

Transcription - When Do You Take Reflection Time?

Welcome back. I'm Kim Baillie and this is Inside Exec.

It's a little bit different today. I'm in Bunbury Western Australia at the Australian Floral Art Association Championships. I have put in two competition pieces, so I now have the afternoon while the judging is taking place to sit and reflect on the time that I have here and some of the things that we've talked about in the podcast up to this point.

What's most interesting I guess, about being here on my own and having some time, is that I can have some time for reflection and I guess that's something that we don't take advantage of in our busy lives. We like to have everything scheduled and time tabled and organized and we do need some time out, some time away, some time for reflection and it doesn't have to be for anything specific. You don't have to be looking for a particular outcome. But it's a good opportunity for you to just sit somewhere quiet, although there's a little bit of traffic noise in the background here, but I'm looking out at this vast expanse of water, there's storms around a bit, but it's just a time where nothing else can impede.

Nothing else can intrude on the time that I've got to think about the things that have happened in the last month or so. It gives me time for reflection, gives me time to look out and not allow any other distractions to intrude in this time where I reflect on where I am at this point and what I'm thinking about, where I'm going. So what is reflection time and how do we use it our best advantage?

Well, reflection time for me is not about thinking about the actual activities of work that might be intruding in my day. It's about a broader approach, it's about just sitting and letting thoughts flow through my head. Sometimes that'll be new ideas, sometimes it'll be solutions that I hadn't thought I could possibly come up with to situations that have been at the back of my mind for some time and sometimes it's just an opportunity to not think at all, to have some stillness in my head and not be constantly working the brain, trying to find the next thing that has to be done, the next thing that needs to be done, the next thing that should be done. So a quiet time and you'll probably hear that in my voice and it's actually a quieter time for me across the board.

You know, it gives my body a chance to recover as well as my brain. It's what it is, it's a reflection time, it's looking inward instead of looking outward and giving yourself an opportunity to have some time where you are not focused on anything in particular, you focus on nothing at all.

There's a lot to be said, a lot of people find solace in meditation. For me, unfortunately if I listen to meditation tapes all I do is go to sleep and maybe that's a good thing, maybe that's my absolute time out. But when I wake, I don't feel that I have benefited from that time. I worry that I've wasted that time sleeping when I could have been doing something more proactive. So meditation is not an answer for me, but sitting awake and quietly in a peaceful place does work. It means that I can, as I said, think about processes that are about me, that are not about the workplace necessarily, but obviously were reflected in the workplace because of the improved approach that I have to work afterwards.

I've had this reflection time. And I think that the biggest issue for us as executives is that we don't know how or when or where to take that time. We think that we don't have time to have time out. We don't have time to stop and smell the roses as they say. Although you wouldn't want to do that this weekend at Bunbury because there's an art gallery full of live flowers. So there's a fairly overwhelming perfume, not just roses. (seagull noises) It's authentic, you can tell that I'm actually on the water's edge. I think it wants to be fed personally. It's not going to happen in the short term anyway.

The reflection time for me at this time while I'm away and I am completely away, I have not ever been to Western Australia before, so obviously not been to Bunbury before, it's a lovely little town on the water's edge, often called the three waters I think because it's meeting of three water ways. A seaside town, but not really a beachy suburb if you understand my drift. And so it's a bit of a country town on the water I guess is my feeling.

And the people here, everyone I've talked to and I said, oh it's a lovely spot, you should be so happy to be here. And they're quite surprised, quite surprised that an outsider would see it as something special because it's just their backyard, just what they're used to and that someone would see it so special that they would have to say something about it.

And I wonder how we can look at that in terms of our work situations and see if we are not over analyzing in our work situation and focusing on the little things that aggravate us rather than looking at how our work and our work ethics and our workplace and our work behavior appear to someone who is independent, someone outside. And it's often a good assessment to get, is to actually listen to what people coming into an organization see and hear that you don't, that you're blind to. That's a good thing for reflection.

Good things to think about that perhaps you are doing some right things and perhaps you're not doing some things that you should be doing or you're not doing things that you should be doing differently. And that they are perceived differently from an outsider to the way they are from an insider, which brings me to one of my pet peeves and it's about expecting outsiders to understand internal procedures.

We can't when we are responsible for organizations, allow that attitude to be brought to the broader public or to your customers or to whoever needs to interact with your organization, It's far too common. And as consumers, we all have been placed in that position where we've applied for some sort of permit or we've gone to a shop to buy something in particular and the response is, oh, we don't do it that way or we have to do it like this.

And it's not that they have to do it in a particular way for you, the customer, but they have to do it in a particular way for them, the organization. And really when you think about it, their procedures are none of your business and you're not interested in them, all you want is a result. And we need to ensure that we focus on that when we're looking at processes and procedures, that we don't allow our understanding of our own procedures to be the reason we give clients or customers for the way we do something. They need to know that what they want, the outcome they want, is going to happen.

I don't quite know how that works in terms of reflection, but it's a reflection that I've had. I've been sitting here, so I'll just share my reflections with you.

So I managed to find myself another time for reflection within a week of the last one. I'm actually back in the beautiful downtown Wangi Wangi in New South Wales after my time in Bunbury at the Australian Championships. And it's been a wonderful week of time away from the rest of the businesses in which I'm involved. Tonight, I've got another time for reflection and in this part of the talk, I want to give you some ideas about when you can find these times for reflection because I know that we all have very full lives, very busy lives, very ordered and regimented lives as I talked about earlier.

But there are times in the day and there is technology that can help you in the reflection time. So I'm actually recording this on my phone and I would imagine that all of you have phones that you can use for recording your thoughts wherever you are and may well in fact use them that way already. So it's an easy way for you to take five minutes, 10 minutes when there's a break in between whatever you're doing to just stop and it's about reflection time. It's about

stopping the process in which you're involved and taking a time away, a time for your mind to recover and to think of other things.

So I'm actually waiting for the clothes to dry in the clothes dryer at the laundromat. And so I thought, well this is a good chance then to finish off that task that I was going to do and have this podcast up and ready for people to listen to. So I'm actually completing a task, but at the same time it is a reflection time for me. As you heard in the earlier part, I strayed off talking about reflection to actually having a reflection about a particular process and that may well happen again.

But I'll try and keep focused this time and just talk about reflection time and how you can use it and what tools are good for you to use when you have reflection time. Now for some people recording what they're thinking is not a comfortable way for them to get the information out of their head and record somewhere else. So I would like to also recommend a process called free writing.

Now, I was first introduced to this when I was writing content for websites and it's a process where you set a time limit and you just write whatever comes into your head and if nothing comes into your head, you just put down blah, blah, blah. You don't try and correct it, you don't try and correct the grammar or the spelling or the way it's structured, you just simply write down the words and you set yourself a time. I used to set myself a time for five minutes. Five minutes is plenty of time to be writing things when you're not going to be distracted and not going to be worried and not going to second guess what you're writing. You can actually put down a whole lot of content.

And the idea of it is that you put it all down, timer goes off, you stop at that point and you do not read it at that point, you leave it and you leave it for a day, you leave it for two days, but you leave it for a reasonable period of time, then you go back to it and you correct it in terms of the spelling and the grammar and the order of the thoughts that you've put down and then you've got a really good reflection or a really good piece of content.

Regardless of how you use that system, that content came straight out of your head. You know, you didn't have to focus on trying to think about it. So I'd recommend it for those of you who don't want to do the recording, I'd recommend the free writing system, give it a try, start off with two minutes, just do two minutes of writing down anything that comes into your head and it doesn't have to be about a particular topic. But I guess that's the important thing, is you don't correct it as you go and it doesn't have to be about anything in particular, you can just write things down or just put blah blah blah if nothing is coming into

your head.

Those two ways are probably the best ones that I can recommend for you to use for reflection time to record what you're seeing and how you're feeling and be able to make use of that information at a later date. It's a habit, reflection time is a habit. The more often you find time, whether it is only two or three minutes or 90 seconds to take time out, it will become a habit.

Reflection time becomes a habit. It becomes a habit not necessarily a regular habit but a habit. It's a habit because you're comfortable with the process that you're going to use and you're comfortable that it's going to provide you with some useful information, information you can act on, you can use or a time where you can release some frustration, release some aggravation for want of a better word, over something that might be happening over which you have no control and it is intruding on the rest of your thought processes.

So the best way to let it go is to write it down or to verbalize it and then it's out of your system because we also know from research that unless you address issues that are sitting in your head, they will sit and come to the forefront of your head and you won't be able to get past them. Everything else will be colored by this other issue that is unresolved in your head.

When you think about situations in the past where you're worried over particular items, you know that your mind hasn't been clear, you haven't been able to focus properly on all of the other things that you need to do because this one thing just keeps coming back and haunting you. As they say, reflection time has a whole host of uses and there is the opportunity for you to be able to fit it into your daily lives and to find time for reflection and to find places for reflection.

There will be places that you don't often think of. I don't suppose any of you really thought that the laundromat was a place for reflection, but it is because it's a time where you are isolated or you can make yourself isolated if you turn off your devices from the rest of your work time, it's a finite time. You're not taking time out of the day to do something else. It's multitasking at a certain level.

And so that's always a good thing to be able to say. You can multitask, particularly if you're a man because apparently men can't do it. Although I don't subscribe to that theory myself. Reflection time, time out, time away from the day to day worries, the processes and procedures that you're thinking about, the staffing issues that you've got, profits that you need to make, the decisions that you have to take.

Reflection time is useful not just in the workplace, but in terms of getting a balance in your life. It's a time where you can look at what you're doing and how are you doing it and come up with answers to issues that you would not have thought of if you had focused on the issue at hand.

You know, sometimes thinking laterally and thinking outside the square can't happen when you're thinking particularly about an issue.

It comes out of the blue. We really don't understand how our brains work particularly well. And so you've got to give the brain the opportunity to provide you with the answer. For me, I find that the opportunity for reflection time will present itself when I'm least expecting it. And so I have to be ready to take up the opportunity when it does present itself. And so I have a way that I can record my voice if I'm on my own and it's a quiet environment or I can write it down. I can use one of my other various devices, the biologically attached tablet or a piece of paper and a pen which I also carry with me and just jot down the thoughts that are running through my head or nothing at all.

And I do encourage you to try the free writing. I know that the recording of your voice is often difficult for people to take on first up, but you might well find that that's because it's out of the ordinary things that you do, it does make you focus on reflection because you're doing something completely different as well as the reflection time.

That's my thoughts on reflection and reflection time. That's a little bit of an aside, out of the more focused podcast that we've been presenting to you. I'm Kim Baillie and this is Inside Exec.