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Written by Kellie Mills, Mills-Eaton Training
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BUSY - A modern day four letter word

This decade has a new four letter word and that word is: B-U-S-Y! For most of us 'busy' has become an insidious and dominant way of thinking, feeling and acting.

Our 'busy' mentality impacts on how we communicate with others at home and at work. When asked how we are these days, our reply generally includes the word busy or the concept of 'busyness'. We rush through our days focusing on *prioritising* so we can achieve our *KPIs* and *KRAs* and *outcomes*, all the while hoping to appear in control at the same time.

Technology provides more means for instant communication than ever, yet we make little time to actually talk to each other. To save time, we send text messages to our friends and family, and we email a colleague in the same office!

In order to do deal with all that the day throws at us, we have designed our everyday objects to remind us what to do. Mobile phones are our alarm clocks and calendars, beeping to tell us to wake up and where we should be next. Our cars scream at us to put our seatbelts on getting in, and to turn the lights off when we get out. We don't have to work out how long something takes to cook because our ovens and microwaves already know.

So, we fill all of the spare thinking time with our 'to do' lists!

Feeling and thinking 'busy' all the time affects how we feel about ourselves. Remember when we had 'slow times' which were used to catch up on the busy time overflow. Where have the 'slow times' gone? The lack of catch up time leads us to always feeling behind, so we feel guilty when we do catch up, or heaven forbid, take some time out.

Busy is a great excuse for *not* doing what's *really* important:

- want to catch up with friends but can't afford the time,
- should exercise more but just can't fit it in,
- should go and have our 12 month health check-up but have too much on at the moment,
- should plan a weekend away with family but have far too much work to do....on and on it goes.

Is *too busy* the message we really want to project to those around us?

When staff assume we are too busy they stop asking for our advice – they don't want to bother us. You can tell this is happening in your workplace by paying attention to the opening lines made by your staff entering your office. Do they start their conversations with; "*sorry to bother you...*" or "*I know you're busy but...*" or "*I'll only need a minute...*"? If you project 'busy' all the time, they may also stop coming to you with ideas that could have a positive impact on your business.

TIP: Make time for staff by having regular morning tea breaks with your team where informal, non-specific chat can occur. They don't need to turn it into a marathon event, but you will be surprised at the innovative (and often time saving) ideas generated when staff don't feel pressured to keep each conversation short and to the point.

When bosses or clients assume we are too busy, they stop bringing us opportunities, believing we probably won't have time to take advantage of them. By using the dreaded 'B' word we can give the impression we are no longer in control. Is this what our clients or bosses want to see?

TIP 2: When your boss asks you a job related question, avoid telling them how 'busy' you are, instead you might want to let them know what you are 'currently working on'.

TIP 3: When you're talking to your clients, instead of emphasising your 'busyness', why not just tell them business is great and ask how **they** are going. Make time to find out what you can be doing for them and open the door for more paying work!

When family members assume we are too busy, they stop expecting to spend time with us and start to build their lives without us. When was the last time you ran into a girlfriend or family member and said those sincere words, "*we must catch up for a coffee*"? How often do you make the time?

TIP 4: Ensure you schedule in time for family and friends. Book that family weekend away, go for picnics, and meet friends for Sunday brunch. Celebrate family events regularly rather than wait for Christmas and Easter. The occasional coffee with a close friend might take time out of your day, but don't you deserve some **time out**? Laughing with those you care about reduces stress, clears your mind and enriches your life.

There are 1,440 minutes in a day, will the world stop turning if you take a few of them and *not* use them to be busy?

Contact info:

Kellie Mills
Managing Partner, Mills-Eaton Training

kellie@millseaton.com.au
www.millseaton.com.au

p: +61 2 4927 5554