

The Tyranny of the Urgent



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You may have seen the old cartoon that shows a king standing on the battlefield in front of his knights and swordsmen. An opposing force is arrayed against them across the valley. The king is shown dismissing a squire who is trying to hand him a business card. Out of sight behind a tent, a man is polishing a tripod mounted machine gun. The caption reads: "I don't have time to talk to a salesman, I have a battle to fight."

(If I had the cartoon and permission to print it, that picture would have been worth 81 words.)

Dealing with the urgent is always exhausting, but the lasting damage of a crisis comes from missed opportunity. When you devote your attention to the current crisis, you are reacting rather than planning. You lose the time, energy, and inclination to craft your future.

3 REASONS PEOPLE SUFFER FROM THE TYRANNY OF THE URGENT

So why is it that some of us always suffer the tyranny of the urgent, while others are relaxed, calm, and proactive about their futures? There are countless specific issues, but I have noticed three principle differences between the two: cash, leads, and organization.

1. CASH

Cash is at once liberating and calming. Many of the crises we face originated with uncertainty about our ability to pay our obligations (or to fund a solution). Beyond that, cash transforms the plausible into the possible. (I considered further describing the benefits of cash but decided not to. If you are in business, you know.)

2. LEADS

An abundant source of leads ranks second only to cash in building confidence. Confidence strengthens our negotiating position and frees us from the urgent need to “sell this guy” or “to work with that jerk” or to cut prices “because we need the sale.”

3. ORGANIZATION

Organization is a sign of having learned from experience. Rather than fight the same battles over and over, an organized company has both advisors and processes to handle problems before they become crises. Great companies are organized both externally and internally. External organization means the company has advisors (lawyers, CPAs, bankers, insurance specialists, etc.) to handle problems outside of the company's normal business operations. Internal organization means the company has processes in place to handle issues within normal business operations (bookkeeping, production, sales, project management, marketing, etc.)

HOW TO GET CASH, LEADS, AND ORGANIZATION

“Well, duh, Holland,” you're thinking, “if I had cash, unlimited customers, and a company that runs on autopilot, of course I'd be relaxed and proactive! What's your point?” My point is that none of those things happen by accident. Cash, leads, and organization happen over time as a result of deliberate action.

What were you thinking about on your drive to work this morning? Opportunity or a current crisis? How would you rate yourself on cash, leads, and organization? If you've had enough and are ready to throw off the yoke of the urgent, you can begin by reading.

To build a cash reserve, read **Profit First** by Mike Michalowicz. His system is NOT a substitute for good bookkeeping, but it presents an easy method for managing and accumulating cash in your business.

To increase your leads beyond those that come by “word of mouth,” read Donald Miller’s books **Storybrand** and **Marketing Made Simple**. They clarify the confusing subject of marketing and present a clear course of action.

To organize your business, start by reading my article **Do You Own a Job or a Business?**, and download my **Advisor and Mentor Checklist**. The article will get you started on systems to manage the normal business operations. The checklist will guide you in gathering the advisors and mentors who can help you head off external issues before they become crises.

If you are short of cash, leads, and organization, there is no greater crisis than to be just as short this time next year.



Martin Holland

Martin Holland is the son of a successful entrepreneur. He grew up hearing about margins and markets, R&D and sales, risk and return on investment. He learned to love the language and rigors of business and grew to believe that business is both the most human of all endeavors and the highest calling. After selling a company in 2011, Martin became a coach in order to help other owners build profitable businesses that do not require their day-to-day involvement.

A native of Norman, Martin earned a B.A. degree from Hastings College in Hastings, Nebraska and a Masters in Business Administration degree from the University of Oklahoma. Over the past 7 years he has written business plans that have raised over \$52.4 million in bank and investor financing. He has helped 157 (and counting) business owners reduce stress and increase performance through clarity of purpose, better marriages, more money, and more free time away from the business.