

SmartBlog on Leadership

Engage. Innovate. Discuss.



Feeling rushed? Break the habit of hurry and overwhelm

By [Joel Garfinkle](#) on August 18th, 2014

Madeline is sitting in her boss's office, patiently waiting for his full attention so she can preview a client presentation she has to deliver tomorrow. Meanwhile Rob, her boss, is sending a text on his smart phone. Before he's finished with that, the computer pings, signaling an incoming e-mail that Rob says he must answer immediately. He interrupts that process to grab a ringing phone and finally waves Madeline away, mouthing "I'll catch you later," as she backs out the door.

Rob is a busy guy. He's **hustling all day long**. And Madeline knows if he doesn't review her presentation before she delivers it to the client, he's very likely to snap her head off. Rob has the "Rush Syndrome." Unfortunately, he's spreading this infection throughout his entire team.

Does any of this sound familiar? There have probably been times when you could identify with both Madeline and Rob. If you detect some symptoms of "Rush Syndrome" in yourself, how can you stop the infection?

- Identify triggers
- Evaluate the impact
- Leave a smaller wake

Let's engage in a little self-analysis and see how you can shift your focus.

Identify triggers. Life moves fast, and in many corporate environments the people who move fast with it are rewarded — they get the perks, the **promotions**, the positive reinforcement. Look back over your activities for the past few days. How often did these thoughts pop into your head?

- People just don't move fast enough.
- These **meetings drag on and on**.
- Get to the point already!
- Let's take some action here (even if it's wrong).

If these are frequently recurring themes, ask yourself, "What's the payoff?" You may look and feel important, but chances are you're feeling more stressed than you realize and you're passing that stress along to everyone around you.

Solution: Pick a theme word that will stop the rush. Try “listen,” “focus,” “attention,” or “stop.” Keep this word in front of you, on your desk, on your notebook, your phone or computer screen. As you start to shift your attitude, notice if other people are relating to you differently.

Evaluate the impact. In the illustration above, Madeline has a real dilemma. If she makes her presentation without Rob’s OK, she’ll be in big trouble. If she pushes him to pay attention to her, he probably won’t, and he’ll be irritated in the bargain. How do your co-workers and subordinates react as you rush from person to person, job to job, meeting to meeting? If they are mirroring your behavior, or if they avoid you even when they need your help, you’re entering a danger zone.

Solution: Openly acknowledge the problem. Tell your staff you’re trying to change your style and give them permission to call you on it when they notice you’re having a relapse.

Leave a smaller wake. It doesn’t matter whether you have two projects going or 200, you always feel in a pressing rush to do it all and do it now. You hustle 24/7. You’re running yourself ragged in a daily battle to keep up. You dash from meeting to meeting, often feeling that your work is out of control, and maybe you are too. People clear a path when they see you dashing down the hall. And in the process you leave behind some damaged feelings, projects, and relationships that can’t be easily fixed.

Solution: Take a deep breath. Seriously, when you feel your world about to spin out of control, close your office door or find someplace to be alone for a few minutes. Close your eyes and just breathe. Let your mind go blank — don’t think about your never-ending to-do list. Then open your eyes and focus on one single thing, whatever is next on your agenda. Consciously slow down as you walk back to your office or head for your next meeting. Your blood pressure will thank you, and so will your co-workers.

*Joel Garfinkle is recognized as one of the top 50 leadership coaches in the U.S. As an **executive coach**, he has worked with many of the world’s leading companies, including Google, Amazon, Starbucks, Deloitte, Cisco Systems, and The Ritz-Carlton. He is the author of seven books, including **“Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level.”** More than 10,000 people subscribe to his Fulfillment@Work newsletter. **If you sign up**, you’ll receive the free e-book “41 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now!”*

*If you enjoyed this article, join **SmartBrief’s e-mail list** for our daily newsletter on being a better, smarter leader.*