

RICK'S TIPS

***Rick's Tips* explores the competencies necessary for successful leadership and provides activities to assist with the development and mastery of these skills.**

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PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

“He that can have patience, can have what he will.”
– Benjamin Franklin

Patience is the ability to endure waiting, delay or provocation without becoming annoyed or upset, or to persevere calmly when faced with difficulties.

DEVELOPING PATIENCE

Impatient people possess high energy and exhibit competitive behavior which sometimes may become aggressive behavior. They tend to be driven, highly intelligent and action junkies who are prone to discount the ideas of others. They have poor listening skills and lack composure in the face of adversity or when things are not happening as fast as they think they should.

Some people take pride in being impatient. Be careful not to get caught in that trap. Impatience can have a negative impact by over managing or over riding people, not developing others, stacking the business unit with your solutions or monitoring too much. A lack of tolerance will cause people to shy away from you and eventually they will quit making decisions and wait for your direction.

While impatience does have positive attributes (like things getting done quicker), in a management role it rarely produces long term effective results. Impatience has its place. For example, a turnaround situation requires an intense, highly effective, driven approach and effort because time is of the essence.

Take time to evaluate where and when your impatience seems to be heightened. Monitor for yourself what is happening to you mentally and emotionally when your impatience and or lack of listening skills emerge.

An impatient leader creates situations where he may:

- Disrupt those facilitating meetings with the need to finish sooner
- Frequently interrupt and finish other people's sentences
- Make his own process rules; doesn't wait for others
- May be action oriented and resist process and problem complexity
- May just jump to conclusions rather than thinking things through

LEADERS WHO LACK PATIENCE

- Act too quickly not always thinking things through or making decisions before all the facts are in
- Are intolerant of the slow pace or cumbersome processes of others
- May be seen as self-centered, do-it-my-way and at-my-speed
- Do not take time to listen or understand others' points of view
- Think almost everything needs to be faster and shorter
- Disrupt those facilitating meetings with his/her need to finish sooner
- Frequently interrupt and finish other people's sentences
- Make his/her own process rules; does not wait for others
- May appear to others as arrogant, uninterested or a know-it-all
- May be action oriented and resist process and problem complexity
- May just jump to conclusions rather than thinking things through

ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Simple Courtesies

Don't interrupt, finish other people's sentences or hurry them. Learn to pause to give people a chance to complete their thought before you respond; make sure they have finished.

Non-Verbals

Impatient people signal their impatience through speech and actions, but they also signal non-verbally. Watch your body language: washboard brow, body shifting, finger tapping, pencil drumming, etc. Ask others you trust for your five most frequent impatience signals and make a conscious effort to eliminate them.

Delay Gratification

Impatient people want it now. They are not good waiters. Practice waiting before providing a response or a reaction.

Impatience Triggers

Some people and actions probably bring out your impatience more than others. Learn what type of personalities and specific actions trigger your impatience buttons. Begin to recognize when these situations arise and develop techniques to stay calm.

Be Open and Approachable

Impatient people don't get as much information as patient listeners do. You will be out of the information loop and miss important information because people are afraid to approach you. Practice suspending judgment. Just take in the information and acknowledge that you understand.

Rein in Your Horse

Impatient people provide answers, conclusions, and solutions too early in the process. Others haven't even understood the problem yet. Take the time to really define a problem and brainstorm the questions to be answered in order to resolve it. Practice this by giving your people a task to think about and come back with some solutions the next day.

Develop Your People

Impatience makes it less likely you will develop any deep skills in others. Assign challenging tasks, provide feedback along the way, and encourage learning for the development of your direct reports.

WHAT IS YOUR PATIENCE QUOTIENT?

Take the following quiz:

**The meeting was scheduled for 10:00 am, it is now 10:15 am and today's calendar is packed.
You...**

1. Squirm in your chair, tap your pencil, and mutter under your breath "I don't have time for this!"
2. Sit quietly working on other projects (you always bring something with you).
3. Get up and leave!

**A co-worker has just gone off on a tangent that is not on the distributed agenda.
You...**

1. Sink in your chair and begin checking the messages on your cell phone until the meeting gets back on track.
2. Listen intently, the subject may not have been on the agenda, but it still has merit.
3. Interrupt, suggesting that the topic be addressed at the next meeting when it can be placed on the agenda.

**The boss' annual "State of the Company" speech has gone on longer than his last round of golf.
You ...**

1. Roll your eyes and whisper to your co-workers, "I know things are good, but they are coming to a screeching halt right now."
2. Start taking notes. Surely he is addressing future issues that it would be important for you to know about.
3. Go to the bathroom; you've had to go for the last half-hour and no one will miss you anyway.

Your new co-worker is having a hard time getting acclimated even though you have already "shown him the ropes" twice.

You...

1. Let him know that you are busy right now and set a time when you can review things again.
2. Say "Sure!"; third time's a charm!
3. Tell him you have a meeting and suggest someone else help him.

The boss doesn't understand your new idea, so she shoots it down.

You...

1. Continue to explain and plead your case. You thought she was smart enough to know a good idea when she saw one.
2. Take some time to review your plan, maybe she knows more than you think; re-work the idea and schedule a time to present it again.
3. Stomp out of the office. She's stupid if she can't see what a great idea this is.

Your performance evaluation was supposed to be last month, but your boss hasn't gotten to it.

You...

1. Complain to HR, you expected this to be completed already.
2. Send an email reminder to your boss; he may have just forgotten.
3. Go to your boss' office with the paperwork in hand.

Your performance evaluation suggests a specific seminar for development that would take you out of the office for an entire week.

You...

1. Let your boss know you can't take the time away from the office right now.
2. Pack your bags, you enjoy any opportunity for development.
3. State loudly that you're not going!

SCORING ON NEXT PAGE

SCORING

MOSTLY 1's:

Your Patient Quotient is Average

You have some patience, but you definitely need to work on it. Look at where you struggle the most, is it with co-workers? Authority figures? Procedures?

When you know what triggers your impatience it will be easier for you to take steps towards controlling it.

MOSTLY 2's:

Your Patient Quotient is High

You are a very patient person, but there is probably at least one area where you lose your cool. Learn to recognize when situations arise or people are present that will cause your impatience to surface and begin develop a plan to address them.

MOSTLY 3's:

Your Patient Quotient is Low

Patience is a foreign concept for you. In fact, you probably can't even spell it. If you do not take steps to develop patience, you will always face challenges in your career.

"The two most powerful warriors are patience and time."

– Leo Tolstoy