



## **Efficient or Effective?**

### **This is the question.**

by Chanon Collins

In the current time of instant gratification, people strive to achieve efficiency in all endeavors. But is efficiency the key to a successful business? Are those touting efficient operations producing effective results?

Webster defines efficient as “capable of producing desired effects – being productive without waste.” Being productive does not necessarily mean effective results are achieved. Much like Geoffrey Chaucer’s Sergeant of the Law who professed to constant activity, but never seemed to produce any results, this type of behavior appears to be the norm for those focusing on merely “getting things done.”

So, what do it take to be effective? An effective individual is one with the ability to produce maximum results with minimum effort. Notice that the results are the focus of the activity, not the speed. With results as the goal, your mode of operation must change.

To achieve effectiveness in your work place, you must establish high expectations. Your goals must be attainable and realistic. For instance, it would be unwise to expect your company to increase its sales three-fold within a short period of time. Make specific expectations and communicate these to your team members. One characteristic of ineffective leaders is that they have doubts about they abilities of their teams.

Communication is essential in maintaining effective behavior. Ask your team members and others for exactly what you want. Establishing standards of performance will be instrumental in developing an effective and productive team. Use your lines of communication to delegate tasks and projects to others. This will open time in your schedule to address larger issues and it will also allow your team members experience in dealing with critical issues.

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The use of time is critical when striving for efficacy (a mix of effectiveness and efficiency). Manipulate the time given to appointments and tasks. Instead of giving someone 10 to 15 minutes to explain an issue, give that person 7 minutes. This unusual amount of time will convey your value of time and will spear the speaker toward an effective presentation of the issue at hand.

In the area of problem-solving, respond to issues with several remedies. Don't offer a quick fix in the name of efficiency – solve the problem with many solutions to ensure effective results. Use these errors as lessons to eliminate future problems. Accommodation and compromise are useful tools in assessing systems, but do not lower your standards. Effective behavior promises maximum results.

Systems and procedures offer a “method to your madness.” Develop methods for the tasks and activities so that everyone is striving to achieve the same goal – effective results. There is a current belief that if you want something completed, give it to the busiest person in the office. Do not let this adage bind itself to you. Learn to say no. If you absolutely cannot say no, learn to negotiate so that the additional requests will not be a burden. As you strive to answer the question, remember this thought – “The expedient thing and the right thing are seldom the same thing.” – Charles Brower

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