

SMART

IDEAS

SHARED

Smart Ideas To Help You Get
Where You Want To Go

IDEA # 1

APRIL 2021

Parkinson's Law Using Constraint to Become More Effective

What does a British naval historian and an author of 60 books have to do with how you get things done?

Cyril Northcote Parkinson most famous book and best-seller was called Parkinson's Law (1957). It was based on the theory that work expands, so as to fill the time available for its completion. The author became known as an important scholar in management.

You may have heard someone say, "If it wasn't for the last minute, a lot of things would not get done." And, so why is it when we have very little time to do something, we often find smarter ways of doing it? And, when we have more time, we are often less productive?

An example of Parkinson's Law is that you give someone on your team a week to finish a task even though the task really should only take about a day and a half to finish. Instead of accomplishing the task in the day and half, the individual ends up stretching out the task and uses the whole week to complete it.

The theory of Parkinson's Law is to constrain time, and you will get more done by giving yourself less time! The real question to ask yourself, your teams, and direct reports is, "Will too much time sabotage our ability to be efficient and effective?"

Another example where Parkinson's Law wreaks havoc is when we schedule time to do something relatively focused and simple, and then it begins to grow into something much different. For instance, take a simple meeting to discuss the strategic intentions each department is carrying out. If there are four hours on the clock, you will soon find it is being filled with lunch, recognitions, check-in's, Q&A, and tasks and problems that are deep into the weeds. Not to mention when a PowerPoint gets thrown in and all focus is completely lost with the 24 slides that really helped soak up the time.

Remember, the meeting was to discuss the strategic intentions. It was not supposed to include all the other things that were "too much", and therefore they made the meeting get bogged down with useless information. The original thought of the meeting may have been better having a strict 2 hour constrained schedule and only four key items to discuss. Nothing more and nothing less.

- 1) Share the top 2 intentions we are focused on.
- 2) Ask if there are any roadblocks that we need to discuss at a later date?
- 3) Find out if we are on schedule or off schedule?
- 4) Ask if there are any resources that you need that will impede your progress.

Since no agenda was published, and too much time was allowed this triggered another one of Parkinson's Law. It's called the Parkinson's Law of Triviality, and it really gets noticed in group settings like the one mentioned above. It becomes really ugly when you start to give undue time and attention to trivial matters. So, **STAY FOCUSED** and work in a time constraint! Remember to plan shorter, more focused meetings with agendas!

IDEA # 2

Poor Behaviors Spark Poor Communication

collaborate on
complex issues

gain unbiased
fresh
perspectives

ideate, create
and innovate

learn from your
peers and top
leaders in their
field



If you want something finished, done right, and completed in an effective and efficient way, you need to become a skilled communicator. In order to do this you must recognize your behaviors, as well as the behaviors of others.

When I look at projects that get derailed, or employees that do something completely different than what was asked of them, I begin to wonder about the conversation and what was communicated. Then I observe the behavior in the conversation and really try to figure out what is the real story. Every behavior has a payoff, and many of these behaviors are done sub-consciously. Behaviors can make conversations reckless and often create misinterpreted expectations.

Unfortunately, many leaders think managing people, the plan, and the process is enough. Anything can get derailed without clear, effective communication and the awareness of understanding human behavior.

I know leaders who are in Vistage (The World's Leading CEO Organization) who work on communication at all levels of their organization. Here are a few behaviors you may witness or be doing yourself that should be early red flags to poor communication:

- 1) **Avoidance:** We often avoid things when we feel unsafe or not sure of something.
- 2) **Blaming:** We do this when we want to shift the focus from something we don't want to deal with.
- 3) **Walls, Boundaries, and Barriers:** When we put up a barrier it's sometimes a sign we want protection. When we make it really hard for someone to understand or gain information we may be feeling threatened.
- 4) **The Stickler and Being in Control:** This shows up as perfection, organized, methodical and having little flexibility.
- 5) **Fixing:** When we always fix things, we are telling the other person they are not worthy to get it done. It creates low self-esteem.
- 6) **Victim:** When we play the victim, we become helpless and give ourselves reasons to blame others.
- 7) **Stubborn:** When we act stubbornly, we are stuck in a fixed mindset. We always think we have the best idea, or the old way is always the best way.

It's great to know that in Vistage, many organizations not only have their CEO on a Vistage board, they also make the investment for their key executives. The return on the investment is great. Being among their peers, getting coached, and learning from experts in a variety of fields strengthens the company. Leadership teams and key employees begin to understand more about leadership, communication, and building strong cultures. New leadership behaviors emerge and soon they find that what gets asked gets done. What gets done gets done right. And what is done right is done effectively and efficiently.

To Learn About **VISTAGE** Visit
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IDEA # 3

Using Questions for Better Leading

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One of the greatest things about being in a Vistage Peer Advisory board is our Vistage members meet together each month and learn how to ask great questions. They begin to realize that the “real story” often needs to be uncovered. We do that by asking questions using the Socratic method of identifying what is really is going on.

Here are a few questions to ask in order to help you discover your own story as well as that of others:

- When someone says, “It’s not getting done, I don’t know what to do?” Give the power back by asking...
- What are you doing to create the results you say you don’t want? >>How would you have to act differently to get the results you do want?

When someone raises an issue that has to do with alignment or leadership problems try asking:

- What are you doing to communicate the values of our organization?
- What are you doing to model those behaviors and values?
- Are you doing anything that contradicts the values of the organization?

·The next time someone complains about the lack of growth in his or her people ask:

- What problems are you solving for your people that you shouldn’t be?
- What would the conversation sound like if you focused on the person rather than the problem?
- What might the outcome be if you let your people solve those problems?

·What you know how your direct reports view your leadership? Ask them. Continually. Eventually they will tell you the truth.

- If you were going to upgrade my leadership skills from a 2.0 to a 4.0 what would you suggest?
- Is there anything I do great that you would never want to change about me?
- Rate my listening skills on a scale from 1-10. Ten is the best I can be.
- What might you be tolerating that your employees wish you didn’t?
- Is there anything I’m tolerating that you wish I wouldn’t?
- Do you find I give good feedback and give clear expectations?

Unbiased Insights Fresh Perspectives Growth

Serial Entrepreneur
Collaborator
Connector of Leaders
Author
Heart-based Leader



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