I have been frustrated by my own and others’ lack of follow-through these last few weeks. I have learned to distinguish between what people promise and what people deliver or what a business promises compared to what it actually delivers.

I regularly use a psychometric test that measures talents and preferences with my coaching clients. One of the parameters it evaluates is an individual’s willingness to follow through after receiving and processing new information.

The psychometric test scores the participant from one to 10—a low score meaning that their follow through is sporadic, a middling score meaning that their follow through is sufficient to maintain personal and professional systems and a high score meaning that their follow through is thorough and that they are good at inventing new systems.

A significant number of my clients have a low follow-through score, which seems to be an entrepreneurial characteristic. If you work with people who have a low follow-through score, it’s not an easy life as we shall see. Fortunately, as a coach, it is not my job to help clients improve their follow-through skills. Instead, it’s my job to help them find some ways around it. (As Dan Sullivan at The Strategic Coach says, ‘If you work on your weaknesses, you just get stronger weaknesses’.)

A helping hand

If your follow through is low or if you work with someone who’s, here are some ideas as to what will help:

1. Your friends, family and work colleagues know not to expect a (speedy) reply/decision from you either by email or telephone. (Or to remember their birthday!)
2. You miss deadlines.
3. You over-promise and under-deliver. You risk losing credibility and your patients. Simon Hocken helps you avoid the trap

If your follow through is sporadic, then unless you have got enough help, your life and your business probably looks a bit like this:

Ten symptoms of low follow-through:

1. You over-promise and under-deliver.
2. You decide on something too quickly, or very, very slowly.
3. You miss deadlines.
4. You miss appointments.
5. You miss the deadlines.
6. You don’t follow up on the patients.
7. You don’t follow up on the referrals.
8. You don’t follow up on the patients.
9. You don’t follow up on the referrals.
10. You don’t follow up on the patients.

Finishing the job

If you over-promise and under-deliver, you risk losing credibility and your patients. Simon Hocken helps you avoid the trap

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4. You miss out on opportunities including following-up on new business leads.

5. Your friends, family and work colleagues sometimes tell you they don’t feel included in your decision making.

6. You always miss the last posting date for Christmas cards!

7. Your team doesn’t believe you will do what you say you will do.

8. You pay too much for flights and trains as you leave it until the last minute to book them.

9. Clients leave you because they believe you are too busy for them.

10. You forget to water your house-plants...

So, it’s not easy having low follow-through. Tolerating your own or someone else’s lack of follow-through will zap your energy.

Tips to get things done

1. List everything that you regularly fail to follow through on.

2. List everything that you regularly dislike doing.

3. Get very clear about what your own unique abilities are and write them down.

4. Hire a clever, pro-active personal assistant. Give them both lists as a job description.

5. Focus on your own unique ability. Your production will increase, your energy and job satisfaction will increase and you will be a much nicer person to be around. The financial cost of your PA will quickly become insignificant.

Use this model in both your personal and professional life and I promise you will get more sleep, be more effective in your key relationships, stuff will get done, you will be tolerating less and have more energy.

Here’s an example

A couple of years ago, I was asked by a very high-profile West-End dentist to help him get his work/life balance back in shape. In his thirties, he was overwhelmed and in danger of physical and emotional burnout. Unfit, overweight, losing touch with his close family and wondering why his job was consuming all his energy, (when he was the boss), he spent about a third of his working life running around his boutique practice: book-keeping, sending out treatment plans, organising his lecture schedule, booking transport and accommodation, training his team, sorting out his marketing, and so on.

Reluctantly (and very concerned at the cost), he took on a competent PA, three days a week. I saw him recently for the first time in awhile, he told me that this action alone had enabled him to re-connect with his family, get fit, lose weight, and double the net profit in his business.

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