

Why Don't Things Get Done?!

By Rick Pay

Why don't things get done? It is a frustrating question that many leaders ask me, including CEOs, CFOs, COOs and other managers throughout the organization. People go into meetings to discuss important issues and problems, but when they leave the meeting, nothing changes! Why is that? There are three things that contribute: 1) too many priorities, 2) lack of accountability, and 3) lack of follow-up.

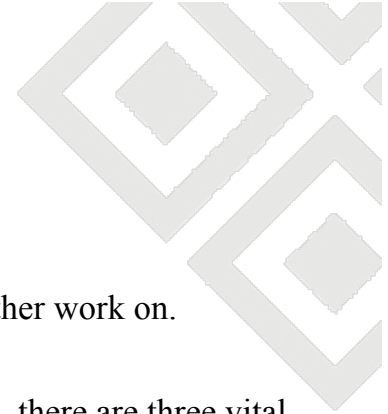
First, your staff needs to know which tasks have high priority. People at all levels are being assigned more work, especially with the cut backs that companies are doing in response to the recession. New products, new projects,

training, additional work due to someone else losing their job – the list seems to grow and grow. A wise person once said it is better to move three things forward a mile than a thousand things forward an inch. To help people get things done, top management needs to establish clear priorities. Whether that is through a business strategy or an operations plan, people need to know what is important. Once priorities are set, if a new project gets added to the list, another project should be put on hold. One of my clients refers to the hold list as the “parking lot.” Empower people to say “no,” or at least to ask the question, “If you want me to do this new thing, which of my current

priorities would you like to delay?” Limiting high priority tasks to three will help get things done.



Rick Pay is president of The R. PAY COMPANY, LCC, a Portland-based management consulting firm that helps manufacturers and distributors achieve peak operational performance.



The second key to getting things done is to establish accountability. Who (and that should be one who) is responsible for the task? Who owns it? If it is not accomplished, what one person will you talk to? I had a chance to ask a retired Air Force General what single action he took to help people get things done, and he said he always established accountability and measured results. When you assign priorities to people, establish how you will know that the task is complete. What measures will you use? What is the timing for the expected outcome? Ask yourself, “Who is going to do what by when?” And again, it is vital to have only one who.

The third key is to go see if they did it! Follow up. George Patton, the commander of the third army for the United States during WWII, once said that the biggest failing of many of his officers was to not follow up on the orders they gave. If you assign priorities and prepare measures but fail to follow up, people will soon figure out that you really aren’t serious and the work will not get done, especially if there is another project they would

rather work on.

So, there are three vital steps to making sure things get done: 1) establish a few (three) key priorities, and put the rest on the “parking lot” list, 2) establish clear accountability with clear measures including what one person is responsible for the result, and 3) follow up! Things will start to happen and your frustration level will be greatly reduced.

Contact The R. PAY COMPANY, LLC:

Phone: 503-780-2014

Email: rickp@rpaycompany.com

Web: www.rpaycompany.com

