

Fighting Complacency In Your Work And Your Organization

| If you're not improving, you're losing

 By **Evan Hackel**

Complacency is like a slow-acting poison that can destroy any organization. Is it damaging yours?

Complacency, which often takes hold a little at a time, is often difficult to notice. But you can hear it at work in statements like these:

- "Business is so good, we don't need to improve anything."
- "I'm afraid that if I start monkeying around, things will only get worse."
- "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."
- "We can't make it any better."
- "I'm just happy with the way things are."

Good Is the Enemy of Great

To achieve great things, it is often necessary to risk doing damage to processes that are working well enough - that are merely good. But it is a risk that you need to take. If you are not consistently



challenging what is good and seeking excellence, you are risking extinction.

General Motors is one historical example. At the dawn of the 1960s, GM was still the world's largest carmaker. Then Japanese car companies entered the U.S. market. Japanese cars were better made than GM's, but GM remained stuck in complacency. GM had another 40 years to change but didn't. What was once unimaginable happened. GM went bankrupt in the Great Recession.

So, we can see that standing still is really falling back. If you're not improving, you're losing. Change and innovation are facts of life today, and the speed of innovation is only getting faster.

If you are not consistently challenging what is good and seeking excellence, you are risking extinction.

Turn the Lens on Your Own Company

Look at your company. Are you seeking excellence? Are you always promoting innovation, improvement and reinvention? If not, start!

If you are not sure whether complacency has set in, here are some questions to ask:

- "Are we experiencing slow or no growth?" If you are, you're standing still.
- "Are any increases in profits coming from operational efficiency, not from growth?"
- "Are our best and brightest people leaving us?"
- "If I were to open a business today to do what we do, what would it look like?"
- "If I were going to open a business today to put ours out of business, what would it look like?"
- "Am I continually improving our team?"
- "Am I investing in training to improve our team and operations?"
- "Am I cultivating a climate of positive dissent?" You want people to feel encouraged to contribute dissenting opinions and suggestions, as long as they are positive and directed toward making progress.
- "Have I surrounded myself with yes people who only rubber-stamp everything I want to do?"
- "Have I built a team of executives who have a variety of different skills and experiences?"
- "Do I cultivate the outlook of a macro-manager?" That means you stay focused on the big picture. Remember, micromanagers kill innovation.
- "Have I learned to put up with negative people and their outlooks?" New ideas and

outlooks can only thrive in organizations where positivity is valued and rewarded.

- "Do I have a defined process of innovation in place?" One good approach is to pick a time every year where you re-think your business and involve the whole company in that process.
- "Am I working in the business . . . or *on* the business?" Senior management needs to keep its eye on the big picture.

Are You Complacent . . .

Think about everything I covered in this article and apply it to yourself. Are you improving and innovating? How are you making yourself better? When to start.... Yesterday!

• • •



Evan Hackel is CEO of [Tortal Training](#), a leading training development company, and principal and founder of [Ingage Consulting](#). He is the host of [Training Unleashed](#) podcasts and author of the book [Ingaging Leadership](#). Evan speaks on Seeking Excellence, Better Together, Ingaging Leadership, and Attitude is Everything.



▶ Would you like to comment?

Submit Your Articles