

# Performance coach spills: What leaders get wrong

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MANAGEMENT — ADAM ZUCHETTI — 29 November 2019 — 3 minute read

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**“There is only really one piece of advice that I would give to anyone in small and medium business,” according to performance coach and executive adviser Phill Nosworthy.**

Mr Nosworthy — who has worked with businesses large and small, including the likes of Microsoft, Universal Music and the AFL — revealed that there are three key problems that he commonly identifies among business leaders.

The first is one we can all relate to: busyness and feeling overwhelmed. But the other is perhaps less obvious.

“Leaders trying to lead others, when they have never [learnt] to lead themselves,” Mr Nosworthy told My Business.

And, he rationalised, “like a lot of things in life, you can be aware of the outcomes of an issue, and still be relatively unaware of the sources of them”.

A third issue, especially prevalent among business owners, is what he described as “the illusion of progress”.

## The illusion of progress

“That is where knowledge acquisition is mistaken for growth,” he said.

“Knowledge acquisition is not growth — you and I both know that you can gain some new insights, but never do anything with it.

“So, many owners fall for the trap of thinking that their next great leap forward is going to come from something they don’t know about yet, so they race about madly chasing new insights while at the same time overlooking all the insights they have worked years to gain.

“This then is simultaneously the biggest barrier and the biggest opportunity for growth that I know of in business and life today: putting into practice the things we already know.”

He suggested that the old adage “knowledge is power” is a real misnomer that many people have long subscribed to.

“Knowledge isn’t power — it is potential. Application is power.”

## Step back to develop your self-awareness

“Think of it like wind blowing a tree — sometimes people can see the trees waving about, but don’t know where the wind is coming from,” Mr Nosworthy said.

“In the same way, a lot of leaders I work with are aware of the challenges in their own performance and team culture, but can’t always connect the dots back to the source of those challenges. Ironically, sometimes the source of the challenge is the leader themselves!

“That’s why self-awareness is so critical.”

According to the performance coach, self-awareness forms the foundation for effective leadership, by understanding one’s own strengths, limitations and drivers and how they then set the path for others to follow.

“It is personal leadership that sets someone apart to create an effective leader of others,” he said.

“To be clear — this is almost never a problem with intent. I still haven’t met the team leader who wakes up on Monday morning and [actively] plans to go to work and make life challenging for people. But that is definitely something that happens!

“All the more reason as to why self-reflection and self-awareness must become routine in the life of any leader.”

## **Busyness clouds awareness**

Mr Nosworthy said that a major obstacle to developing this self-awareness is busyness.

“Busyness is the absolute enemy of the calm and dynamic demeanour that is a hallmark of the greatest leaders,” he said.

“While we all have very full lives and schedules, great leaders seem to move slowly and with purpose. The self-reflection that leads to self-awareness and growth is usually the first thing out the window when someone is too busy to think and rushing about madly.”

He alluded to the importance of delegation and prioritising the most important tasks, to follow the “less is more” principle.

“The mantra here then is to slow down and ‘do less better’,” he said.

## **‘Only one piece of advice’**

All of these points, according to Mr Nosworthy, ultimately boil down to a single, crucial piece of wisdom.

“There is only really one piece of advice that I would give to anyone in small and medium business and that is to know — like really know — why you go to work,” he said.

“The people at greatest risk of dropping out or burning out are the ones who are working hard but have never quite worked out what they are working for.”

He concluded: “It doesn’t matter what your reasons are — but boy, it’s important that you know them. Those reasons are the things that will get you out of bed, keep you pushing when times get tough, and give you reason to celebrate when you achieve them.”