



Reflection – Who Has Time for That?

The question you should really be asking yourself is not when you find time for reflection but how do you ensure reflection is a part of your commitment to being a strong leader. The internet is always buzzing about one topic or another. If you are in any type of leadership role, this is not a topic you want to second guess the importance of learning more about.

I learned that having a cadence for reflection is far more likely to result in being successful with this endeavor. The time most people most often think of reflecting aligns with year-end. And, what else do people do around this same time of year? Yes, that is right, they make New Year's Resolutions. A quick search of Google and you will find many of those resolutions fail. A plethora of hits on articles on this statistic indicate an 80% failure rate. Something you do once a year does not lend itself to building a habit. But before we talk more about this, let's get back to why reflection is important.

Reflection is a process by which we look at what we should be celebrating and what we learned along the way. Celebrating is not only good for us but reflecting on who contributed to whatever the success was, propels us to want to involve others who should also be celebrating their own successes. An effective leader wants to make sure those involved do not miss the opportunity to celebrate because it is not only good for morale but this contributes to instilling motivation to do more of the same quality work that led to those successes.

If we skip reflecting we also likely skip learning from our experiences. Learning from our experiences is where we can find insights to leverage repeating what worked and omitting obstacles in the future which were identified as a result of that reflection. Some of the greatest learning we experience comes from uncertainty, so there is always something to discover and make use of through reflection.

Lastly, reflection helps with planning strategies for future success. And, if this sounds like something you tend to avoid because it sounds difficult, then make it a team effort. Schedule time with your team dedicated to reflecting on the past quarter, then repeat this once a quarter. Call it Team Quarterly Reflection & Celebration! Make it fun and extract the nuggets from the process while encouraging your team to do more. Reserve monthly reflection for yourself, and make it more personal, just about you. Annual reflection is something you and your team will be more likely to look forward to vs. dreading, when you approach this as a habit and not simply one more task on the to do list.

Here are a few questions, to get you started.

[Note: Qs are for use with a team; insert "I" if using for personal reflection.]

1. Was this initiative a success? Why/Why Not?
2. What did we learn from this?
3. What worked that we may want to leverage and repeat next time?
4. What might we want to do differently next time?
5. What are the most important priorities ahead of us?
6. How will you encourage your colleagues to share their ideas when we are confronted with obstacles?

Try one of these reflection methods and then let me know how this goes for you.