

Rid Yourself of Analysis Paralysis

By Theresa Rose

Have you ever found yourself endlessly obsessing over an issue, unable to move beyond it? When dealing with a problem or potential opportunity, do you ever have dozens of seemingly unanswerable questions swirling around your brain? If so, you may be suffering from one of the most common afflictions known to the modern worker: analysis paralysis.

At some point we have all found ourselves in the crushing grip of this dreaded condition where we simply can't make a decision no matter how much we want to get to the end zone. We convince ourselves that we don't have all the facts, the timing isn't quite right, something bad will happen if we take action, or we just haven't conjured up the right solution yet. These feelings of unreadiness and unsteadiness cause us to squander precious time and lose our peace of mind. What is the root cause of this all-too-prevalent mental malaise? It is our own egos.

The ego convinces us that we haven't done enough legwork because of one reason: it doesn't like the unknown. Imagine your ego as a person who is deathly afraid of heights. It would rather remain firmly, safely planted on the ground instead of jumping out of an airplane to experience a thrilling skydive. When you are about to embark on something new, your ego senses that change is imminent; in its panic, your ego will betray you if you allow it. It will plant all sorts of ridiculous scenarios in your head in order to keep you from acting. In your quiet moments, it will whisper in your ear that you will lose your job, home, family, and livelihood if you make the "wrong" decision. It's most fervent desire is to have you frozen in fear until the wonderful opportunity – whether it is that completed project, the fantastic promotion, your big move, or the new job – passes you by.

Even though the ego is a formidable foe, it is not infallible. Here are a few steps to help you move off dead center and back into action.

- 1. Set the timer.** Give yourself a defined period of time to finish the process of data gathering. Chances are you probably already know everything you need to know. If you like, you can bop around in your cerebral spin cycle for a few more days and pick up those last bits of information. However, it is important to accept the fact that there will always be unknown factors; you will never have all of the data about a particular subject. When you come to terms with the inevitable unknown, you can then make a decision based on what you know today.
- 2. Listen to your gut.** What does your instinct tell you to do? What option brings you the most satisfaction and joy? What feels right? When your fear is no longer driving the decision-making process, you can trust the guidance you receive from your intuition. It is the most talented business analyst you'll ever have at your disposal.
- 3. Ask for a second opinion.** Now that you have an idea about what you want to do, run your arguments past an impartial judge such as a trusted friend or

- colleague. Make sure you don't choose someone who is vested in a particular outcome or who will tell you only what you want to hear. Present your cases as if you are in front of the Supreme Court; make them clear, succinct and convincing. Encourage your friend to ask you questions in order to solidify his or her understanding. When you are finished, ask for feedback on your arguments, both on content and delivery. Where in your presentation did you have the most energy? Confidence and enthusiasm are always good indicators of the most appropriate solution.
4. **Do a mental dry run.** Once you've decided on which path to take, begin the journey in your mind first. Mentally play out your decision exactly as you wish it to be. Fill in all of the details of the outcome, including your feelings, the environment, the reactions of others, the financial benefit, and any other positive result stemming from your decision. Mentally replay this imaginary outcome over and over again until you feel utterly confident in moving forward.
 5. **Take the leap.** Make a commitment to act by a certain date and follow through on your commitment without hesitation. Rest assured that you will hear the nagging voice of your own second-guessing ringing in your ears. Expect it. It is nothing more than your ego's final 'Hail Mary' attempt to keep you locked in a state of inertia. All great leaders hear that same nagging voice, yet they choose to act anyway. You can do it, too.

The most important step to bust through analysis paralysis is to adopt a trusting, Zen-like attitude. Remind yourself that whatever happens is supposed to happen. There are no mistakes, wrong turns or missed opportunities. If you remember that, in the larger context, everything occurs exactly as it should, you can cut yourself some slack. Any outcome is far preferable to the physical, mental, and emotional price you pay when perpetually brewing in fear, doubt, and uncertainty. Isn't it time to take off those cement boots and take the leap?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Theresa Rose is an inspirational speaker and award-winning author of the new book, "Opening the Kimono." As founder of Serious Mojo Publications, Theresa specializes in fresh approaches to energy management, productivity and creative development. Her experience includes owning a healing center, senior manager of a Fortune 100 firm, and vice president of a consulting firm. For more information, visit www.TheresaRose.net.