Leaders need to master time to amp up productivity

By Kumaran Rajaram

HIGH performance teams with strong track records are often swamped with work, facing multiple assignments and many deadlines. For project managers leading such teams, one essential skill is effective time and energy management. Three strategies are vital: (a) prioritise your priorities, (b) manage your energy with a laser focus, and (c) deal with procrastination.

Prioritise your priorities

For project managers, it is important to be aware of the limited and valuable time at hand and how resources need to be carefully and mindfully deployed to achieve the outcomes. The ability of the project manager to have done this will reflect in the team’s work satisfaction, morale and commitment that they show in the projects they are assigned.

This has a spillover effect in the quality and efficiency of the project outcomes to be attained. Unprioritised workloads mean your highest priorities are your lowest. The second strategy is managing your energy with a laser focus mindset. The third strategy is deal with procrastination.

Managing your energy with a laser focus mindset

The second strategy is managing your energy with a laser focus mindset. For maximum efficiency, one must focus on the task at hand and limit multitasking. Focus 100 per cent on a single task at any one time. This means you are to direct your entire attention and all your energy on the task in front of you.

The commonly held belief that we can multitask and do multiple tasks effectively is contrary to research evidence that shows that we are not able to effectively focus on more than one thing at any one time.

For unimportant activities, by all means multitask so that you do not end up spending too much time on them. If you have requests to be involved in ad hoc activities that do not need really require your presence, delegate so that you are able to focus on the prioritised task at hand instead of trying to juggle everything by yourself.

A tight deadline, for example an artificial deadline which is much earlier than the original deadline, enables you to come out of the procrastination state and get you to perform the task at hand, by putting positive pressure to complete the situation and act creatively.

Indeed, having a much-compressed time phase to complete the task could potentially make you perform much better, which makes you more productive.

An earlier deadline also allows time for a thorough review that only enhances the quality and rigour of work produced.

Work expands to fill the time allocated to it, says Parkinson’s Law. A self-imposed strategy of putting self-timed constraints on everything you do, even if there is no real need to do so, can be a ‘push’ factor to focus on your work instead of procrastinating.

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