



How do you keep the flywheel going? As the holidays are right upon us, what are you doing as a team leader to keep the momentum going among the parties, vacations, and hustle-bustle? Maybe you organize a quick team activity when the office (or Zoom call) energy is low. Maybe you schedule "check-ins" with team members to see how their progress is going on a certain project. Evaluate what that may look like for your team.

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BUILD A SYSTEM TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON TEAM COMMITMENTS

A client of mine was frustrated that nothing was happening after a team meeting. He said, "It's a great conversation, but then everyone goes back to 'work' and nothing happens!" It's a common complaint as most teams identify potential tasks throughout the course of their meetings and then walk away thinking that everyone knows what they need to do.

Au contraire! Unless you have a process to ensure all know what needs to be done, who is responsible for doing it, and by when, it's no surprise nothing happens.

How to turn potential ideas into concrete team commitments:

1. **Record Ideas.** Have a [flipchart](#) or [Google](#) sheet ready to record the idea as it pops up and who identified the task to be done.
2. **Review Potential Actions.** At the end of the meeting, review the "action plan." Make sure the team thoroughly understands the task assigned and the scope of the work. You may even discover that a task doesn't need to be done at all!
3. **Get a Name.** Make sure you write down the name of at least one person responsible for completing each task. Look to the person who suggested the idea and check to see if she would be willing to be accountable to the team for ensuring the task is completed. BTW – it doesn't mean she has to do all the work, but she should be responsible for marshaling the right people and resources to get the job done.
4. **Ask for Help.** Ask the person responsible if they are going to need some help, then quickly identify who will help him. It's a good practice for those people to touch base right after the meeting to set up a time to get together.
5. **Set Specific Due Dates.** Rather than "next week," write down February 11. By assigning a specific date, the task becomes much more tangible and can be written on

team members' calendars. If appropriate, put the task on a timeline and show how it affects other team events or tasks.

6. **Capture in Meeting Minutes.** Make sure the action items, persons responsible, and due dates are captured in the meeting minutes. Typically, minutes are sent out within two days of the meeting. This serves as a quick reminder to each team member.
7. **Follow Up.** Make sure you devise a system to follow up on those tasks:
 - Some teams like to post a "team task list" in a common area. This list has all the assigned, and not yet completed tasks, persons, and due dates. As a team member completes a task, the team can check or cross it off the list.
 - One of the first items on your team's agenda is a report out of the team's "task list." Team members can report completion, progress, or any delays. Celebrate and congratulate completion. Note progress and see if any help is needed. If there is a delay, don't shoot the messenger! You want to build a work culture that expects assigned tasks to be completed and doesn't hide the facts. Don't assign blame. Instead, allow team members to explain what happened and what they are doing to get the task done. Ask what the team can do to ensure the task is done within a reasonable amount of time.
 - If it seems like many deadlines are slipping, prioritize your team task list so each team member knows what is vital (it must be done — give it an "A"), important (it should be done — a "B"), and nice to have (it could be done — a "C") to your team's work.

Many teams develop ground rules to help each other follow through on tasks. For example, "Offer help without being asked." "Ask for help — earlier rather than later." "Complete all tasks assigned within the agreed-upon timeframe."

As you build a system to support the team's follow-through on assigned tasks, the team will start to feel responsible to each other for completing the projects each team member takes on.

7 TIPS TO INSERT YOURSELF INTO A PANEL DISCUSSION

It's possible that you, as a panelist, may not be able to insert yourself into a panel discussion. Perhaps it is because you're an introvert, or you're sitting at the end of a long row of panelists, or you're the outsider and all the other panelists know each other well.

Regardless of the cause, the moderator is not balancing the airtime, and you simply can't get a word in edgewise. Not to worry, here are some easy things to do to insert yourself into a panel discussion:

1. **Shift Your Mindset.** Patrick Allan says, "If you feel like you struggle to be heard, there's a good chance that a lot of it comes from your own mind. You might think it's important for you to sound intelligent or funny...Change your perspective on the whole ordeal." Consider it to be a casual dinner party with friends where everyone should have a chance to talk! Allan continues with a pool metaphor: "It's a pool full of splashing kids, having a good time, so take off the floaties and dive in!"
2. **Appreciate Your Role.** Perhaps you are intimidated by the other panelists and are hesitant to barge into the conversation. Don't forget that you were asked to provide a specific perspective on the topic – and you are depriving the audience of your knowledge! Make sure you come prepared with your three talking points with concise, corresponding stories.
3. **Adjust Your Body.** Take a look in the mirror. Your natural stance may be sending subliminal signals that you *don't* want to talk. Crossed arms, looking at your notes, fidgeting, etc. don't make it easy for the moderator to direct the conversation toward

you. Lea McLeod at The Muse recommends “a neutral pose that shows you’re engaged, but not presumptuous. Use open body language (i.e., don’t cross your arms), avoid extreme facial expressions (regardless of whether they’re favorable or disapproving), and nix the foot tapping and other fidgety habits that signal impatience.”

4. **Listen Actively.** If there are four panelists, each person will only be able to talk 25% of the time. So, you will be in listening mode the majority of the time. Keep eye contact, nod when you agree, and react appropriately to what is being said. David Morin says, “As long as you are involved in what is being said and show it with your body language, people will see you as part of the conversation even if you actually don’t say much.” The added benefit of being a good listener is that they will direct their attention to you when you speak.
5. **Signal the Moderator.** One of the main roles of a panel moderator is to balance the airtime evenly between panelists. They should be constantly scanning the panelists and creating space for them to weigh in as appropriate. When ready to speak, look directly at the moderator, lean in, and open your hands as if you are going to say something. A savvy moderator will create a space for you to break into the conversation.
6. **Dive In!** When you have something to say, seek a small break in the conversation – even if it is a fellow panelist taking a breath! Confidently lower your voice in tone, lean in, open your hands, and share a quick comment about what the panelist just said, add the word “and,” and share what you want to say! The gestures trigger people’s motion sensing and everyone’s eyes will be drawn toward you.
7. **Interrupt.** Sometimes, the only way to get to speak is to interrupt the moderator or a panelist. But that’s easier said than done for most people. Have some “starter” phrases at the ready if you think this may be a problem:
 - “Hold on just a moment, Jack, I appreciate that point....” State his point concisely and *add to* the conversation.
 - “Hui, that’s an interesting point and I’d like to add to that.”
 - “You have an interesting point there, but I have a different perspective that I’d like to share.”

Next time you’re feeling left out of the panel, try one of these seven tips to insert yourself in a panel discussion.

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: TURNING THE FLYWHEEL: A MONOGRAPH TO ACCOMPANY GOOD TO GREAT

I recently attended a leadership conference where Jim Collins shared his Twelve Questions for Building a Great Company – essentially a culmination of all his work. And what do you think was one of the most important contributions?

He says, “the big thing is your underlying flywheel architecture, properly conceived.” Ahhh...and that’s the tricky part. Anyone can put together a flywheel – I’ve read several blogs about this, and they don’t have the clarity and crispness with which Collins explains not only the flywheel, but all the other important concepts of his work.

- Disciplined people
 - Level 5 leadership
 - First who, then what – get the right people on the bus
- Disciplined thought
 - Genius of the and

- Confront the brutal facts – The Stockdale Paradox
 - The hedgehog concept
- Disciplined action
 - The flywheel
 - 20-mile march
 - Fire bullets, then cannonballs
- Building to last
 - Productive paranoia
 - Clock building, not time telling
- Preserve the core/stimulate progress
 - 10X multiplier
 - Return on luck
 - Outputs of greatness
- Superior results
 - Distinctive impact
 - Lasting endurance

I particularly love the last paragraph of the book:
“Finally, I caution against ever believing that your organization has achieved ultimate greatness. Good to great is never done. No matter how far we have gone or how much we have achieved, we are merely good relative to what we can do next. Greatness is an inherently dynamic process, not an end point.”