the long-term existence of the organization, such as people, innovation and strategy.

Break the pattern

Working long hours can become a way of life. For many leaders, it's a coping mechanism to avoid addressing their fears, weaknesses and personal demons. If you want to get out of this pattern, here are some thoughts:

- Go on a two-week vacation and leave someone in charge of the business or the division. Prepare your trip so that the business can run without you. See what happens.
- Have a discussion about succession planning and who could be in charge while you are away, sick or just taking a break. It could be one person or a group.
- Evaluate your team's talent and bring in reinforcements to relieve the pressure.
- Evaluate the quality of the work you do during these long hours. How many are productive and bring value to the business? Could you modify the way your organization works? Could you reduce complexity?

Working too much is a sign of organizational inefficiencies. There are never enough hours to solve that. Slow down and pay attention for a second. Life is much more than work. ●



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