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January, 2012 Volume 3: Issue 1

Number 20

Problems With Productivity

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a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

The Manager's Coach

I can remember a few times in my life when I wasn't able to be productive. It's not that I wasn't working; it's just that the process of getting things done felt like an uphill battle. And that feeling drove me crazy. Completing tasks and projects took more time than they should have taken. Generating creative ideas was like pulling teeth. Figuring out what I needed to do next didn't come easily. During these periods overwhelm and frustration consumed me. Like everyone, I had so much to accomplish. Instead of meeting my goals efficiently and effectively, I kept spinning my wheels.

Thankfully, whenever they happened, these unproductive times didn't last longer than a few days or weeks. As I look back on them, however, I clearly understand why they hit. Historically, the reasons behind my personal lack of high productivity fit into three main categories: responsibility overload, anticipatory grief, and fatigue. These translate into being pulled in too many directions at once, living on the edge before my first husband's death, and simply not getting enough rest for several nights in succession. Yes, I am choosing to reveal my humanity here. Like many of you, I have struggled with an unrealistic schedule, chronic illness and death, and countless bouts

of sleeplessness. All of them are draining, and all of them detract from our ability to perform and produce.

The feature article below identifies seven causes of low productivity. This is not an exhaustive list, but what appears there captures some major reasons why we aren't functioning at an optimal level and getting great results in a timely manner. As you and I begin a brand NEW YEAR, we owe it to ourselves to check which ones resonate with us. Further, we owe it to ourselves to see how we can reduce their negative impact. I'm sure you want your 2012 to be filled with a lot more success and far less disappointment.

Sylvia

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FEATURE ARTICLE

7 COMMON CAUSES OF LOW PRODUCTIVITY AND HOW TO TURN THEM AROUND

1. You are chronically disorganized.

Ask yourself why you tolerate this way of life. What single thing could you do to reduce the amount or intensity of disorganization? File papers to clear your desk? Avoid overbooking your calendar? Consider every resource you need before you start to write a document? Stop using stickie notes that get lost?

2. You have not prioritized your tasks and projects.

Face the fact that you cannot do fifty tasks each day. While there may be fifty things that ought to be done, you have to clarify which ones are most important. Before you get out of bed in the morning, know which three things absolutely must happen before you go to bed that night. Invest energy and time into those three, and then begin to tackle the others.

3. You lack passion for your work.

If you aren't excited about what you do, perhaps it's time to seek a different employment opportunity. When you're bored and uninspired, you can't possibly perform to the best of your ability. In addition, your flat attitude

poisons the moral of the people around you. If you can't figure out a way to increase your motivation, then do everybody a big favor and leave.

4. You don't take breaks.

Stepping away from your work for fifteen minutes every couple of hours actually increases your productivity. On the surface this sounds like it couldn't be true, but it is. You need to recharge your brain and body. Take a brief walk, read an inspirational passage, breathe deeply, or listen to music. Remove yourself from what you are doing. When you return, you'll be amazed at your ability to concentrate.

5. You tackle difficult tasks during your worst time of day.

This is like shooting yourself in the foot. Instead, flip this around and identify your best time of day. Then make a conscious choice to fill it with the tasks that challenge you most. You will struggle less in the long run. And you will discover that what appears to be difficult actually becomes somewhat less difficult just because you feel fresh and alert.

6. You permit a variety of distractions to interrupt you.

Studies have shown that it takes at least ten minutes to recover from one interruption or distraction. Given this statistic, how much time are you wasting each and every day? Probably hours. The lesson here is to manage your distractions rather than allow them to manage you. Choose to engage the distractions you view as necessary, and get rid of or postpone the rest.

7. You promote an open door policy.

What a big mistake! Being totally accessible to your staff and colleagues doesn't serve them or you. Try this strategy: reserve a completely open door for an hour or two each day, a closed door for the same amount of time, and a half closed/half open door the remainder of the time. Train people to respect a partially or tightly closed door short of an emergency.

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Offers and Opportunities

***** COMING SOON! *****

Launching Leaders With Sylvia: 5 Essentials for First Time

Managers

This packaged audio product, which will include five CDs, transcripts, and worksheets, focuses on:

- Mindset for managing
 - Time management
 - Professional image
 - Supervision
 - Trust building

Ideal for anyone who recently started a management position or expects a promotion.

Your investment? Only \$197

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RESOURCES

Oftentimes we are not as productive as we'd like to be because of our mindset, beliefs, assumptions, and interpretations of life circumstances. Sometimes low productivity is not first and foremost about our habits. When this is true, we need to shift our view and understanding before we can change our habits. Want a fascinating read? Treat yourself to Vincent Harris's *The Productivity Epiphany* published by Tremendous Life Books (2008). In this book filled with essential and powerful insights Harris invites readers to look beneath the surface of their attitudes, thoughts, feelings, reactions, and actions. In short, he points out that we must clear up our internal junk and gunk in order to increase our productivity. An easy and quick read, any chapter in *The Productivity Epiphany* can move YOU to the next level within a matter of minutes.

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TIP

Identify the single, biggest block to your personal productivity. Then determine what it is costing you in terms of time, energy, professional

reputation, and money. Decide upon three steps you could take this week to blast through that block. A word of caution: Ask yourself how much you really want that block to disappear. On the surface you may think you want it to go away, but deep inside there may be reasons why you insist upon keeping it.

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Where in the World is SYLVIA?

Sylvia has been spending time with *a fake productions* planning major revisions to the Launching Lives website. Her site will have a very different face by the end of January to accommodate the three different coaching programs she will offer. Stay tuned for the official announcement in a few weeks!

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About This Ezine

This Ezine is 1) to provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to both personal and professional growth and 2) to invite them to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

Back issues are [available here](#). Send email by [clicking here](#) to manage your free subscription. Sharing content with attribution is encouraged

Launching Lives Ezine is dedicated, above all, to “building people...building businesses.” ©2010, 2011

About SYLVIA

Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, is an executive coach based in South Central PA. Her mission is to support corporate and nonprofit executives and business owners as they solve problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives. Her background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A [certified executive coach](#) through The Rescue Institute in Colorado and a participant in extensive continuing education, Sylvia is a platinum level expert author on ezinearticles.com. She has produced an audio CD entitled, “Making Change”, [three special reports](#) for persons in management positions, and an e-book entitled, No Surprises: A Business Guide for Starting Your Coaching Practice.



More information is available at her
Launching Lives Website

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives is an executive coaching company located in South Central PA. Its mission is to support managers and executives to solve their most pressing problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their

lives utilizing a holistic approach. Launching Lives focuses on **BUILDING PEOPLE** through individual, private coaching, group coaching, specialized products, speeches, and retreats. Most coaching takes place by phone.

Often people don't really know **HOW** they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching is the **SOLUTION** to any of these issues.

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