

Stop; Look; and Listen

On many a rural road, there is a lonely rail road crossing marked by an X sign with the words, “Stop, Look and Listen” written on them. Most times, there is nothing to see or hear as few trains come by. But when one does, it can crush anything on the tracks.

The message on the sign can be a slogan for our own times. In our busy lives, we can get caught up in events, reacting to situations, and unable to relax enough to learn anything new. Under the crush of work, many of us find ourselves narrowing our focus till we are living in a small bubble of work, eat, and sleep. In many cases, we do better if we stop, look, and listen.

The world changes around us. Markets change. Competitors jump in. Financial situations change. Customers keep asking for more. And in our dynamic, capitalistic society, changes bring in new ideas and new people. If we just react, we will be always “behind the curve”. We want to be able to see ahead of the current crisis. It takes effort to see where things are headed and to act decisively in the correct way.

In order to see ahead, we need to clear our minds of the day-to-day issues and see the things that we are not seeing now. The problem is that when we look around us, we always filter what we see. We use our expectations to block out stuff and thus, can miss the signs that the world is significantly changing underneath our feet.

We need to stop seeing what we expect;

look and see the things that we have overlooked, and listen to the voices that we have blocked out earlier.

This stopping can be hard but profound. But when we stop, we have the opportunity to reexamine and reorder our priorities. Our priorities change. Our markets change. Our worlds change. It can be time to stop and see all these changes.

Often, we need to step outside of our bubbles and see both what life is like for others, and see how our efforts fit in the grand scheme of life. Some people visit areas of poverty. Others step outside of their usual social and business groups and interact with other groups within their city.

Stopping Can Be Profound

There are many other voices out there. Many such voices are from groups that could be future markets. Some voices want to point out that living in our small work bubble has shrunk our lives to the point where we might be diminishing who we are. The writer Dickens used the Ghost of Christmas Past to try to point out how far Scrooge had fallen. Sometimes, we need to remember how far down we have come in our pursuit.

We take time out to listen in order to refocus our lives and our businesses. We can then restructure work, change how we deal with customers, and set ourselves up for success – a success that we would not have been able to reach without stopping.

When we stop, look, and listen, we can be reminded of our deepest values, reconnect with our selves and our own humanity, and reclaim a vital part of life.

Trust and Productivity

Recently, the productivity index was released and it showed a sharp drop in productivity. When the pandemic hit and many people started working from home, the productivity index hit some new highs. Recently, managers have been requiring people to come back to the office and productivity dropped instead of rising further. Part of the issue is trust. In general, people are more productive when trusted.

The “push back” against returning to the office has included both a number of resignations and “quiet quitting”. Many people value the extra flexibility they had when working from home and feel that the requirement to return to the office is a sign of a lack of trust by their managers. On the flip side, many managers feel that their workers aren’t as productive when working from home. Many managers don’t trust because they don’t have the proper tools and techniques to measure what their employees are doing.

Blind trust never helps anyone. On the other hand, total distrust doesn’t build a quality organization. What is needed are new management tools to provide the level of accountability needed in a new environment. Some are going for surveillance software on PC’s including key loggers and remote camera monitors. These are not very helpful and hurt the trust most organizations need.

Simply put: management needs to define what constitutes doing the job well, what metrics measure the important factors, and develop the tools to provide visibility on those metrics. In that way, management can trust employees to work anywhere while verifying that the job is being done.

Trust is an important part of business productivity. Let us find ways to build trust and continue to have great productivity.

Risky World

Ride sharing companies use demand pricing where the price goes up at times. However, they don’t seem to have some sanity limit on the price. A rider in England was charged 35,000 pounds for what was supposed to be a four mile ride. The app had listed his destination as Australia which would have been thousands of miles (not to mention driving through several oceans.

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