

PERFORMANCE ARCHITECT



LEADING WITH
WHAT YOU HAVE

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by Andrew Simon

*Be strategic, not comprehensive.
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In the context of a tight fiscal environment, competing priorities, diminishing resources, claims that everything is urgent, constant flux and general tiredness, it can be really difficult to engage and inspire staff and to keep up levels of morale. Yet, on the other hand, there is no better time to lead. Leaders are needed most when they can help find a way forward in such circumstances.

Here are some tips and ideas to consider, in no particular order:

- Be strategic, not comprehensive. You can't do everything, know everything, be everywhere or manage every issue. Find the most strategic issues and focus on these.
- Know your boss's priorities and the priorities of the organisation and align your work and that of your teams with these.
- Drop things off your plate and manage the consequences.
- Delay things and manage expectations early.
- Combine things and double dip when you can.
- Get rid of unnecessary and meaningless processes.
- Say NO to the ridiculous, the rude, the stupid and the meaningless.
- Say YES to the meaningful, the wise and the courteous but add "and this is how we can make it work for you under the circumstances" so that you work within your means.
- Find "workarounds" for the stubborn, the disengaged and the blockers.
- Choose your battles well.
- Move from managing time to managing your energy levels and that of your team. Work in intensive bursts with frequent breaks in-between. Accelerate at periods of the work day when you function best, and decelerate at other times.
- Share real information and knowledge, don't add to the distracting noise by gossiping.
- Ask questions and clarify early in the piece, this saves you time in the longer run.
- Focus on providing meaning, logic and rationale to your people and let your teams work out the details of "how".
- Keep things simple.
- Use your EA if you have one, to qualify emails coming into your inbox. Read and act on important emails in a timely manner. Get rid of unnecessary emails quickly.
- Limit meetings that you chair to 45 minutes max to allow time between meetings to think and catch your breath.
- Start meetings on time and don't wait for late comers.
- Block out periods in your diary when you can clear backlogs.

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- It's important to build capacity in your people especially when you have less and less people to work with by:
 - coaching, teaching and guiding people in their work, not doing it for them.
 - delegating with trust and accountability.
 - Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of your people. Develop weaker areas, and build on and leverage strengths.
 - Strength assignments provide stretch, so assign them to your people.
 - Don't try and make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- You can't really motivate people. You have to find a way to help them to motivate themselves. The quality of the relationship that you have with your people as leader will help you to do this.
 - Apply the principle of "good enough." When things are tough and tight, good enough is.... well good enough!
 - Don't expect acknowledgement for the work you do as leader, but always acknowledge those that you lead.
 - Remember the Progress Principle: baby steps and small wins do add up!
 - Remember the Pareto Principle: 80% of something is usually the result of 20% of something!
 - Keep things in perspective: it could be worse!
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