

The Accountability Revolution Continues

Mark Samuel on Staying on Course During Inclement Weather

Our work environments are full of changes and crises that distract us, challenge our priorities and cause us to lose focus. Some teams and individuals give up planning and prioritizing to simply fight the fires. The problems with firefighting are: you never get ahead, you never improve and your work is defined by crisis and demand, rather than by strategy or planning.

How do you stay the course in the midst of crisis and change? By sticking to a system that helps you stay focused on what's most important.

Remember The Goal: One of the challenges we face today is raising our heads out of what we are engrossed in to remind ourselves where we want to go. Make sure you have a well-defined goal and that everyone involved has a clear understanding of that goal. Be sure to distinguish between the destination and the methods you'll use to get there. If people only see the means but not the end, it becomes difficult to catch ourselves when we get off course.

Build In Flexibility And Recovery Mechanisms: While effective systems are always focused on achieving the desired outcomes, they are also dynamic. No matter how well we plan, there will be times when we must deviate from our plan. It happens. Problems develop when we don't come back to the systems we've created. Instead of using the situation as a means to abandon your focus, use your focus as a means to evaluate and manage the situation.

Evaluate often: People respond more to what we inspect rather than what we expect. Our natural tendency might be to ignore something that we have failed to work on because we're embarrassed by our lack of progress. In reality, it's important to bring it up as a way of keeping it alive, even if we have to postpone it temporarily.

Celebrate: Most teams move from one thing to the next without ever taking time to appreciate their accomplishments. Over time this can contribute to burnout and a loss of motivation. Take time to reflect on progress, to recognize contributions and to share congratulations. People want to feel good about their contributions.

Practice these strategies and you'll be better prepared to stay on course the next time a storm rolls in.

Best wishes,
Mark Samuel

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