

Overcoming Organizational Inertia

We first learned about inertia in high school physics. It's the tendency of a body at rest to stay at rest and a body in motion to stay moving. It's the law that explains why it's easier to keep something moving than to get it moving. Companies follow this law. They have organizational inertia.

We've all seen it. We work with it every day. Overcoming organizational inertia is one of the major challenges for every effective executive. And it starts with each of us. For example, most great ideas die before they are ever defined, explained or evaluated. The main reason for this is not laziness or fear; it's that most executives are working hard on their day-to-day activities and don't allow enough time to do things that are most important.

In today's world of leaner, flatter, more efficient organizations it's difficult to find the time to think about underlying problems, fundamental issues or future situations and results. But it must be done. These are the areas where the long term success of your company resides. Providing this evaluation and guidance is one of your primary roles as an executive. Being too busy with day-to-day activities and emergencies is an unacceptable reason for not doing it.

Now, how do you ensure you have the time for this critical activity? For some specific ideas on how to free up time, go to our website and read our article entitled [Moving Beyond Management 101 – Post Graduate Time Management for Executives](#).

The final result you want to attain is to develop the habit of spending a specific amount of time each week on fundamental and strategic issues. Look at them from two directions. Look to the future and study what will naturally occur without a change of some type. Look also down into the situation at its fundamental and causative issues, so you will know what to change to get the result you need. This is a back and forth, iterative process. Where are we going? Why? What could we change to get a better result? What would the result likely be? And, on and on.

This is mostly a thinking process, so you usually don't need a lot of tools, gadgets or reports. You just need to do it. Pick a subject, problem or opportunity and spend time with it. I suggest a minimum of 30 minutes, especially if you haven't done a lot of this lately. Work your way up to a couple of hours. That's an acceptable amount of time in a week

That's the first step – identifying what needs to change or what needs to be worked on. The next step is to create a practical solution and put it in place quickly and efficiently. Now we're back to organizational inertia again. Not with you but with the people within the company that you need to work on this idea. How do you convince them to work on your change effort when they are already busy with other activities?

The key is to get your effort started. This usually means presenting your idea in a clear, precise manner that demonstrates the value it will create. Make sure everyone understands that being chosen to work on this project will benefit them also. You may also need to work with each person (and perhaps their manager) to prioritize their current activities and find a way to free up the needed time for your project. This will get them started. Once started you'll most likely gain momentum and people will naturally get excited. Once excited, they'll manage their own time from that point on.

In our management consulting practice we help companies identify and attain their full potential. This is our vision. It is why we were created and what we do. Please visit our website (McDonaldConsultingGroup.com) if you want to learn more about our firm.