

Don't Be A Crisis-Magnet! ©

by Judy Feld

When I begin working with corporate managers or entrepreneurs, some will tell me they are always in "crisis-mode". It's time to take a general, big-picture look at possible origins of crises...and ways to prevent them.

I. How do we get to the point of crisis?

One way is to ignore warning signals. We may receive gentle, subtle clues...or we might get "heavy blow with a blunt instrument" clues. Any student of human nature knows that from time to time smart people may ignore all kinds of clues.

Some organizations--large and small--build in the ability and the habits of ignoring warning signals. Instead they rely on crisis management...and in some cases have gotten very good at it. Some individuals follow that same path...by failing to notice the incubation of crises and failing to incorporate alternative scenarios into their decision making. "Problems" may be potentially damaging if they are not solved, but when they escalate into crises they may threaten the existence of the organization (or family unit, if on a personal level). Sometimes people ignore warnings of a problem when these warnings come from outside their organization. Sometimes organizations pay attention to the problems that can be easily identified, and ignore the other problems that may be lurking. The best way to stay out of this situation is to heed those early warnings or clues.

~~Coach's Comment~~

I use a coaching model with my clients that follows the progression:

Message==>Lesson==>Problem/Pain==>Crisis:

We receive many MESSAGES that arrive in the form of clues, inklings, new information, and/or insights. The message may be telling us to grow or change in some way.

==>What happens if you don't heed the message (or don't treat it as an opportunity?)
You are now given a LESSON. How much do you enjoy what we euphemistically call "learning experiences"? You may not like the lesson, but it will increase your awareness.

==>What happens if you don't learn the lesson?
It turns into a PROBLEM. When this happens with great frequency you realize that you have turned into a master problem-solver rather than someone who does what it takes to avoid having problems. Take a look at whether you invite problems...because you solve them so well.

==>What happens if you can't solve the problem?
It turns into a CRISIS...and crises are not good for your well-being.

So heed the messages you receive and enjoy a greater degree of balance, ease, effortlessness and joy!

II. Who likes problems and crises?

Another way of asking this same question is to identify some possible perceived "rewards" that might result from ignoring messages and escalating situations all the way to crises:

1. "Good problem-solvers" need problems to solve so that they can exercise their talents. So they make sure they get them...and continue to solve them. It's a big adjustment to learn to be problem-free.
2. "Indispensable" business owners or managers need to keep proving their worth.
3. Some entrepreneurs are such unrelenting optimists they will ignore all but the devastating crises that threaten their businesses.
4. People who run on adrenalin continue to create, allow to happen, or respond to situations that allow them to keep manufacturing adrenalin as fuel for their machines.

III. How and why do we avoid problems and crises?

We want to avoid them because constantly responding to problems and crises are an inefficient and ineffective way to run our lives and businesses. While crisis management can sometimes be fun (for some people) it can often lead to high levels of stress, a disrupted personal life, exhaustion, and sometimes the failure of projects.

What can you do to avoid problems and crises? I hope these suggestions help:

1. Learn quickly and often from your environment, events, people and experiences.
2. Fine-tune your personal filters and antennas so you hear "early-warning messages".
3. Notice if and how you might contribute to a problem.
4. From Deepak Chopra: "Silence is the great teacher, and to learn its lessons you must pay attention to it."
5. From "Moses on Management: 50 Leadership Lessons from the Greatest Manager of All Time" by David Barron:

" If Moses had not noticed something that was off the beaten path and turned aside to see what it was, he might have missed his shot at revelation....Moses could have walked right past it. He didn't. He turned off his path and went to learn more about it. He was curious rather than fearful; he noticed his surroundings as opposed to sleepwalking through them. His experience at the burning bush serves as a model for entrepreneurs and managers of all stripes." (page 166).

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Judy Feld launched her coaching business in 1995, after twenty years of corporate experience in technical, marketing, management and executive roles. In her private coaching Judy serves managers, business owners and professional people, including career changers, CIOs and other technology leaders, and executive women. As a former vice-president of a major airline company, Judy leverages her corporate experience with her clients which includes Fortune 500 companies, nonprofits, and entrepreneurial businesses. Judy is a Master Certified Coach, a Certified Mentor Coach, a 1993 graduate of Leadership America, and was 2003 president of the International Coach Federation.

She is also the co-founder, training director and on the faculty at the University of Texas at Dallas School of Management Executive Coaching program.

Judy is a virtual partner with Ernest F. Oriente in Coaching Success TeleForums™, the first example of their trademarked SmartMatch Alliances. They work with their clients by telephone and E-mail, specializing in global distance learning, serving groups of executives, professionals and individuals who are geographically dispersed. They have appeared more than 3500 times in business and trade publications and been interviewed in a wide variety of leading magazines and newspapers, including Inc., Business 2.0, Smart Money, The New York Times, Fast Company, The LA Times, Fortune, Business Week, Self Employed America, Financial Times, and Working Woman.

Judy Feld, Master Certified Coach (MCC)
Certified Mentor Coach
2003 President, International Coach Federation
judyfeld@coachnet.com
<http://www.coachnet.com>
972-931-6366 (phone) 972-931-6616 (fax)
Subscribe to the SOHO Success Letter and
Coaching Success: subscribe@coachingsuccess.com
