

ONE.

Could I please ask for ONE minute of your time?



The start of a new year is always an energizing time, with a fresh new start and visions of countless, exciting, new opportunities that the coming months may hold for us. But just as our well-intentioned New Year's resolutions often get waylaid before we have barely gotten out of the chute, so, too, can our creativity, enthusiasm, drive, and best intentions get quickly set-aside as real-world challenges seem to set up hurdles before the confetti, fireworks and celebrations have subsided.

It may be something as simple as time in a day. I always start my day with a very clear picture of where I would like it to go and what I would like to accomplish. Somehow, however, before I get through my first cup of coffee, I am greeted by scrolling pages of emails (often from peers who are starting their own new year, with their own great intentions, that somehow require my own support and assistance); unexpected phone calls; staff questions that need to be answered to keep everyone else moving forward; and, before I know it, the day is done and I haven't even started on my own well-planned intentions, which now get moved and added to tomorrow's list!

So far this year I have talked with friends and colleagues who are dealing with their own set of hurdles, that include: limited staff with plates that are already overflowing; employee health challenges; budget realities (all those new opportunities often come with a price tag); technology problems; job changes; conflicting obligations; and more. The further behind we get, the more pressure we feel, and it can take the fun right out of our fun industry. I have kidded with our own staff, that how good an idea is depends (partially) upon what else is requiring my attention when it is laid on my desk.

So how are we supposed to change the world, keep our events fresh, build new partnerships, improve internal programs/processes, raise more money, et al., if we can't find the time and resources to simply stick to our calendar? I found the simplistic answer to that question during our recently-completed IFEA/NRPA Event Management School at the Oglebay National Training Center in West Virginia.

One of our students was saying that their week at the school had provided so many new ideas of how they could improve their own events, that they didn't know how they would ever get them all done. By nature of trying to provide our best experience to those attending the school, we had unintentionally created paralysis from overload, and more stress at that!

My answer was that they did not need to accomplish all of the ideas they had gained as soon as they returned home; or next week; or next month; or even this year. I encouraged them to pick just ONE new idea (the one with the greatest potential return from their viewpoint – financially; time saving; symbolically; perceptually; et al.) and to focus on that. By accomplishing

the ONE best idea, they would gain direct benefits and the motivation to take on the next best idea.

After that conversation I realized that I should take my own advice. While giving up the required multitasking that our jobs and industry demand is not an option, adding to those tasks is by our choice and we do not need to add a plethora of new opportunities all at one time, nor ones that are not the best use of our time and resources. Two valuable pieces of wisdom that I have gained over the years:

"If you can't do something with quality, don't do it at all!"

and

"There is no point in doing well, that which you should not be doing at all!"

Focusing on the correct options, exponentially, the power of ONE can be tremendous. If every one of your staff, your boards, your volunteers, your vendors, your entertainers, your city partners, et al., were to focus on ONE thing that they could each do to improve their area of responsibility; their personal lives; your programs and processes; your organizational partnerships; your event product; and more, just imagine how many new and valuable things we could accomplish together.

At every staff, board or volunteer meeting, try defining a few selected areas of importance, and ask each participant for just ONE (hopefully their best) idea for improving that area. If they have no ideas on a specific topic, they can pass. By the time you have circled the table, you should have a list of great ideas. Then, after some general discussion regarding those ideas, go around again and ask everyone to pick what they think the ONE best idea is from the first list. Do that until you have narrowed down to the ONE best idea to spend your time and resources focusing on. The ONE with the highest likely returns across-the-board. Following this process, you should also end up with a pretty good list of what your next best ideas to concentrate on are, as well.

ONE action; ONE phone call; ONE meeting; ONE new book read; ONE new benefit added; ONE new program; ONE improved process; ONE new decorative element; ONE new marketing approach; ONE new vendor; ONE new educational opportunity taken advantage of; ONE new partnership; ONE new friendship; ONE new idea. The exponential returns are waiting.

As you go through the year ahead, please let us know about your ONE best idea so that we can share them with your professional peers around the world. You can email them to my attention at schmader@ifea.com.

Here's wishing us all ONE great year ahead!