

WORDS ALAN HARGREAVES

# RECHARGE YOUR MANAGEMENT BATTERIES

IF YOU'RE PERSONALLY MIRED IN A STATE OF INERTIA, ACHIEVING MOMENTUM REQUIRES A BOLD RETHINK.

**W**hy does a business lose momentum? There can be structural reasons: shifts in the economy, technological change, the age of the business or its people. Mostly, however, it's management. All those structural things can be managed, but in challenging times management batteries can run low. Over time, inertia sets in.

Two common symptoms of management malaise are: personal disorganisation which gets in the way of taking action; and isolation, when managers lose sight of their own identity and get stuck in their own perspective, causing the whole team to lose focus.

Address these issues and you start to chip away at inertia. Here are five simple ideas to recharge both yourself and your team.

## MICROMANAGE YOURSELF

Start the day with action. Just as a project gets a year behind schedule one day at a time, you can rise out of inertia one step at a time.

Contrary to current wisdom, take some time out from working 'on' your business and do something 'in' it. Find something that will take 15 minutes and get it done. Superman has to find a phone box before he can do anything else. Where's yours? Make the phone call, set up the meeting, delegate something; anything. Just get moving. Action creates action. One thing will do, but start with you.

The biggest single obstacle to taking this first step is personal organisation, or lack of it. Try getting some clarity into your actual work space.

In the most productive day of my professional life, a woman sat in my office and told me to pick up the first piece of paper in my in-tray. Then she asked me



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why I shouldn't throw it in the bin. That's where 70 per cent of the stuff in my office ended up. We did that all day and decluttered our way to clarity.

I delegated another 15 per cent to the people whose job it was to do those things. That was management. We filed another 10 per cent. That was organisation. The last 5 per cent were actions I had to take. That was me doing my job.

Prior to that day I felt I had lost momentum. At the end of that day the fog had cleared and I was moving. A positive view replaced the negative outlook and the change in mood was infectious.

Take time out to declutter. Identify a simple action, then take it.

## DE-ISOLATE

Your own thinking isn't going to get you out of inertia; it's probably what got you in there. None of us is smarter than all of us. Start your own think tank. Don't rely on your board or a management committee.

Put together four or five colleagues who have key brainstorming attributes: that is, they are interested, open, positive and supportive. If you don't have enough people in your organisation, then draw on friends, family, advisers, customers or suppliers. Just make sure they have those attributes. Make this a vehicle that is purpose-built to recharge your business.

Then put a topic in the tank and follow the first rule of brainstorming: don't reject any idea. Examine things that might seem frivolous. If someone says you should sell the inert business and move on, investigate it. Investing in something else might be the best decision you ever made.

Conversely, finding out that what you've got has great value is a powerful discovery. Use your think

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tank to unlock that value. It's a place that generates inspiration and enthusiasm. There is huge leverage in this simple idea.

## ELIMINATE IDENTITY FRAUD

One of the most powerful marketing tools is to identify your unique selling proposition, or USP. That's your USP, not someone else's. What's your unique management strength? We read a lot about how acknowledged business leaders got to where they are. That can be inspiring, but you are not Jack Welch or Richard Branson. You are you.

There will always be people who will do some things better than you. Celebrate them and encourage them. Help them do the things you are not good at. Then you don't have to do them. Meanwhile, refocus on the things you do well.

Ask your think tank what those things are. Sports psychologists talk of the power of the personal best. Set the bar just slightly higher. Rather than focus on things you are not great at, see how you can do slightly better at what you already do best.

That brings three rewards: you leverage off strength, not weakness; you focus on the positive, not the negative; you get motivation and momentum from lifting your game.

It takes a lot of courage to be who you really are, but you were born an original. Don't die a copy.

## NOW, FORGET ABOUT YOU

If you can get comfortable with who you are and what you are good at, you are ready to take the next and most important step.

Start making a concerted effort to forget about yourself. The best way to do that is to help others.

The most powerful characteristic of a strong leader is the ability to encourage others to excel.

Worry less about your own stature and start lifting that of others. Do that and your own stature will take care of itself. So will the stature of your team and your business.

The results will be incremental at first, but your business batteries are now showing signs of life. Working with others will take them to fully charged.

## USE YOUR MOMENTUM TO GO SOMEWHERE

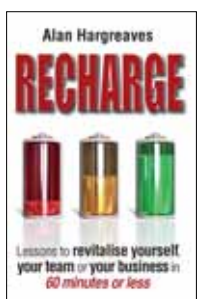
If you have taken these four steps, you are ready for the last. You have decluttered for clarity, taken action, boosted collaboration and rekindled teamwork. The batteries are recharged and it's time to start the car. Where are you going to take it?

This is another job for your think tank. Ask it an easy question: "What is the simplest, most achievable action the business can take that lifts its strongest suit to the next level?"

Don't take the nuclear option. Look for a simple step forward. It might be just discussing – rather than executing – an acquisition or an initiative in a new business area. Or it might simply be identifying a slow-moving line of stock and packaging it into a special offer to de-clutter your inventory. Just make it something doable.

The type of industry or the size of the business doesn't matter. The point of the exercise is to generate action. Find the target and make the first move in that direction. Rather than explode with momentum, take the first step in building it. After that, take the next one. The rest will follow. **MT**

Alan Hargreaves has 35 years experience in financial services and business consulting.



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