

METROWEST BUSINESS



[WRITE ON THE MONEY]

EXCITING RESULTS from boring routines

Finally, a routine!

It's the first full, non-holiday week of September and people are getting back to work, back to school and



Maureen Condon
LOCAL COLUMNIST

back to business in general. And I love it. While I can be spontaneous occasionally, it's not always a comfortable experience. I'm much happier with the flow of a routine in my week.

Routines get a bad rap for being boring. But in reality, routines pave the way for very exciting things. Think about school. Only by getting up every day, attending class, doing the homework and moving to the next grade can you ever enjoy the thrill of a graduation day. It's similar with work. When you consistently put in the time, energy and effort and endure the daily grind, you position yourself to enjoy the exhilaration of landing a hard-earned promotion or great new job.

Sports and entertainment provide the best example of routines leading to excitement. From Little League champions, to Boston

Marathon finishers to Olympic gold medal winners, athletes understand that an established routine can lead to incredible experiences. Musicians, actors and singers appreciate that only by following a clear routine of practice and more practice can they ever deliver that unforgettable performance.

In your marketing and business communications, routine pays off too. Here are a few routines worth working into your schedule.

Stay in touch

How many times has someone said to you, "It's been too long" or "We should get together." You may have the best intentions of staying in touch with your old employers, co-workers or classmates, but invariably life gets in the way. But if you create a routine for reaching out, it is more likely to happen.

Your relationships – business and personal – lay the foundation for your success. The stronger they are, the better you will do. I had a colleague who set a goal of calling one person every day just to say hello or schedule a date. It was a simple, manageable approach that worked for her.

Maintain a fresh online presence

It is more overwhelming than ever to keep up with the online venues available to today's professionals and organizations. Your business needs a website, you should be blogging, you should have Facebook and Twitter pages and a LinkedIn profile – it's not surprising that once most people get these things set up, they go silent. No tweeting, no blogging, no web updates.

But the only thing worse than no online presence is a stale one. So figure out which venues are most important for your career and your organization and make a commitment to update them consistently.

Be responsive and follow up

When you get busy – and who isn't – the e-mail inbox piles up, phone messages go unreturned and deadlines can come and go. But keeping up with your correspondence, and especially with your deadlines, is a pivotal business requirement.

Set aside a time or two each day to focus on e-mail, maybe add another block to return calls. It may seem challenging to find the time but taking a few minutes regularly will prevent a landslide of follow up you have to do.

Debrief after milestones

When we have been cramming to prepare a big presentation or meet a major client deadline, we are often tempted to just take a deep breath and move onto the next deliverable once it's over. But we do ourselves a disservice every time that happens, and you do, too.

By setting up a routine to have a post-mortem or debrief after every project, event or milestone, you give yourself the room to celebrate what went right and address what went wrong.

When you move too fast from project to project, deadline to deadline, you risk producing the same results repeatedly. If you want your business or career to grow and improve, build a debrief into your routine.

So the monthly routine of my column is done. Should I debrief or pour a glass of wine? I'm thinking wine. That's a routine I like, too!

Maureen O'Grady Condon, a Framingham resident, is principal of Precision Marketing Group, a marketing firm that serves entrepreneurial, B2B companies. Contact her at Maureen@precisionmarketinggroup.com.