Learn to look at work routines in a new way

COVID-19 changed all our daily routines—

from how we work, shop, and even socialize. Many of us found new ways to get the job done, picked up new hobbies, rekindled passions, or strengthened family ties during the pandemic.

Now that things are beginning to return to a "new normal," it's important to take stock of our routines—old and new—and ask some important questions. We want to decide where to focus our energy going forward. With a little practice, we can train our brains to think more creatively and evaluate how things are going along the way.

Ask "Why?" without asking "Why?"

We've all been around a toddler who keeps asking, "Why?" At times it can be annoying, but it's also an important way to learn.

In the workplace, hearing "why?" can feel like a distraction when you're trying to get something done. Sometimes it's easier to put your head down and just do the work; but that's not the most effective choice long term. Without asking questions, we won't have the answers we need to adapt and grow.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO GET AT "THE WHY" WITHOUT USING THE WORD:

EXERCISE 1

- ☐ Tell me more about how this process evolved.
- ☐ What problem are we trying to solve?
- ☐ What led to this decision?
- ☐ What were the team's priorities at the time?
- ☐ What did leadership want to accomplish?
- ☐ How did our competitors respond?
- ☐ What technology was available?
- ☐ What do we know now that we didn't know then?
- ☐ Has this process ever been evaluated? If so, what was the outcome?

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Once you know your "why" determine what to start, stop and continue

Many things have had to both start and stop because of the pandemic. People have more grace than ever for change. Now is the perfect time to assess routines that may have needed to be changed for some time. Then you can focus your time and resources on the right things to accomplish your goals.

HERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM:

1. What should we START doing?

☐ Things that are not being done, but should be done

☐ Things that are new and worth trying or experimenting with

☐ Things we should do to be more effective and efficient

☐ Things that help address new realities or gaps

2. What should we STOP doing?

☐ Things that are not working or not contributing to desired results

☐ Things that are impeding progress, counterproductive, or are no longer practical

☐ Things that are no longer cost-effective

☐ Things we or others dislike but have continued because it's "what you've always done"

3. What should we CONTINUE doing?

☐ Things that are working well

☐ Things that show potential but need improving

☐ Things that we like or want to keep

☐ Pieces of processes or programs that we want to stop, but others we want to continue to avoid "throwing the baby out with the bath water"

At the end of the exercise, you should have a good list of activities. The same week the activities have been selected, decide which items make sense to move forward with now, and which to keep for another time, and determine when that time is. Develop implementation plans looking for quick wins so you can build on the momentum.

Enjoy the benefits of letting some things go

We've all been taught to "never give up." While perseverance and grit are essential to success, so is knowing when to let something go. It's important to acknowledge the trade-offs of spending time on one activity compared to another since we all have limits. Giving something up that isn't productive frees you up to do things that are. In other words, you have a lot to gain by letting some things go.

If you're not sure whether to let something go, here are some things that might be preventing you from deciding:

1. You're focused on the time and energy you've already invested even though you can't get them back

2. You're only seeing positive cues—and missing the negative ones

3. Realizing things are not going well can cause you to believe achieving the goal is more valuable than it really is

4. You're afraid of making a mistake—rather than trusting your instincts

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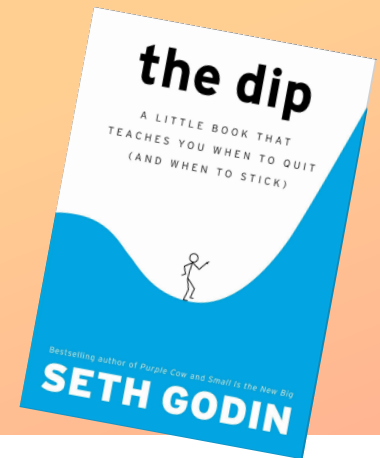**Once you understand why you're stuck, here are some things you can do to make it easier to let go:**

1. Get a grip on your emotions so you're prepared for the transition—letting go can be hard so mentally prepare

2. Give yourself a pep talk about what will be possible when you let go of what is not working

3. Use if/then thinking to plan how to achieve your new goal

4. Prepare for the stress of transition by taking care of yourself

Now you're asking the right questions and ready to focus on what's important instead of being tied down with auto-pilot tasks.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Check out *The Dip* by Seth Godin

The Dip is the long journey between starting something and mastering it. But *The Dip* can actually be a shortcut because it gets you where you want to go faster than any other path. The decision to let go is a simple evaluation: Is the pain of *The Dip* worth the benefit of the light at the end of the tunnel?

the dip

A LITTLE BOOK THAT TEACHES YOU WHEN TO QUIT (AND WHEN TO STICK)

Bestselling author of *Purple Cow* and *Small Is the New Big*

SETH GODIN

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