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The ABC's of Work & Life

Minding Your Ps and Qs: Parched, Pace and Quality



Katie Mehnert ponders over P and Q.

That means having enough water and cups.

After five years and plenty of feedback, I would think this race would have learned its lessons. Unfortunately, it's proven it hasn't done anything more than grow its numbers and fees. Needless to say next weekend, I will not be running this race in Houston.

Walking the high wire in heels

I've been an active dues-paying member of a trade association for a number of years.

In its quest to grow, the organisation is getting too big, too fast, and isn't unsustainable. The people model is too complicated and its leadership turns quickly. The board burns through an untrained volunteer base leveraging high-worth working professionals (with real leadership jobs) to run its operations. Instead of cutting unnecessary items and simplifying the offer, the organisation continues to invest on non-value



activities. It's choosing to walk the high wire in heels and not marathon shoes.

Thirsty for leadership

Failing to focus on the basics is what puts people, organisations and events on the high wire. To get ahead, leaders have to get the basics right and make tough choices. That means taking feedback, and doing something *with* it. Growth needs to be managed in a careful manner, which requires focus, strategic capital raising, restructuring and execution. It's

less about growing the numbers of runners or members, and more about putting a quality factor on the product or service.

These two stories remind me of the organisations and leaders I've worked with.

What do they have in common?

- Both lack the ability to pace growth and get quality right. When you grow too fast, don't measure pace, and fail

to focus on quality, you put yourself on a path to self-destruction. When you say "yes" to everything, you get an unstable mess.

- The organisations inconsistently collect feedback from supporters, but do not put the findings into measurable and visible action.

The path to sustainability

Sustainability is hard and rare. The best enterprises and leaders put the following at the core of everything they do:

Great leadership

Do you have the right leaders guiding the path? Are they supported by a diverse set of actively engaged advisers? Are you developing the right pipeline of talent to groom?

Customer and market focus

Do your people have the discipline to focus? Do you care about your customers? Do you consistently ask your customers, sponsors and supporters for feedback? And once you have collected it, do you put it into measurable visible plans so that you can demonstrate a willingness to improve?

Culture = Reputation

What image are you projecting? Is it in line with what you want to be or ought to be demonstrating? How you build the inside is directly related to how you are viewed on the outside. Get your house in order first by starting with the top of the house.

Bottom line: Parched runners and organisations with limited resources eventually pass out or die.

What are you doing to keep hydrated, your people healthy, your mission alive, and yourself on course as you race on the path to long-term success?

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I just need some water.
Oh and maybe a cup, too?

