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Insider Tips to Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier and More Profitably

THE 15-MINUTE MEETING EVERY LEADERSHIP TEAM SHOULD HAVE

If an unexpected disruption hit your business tomorrow, would you handle it with confidence?

Many businesses don't discover gaps in communication, decision-making and operational planning until they're responding to a disruption in real time.

As the year winds down, it's a good time to review your readiness. Start by bringing your leadership team together for 15 minutes to answer these five questions.

1. If our business stopped operating tomorrow, what would need to be restored first?

Identify the functions your business can't operate without, such as scheduling, customer support, payment processing, order fulfilment or access to essential files.

Knowing what must be restored first helps your team focus on what matters most, rather than trying to fix everything at once.

2. Who makes decisions during a disruption?

Pressure quickly exposes unclear ownership.

When people don't know who can make the call, they wait for approval, duplicate work or create separate conversations that slow the resolution.

Your team should know who starts the response, updates employees, communicates with customers and works with vendors or IT partners.

3. How would we communicate without our usual tools?

Email, phones and collaboration platforms feel dependable until they stop working.

If employees couldn't access email, where would they find instructions? If your phone system failed, how would customers reach you? Where would leadership share updates?

A backup communication plan gives employees and customers a dependable place to turn.

4. What is our biggest operational dependency?

It may be a software platform, internet connection, third-party provider or an employee who understands a process nobody else fully knows.

Identifying these dependencies shows where documentation, testing, backup options or support may be needed.

5. What would we wish we had prepared?

Your team may wish it had documented a process, tested backups, updated contact lists or agreed on which systems should come back online first. Preparation gives you room to respond instead of react.

Turn the answers into action

Answering these questions will show you where your plans are clear and where they still rely on assumptions. It will reveal how your people, systems and processes need to work together during a disruption.

A good IT partner can turn gaps into action by testing recovery processes, checking backups and documenting what matters most. The result is a clearer plan your team can rely on when things don't go as expected.

4 WAYS TO GET MORE OUT OF YOUR TEAM

Businesses don't struggle because they lack great employees. They struggle because they don't understand how to make the most of the people they have. This results in smart, capable employees in the wrong roles, leading to frustration and unnecessary friction that comes across to leaders as incompetence.

Patrick Lencioni, bestselling author on business management, discusses in his latest book, *The 6 Types of Working Genius*, how every job uses a mix of six different skills. However, most people are wired to only handle a couple of the required skills. They're energized by the skills they have, which in turn make them productive. When employees aren't energized, they disengage.

Here's how to avoid performance pitfalls and get a better understanding of your team's strengths and weaknesses.

Hire for the work, not the title

When a role opens, most hiring managers default to a list of relevant experience, industry background and a resume that matches the job description. What they don't ask is what the role requires a person to do.

For example, a marketing role. Do you need someone to come up with bold new campaign ideas, someone who is great at sales leads or someone who can rally the team to meet deadlines?

According to Lencioni, most candidates will say they can do it all, but those jobs require different skill sets. So, the question becomes whether the role plays to the candidate's strengths or exposes their weaknesses. Does it increase productivity or create tension?

Get specific about what's expected of that role on a typical Tuesday, then hire for the person who finds that work energizing.

Look at your team before you look outside it

There's an instinct in business to fill every gap through hiring. If the team is struggling with follow-through, you might think of bringing in someone more detail-oriented. That instinct often reflects a gap in team awareness more than a gap in headcount.

Lencioni suggests mapping out what each person on your team does best. What work genuinely energizes them? One person's frustration could be another's best skill. Filling in a gap might just mean rearranging tasks among team members.

Underperformers may need change

Not every underperformer is the wrong person for your business. Sometimes they're just in the wrong role.

If you have someone who fits the culture, shares values and genuinely wants to contribute, letting them go isn't necessarily the right move.

Good people are written off every day because no one asks whether the role is the issue. Before you start an exit conversation, says Lencioni, ask why they are struggling. A new role might be what lets them do their best work. Moving someone into work that plays to their strengths costs less than replacing them.

Teamwork is your real competitive advantage

It doesn't matter if you have the best strategy, product or pricing, if your team isn't functioning well together, your business will never reach its true potential.

The most overlooked competitive advantage for a small business is how you use your team's strengths. When a team works with its strengths and understands its weaknesses, it stops working against itself.

If your business is struggling, instead of replacing good people, take a page from Lencioni's book. Look into better understanding how your team is wired, then build around it. The whole business will become easier to run.

5 OVERLOOKED BUSINESS HABITS THAT SAVE THE MOST TIME

If you're like most business owners, you're always looking for ways to save time. New software, AI tools and productivity systems all promise to help, but the businesses that run with the fewest interruptions usually have one thing in common: better habits.

The biggest time-savers aren't always the ones getting the most attention. They're the routines that prevent small problems from becoming expensive distractions.

As year-end approaches, it's a good time to revisit a few habits that can help you stay productive, reduce friction and avoid unnecessary fire drills.

1. Plan ahead instead of playing catch-up

If you wait until the end of the year to evaluate what's working, you're already playing catch-up. Well-run businesses set aside time to review priorities, discuss potential roadblocks and prepare for what's next. Those conversations don't need to be long, but they need to happen consistently.

Planning helps you react less, stay focused and raise concerns before they affect deadlines, customers or daily work.

A little planning today prevents a lot of scrambling tomorrow.

2. Document the important stuff

If your business depends on one person remembering how something works, you've created a single point of failure.

Processes, vendor contacts, key procedures and responsibilities should be easy to find, understand and share. Good documentation keeps work moving when someone's unavailable and reduces the time employees spend searching for answers.

Documentation doesn't need to cover every task. Start with approval steps, vendor contacts, recurring processes and responsibilities. When information lives in one person's head, work slows down. When it's documented, your team can move forward with confidence.

The less your team has to guess, the more time they can spend getting work done.

3. Fix small problems before they become big ones

Your business probably has a list of minor frustrations people have learned to work around. Maybe it's outdated software, an inefficient process, aging hardware or a task that takes too many steps. Because those issues aren't urgent, they're often pushed aside.

continued on page 4 ...

SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH

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CARTOON OF THE MONTH

"You must be the new remote employee."

... continued from page 3

Efficient businesses take a different approach. They address small problems while they're manageable before they can cause larger disruptions.

A five-minute delay repeated across several employees every day can quickly add up. The same is true for slow systems, repeated errors and processes that create unnecessary back-and-forth. Small issues may seem harmless, but they rarely stay that way.

4. Test your plans instead of making assumptions

It's easy to make assumptions when everything seems to be working.

Resilient businesses replace assumptions with confidence. They verify backups, review recovery plans and walk through potential scenarios before they're forced to respond to one.

Testing doesn't need to be complicated. It may mean confirming backups can be restored, checking emergency contact information or asking employees what they'd do if a key system became unavailable. For many businesses, preparedness becomes a priority only after something goes wrong. A quiet month is actually the best time to test your plans, before the pressure is real.

The time you spend preparing for a disruption is usually far less than the time you'd spend recovering from one.

5. Treat your IT provider like a strategic partner

If you talk to your IT provider only when something breaks, you are missing opportunities to prevent problems.

Successful businesses have regular conversations about goals, risks, future needs and business priorities. That allows technology decisions to support growth instead of reacting to problems after they happen.

A strong IT partner helps reinforce the habits that keep your business running efficiently. They can identify risks, recommend improvements, plan for future needs and provide support before an issue becomes an interruption.

The best technology relationships don't just solve problems. They also help prevent them.

Better habits create more time

Saving time isn't always about working faster or adding another tool. Often, it comes down to habits that reduce confusion, prevent delays and keep minor hiccups from turning into bigger ones.

Planning ahead, documenting information, addressing issues early and testing your plans can save hours of disruption later. With the right IT partner supporting those habits, your business can stay productive each day and focus on what matters most.