

Instant Gratification – Is wanting it NOW good for you and your business?

By Ella Scheinwald ©

We live in a fast-moving world. Your computer, Blackberry, and other electronic gadgets help you stay connected instantaneously. But technology is both a blessing and a curse. It has raised your expectations, and the expectations of those around you, about how quickly things need to get done. And because you're able to do more than one thing at a time, you do. You talk on the phone, email, chat on-line, and text, all at once. Working this way doesn't work because you're functioning on urgency mode.

First, it sabotages your mood. Your stress level goes up when you become totally overwhelmed by information overload from too many places at the same time. You feel irritated and even anxious when the computer takes too long to boot up, when Google is not quick enough with the search results you want, when employees don't answer your emails instantly. You snap at employees, colleagues, loved ones.

Second, it devalues your relationships. You've turned personal interactions into the equivalent of quick sex. Sure, "quickies" are exciting. They give you an adrenaline rush. They enhance your feelings of power. They're instant gratification. But they're superficial and unsatisfying. You may have dozens, hundreds, maybe even thousands of contacts and "friends" but not many deep relationships. Because relationships take time.

Third, instant gratification tricks you into believing that your business will suffer if you don't react quickly. In reality, you usually don't quite complete anything when you're spending all your time putting out fires.

Guess what? If you slow down, you and your employees can become more productive. You can bring successful closure to issues by taking the time to strategize rather than reacting through emails. You can build more meaningful relationships with your employees. One of my Israeli clients has about 1,700 employees in his very profitable high tech company. He took the time to personalize his relationship with each and every employee. His employees feel valued and are highly motivated because the founder and the corporate environment value them and their contribution to the company. Their importance is not defined by expectations of multi-tasking and urgent responses.

So how can you overcome your addiction to instant gratification?

- Learn the difference between what is urgent and what is important. Prioritize and direct your full attention to important matters that deserve your time rather than urgent matters that demand your time.
- Set aside time for instant gratification, say, 30 to 45 minutes first thing in the morning, to read emails. Respond to those that require a quick answer and tag and set aside ones that require a more thoughtful response.
- Look at each task as it relates to the short-term and long-term objectives of your company. Ask yourself how your action adds to your platform, and how it adds value to your product and company.
- Reflect on your work day. If don't remember what you did, you may be working on too many things at the same time.