

increases when we access social media, which is why we seek out using these accounts. We need to trigger this increase through other means.

If you have worked for an hour without seeing a newsfeed, then reward yourself with 15 minutes of free time, go for a walk, get a special coffee, or do another preferred activity. The longer you are able to avoid unwanted activity, ideally for the entire day, the more you can reward yourself with something bigger. This can be a new video game, trip to the spa, or some much needed quiet and relaxation time in the evening. Encouraging your new behavior with rewards will ensure you stick with the new behavior.

8

MOTIVATIONAL CHANGES

Before I narrowed in on providing productivity advice to businesses, I operated a sales consultant business. I had a moderate number of clients. Many were local business owners looking for ways to break into the online market to expand their reach and boost sales.

The Pareto Principle was my go-to method for explaining where businesses should be focusing their attention to increase their profits. We would identify which clients were adding to most of the profits or which products accounted for the most sales. The problem I saw most often with my clients was that most small business owners try to be everywhere online. They exhaust themselves trying to get the products on this big chain retailer, they set up multiple online shops to get more views, and they spread themselves thin. These were fairly easy fixes. We would look over what they had already done and would quickly see where a majority of their online sales were coming from. We would then focus the majority of their marketing budget to drive traffic to those sources.

One client I encountered had a small shop where she created funny and motivational quotes which she would then print on t-shirts and sometimes specially requested items. Her name was Sally, and she had a very eccentric personality. She had yet to enter online sales except for the occasional request for something from a friend through social media. Her business

was nearly nonexistent in the online world. As a result, her income was barely increasing month to month, and she would have to close down her doors by the end of the year if she couldn't get it together.

I sat down here, as I did with all my other clients, and we began reviewing sales reports. I asked her about how many customers walked into her store during an average day. During the week, three or four people would browse her small display and, on the weekends, maybe 20 people would enter her little shop. This didn't look very promising.

I asked her what she spent most of her time doing. She said she would be busy trying to keep up with the request from friends and family to customize shirts for special occasions. Nearly all these orders she would do for at least half the price she should have been charging. She said that she could barely keep up with completing those orders, which left little time to focus on new designs to display in the store.

I asked if she offered these customized designs to anyone who walked in the door and she had said no. I asked if she promoted customizable designs on her social media sites and she said no. She reasoned that she wouldn't be able to keep up with more than one order at a time as she did nearly all the printing herself in-house.

Right from the start, it was clear where we could implement the 80/20 rule. She had to come up with a new system for printing shirts. Since this option would quickly account for 80% of her profits when she set up an online storefront, she needed to be more productive about getting orders completed. This would, in turn, free up a great deal of time which would allow for her to focus on the parts of her business that she really loved, which was coming up with new motivational quotes and shirt designs.

It was my work here that got me to thinking about the 80/20 in my own business. While it was growing and there is no doubt that most businesses would also need assistance at some point with increasing sales, I began thinking about how many other businesses were focusing on the wrong activities? How many other business owners were solely focusing on profit and not productivity?

MORAL OF THE STORY

We can get caught up doing the 80% of things we don't want to be doing when we lose sight of 20% that brings us the most joy.

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT MAKING THE MOST IMPORTANT 20% A PRIORITY:

We give too much time to tasks that provide little return.

When we take more time to complete less important tasks, we have less time to work on the things that benefit us more.

Not prioritizing tasks results in wasting time on things that can be completely left undone.

When you look at all your things as important, you waste unnecessary time completing and improving things that have little, if any, impact on your progress.

We appear to be busy but don't make progress.

Spending time only doing low-value tasks means you won't be getting the valuable items done. While you are busy, you aren't doing the things that need to be done to achieve your goals.

HOW TO GET RID OF THIS HABIT:

Step 1: Consider the long and short-term benefits.

Prioritize your goals by the impact they will have now versus in the future. What activities are you doing or need to do to produce 80% of your results? Evaluate how beneficial these tasks really are; you should be able to narrow down these tasks to just a select few that will have the greatest impact on your progress.

For Sally, she had to utilize the fact that nearly all of her profits were coming from a service that wasn't even offered to enter the market. Her reluctance to do so stemmed from spending the majority of her time making the shirts herself. Once we devised a system for her to streamline her special request orders, she was able to focus on the parts of her business that kept her going in the first place. She was able to not only bring in a new stream of profit by offering custom orders online, but she was able to come up with new original designs which was really her passion.

Step 2: What are your low and high priority tasks?

Make a list of all the things you spend your time doing throughout your day. Then make a list of all the things you need to be doing to reach your goals. Take each list and organize each of the tasks into low-priority or high-priority tasks.

Low-priority tasks can easily be delegated or not done at all. These are 80% of the tasks that we waste our time on. High priority tasks are what may require more of our effort but will provide us with the most gains. When you go to work, begin by tackling the things that will have the biggest impact now, and that require little effort. By completing these tasks first, you build up your momentum. Then you want to take advantage of your momentum and get to the high-impact and more-effort items.

Step 3: Track your progress.

To know if you are actually spending your time doing the right activities, you need to track the progress that is being made. With each of the things, focus your attention on tracking how it is affecting your ability to move ahead, grow, or its effectiveness to solve a problem. If you aren't seeing significant progress or more time is freed up in your day, then it is likely that you are focusing on the 80%, not the 20% activities.

You don't want to get caught up on trying to improve upon the 80%. Those in sales tend to learn this the hard way. They tend to see the 80% of customers who are only contributing to 20% of the profits and begin to pour money into marketing, special offers, and other incentives to get them to buy more. The same is true for business owners looking to boost productivity among staff. They look at the 80% that are contributing to 20% of sales and think that more training or bonuses will entice them to increase their efforts. What happens? The customer will take advantage of the special deal, sometimes, and continue with their buying habits. It won't change. Those employees will put in a good effort for a bonus, but when it is over they will go right back to their low-productive working habits.

Focusing on the 20% that is already contributing to most of your success ensures that you keep those customers and employees long-term. When you implement this rule into your daily routine, you will see you stop wasting time on the activities that are only contributing to 20% of your progress and you begin to rapidly crush the to-dos that get you to your goals.

Step 4: Find the 80/20 in your everyday activities.

The more you practice utilizing the 80/20 rule, the easier it will be to implement it on your goals. This can be applied to all areas of your life. It can be applied to increase pleasure when

you focus on doing more of the 20% activities that bring you the most joy. You can make room in your closet by getting rid of the 80% of clothes you don't wear. Diet can be improved by replacing the 20% of the most unhealthy options (like pop, snacks, and breakfast pastries) with more healthy ones. If your home always feels cluttered, you can get rid of the 80% of things you don't use daily. Simply looking at the things, activities, and even the people in your life will help you narrow down what equates to the 80% you waste time on, that only contribute to 20% of your overall satisfaction. Then you can focus on the 20% that accounts for 80% of your happiness.

9

BUT I WAS DOING EXTRA CREDIT?

In college, my roommate was a pharmacy major. He wanted to be top of his class, and his work ethic reflected that. He'd be up all hours of the night rummaging through biology books and had notebooks filled with numbers and equations. For all the hours he put in, I had assumed that some of the classes were a challenge and required all the extra study time.

It turns out I was wrong. One evening I encountered him in the floor lounge where he was tutoring a table full of people from his class. It turns out it was quite easy, and he was constantly reading ahead of the material and doing extra credit that was assigned.

When we got our mid-term grades, I was sure he had aced all his classes. If you can breeze through the information in some of those pharmacy courses, what could you possibly struggle within any of the others?

When I asked how he did, he was disappointed. He was getting a C in his philosophy class which would derail his plans for making the Dean's list and being top of his class.

I suggested that maybe he ask for an extra credit assignment like he had done for his biology class. He said that there were extra credit assignments but that he spent his time doing the biology ones because they were easier for him.