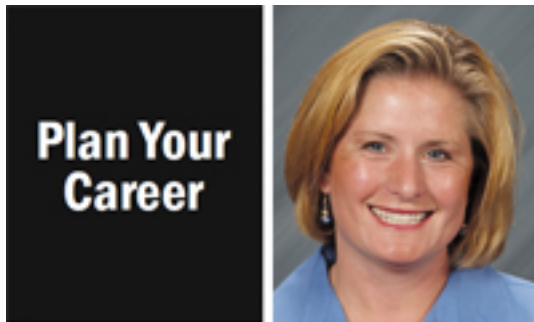


Let me get back to you on that

Written by Julie Desmond
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Abbe's co-worker is so laid-back. "He waits on everything," she says. "He doesn't return calls or respond to emails. He loses orders all the time. I wish he'd show some interest in his job!" The guy Abbe works with probably doesn't lack interest. What he lacks is urgency. Urgency: the instinct to move rapidly to impact an outcome. Urgency can't be taught. Or can it?

First a person needs to know what urgency is. The same guy who is slow to respond to customers likely would recognize urgency in other settings. Imagine walking into a sandwich shop, placing an order and hearing, "Oh, let me get back to you on that." Instead, a good server moves rapidly to make the sandwich happen, because they know what's on the line: customer satisfaction, money, their job.

Once Abbe's co-worker knows what urgency looks like, he has to realize that urgency doesn't manifest itself out of nowhere. Think of your last plane trip. Concerted effort goes into making sure urgency prevails in case of emergency. For example, the words Life Vest Under Seat appear on back of the seat ahead of you. If your plane drops into Lake Michigan, and your response is, "Let me get back to you on that," then you'd better be a strong swimmer. Knowing in advance that there's a life vest nearby ensures that in an emergency you will know what action to take. Urgency requires preparation.

Because urgency impacts outcome, a sense of urgency comes more easily when a person has clear goals in mind. A good baseball game is all about urgency in action. If Abbe's co-worker is standing on first base and a ball comes his way, will he say, "Let me get back to you on that?" Let's hope not. Urgency kicks in because the guy has been ready, waiting, in the right place with a glove on his hand. He knows that fateful moment when he's in it. Urgency happens when you're paying attention and you know what outcome you are expecting.

If Abbe's co-worker knows what he's waiting for (an order from a paying customer), is prepared for the conversation (knows his product or service and believes in it) and wants to impact results (make the sale, keep his job), then urgency happens. Some focused training will get this person into position, ready to move a little faster when he should.

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