



Are You Impatient?

Knowing the symptoms and applying the solutions

By Joe Laipple, Ph.D.

Most leaders I talk to are frustrated that they can't get change to occur as quickly as they'd like. They want change now but, almost without fail, they suspect they won't get it. They want to be decisive. They want their words promising it will work to ring true.

What many organizations don't realize is that impatience within leaders and managers can be harnessed into productive and helpful behavior.

– Joe Laipple

For most organizations, change initiatives are easy to start yet they seem to sputter and stall. The cycle is rarely broken over years and entire careers. For some leaders, the impatience can be seen when they want it yesterday. They show impatience about results, activities, actions, behaviors. These leaders focus their efforts on pushing for results. It's about results in the end anyway but they must be careful not to push too soon. This usually leads to false reporting, good paperwork, or employees playing the numbers game.

Then there are those who want it all. As the comedian Steven Wright remarked, "You can't have everything. Where would you put it?" The challenge for these leaders is to maintain their impatience about the right things at the right time.

Others feel stuck in a constant cycle of change. You've seen this cycle before and it is hard to stop. The smart money for these leaders is that this time they will likely fail.



Even for those individuals who wait out the change because history tells them the organization will not have the persistence to continue or follow up, know eventually there will be a new speech from a leader about the next thing.

Patience is the support of weakness; impatience the ruin of strength,'

— Charles Caleb Colton

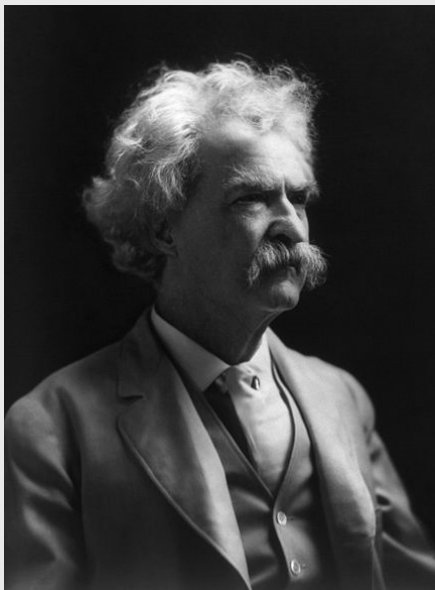
With all of these symptoms and examples of impatience with leaders, what many organizations don't realize is that impatience within leaders and managers can be harnessed into productive and helpful behavior.

SOLUTIONS

The following are solutions for managers and leaders who want to harness their impatience into something more productive and helpful:

- Describe and maintain a clear line of sight. Define long-term success (12 to 24 months for example) and incremental success in behaviors and actions starting today, to 30 days, to 60 days, to 90 days that will guide you to your long-term outcomes.
- Focus on changes today (or this week). Here is a great place to redirect your impatience. No waiting. Do something today. Then we can really talk about it. Start now. It is hard to get good at something if you only do it occasionally. Daily is great. Weekly is acceptable. Biweekly or monthly won't work. This goes for all employees—those doing the work and those influencing others. Start the changes and the follow-up today.
- Focus on 1-2 behavior changes. If you have to do 30 things differently every day, you are in trouble. It is too much work and requires too much effort. Focus instead on getting good at a couple of things. Then

- you'll have a chance to develop new desirable habits.
- Create conditions of self-direction and self-management. Ask people to describe how the changes are working for them. Ask others to describe how they are making it work. Ask questions to prompt others to share how they are part of the change.
 - Gather an ongoing body of evidence. This includes behavior changes now, leading indicators and activities (like how customers are responding differently, early signs of success), and results changes as they emerge.
 - Demonstrate a persistent and deliberate impatience to follow up and pull through the changes. It is easier to make that great speech to get it going. It's harder to follow up persistently and consistently over time. This is one of the key engines that we need to build into change efforts. It also requires leaders to ask more, tell less, follow up, encourage and help.
- So what are you waiting for? Determine where you want to go. Take some action today (not tomorrow, in fact, when you are done with this article, do something now). Try it. See how it worked. Make that small adjustment. Get ready for the next action you will take that will lead you to where you want to go.



WRITING FOR THE IMPATIENT LEADER

“I didn’t have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.”

—Mark Twain

Andy Lattal, the acclaimed behavior analyst, used to assign several long articles for his classes each week. Students were required to write half-page essays that synthesized hundreds of pages of assigned readings and offer proof the articles were read. This may seem like an easy assignment. The tempted student might merely scan the readings and then try to write the essay. The student who got the most out of the class re-read the

articles and rewrote to create an effective short essay. The challenge was to find a novel thought that stands out.

The process of rewriting often led to synthesis or discovery of something important, at least from the student perspective. This process forced the writer to omit words that didn't help make the point.

As a teacher I used this same technique. It made using essays—even with a large class size—possible and practical. It also separated substance from fluff.

Later when working with business leaders, it was crystal clear that unless you couldn't say something in a half page, they wouldn't read it. The burden then is on the writer.

WRITING FOR IMPATIENT READERS

- Have a point and get to it quickly.
- Be clear on what you are saying and asking.
- Take out the fluff. As Strunk and White said, "Omit needless words."
- Don't just write. Rewrite.

One final note: As I fact checked the Twain quote, I came across this earlier quote from Blaise Pascal,

"I have made this letter longer than usual because I have not had time to make it shorter."



[About the Author]

JOE LAIPPLE, PH.D.



Joe Laipple is author of Precision Selling: A Guide for Coaching Sales Professionals and Rapid Change: Immediate Action for the Impatient Leader, both available for purchase in the

ADI Store.

[About ADI]

Regardless of your industry or expertise, one thing remains constant: People power your business. Since 1978 Aubrey Daniels International (ADI) has been dedicated to accelerating the business and safety performance of companies worldwide by using positive, practical approaches grounded in the science of behavior and engineered to ensure long-term sustainability. ADI provides clients with the tools and methodologies to help move people toward positive, results-driven accomplishments. Our clients accelerate strategy execution while fostering employee engagement and positive accountability at all levels of their organization.

CONNECT WITH US

aubreydaniels.com/stay-connected

web: aubreydaniels.com

blog: aubreydanielsblog.com

twitter: twitter.com/aubreydaniels

