

Governing Energy



I Don't Have Time

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For much of my career and I have said it myself, the comment “I don’t have time” is a well-worn excuse for not doing things right the first time. In our seemingly stressed out society it does seem as if this is a new truism.

But is it? In a decades old newsletter, the author recalls recanting a “final” consulting report forwarded by my subordinate for my review and approval. A quick Spell Check revealed a multitude of spelling and grammatical errors. When pressed as to why the report contained these easy to find errors, it was explained that (words to the effect) “I really wanted to get it you quickly.”

As readers might expect, these errors needed to be fixed before the report was sent to the client. This precipitated a new policy—If you don’t have time to at least Spell Check a document, I don’t have time to read it!

In this case, the author of the report wasted the time of senior management and effectively had the appearance of unprofessionalness. To assure that the organization understood this requirement, this executive would start the spelling checking process and when the first typo was found, the entire document was returned for “rework.”

The adage, “If you don’t have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?”ⁱ We all face performance pressures but not taking time to get it right is dilutive and sometimes at the equity level.

Doing More with Less

This author recently heard that in some cases field personnel are picking up additional (office) tasks and sometimes being asked to work on their “days off.” If this is correct, their management maybe pressuring the organization to into a “don’t have time” scenario that may result in unplanned downtime, safety incidents or worse.

After a series of unfortunate and deadly incidents at sea, the US Navy is changing its policy regarding what it asks of its personnel in *high intensity field operations*. This change comes after a number of fatal casualties as well as ruined careers and early retirements of senior officers.ⁱⁱ

Phrases such as, *I don’t have time, multitasking, doing more with less* can be indications of an organizational ecosystem stretched too thin. To be sure technology can enable a more effective and smaller workforce.

However, in all the cases referred to herein, enabling human performance is the most important part of any Critical Path to Best in Class Operational Performance. Unfortunately, it appears that not all senior executives are as attuned to his issue as perhaps they should be.

Individuals work hard and some will excel in challenging environments. Knowing where the limit is, is the responsibility of leadership. History’s best leaders understand where this line is, and even how to extend it. History’s worst leaders just kept whipping the chain gang.

Is Your Organization Setting Itself Up for Operational Failure?

Additional details are available from the author.

About the Author

Dr. [Scott M. Shemwell](#) has over 30 years technical and executive management experience primarily in the energy sector. He is the author of six books and has written extensively about the field of operations. Shemwell is the Managing Director of The Rapid Response Institute, a firm that focuses on providing its customers with solutions enabling Operational Excellence and regulatory compliance management. He has studied cultural interactions for more than 30 years—his dissertation; *Cross Cultural Negotiations Between Japanese and American Businessmen: A Systems Analysis (Exploratory Study)* is an early peer reviewed manuscript addressing the systemic structure of societal relationships.

End Notes

ⁱ <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/j/johnwooden384653.html>

ⁱⁱ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/08/26/deadly-navy-accidents-in-the-pacific-raise-questions-over-a-force-stretched-too-thin/?utm_term=.00d3ff05784a