

Pearls of Leadership Wisdom: The Waiting Game

Welcome to my backyard and Pearls of Leadership Wisdom. My topic today is the waiting game. Let me tell you a story. Last week I had a conversation with a woman who is a small business owner and also owned a small business in the 2008 recession. We started talking about lessons learned from that time in the business and one of the things she said, that has stuck with me, is that she and her partners decided to wait for normal to return, which they decided because they couldn't really plan for what things would be happening in the future. They needed to wait to see what those things really would be and then they would plan. That turned out to be a wrong course of action for her as it resulted in a huge amount of debt and employees needing to be laid off. All in all, she learned a vital lesson that waiting doesn't work for business.

I had another call this week, that call was with an individual I'm coaching who is the head of a large business segment in a major corporation. As we talked about current circumstances, he said "Sandra, it's so hard right now, the hard part is, when do I pull the trigger on something and when don't I? Will the industry pivot this way or will it pivot that way? I have a major hire that I really do need to make and I'm hesitant to make the hire because maybe I'll be hiring the wrong skill set.

Both of these individuals spoke to the power I call it—the seductive power of the waiting game—to keep us from moving ahead or taking any action. Now why is the waiting game so seductive, why does it pull so hard on us? It's like a rut. I want you to think for a moment about what it feels like to be in a rut, predictable, safe, secure, nothing bad is going to happen. The waiting game is like being in a rut psychologically and we feel protected, but the very thing that seems as if it protects us is actually just lulling us into believing that the future will be just like yesterday. So that false security of the waiting game of that security blanket comes with costs. The costs are lost opportunities and squandered time and even the loss of a team who would love to follow someone who's willing to take action and have the courage of their convictions. So think for a moment if the waiting game and that security blanket feels comfortable, what can you do to ensure that you don't get lulled into playing that game?

I have a few suggestions for you:

- First of all, ask yourself this, what is the worst possible thing that can happen if I do act? The likelihood of that worst being absolutely horrendous is probably not high.
- Ask yourself what won't I have the opportunity to do or make progress on if I sit and wait. Ask your team to help you.
- Ask your team what are the phantom barriers that are getting in our way collectively of being able and willing to take action.
- Finally I have a word that I want you to insert into some of the questions that you asked about your business and that word—that three-letter word is—now. Think of the



questions you asked at the start of 2020 about your business and then insert the word now. Where might we find the biggest growth, NOW. What moves might our competitors make, NOW. What opportunities do we have to pivot, NOW. Using that simple language of now will help move you out of the comfortable spot of the waiting game and help you see the opportunities that exist in the world around you. So here's to your leadership now.