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Why We Still Can't Get Sh*t Done: Breaking the Traps That Hold Us Back

Leadership

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If you've worked in hospitality long enough, you know this dance. The strategy decks pile up. The ideas are solid. The problems are clear. And yet somehow we're still stuck. Not because we're clueless. Not because we're lazy. But because something always gets in the way of execution. The day gets busy. The budget gets tight. The email gets buried. And before you know it, the thing you meant to tackle is still sitting on your to-do list, three quarters later.

Sound familiar? You're not alone. Let's talk about why it happens and more importantly how to start making real progress again. For anyone who's spent time working in hospitality, on-property or in corporate, you've probably had the same experience: we know what needs to be done, but we just... don't do it. Or we start, then stall. Or we decide, then re-decide. Again and again. It's not that we lack knowledge or ideas. Often, we know the problems and we even know the solutions. What we lack is momentum. Execution. Follow-through.

After years as both a corporate leader and now a consultant, I see the same five traps showing up over and over again. They keep teams spinning, projects stalling, and progress perpetually pending. Let's talk about them, and more importantly, how we might finally break free.

THE "TOO BUSY" TRAP

This is hands down the most common trap. Everyone's overloaded, especially your top performers. The problem isn't awareness or effort, it's prioritization. This trap always brings me back to Stephen Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People," and specifically Habit 3: Put First Things First. Covey borrowed from Eisenhower's urgent vs. important matrix. The gist: urgent tasks scream the loudest, but important and not urgent ones move the needle. Covey emphasized the magic of Quadrant 2: things that are important but not urgent – strategy, planning, innovation. These are the game-changers, but they often get ignored because they don't have a flashing deadline. We all spend too much time reacting and not enough time building. You don't need to categorize your whole calendar, but just being aware of this framework helps. Make space for the work that matters most – even if no one's yelling for it.

THE "TOO COMPLICATED" TRAP

Some problems feel too big, too messy, too political, or just too damn hard. Think of multi-stakeholder tech projects or entrenched operational processes. We freeze, delay, and then avoid. The trick here? Simplify. Take a page from any solid problem-solving framework: define the problem, gather info, brainstorm solutions, pick the best path, and map out your plan. Sounds basic, right? But so often we skip steps, or never even start. The key is to eat the elephant one bite at a time. Yes, it's a cliché. Yes, it's still true.

THE "CUTTING THE ROAST AT BOTH ENDS" TRAP

This one comes from a story: A family always cuts both ends off the roast before cooking. When asked why, no one knows. Turns out, Great Grandma had a small pan. But the habit lived on for generations.

Every hotel has its own version of this. Legacy processes and assumptions that nobody questions anymore. Workarounds that got baked into new systems. Decisions made for reasons that no longer exist. Sometimes it just takes fresh eyes. A new hire. A teammate from another department. A consultant (hi). At a previous company, we did "Fresh Eyes Reviews" with new team members after 60 days. It was amazing what they could spot. You can also use tools like the Six Thinking Hats to shake up how your team approaches problems. The goal: challenge the default and stop cutting the roast.

THE "TOO POLITICAL" TRAP

Not political as in Washington. Political as in internal turf wars, sacred cows, and departmental friction. Marketing wants to push direct bookings. IT resists the tech. Ops doesn't want to change the flow. Sometimes people cling to old decisions, systems, or vendors because they feel ownership. Or they're afraid to speak up. Or they know it won't go anywhere. This one's hard. It takes leadership. Not just from the top, but across the organization. You need a culture where people can question, challenge, and collaborate without fear. Easier said than done, I know. But essential.

THE "FOFU" TRAP (FEAR OF F**KING UP)

This is the quiet killer of decisions. Teams stall. RFPs drag out. Projects get endlessly reviewed. All because we're terrified of making the wrong call. The reality? There's rarely a perfect answer. Most of the time, you're choosing between a few good-but-imperfect options. Teddy Roosevelt said it best: *"In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing."* We over-index on due diligence and forget to act. Tech companies iterate. They test. They launch. They move fast and fix later. We procrastinate, deliberate, and hope someone else makes the call. There's a middle ground between reckless and frozen. Let's find it.

WHAT NOW?

My challenge: pick one or two things you already know need to get done. Not necessarily a big new idea – just something you've been circling for weeks or months (or maybe years!). Maybe it's a system that needs replacing, a process that needs updating, or a conversation that's overdue.

Now ask yourself, are you avoiding it because you're too busy?

- Because it feels too complex?
- Because it's "just the way we do it"?
- Because it might step on toes?
- Because you're afraid to make the wrong call?

Whatever the reason, name it. Then move anyway. No roadmap. No task force. Just one clear step forward this week. Momentum beats perfection, and motion is the only way out of these traps.

Break the trap. Get sh*t done.

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