

# *A Special Report on Self-Sabotage in Business*

*Unveiling the Common, Subtle, and Destructive Ways  
We Harm Our Performance And Business Success*

---

*Tony Kubica and Sara LaForest*



401.885.2011

## *A Personal Note from Your Business Performance Specialists*

Dear Business Leader,

**Self-Sabotage.** We've all done it.

Self-Sabotage is when we act against our own best interests. It's when we say we want something yet then go about making sure it doesn't happen. We are *mysteries* to ourselves! And often we have no idea why we are sabotaging our businesses, organizations and careers.

If only you could "fix" these behaviors—just imagine how successful your company could be. Unfortunately, most people don't have any idea of where and how to begin. To overcome the incredible power of self-sabotage, you must look deep inside yourself.

Why?

Because, our self-destructive behaviors are symptoms of larger emotional issues and practices of learned and adaptive (old reactive) behavior. For example, if you can't identify why you procrastinate—or why your salespeople do—change will remain elusive ... and so will success.

It's difficult to change your patterns if you don't understand this basic truth. And no matter what the industry, people have certain types of emotional baggage.

And the fact that these behaviors are so common it can make it seem as though unproductive behavior is normal. This illusion keeps people mired in the same problems throughout their careers.

But don't be discouraged: Knowledge is power, and knowing the problem exists is the first step in breaking the cycle. That's why we created this special report that **identifies the common self-sabotaging traits**. And, through **stories of real people and business situations** we reinforce our message of the damaging effects of self-sabotage. We also provide you with examples of self-sabotaging behaviors along with key **tips and techniques that you can immediately implement** to address and prevent self-sabotage.

Now, we anticipate exactly what you are thinking...

### ***Why Should You Trust Us?***

With more than **50 years of combined experience** in helping global companies and organizations improve their business performance and accelerate their business growth in record times, we have become **Masters in the Psychology of Business**.

Companies around the globe now bring us in to unveil the common, subtle and destructive ways they are harming their performance and business success. Magazines and online publications like **WomenEntrepreneur.com, Business Week, Fast Company, FOX, CEO Refresher, CEO Online Microsoft Community Dynamics and hundreds more** are now publishing our work and helping us spread our messages that can positively impact your business.

Through working with global organizations as well as small business owners and entrepreneurs, we have discovered that the same principles and information we're about to reveal to you is

*"Your concept about your work not only keeping companies in business, but also improving their bottom line is right on. I like to think of it in terms of efficiency. If you avoid screw ups, limit self sabotaging behaviors that muck things up, your organization will naturally run more efficiently with fewer distractions that eat up time, success and, ultimately, profit."*

*Ron Moleski, Pharm. D  
Partner, RJM Group*

applicable to every business—no matter how large or small your company is and no matter the industry.

Now before we show you in detail, how you're literally getting in the way of your business success, first imagine how successful a company could be if every salesperson, every manager and every executive would drill down and confront the internal demons ("old and unproductive ways") and honestly look at their self-diminishing behaviors ("blind spots") that keep them from reaching optimal performance.

There's no reason why every business professional can't do the internal exploration necessary for change. Such a change requires pure determination and hard work, but it's the only way to jettison bad habits.

We hope to give you the education and motivation you need to take your business to the next level. We sincerely want to help you—and we strongly encourage you to share your thoughts, questions and stories by contacting us.

To your business success,

*Tony Kubica and Sara LaForest*

*"Your work provided a powerful structure by which we could safely and effectively explore our retrospective strengths and weaknesses, specifically on our tendencies and implications for the success of our partnership and our business."*

*Kelly M. Bowen and  
Melissa A. Jefferson  
Founding Partners,  
Inside Lead Counseling  
and Consulting,  
Colorado*

*Improving  
Performance*

*Navigating  
Transitions*

*Accelerating  
Results*

### ***How Self-Sabotaging Behaviors Are Damaging Your Business***

The components of business successes are often seen as having...

- A vision or defined strategic direction
- A sound business plan
- A good product or service that people are willing to pay for
- Funding and financing
- Great customer service that will attract repeat buyers
- A competent and capable management team

This is all true. Yet, there seems to be something missing. Businesses are failing despite having the basics in place. Individuals are performing well-below their capabilities!

Why?

We set out to find the answer through drawing on our years of experience and by talking with over 500 business people representing solo practitioners, owners, executives and employees of small-to-medium sized businesses and Fortune 500 companies. They were employees, employers and the unemployed. They were male and female—and they were ethically and generationally diverse.

The stories we heard, however, were similar—and they seldom were about the business engine, even though the conversation started that way. The stories we heard were about the lubrication—the subtle and more fluid elements that make the engine run smoothly. These elements are directly related to behaviors!

For example...

- Charles decided to leave his position as CFO of a mid-sized manufacturing firm to start his own consulting firm that would advise small business owners on financial issues. Twelve months later, after securing only 1 client, he abandoned his lifelong dream of owning his own business and accepted a Director of Finance position at a large service organization.
- Suzanne decided to leave her position as a Director of Marketing for a national retail chain to join a small consulting boutique that provided marketing communications services to the retail industry. Six months after starting at the boutique, she resigned and started looking for marketing job in the retail industry.
- Dave recently graduated college with a degree in business. He started his job search like many applicants with great expectations as he had excellent grades, was a star athlete in school and was confident in his skills and abilities. Eight months later, he started to question and re-think his approach to the job market.

What do all these people have in common?

They were all competent and capable. Each of them experienced previous success.

So what happened? **They let self-sabotaging behaviors defeat them.**

*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

In Charles case, he didn't realize that he was in the marketing business and not in the financial services business. As a solo practitioner, he was responsible for finding and attracting new clients and convincing them that his services would add value to their business.

He wasn't used to that. In his previous job, he didn't have to market to anyone. Staff came to him. Vendors courted him. Returning calls, showing on time for meetings and responding to vendors were not high priorities. He did not have to build relationships—as others had to build it with him. What worked so well for him in the past sabotaged his chances for success. If you want success, you have to learn how to adapt.

Suzanne found working in a small boutique frustrating. As a Director of Marketing, she had a staff to support her. She was not used to hearing the word “No”! When she asked for something, her staff delivered. As a member of a small boutique Suzanne had prospect and client-facing responsibilities and they had little problem telling her “No” to her ideas. She found this frustrating and never learned that “No” can be an opportunity to continue the discussion. Instead she quit in frustration.

Dave's start was not only shaky, but in-effective. He had extremely strong opinions about politics, religion and social issues. And, he wasn't shy about sharing them. During interviews, he would wow (at least in his opinion) his interviewer with a long monologue about current events. His answers to the interviewer's questions were long and emotionally-charged. He was extremely confident in his opinions and beliefs and he honestly felt that this would be a plus for him in his job search. Obviously, it was not.

These are three examples of people who had the skills, credentials and the capabilities to become successful. Yet, they were not—simply because they became victims of their own self-sabotaging behaviors...

- Charles fell victim to the belief that he didn't have to build relationships. People buy from people they like. It's really that simple. Later, in this report, we'll discuss relationship building in further detail.
- Charles also fell victim to the belief that he can respond at his leisure. Responsiveness shows you care and the buyer wants to invest in people who they think cares about them and their issues.
- Suzanne's sabotaging belief was her inability to hearing the word “No!” This response caused her to react defensively. In many cases, Suzanne showed flashes of anger and irritability which never goes well with prospects and clients.
- Dave's sabotaging behavior was led by a misguided belief that his personal beliefs (which were always well-accepted in school) would be accepted and welcome by a prospective employer.
- We have identified twenty-one self-sabotaging behaviors that are harmful to you and your business.

*Improving  
Performance*

*Navigating  
Transitions*

*Accelerating  
Results*

These 21 behaviors are listed below. **(We suggest you print them out immediately, and put it in a prominent position within your office.** This way you read it every day and become more aware of your behavior.)

***21 Self-Sabotaging, Self-Destructing Behaviors That Will Limit Your Chances of Success...***

1. Non (or slow) responsiveness
2. Aggressiveness
3. Poor inter-personal skills
4. Low tolerance for other people
5. Lack of conviction
6. Giving up easily
7. Perfectionism
8. Overly-opinionated
9. Self-centered
10. Inability to focus/concentrate
11. Self-doubt
12. Low self-confidence
13. Fear of failure
14. Fear of success
15. Poor self image
16. Arrogance
17. Greed
18. Dismissive
19. Self-deception
20. Poor communication skills (particularly listening skills)
21. Poor impression management (personal/professional presentation skills)

**Note: We acknowledge that there are many more self-sabotaging behaviors but these are the ones that are commonly encountered in our work and in our research.**

And, we clustered these behaviors into 9 self-sabotage groupings. We did this because we rarely found one self-sabotaging behavior that solely contributed to the outwardly manifested behavior being demonstrated. It became clear to us that there are multiple behaviors working simultaneously which creates a complex mosaic.

In the next sections of this special report, we break down the 9 self-sabotage groupings.

### ***How Fear Will Kill Your Business Faster Than Any Other Behavior***

If you are unwilling to conquer your fears, then simply give up your dreams of success in your business or career. Giving in to fear is the **most important contributor** to business and personal failure.

Issues such as self-doubt, low self-confidence/esteem, fear of failure, fear of success and poor self-image all contribute to self-sabotage. When we talk to clients about overcoming fear, we like to use the metaphor of “feeding the fear monster” because it aptly describes what is happening in our minds.

When we have doubt and concern, we tend to ruminate on it. The more we ruminate, the more fear grows until it’s all consuming. Rumination is the fertilizer that causes fear to grow like weeds in our front lawn.

For example, read this story from one of our interviewees...

*“When I am in the absence of information, I tend to create my own story. And although, I know that my stories have the worst possible outcomes imaginable, it continues to get worse. The more I think about it, the more it becomes like a racecar gaining momentum and speed as it drives directly toward a brick wall. These events never end well.”*

Giving energy (your thoughts) to—or “feeding your fear” will only create “The Monster” that will get in your way from reaching success. It’s like meeting baby Godzilla and finding food for him. You feed him. You nurture him. And, one day, he grows up and eats you: stops you in your tracks and causes you to retreat.

Why?

Because that’s what monsters do.

Common self-sabotaging behaviors we see in the fear category include:

- Fear of failure
- Fear of success
- Fear of criticism
- Fear of competing with yourself
- Fear of competing with others
- Fear of standing out in a crowd
- Fear of not being recognized
- Fear of taking a risk
- Fear of ridicule and shame
- Fear of not being good enough
- Generalized fear (i.e., during an economic downturn)

*“Your pragmatic approach to business management, client relations, and psycho-analytical observation as it relates to fear and insecurity in the workplace is a needed commodity to any young entrepreneur.”*

*Kevin Rinaldi-Young  
Estate Manager, Rhode  
Island*

*Improving  
Performance*

*Navigating  
Transitions*

*Accelerating  
Results*

**TIP:** Be aware that fear can impede moving forward and taking action.

**TECHNIQUES:**

1. Remind yourself that events are neither positive nor negative. They just are. It's how you interpret them and the meaning you give them that positions them as either setbacks or opportunities; and one's perception of setback is food for the monster. A common example is this: *Don't take others reserve with or dislike of you so personally. Do your best to form and build positive, professional and respectful relationships and if someone does not want to play, so be it—accept and move on vs. get stuck in self doubt.*
2. Find and work with someone whose opinion you value, who you can trust and who does not have a vested interest in the outcome. Ask them to probe, question and see if fear is working against you.
3. Learn new things versus doing only what you know. It will expand your knowledge and your self confidence.
4. Stop ruminating. Negative future fantasizing just feeds the fear monster. To overcome fear redirect your energy, shift your focus—positively distract yourself. Use positive self-talk. Have one or two scripts that you regularly use to help yourself get unstuck and overcome the fear, for example—*this is not life or death and this too shall pass. Or, I have something to learn here—my school is in session...*
5. Look the fear monster in face (quit putting your head under the blanket)—focus on what's real (evidence-based) identify exactly what the fear is and it's risks/worst case scenario. Then, identify what you can learn from this—how can you use this to your advancement?

***How Failing to Establish Real Relationships Leads to No Business***

No real relationships = No Results! Success in business is all about good relationships with prospects, customers and vendors.

*No relationship = No trust*

*No trust = No credibility*

*No credibility = No interest*

*No interest = No business*

It's really that simple!

Now, we added the word "real" on purpose. A good relationship is mutual. During our interviews and in our work, we hear people tell us that they think they had great relationships with their clients, prospects and vendors.

Yet, when we asked them about sales, referrals and testimonials, we were greeted with silence and excuses. Good relationships are mutual. They lead to additional business. They lead to referrals. And they lead to testimonials.

It's time to wake up and really evaluate the relationships you have. We cannot think of one situation where a real relationship does not lead to mutually beneficial outcomes for both parties.



*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

You must understand that building relationships is an art. It takes time and thoughtfulness. It is a process, where you literally engage the other person over time. You develop a common ground and understand so you can start building trust. So, you must develop patience, intention and attention.

We had one interviewee tell us that he didn't have time. He needs to increase sales now. Our response was simple—it still takes time!

**Common self-sabotaging behaviors we see in the Relationship category are:**

- Poor interpersonal (relationship) skills
- Poor communication skills (written, verbal and non-verbal)
- Low self-esteem/self-confidence
- External control issues
  - Boss-pressure to sell
  - Performance pressure/security as a driver
  - Intimidation takes you out of relationship building
  - Terrified of being unemployed
  - Intimidated beyond what one can rationally handle
- Talking more than listening
  - Misuse of talking
  - Misperception that if you don't talk you won't sound or appear impressive (tip—power of silence through listening—old joke says it's better to be quiet and appear stupid than to open your mouth and remove all doubt)
- Concern about having to deliver on the promise
- No/low confidence in ability of the company to deliver on promise
- Concern about being held accountable
- Concern about entering into a bad business relationship
- Concern about giving more than getting—one-way business relationship
- Concern about being seen as manipulative
- Low tolerance for other people—simply impatient
- The feeling that others will “suck you dry”

**TIP:** Understand and accept that forming a real relationship takes time. It requires a respectful give and take; it requires mutuality as you build the relationship. To influence remember the Law of Reciprocity—you have to give before you get. But it only works when what you give is of value to the other person, which is often different than what you think they will or should value.

*Improving  
Performance*

*Navigating  
Transitions*

*Accelerating  
Results*

**TECHNIQUES:**

1. Learn how to listen intently and understand what is important to the other person by asking questions. And try to listen more than you speak.
2. Find common ground, that is common points of interest and build your relationship on them.
3. Exceed their expectations by getting things done early verses on time.
4. Know that it is a valid challenge to honor your client's/the other's process (while sometimes slow and kludge) and to not push too hard. Setting/agreeing on clear objectives will serve as your guidepost.
5. Ask for support from people you have given it to.
6. Spend some time in casual conversations and informal-relationship building activities (breaks, lunch, wellness/exercise partners, avocational interests, general family updates, etc) though carefully and modestly self-disclose. (Some personal information is important to others feeling you are personal and approachable, but too much runs a risk. We believe that less is more in new or business/professional relationships).
7. Come across as a peer: Speak clearly, in an unrushed manner and loud enough for those you are speaking to easily hear you. A soft, mousy voice is perceived as weakness and insecurity. "No voice", that is, failure to speak up or add input, is perceived as apathy or fear (and a lack of confidence.)
8. Stay on point—be concise and direct, not filled with unnecessary rambling or extended versions of the story.

***How Your Lack of Responsiveness Will Lead to a Lack of Trust with Customers, Prospects and Employees***

Organizational response can literally determine whether your company succeeds or fails. Markets change. Populations shift. New technologies get introduced. Customer needs and desires change. Successful companies and organizations listen, understand and adjust. Before this can be done at the organizational level, timely and appropriate response must be integrated into the DNA of the organization—and that is the job of the leader.

When and how you respond sends a powerful message—either negative or positive. For example, responding to email or voice mail serves as an example of what they can expect from you in the future. If your response time is more than one day, the person expecting your response begins to form a picture of you—and it's not flattering. Waiting more than a day to respond to email or voice mail may in your mind reflect that you are busy and important, however it is also likely to communicate that you don't care that much about the person expecting a response.

Your response to requests for proposals, customer questions, customer follow-up after a contact or meeting or a request from your boss, board members or team members can also cause great harm if not done appropriately and in a timely manner. For example, we talked to one executive who told us that she does not respond to her boss unless he asks three (3) times, just to be sure it was really a priority! She is no longer with the company.

*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

**Some self-sabotaging behaviors we see in the Responsiveness category are:**

- Poor, low, or no business return time on
  - Calls
  - E-mail
  - Voice mail
- Poor or no follow-up
- Closing the loop/closure/exit/completion
  - Not tending to the details

Remember what Emerson wrote: “What you do speaks so loudly, I can’t hear what you say.” You don’t want your message to go unheard because of what you do (or don’t do!) Both count and actually—behavior trumps talk!

**TIPS:** Understand that responsiveness defines you and your business in the mind of the other person. Control this definition to the advancement of you and your business.

If you don’t respond in a timely manner, people don’t assume you are important and busy; they assume you don’t care.

**TECHNIQUES:**

1. Define responsiveness for you and your business and define it in a way, through evidence (facts) that will increase your repute and grow your business. Then, every day, respond accordingly. Examples include:

- Return phone calls within one business day unless it’s over the weekend or a call comes in late afternoon, and then respond by the close of the next day.
- Return emails within one business day (two days maximum)
- Ensure that you confirm understanding of the other—restate agreements to clarify. This minimizes the chance for misunderstanding and clarifies roles and expectations.
- Exceed expectations—get things done early verses on time. Render old adage—under promise and over deliver.
- Ensure that you “close the loop” for completion, meaning follow-up directly to indicate completion and close out of a key activity, project, task, agreement, etc.
- From the start, do not accept (say no when you can) or negotiate unrealistic deadlines.

**TIP** on responsiveness from an organizational level: Understand that Organizational Responsiveness has three components: External (with client, prospects, buyers, vendors, queries and board members); Internal (bosses, peers, subordinates in the organization) and, to the Business Community/ Marketplace, (which is critical for the overall success of the company.)

**Technique:** Work to eliminate political posturing by not playing favorites, by not tolerating it, and by not exhibiting it in your own behavior.

*Improving  
Performance*

*Navigating  
Transitions*

*Accelerating  
Results*

***How Over-Selling Can Ruin Your Chances of a “Sale” You Would Have Made***

We asked CEOs, entrepreneurs and organizational leaders and managers what annoys them in a sales situation. Everyone (and we mean everyone!) said a pushy sales-person.

Yes, we meet these people everyday in retail shops, offices, conferences, and even at our sons and daughter events.

They’re everywhere!

Yet nobody likes a pusher.

How can that be?

One answer we found is that nobody thinks they’re a pusher!

**If you’re doing these 3 activities then likely you came across as a pusher...**

1. Selling beyond the agreement to buy—this is often the behavior of a new or insecure sales person or one who has an apparent case of acute hearing loss.
2. Up-selling: Trying to sell the buyer more than they need. Yes, you can tell them about additional products and services but there is a precariously thin line between pushing and up-sell and informing the buyer of options and higher value products and services.
3. High-pressure selling: These are the “once-in-a-lifetime” or “buy now while supplies last” sales approaches. Rarely does this leave the customer with a satisfied feeling.

Most of us cannot build a business on one-time buyers. The cost of sales is high. The learning curve we all experience with new buyers is high. And the time invested is high. If you do get any short term gains from aggressive selling, it will have long term devastating effects. Just witness the banking and real estate industry in 2008.

**Here are some common self-sabotaging behaviors in the over-selling category:**

- Physically getting in someone’s space—the close talker
- Believing in a one-and-out sales approach
- Poor core sales skills
- Egocentric
- Believing in and practicing a win-lose proposition
- Belief that business is war—Rambo behavior aka, combat sales

**TIPS:** Understand that effective selling is about listening and identifying the buyers wants and needs. (It’s not about your wants and needs or your revenue.)

Forget the absurd advice that a quick response looks too eager and desperate for business. It makes you look—responsive!

There is a thin line separating self-confidence from arrogance. If you want to succeed—don’t cross it.

*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

**TECHNIQUES:**

1. When the buyer's wants and needs are identified, explain how your product or service can address them and the value they will realize. Then deliver on the promise.
2. Know that it is a valid challenge to honor your client's process (sometimes slow and kludgy) and to not push too hard. And setting/agreeing on clear objectives will serve as your guidepost.
3. Probe (ask questions to clarify understanding of) the client's / buyer's motivation to buy—but do so respectfully and thoughtfully...
4. Think of the long term sale—that means go slow, don't push and think of the longer-term relationship and resulting opportunities forthcoming.
5. Caution: Flirting and fawning are forms of overselling (as well as demeaning) yourself. Realize how unprofessional and damaging these behaviors are.

***Working with "NO": Making "No" an Oxymoron***

We know: rejection is tough. It can hurt psychologically. Nobody likes to be rejected. Remember, that's why after 6 months in her new position within a consulting boutique, Suzanne resigned from her position. She was frustrated.

If you want to succeed, you need to start thinking of "No" as an oxymoron: both yes and no at the same time.

Too many executives, leaders, sales professionals and entrepreneurs believe that "No" is a rejection of them personally. However, you must understand in business it is often a reaction to an initial approach. It is also a common reaction when there is no real relationship.

A "No" may also result from not having found the true need of the buyer. The pushy salesperson, for example, focuses on meeting their own needs instead of the buyers needs. You need to ask probing questions, and explore options. Once the need is found, then the conversation automatically turns to how to address that need.

Learning how to interpret a "No" is an important sales/business success skill and complimentary to this is the need to know how to interpret objections. Many people think that an objection is a no. An objection is an objection to an idea, thought or proposal at the present. It may be nothing more than the start of a dialogue. If you interpret a rejection as a "No" then you and only you are responsible for ending the dialogue.

**Self-sabotaging behaviors we see in the Quitting category are:**

- Not taking the time to develop the relationship because no relationship = no
- Not being prepared by anticipating a possible no and your response

## Improving Performance

## Navigating Transitions

## Accelerating Results

- Busy at the wrong things or with the wrong people resulting in patterns and cycles of self-generated no
- Retreat at receiving a no
- Get upset at receiving a no—and your negative behavior (even your tone) shows it
- Not taking appropriate next steps when you know what they are
- Quitting because it's easier now and quick to do
- Haven't learned how to interpret no—assuming an objection is a no versus seeing opportunity in it

So look for the opportunity in no! While getting the signed contract is important—it is often reached by starting with a series of small yeses and building on them always moving forward to meet the clients' objectives.

**TIPS:** Before entering into a sales situation, whether it's with a client, a customer, your boss, peers (including a prospective new alliance) or subordinates, be prepared. Lack of preparation leaves you vulnerable, and looking unprepared or negligent.

Adopt a new paradigm of no to help you be more open to it and resilient: See no as an opportunity to listen, learn and understand—it can actually be a relationship (and business) builder.

### TECHNIQUES:

1. Prepare for each important encounter by thinking through your case and what you want to achieve and use this to set your objective at the beginning of your meeting, and soliciting the same from them. Frame your value proposition: the value expected... If you are really serious about this, work with a trusted advisor to identify your weaknesses in the presentation and work to close them.
2. Remember, you must work to build a relationship with your buyer.
3. Depersonalize no—meaning, do not take no so personally. Often the people you are dealing with may not even know you. Or, they may be a gatekeeper (verses decision maker) and their job is to say no, or they are saying no because you failed to establish a relationship first. An objection isn't necessarily a no, it is an opportunity to clarify your position—use it as such.
4. Be prepared for questions, challenges and push-backs by using scripts (anticipated questions and issues with practiced and even written points to help you in high pressure situations).

*Examples: Can you please tell more about why you think or feel this way?*

*I'm surprised to hear your objection; please help me understand what you are basing this on?*

*I know this an important to you so I want to be sure I understand your current concerns. Can you highlight these so I better understand?*

*Is it the objective or the option (the "what" or the "how") that you are not comfortable with?*

*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

5. Caution: Don't allow yourself to get "stepped on" with a no. Meaning, do not allow others to demean you or treat you with disrespect. Set limits, teach people how to treat you and with no response or a negative response—remove yourself and move along (they would likely not be good business anyway).
6. We've said this before- but it's essential to listen more than you talk—much more.
7. Make sure you are dealing with the economic buyer (Don't waste your time with gatekeepers and people who have no authority (or self-confidence) to say yes.
8. Be confident, persistent (not a pest), and patient.
9. Don't try for an all or nothing approach. "Peel the onion" and get approval/buy in at each layer before moving to the next layer—remember, a series of small yeses.

***How Perfection Can Get in Your Way of Achieving Your Goals***

Many people believe that they cannot introduce a product, service or proposal until it's perfect. Let's be honest, very few of us are in life and death situations. And good is often good enough. Just look at how many bugs there are in Microsoft's products when they first launch.

We found through our interviews that perfection is a useful crutch. It served multiple purposes. It prevented rejection. It provided a reason to work long hours. It provided an opportunity to avoid less comfortable interactions. Yes, perfection can be an avoidance behavior wrapped in the veil of the presumed sacred.

There is a difference between being in the pursuit of perfection and perfection itself. Pursuing perfection is an admirable goal as long as you keep it in this perspective: It is a pursuit, something you strive for and that's it.

The Million Dollar Consultant, Alan Weiss, often talks about the 80 percent factor—80 percent ready and go. How often is the extra 20% appreciated? In most cases, the only thing that goes up is your cost:

- Cost in time
- Cost in dollars
- Cost in lost opportunities

Perfection has an even more insidious impact on an organization when it manifests in leaders who believe by virtue of their position that they must have all the answers. They are reluctant to ask for help because of their fear of not appearing perfect to their employees. Opportunities may be forgone and decisions may be poorly made as a result.

**Common self-sabotaging behaviors we see in the Perfection category are:**

- Holding the belief that you need to be perfect—shows up as overdoing
- Initiating or enabling "scope creep"—doing more work than was agreed to
- Avoiding completion—using perfection as a crutch to avoid interactions with clients, colleagues, bosses

## Improving Performance

## Navigating Transitions

## Accelerating Results

- Perfection's insidious impact on a leader who believes by virtue of their position they must have all the answers and be the "perfect leader"—opportunities forgone and decisions made poorly result.

Again, we must reiterate: Good (defined as, "of high quality or suitable") is good enough!

**TIP:** The purpose of being in business is to identify and meet the needs of your clients and customers and to add value. This results in revenue and growth. Perfection can get in the way of your purpose.

### **TECHNIQUES:**

1. Avoid scope "creep"—that is, doing more and going beyond the scope. Clearly establish scope objectives from the beginning, whereas your tendency to over-do will be less if it is clear when you have met your objectives.
2. Be adaptable and flexible to change and willing to vary from your "perfect plan" in the face of evidence and when conditions warrant.
3. Say no more often to things you don't like and aren't good at to avoid likely procrastination and the tendency to over-do to compensate (AKA: "needless perfection").
4. Know your industry's standards (what is expected to get "A" and do worry about the plus (A+)

### ***The Risk in "Wearing Your Personal Beliefs on Your Sleeve"***

Sorry to break it to you—but what you believe is truly not important to your buyers, unless they happen to be a very tolerant and forgiving friend. Business is about understanding your clients' needs—not sharing yours! One of the consequences of sharing your personal beliefs is what we call the "quiet de-select".

Your prospects may patiently listen to you. They may even nod and smile and make the appearance that they either agree or that they're even the slightest bit interested. And, when you're done with your monologue and you walk away (or hang up), they'll de-select you.

If a prospect has shown interest in you—and then never return a call, you got quietly de-selected. For example, in our interviews, we saw how easy it was to get the interviewee to share their personal beliefs. Some talked briefly about their opinions. Others rambled with great enthusiasm and emotion. It was like watching someone setup their own obstacle course and then try to run through it.

### **Self-sabotaging behaviors we see in the Personal Beliefs category are:**

- Overly-opinionated on "everything"
- Belief that your way and beliefs are best—"my way or highway" thinking
- Irrational thinking that they really care
- Not understanding and practicing that business is about their needs not yours
- Assuming others know and believe what you do



*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

So be careful about falling into the trap of sharing your own personal beliefs with your prospects, customers and clients.

**TIP:** Business requires building real relationships, identifying the buyer's needs and wants and meeting them in a way that adds value to them and their business. Rambling on about you, your opinions, your beliefs (right or wrong) and your personal preferences is not in the line of sight to achieving your business objectives.

**TECHNIQUES:**

1. Focus your conversation on the other person and on the business purpose of the meeting. Ask questions, probe for needs and wants—and listen.
2. Modestly self-disclose. Some personal information is important for others to feel you are approachable; too much runs a risk.
3. Do not initiate personal and controversial issues at key business events and meetings.
4. Avoid entering (joining) into discussions on personal or controversial issues.
5. When talking about sports, keep it unemotional—remember your goal is to gain a customer not to prove your team is better than their team.
6. If the client or prospect asks you for your personal opinion on a controversial issue, reserve it (do not give your opinion) and re-direct the subject back to the meeting discussion by:
  - asking an open ended question related to the meeting agenda/objective or,
  - getting the prospect (or client) talking about their needs
7. Pay careful attention to being respectful in your tone and body language when managing or redirecting issues of personal beliefs.

***How a Lack of Focus is Hurting Your Chances (or Your Organization's) Chances of Hitting Your Target Goal!***

How many times have you sat in a meeting or worse directly talking to someone and you sense deep down, they are just not there. You don't have their complete, undivided attention. Think about the person doodling, reading something else, or checking their email, Blackberry or iPhone. Surely, their body is there in front of you—but you quickly discover that their "lights are on, but nobody's home." If they don't think people notice, hubris would best describe their behavior.

When faced with such behavior, does it make you want to come back and re-engage, particularly if it's a new relationship? No, and we agree.

**Now, let's talk about lack of focus on an organizational level.**

Many books and articles (including our own) have been written about an organization's inability to execute. A strategic plan is created amid great excitement, but the executive team quickly loses focus. They move onto another idea. And, the process continues.

This can best be described as "management by fad, otherwise known as "flavor of month. That is the latest fad and the latest new idea is what captures your attention. And you run the risk of flitting from one idea to the next—never really implementing anything. This organizational lack of focus can exhaust and discourage your staff. And the result - inaction and employee turnover.

*Improving  
Performance*

*Navigating  
Transitions*

*Accelerating  
Results*

**Here are some self-sabotaging behaviors we see in the focus management category:**

- Failure to stay focused on the task at hand
- Consumed by distractions—slave to your email, pop-ups, paper stacks and phone calls
- Stuck in your desire to quit because you are not happy with what you're doing
- Dislike or disinterest in the content you're working on
- Dislike of boss, colleagues or clients
- Imbalanced focus on out-of-work interests
- Poor planning skills
- Poor prioritization
- Poor organizational skills
- Feeling you are not getting what you're worth

**TIPS:** Set priorities for you and your organization. Clearly understand and articulate why these priorities are important, set timelines for completion—then execute and monitor.

What separates the mediocre from the great is not the absence of setbacks, it's how you deal with and recover from them, meaning your ability to move through them and onward.

Many people have great ideas that they are passionate about. It's the few that follow through who are successful. ("stick-to-itiveness" takes focus).

Focus isn't just taking action—it's taking the "best action". Hence, "ready, shoot, aim" may be fast, but it is also impulsive and reckless.

**TECHNIQUES:**

1. Make your priorities known and to those involved and explain why the priorities and the timelines associated with them are important. This clearly communicates what you believe is important for you and the organization—and the transparency holds you accountable.
2. Preserve and build your energy through positive self care—the basic 4 = eat well, sleep enough, hydrate and regularly exercise!
3. Use accountability partner to bounce things off of—trouble shoot—report progress and help encourage you.
4. Use reflection and self assessment to review progress, identify wins for replication and identify next step areas.
5. Establish realistic goals/objectives for what you can accomplish during a day or by a weekly plan.
6. Invest in "front-loading" – planning your strategy before you jump into a complex or challenging task or project. This will save you time and mistakes in the end.
7. Ensure you have the resources you need to successfully perform. (Suitable time, equipment, tools, facilities, administrative support/human resource, budget, etc)

*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

### **How Having a Weak or False Executive Presence is Costing You Credibility**

Executive presence is not solely about looking the part—that's a fake presence. True executive presence is about being the part! It also has to do with self-confidence, self-esteem and self-image.

True executive presence is more than the Armani suit, the Chanel leather portfolio, or the Rolex watch. It requires impression management skills.

Why is this important?

Because in our work and interviews, we frequently heard one...

- Should dress for success
- Look the part
- Fake it till you make it

Unless it was in jest.

### **Some self-sabotaging behaviors we see in Executive Presence/Impression**

#### **Management category are:**

- The empty suit—you look the part but aren't prepared for the part, either socially, emotionally, or mentally
- You don't look the part. Your physical presentation does not align with what people expect of a leader or top candidate
- You are clueless or negligent regarding the importance of impression management—issues such as lack of self care and presentation—overweight, frumpy, overtired/groggy, smelly (like an ashtray, or you stink—either because of poor hygiene or too much overwhelming cologne)
- Fundamental error in the premise or belief that these poor habits are the badge of executive success—fueled by “business is war” belief cycle of victim-martyrdom—lack of sleep, poor eating habits, and no exercise because “I'm too busy...” Your client or prospect will quickly see through the facade. They rather see added value and improved conditions.

### **How to Improve Your Executive Presence**

1. Take care of yourself. People with low self-esteem and self-image often neglect their health and their appearance. It shows. Now, we're not talking about looking like models in GQ or Vogue We are talking about having a healthy respect for your own health and physical presentation. Like it or not, tired, overweight, out of shape, sloppy or inappropriately dressed presents a drastically different image than those who take care of themselves.
2. Prepare yourself. What you read, who you listen to and what you watch contributes to who you are as a person. Remember, building relationships is about finding areas of mutual interest. Informed, involved people like to know they are talking and working with informed, involved people.

Remember, executive presence is not about the show—it's about who you are as a total person.

## *Improving Performance*

## *Navigating Transitions*

## *Accelerating Results*

**TIP:** It's true and remember this well—you only have one chance to make a first impression. Yes it sounds like one of those self-help throwaway lines, but truly, ignore this at your peril.

### **TECHNIQUES:**

1. When making a first impression, do so with sustainability in mind. That is, how you initially present must be consistent with how you present as your business relationship develops. This means, work to present well both the first time and every time after that.
2. Gratitude is powerful. Authentic gestures of recognition and appreciation yield great benefit. This is a soft component of effective leadership.
3. Be aware of your annoying habits—have someone you know and trust point them out to you and begin to work on improving them.
4. Ask intelligent and provocative questions that show you are familiar with the issues in the industry or in the organization.
5. Use humor tastefully and appropriately.
6. Position and carry yourself (your posture and body language) with confidence and as if you care about what you are doing—you do so by showing it.
7. Create a Learning life—implement regular ways that you will challenge and grow yourself through reading, writing, professional groups, travel, research, mentorship or coaching.
8. Innovate regularly. Ask yourself and experts around you how what you do now can be even better.
9. When you can, employ empowered delegation—choose the right person, clarify the goal/objective and any necessary parameters, then get out of the way.
10. Your physical presentation should be equal or better than those around you (image is contextual—meet or exceed your context).
11. Keep sight (meaning, regular practices) of your personal needs and priorities (life balance is core to “happily successful” verses “unhappily successful” career performance).
12. If you are an aspiring “executive” it is essential that you initiate and request projects, initiatives, assignments that present opportunities to demonstrate your higher value and seek positive exposure to senior management, key clients, etc.

### ***Your Next Steps...***

Now that you have read our Special Report on Self-Sabotage in Business, like any great coach, we challenge you to “answer this question: So, now what?”

By this we mean, what are your “take-always that you can apply immediately to recognize and eliminate self-sabotage? What are one or two key things, that if done, or done differently, and practiced consistently, will make a notably difference in you and your organization?

Start there, right now. Remember, you do not need to change everything at once—that is a recipe for failure. What you do need to do to improve and grow your organization (and to grow

*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

personally) is to identify and implement one or two actions consistently. Then, continue to monitor your results and make course corrections as appropriate.

**Here are some other questions you need to answer right now...**

- At this present time, is your organization where you want it to be—or do you want to reach the next level with your business?
- Do you believe you or your leadership team has the skills required to successfully and swiftly transition into a new position?
- Are you interested in developing yourself and your organization?
- Do you and your organization have clear goals—and a sound strategic vision?
- Are you feeling or hearing that you or your organization needs to change, but you're not sure how?
- Are you experiencing poor morale and as a result of your organization's leadership?
- What would refining your executive presence mean to you and your organization?
- Are you looking to reduce the time for achieving effectiveness during a transition period—especially as we go from recession to growth?
- Do you seriously want to improve management performance, effectiveness, productivity, output and results?

**If You Answered Yes to ANY of the Questions Above, Then We Have 2 Solutions For You...**

**1. Coaching and Consulting Services to Help You Stop the Business Self-Sabotage**

We are able to provide you with a competitive depth, knowledge and skills garnered from over 50 years of working with and consulting to hospitals and health care organizations, research and technology companies, social (non) profit organizations, native organizations, secondary and post secondary education, government sector, energy and resource development, tourism/commerce, and construction companies. We have represented both large to small organizations, from hands-on fieldwork to executive level leadership. Let us help you customize a coaching and consulting program that will help you

- Create a sound strategic vision that will support your organization now and in the future
- Implement your strategies so you can achieve business growth
- Manage any transition—whether it's new leadership roles or a transition from recession to business growth
- Customer growth and retention strategies
- Assess and improve organizational performance
- Build your brand and manage the perceptions and impressions your organization makes on your employees, stakeholders and your customers
- Improve your communication systems
- Build a more resilient and positive work environment
- Improve employee relationships and collaborative efforts
- Align everyone in your organization including executive and middle management

*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

- Develop your executive team with our executive performance coaching process that is motivational and participatory by design and is highly personalized and interactive as we address the specific issues relevant to your situation. We provide coaching for business skills and leadership development, transition to new roles and responsibility and life balance.
- 2. Webinars, teleseminars and live workshops which are instructional, engaging and customized for the needs of your business or organization.

We welcome you to contact us to learn more about how we serve as trusted advisors to our clients and partners in support of their greater success.

Contact us at Kubica LaForest Consulting

**Tony Kubica:**

**401 885 2011**

**[tony@kubicalaforestconsulting.com](mailto:tony@kubicalaforestconsulting.com)**

**Sara LaForest**

**805 904 6450**

**[sara@kubicalaforestconsulting.com](mailto:sara@kubicalaforestconsulting.com)**

To your success and well being,

---

Sara and Tony

Tony Kubica is a consultant, coach, writer, and speaker. He specializes in transition management, leadership development and performance improvement. Prior to founding the company he was a manager, director and vice president in healthcare organizations and was a member of the executive committee and senior vice president in charge of the Chi Group for Superior Consultant Company. As a senior vice president with Superior, he also had company-wide responsibility for recruiting and resource management. When not working with clients, writing or speaking, he teaches children and adults how to improve their self-discipline and self-confidence as a martial arts instructor. He believes he is the oldest person to appear on MTV's reality show Made.

Sara LaForest is a consultant, coach, author and speaker. She specializes in leadership strategy, talent development, organizational behavior and performance improvement.

Prior to founding her company, Sara worked in management and work force development for over two decades. She works with healthcare organizations, government agencies, nonprofit and American Indian/Alaska Native organizations, post-secondary education, and small and medium sized companies representing the private business sector. Having completed her master's and bachelor's degrees in psychology, Sara has continued with graduate studies and professional development in adult education and organizational leadership. She holds professional affiliations with the International Coach Federation (ICF), the American Management Association (AMA), and the Institute of Management Consultants (IMC). She holds certification with Hogan Assessments, an internationally used and premier personality and job performance profiling system, used to help organizations hire high-potential talent and develop current and future business leaders.

*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*