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Stuck in a rut? Have you tried introspection?

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There are often times, when it feels like our professional lives and career development stagnates. Often, we justify this period as a passing phase, by rationalizing: the economic slump, projects placed on hold, project budgetary challenges, a new business manager, or restructuring of the business.



In technical terms, a locus is defined as a position where something occurs, or is situated. In the 1960's Julian Rotter conducted a study on how people's behavior and attitude affected the outcomes of their lives. He applied this mathematical principle to psychological behavioral patterns. The study showed that the most successful people tend to internalize their locus of control by believing that the outcomes of their lives and work is determined by hard work, their attitudes and decisions. Whilst dissatisfied people are fueled by an external locus of control, in the hope that somehow miraculously, things will fall into place. Therefore, through introspection, the examination or observation of one's own mental and emotional processes, we can greatly improve our productivity for a better outcome and to achieve our full potential.

On my quest to improve my productivity and to "give life" to my to-do list and turn my thoughts into action, I was inspired by an article I read. The article published by the *Harvard Business Review* titled "7 Traits of Super-Productive People" inspired me to think about the improvements I could make in the way in which I work and integrate with my team members. Applying these principles to the challenges often experienced by young professionals, we can learn the following from super-productive people:

Set stretch goals

Setting stretch goals is a method of aggregating tasks into a significant project size to enable you to work at pace and remove distractions. The apparent contradiction to breaking up tasks into smaller more manageable chunks, is that they disconnect the tasks in a random way and reduces productivity.

Show consistency

Delivering consistently reinforces reliability. These super-productive people have stable productivity levels tackling tasks as they arise, shying away from procrastination and panicked, erratic workflow. This is not an easy feat, as much of the deliverables on a project are dependent on external stakeholders and team members playing their part and sticking to the agreed timeframes.

Have knowledge and technical expertise

This is not typically a challenge for engineers who pride themselves on academic qualifications and technical experience. However, your tertiary qualification will get you to the door but it's your experience and the enhancement of your skills and widening of your knowledge base that will ensure that you complete your tasks in a manner that is of a high quality and delivered timeously, that keeps opening new doors.

Drive for results

Challenging yourself you be and to do more, creates a healthy level of competition between colleagues, team members and yourself. Being driven to realize results sooner sets self-imposed challenges to optimize performance and results.

Anticipate and solve problems

Productive people are excellent problem-solvers and employ creative solutions to improve their productivity. They anticipate challenges and innovate solutions around problems. Termed *mental* contrasting, super-productive people think about what they want to achieve, of the barriers between them and the goal and of how to counteract the problem.

Take initiative

For many super-productive people, they don't delay on starting a task, and never have to be reminded to commence. They think ahead and begin to do preparatory work on tasks assigned.

Be collaborative

Despite having immense individual strengths and traits, super-productive people are intuitive team players who work well with others. They are firm and clear in their actions and on what they expect of others.

Super-productive people seem to get it all done as if by magic, but super-productivity is a set of skills that we can acquire and utilize. So, to get a hold of your productivity and to get back into the driving seat of your own development, internalizing your locus of control is critical.

There is a wealth of information and tools to demonstrate the concept of internalizing your locus of control by improving your productivity to enhance growth and development. By investing in yourself, and by actively engaging in activities that will develop your knowledge, skills and abilities in line with your field of expertise, success is inevitable.

Irish Playwright, George Bernard Shaw wrote, "The people who get on in this world are the people who get up *and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them*".

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