

Get Less Busy

Will Rogers once wrote that the first thing to do when you find yourself in a hole is stop digging. Yet all too often we are so wrapped up in the task and “getting it done” that we lose control of the direction we’re heading and instead find ourselves swept up with the tide. This is a difficult position mostly because recognizing it is nearly impossible, ironically, because that too would require that we slow down enough to look at where we’re headed and whether the place and pace is what we want.

The concept of keeping busy in order to show that you’re busy is as absurd as the old dictate in the U.S. military that read; “if it moves salute it, if it doesn’t move pick it up, and if you can’t pick it up, paint it”. Demonstrating activity is not the same as advancing objectives, and there are as many scenarios in which slowing down works toward advancing the agenda as there are situations that call for the pedal to the metal and full steam ahead.

The trick is knowing which circumstance calls for which approach. The words of Henry David Thoreau, that it is not enough to be busy, the question one must answer is what he or she is busy about, sheds some light into the guidelines we can use when needing to select.

Urgent pursuit of a goal is never preferred over a calculated, process oriented approach. Sometimes in the interest of time we disregard the process in its entirety, as opposed to cutting corners and eliminating the “nice to have” but non-essential steps. Chances are getting less busy, but being more focused will allow you to reach your objectives in less time and with greater clarity.