

Office Politics: How to keep your edge at any age

BY DR. NANCY D. O'REILLY, SPECIAL TO THE DAILY BUSINESS BUZZ

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HALIFAX – Is your workplace starting to leave you behind? The truth is, whether you've been working for two years or 52 years, it is easy to get into a rut ... and stay there. Humans are creatures of habit, and the habits that we develop over the years can be difficult to break. It's easier to stay in the same routines, activities and responsibilities that we've always done. Unfortunately, that kind of attitude in business will get you nowhere. The people who rise to the top of their careers are motivated, innovative and ready to take on new challenges.

If you are starting to experience a mental or physical slowdown in the workplace, here are some tips to get your edge back. These strategies will help you find the energy and drive to succeed, whether you are 29 or 99 years old.

Get healthy: Your number one way to age-proof your career is by taking a closer look at your physical and mental condition. The easiest way to do that? With a complete physical from your family doctor. Be honest with yourself – how long has it been since your last check-up? That little ringing in your ears, could be more serious than just a little hearing loss. Make it your priority to have regular physical examinations, and check for the diseases that may affect you more as you age, such as heart disease, prostate and breast cancer.

Get moving: Are you feeling more sluggish and less energetic? It could be because you aren't getting enough exercise. Many Americans have more sedentary lifestyles, not just at home (in front of the TV) but also at work, typing away at the computer or checking emails regularly. To keep that edge, you should be spending at least a few days each week doing some sort of physical activity. Incorporate cardio exercise (at least 30 minutes), weight training (use free or stationary weights at least three times a week) and most importantly, cross train to do different cardio exercises that challenge your body and build a healthy heart.

Check your skills: Are you staying up-to-date with the skills in your industry? What about all the technology tools out there? Are you on the leading edge or are you feeling frustrated by your lack of knowledge? Remember, it is fun to learn. Even if you don't have time for long classes or weeks of training, you can still subscribe to your industry magazine, read up on the latest trends via e-mail, or network at industry events in your city. There are usually even weekend events or retreats that will help you stay up-to-date on your job skills.

Keep balanced: Are you spending too many lunch breaks trying to catch up on paperwork? Are those office e-mails eating into your vacation time? If so, you're not alone. Many workers have a hard time separating their private lives from their work lives. We live in a 24-hour society, with easy access to the office via e-mails, Blackberries and cell phones. But that doesn't mean we should be doing things that way. Staying balanced means spending quality time with family and friends, enjoying vacation time and knowing when to un-plug the BlackBerry. By keeping your life balanced, you can actually get more done at work!

Learn to take a break: Taking a vacation these days can seem like a pipe dream, but it's important to take a break every once in awhile. Some people blame the rising cost of fuel and airfare, while others simply can't find the time. Stop with the excuses! Working non-stop and even forgoing a vacation may make you feel like Superman or Superwoman in the office, but soon enough your body will protest and get burned out. If a weeklong vacation isn't for you, opt for a day or two to take some personal time away from the office. Use that time to visit a spa, visit family or friends, take the kids to the beach or even just get some housework done. If a week in Europe is out of the picture, set up a vacation at home, known as a "staycation," where you purposely stay in your own home, doing personal errands or just kicking up your heels on the sofa.

Try something new: When you are young, it can seem so easy to pick up a new sport or hobby, without even thinking twice about whether you will be good or not. It's important to have that attitude at the office as well. Try something new and you may surprise yourself, in a good way! For example, if you've always wanted to start golfing, why not join that group of golfers in your office during their next outing at the driving range? You could be making new connections and helping your brain stay young. If your boss asks you to try take on a new responsibility or task in the office, develop a positive attitude and jump right in. Sure, you can always ask for help if you need it, but you may also learn that you have natural talents in other areas.

Stay connected: Are you good at keeping in touch with your friends, co-workers and relatives? Not only is it important to stay social in business because of the contacts you make and the opportunities that you create, but socializing also keeps your energy levels up. Without that social interaction, you can start to feel deflated and unmotivated. People want to work with and be with people who are fun, outgoing, happy and energized. These days, you can even re-connect or build relationships over the Internet with social networking sites.

Develop an attitude of gratitude: In other words, pass it on. You might be higher up on the pecking order at work, so wouldn't it be nice to help someone at the lower end? You can mentor someone new at the office or volunteer at a local charity or non-profit organization. Every bit of positive energy you put out will come back to you in a BIG, positive way!

Think it and it will be: The laws of attraction really do work! Your mind and your thoughts attract the people you want, the career you want, the money you want, the love you want, and life you want. So, start thinking about the things you've always wanted and start moving toward these goals with a positive attitude.

You can jump-start your life with these simple steps. It's never too late to re-fire your energy and drive, and feel great about YOU.

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