



# { THE BYWATER JOURNAL }

CREATIVE APPROACHES TO OPTIMIZING PERFORMANCE

NEWS FOR CLIENTS AND FRIENDS OF BYWATER CONSULTING GROUP

## In today's newsletter:

- [How to Have a Truly Strategic Offsite](#)
- [Increase Your Influence Immediately](#)
- [Five Reasons to Get Out of the Office](#)
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## Stop Wasting Your Time With Fluffy Offsites

If you're like most of the Fortune 500 executives I work with, you've attended more than your share of offsites. With hope, some of these sessions have been highly productive - and well worth the time, energy and budget that went into them.

In all likelihood, however, some have felt insubstantial, disorganized or just plain bland. Such meetings are all too common in corporate life - and a missed opportunity for real strategic impact.

To help you make the most of your next team session, here are several best practices from a team offsite I recently conducted.

### The What:

The team was brought together for a 2-day meeting - the second in a series of quarterly offsites. Although this group has a demanding daily grind, their offsites are prioritized as

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## What Clients Are Saying



*"Liz Bywater has been my coach for the past year, and it has been an absolute gift.*

*I can't say enough good things about the experience.*

an invaluable tool for driving rapid progress.

### The Why:

To carve out time for the team to take a *meaningful pause* in the action - to have them *slow down* long enough to think, plan, set or change direction - and then hit the accelerator hard. I call this type of session a **Strategic Pause**.

### The How:

This team focused on clarifying vision, communicating brand, and aligning on priorities, opportunities and challenges.

They identified ways to improve communication and collaboration - allowing the group to fully capitalize on strengths that might otherwise go unrecognized.

They spoke frankly about what each team member *brings* to the table - and what each *needs* from the group.

And the entire team made a commitment to help each other in new and creative ways.

### Why It Worked:

Among other things, here's what the leader did right.

*She encouraged and modeled openness and candor.*

*She asked questions and invited honest replies.*

*She listened without interrupting, disputing or dominating the conversation.*

*She dug deep to get at the root of the team's greatest challenges and concerns.*

*She was genuinely interested in hearing what people had to say.*

***I would recommend Liz to anyone looking for ways to improve their leadership and achieve their potential."***

- Liz Fowler  
Vice President,  
Global Health Policy  
Johnson & Johnson

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*She recognized individual and group successes - and she encouraged the team to replicate best practices.*

### **What Could Have Gone (Terribly) Wrong:**

Here's a partial list of typical derailers.

*The team **could have been** distracted by nonstop email, text, and other electronic hijackers. (They weren't)*

*People **could have been** unduly critical or dismissive of one another's ideas. (They weren't)*

*People **could have** remained silent - in anticipation of being struck down or overrun. (They didn't)*

*The team **could have** dwelled on failures and obstacles. (Instead, they looked honestly at what's gone wrong in the past. And they developed viable solutions for current and anticipated challenges.)*

So now it's your turn. Take time to pause and reflect on *your* last offsite.

What went especially well - and where did it fall short of expectations?

For your **next** offsite: build upon past successes, foster an atmosphere of openness, be genuine, focus on priorities and set the stage for what's to come.

And don't forget to ask your team what they'd like to cover. By considering everyone's most pressing concerns, you ensure a strategic team offsite that is truly worth everyone's time.

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## **How to Increase Your Influence Immediately: Four Leadership Tips**

I recently began working with Jack, a high-level executive for a large multi-national company. Jack is extremely bright, full of great ideas, and eager to put those ideas into motion.

But Jack has a real problem. He's having one heck of a time getting support from others in the organization. His ideas are slow to gain traction - if they gain traction at all. In fact, his proposed initiatives are often met with covert or outright resistance from his key stakeholders.

**Jack lacks influence. And if he can't influence, he can't lead.**

If you're like Jack, you've got a job to do. You're a leader and you need to win the hearts, minds, and commitment of others if you are to get things done. Here are four ways to build relationships, improve communication, and increase influence right away.

### **1. Stop leaving others out of the conversation**

Busy executives are just that - busy. And often overwhelming so. The demands don't stop and the pace never slows. So you may believe it's a waste of time to pause in your activity long enough to sit down with an important stakeholder - to fill him in on your plans or to seek input or agreement before taking action.

But the fact is, when you pause - to align with colleagues, gain support, or collect additional insights - you develop trust, build helpful coalitions, and avoid alienating people who might otherwise slow or completely derail your efforts. In other words, you create influence.

### **2. Answer your emails**

I get it. You're swamped with hundreds of emails every day. If you're like many of my clients, you are so bombarded that you can't get through daily email in less than an hour or two, sometimes more. The idea isn't to add to your burden or busy-ness.

Here's what I tell my clients to do.

Don't reply to your email scattershot throughout the day. Instead, block out 15 minutes 2-3 times a day to review your inbox and identify where a prompt reply is needed. Your response may be as simple as acknowledging receipt of important information, "Got your note, will review and get back to you by Thursday afternoon. If you need me sooner, please call me on mobile. Thanks!"

And that's it. In 30 seconds' time, you've shown that you heard the other person (or people), that you're going to respond in greater detail, and that you're available if needed - without creating further email clutter.

The result? When people feel recognized and heard, they are more likely to listen to you, consider your ideas, and provide support for your initiatives. How's that for influence?

### **3. Listen to someone else's POV**

You already know how **you** feel and think about a new product, project or idea. Now it's time to see it through others' eyes. If you are Head of R&D, for example, ask your colleagues in Sales and Marketing what this new idea or product means to them. Does it create opportunities? Will it cause headaches? Is it even feasible? Perhaps they have insights into the customer experience that you should take into account.

Listening to others - and pausing to reflect on different points of view - will create stronger alliances, drive better decisions and produce far greater influence and impact.

### **4. Pay attention**

When someone steps into your office or calls you on the phone, give her your full and undivided attention. Don't surreptitiously glance at your computer screen. Trust me, you're not fooling anyone. Don't tap away at your keyboard,

even if you are taking notes on the discussion. Don't let your devices interrupt the conversation with pings and vibrations.

Be in the moment, fully attentive to the other person (or people). Listen without comment until it's your turn to ask a clarifying question or offer an opinion. You'll be amazed how much more effective these conversations will be - and how much stronger your relationships will become.

Good communication coupled with excellent relationships translates to increased credibility and far greater influence.

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## **Five Great Reasons for Leaders to Get Out of the Office**

In today's busy, breakneck-paced work environment, few executives allow themselves time out of the office - whether to grab lunch or visit colleagues in another locale, to attend an interesting workshop or browse the shelves at a favorite bookstore. Such 'luxuries' are considered indulgent or impossible when deadlines loom, decisions await, and fires demand rapid extinguishing.

**But here's the truth.** Pausing from the daily hustle and ensuring time away from the office - whether for an hour or a week - is neither an extravagance nor a waste of time. In fact, I'm going to give you five great reasons to get out of the office.

**But first, let me suggest an easy experiment.**

During your next lunch hour, resist the temptation to answer emails or return phone calls. Instead, stand up and step away from your desk. On your way out of the office, avoid the executive dining room. Steer clear of the cafeteria. Stay away from the lunch joint you'd otherwise frequent with your closest peers.

Set yourself up in a comfortable leather chair at a nearby coffee shop. Enjoy your hot beverage of choice, put away

your phone, and make eye contact with the stranger sitting across from you. Make a connection. Say hello, ask an introductory question or two. You can let the other person steer the conversation to see where the discussion takes you. Or you might ask for reactions to a new business idea you've been considering.

Try this once a week for a month. It's a low-risk, low-cost investment of your time and energy. **Here are five great reasons to give it a try. You will:**

### 1. Meet interesting people

Hey, you never know who may be sitting in that comfortable chair across from you. I've had fascinating conversations with Fortune 100 executives, leaders of non-profit organizations, independent business owners, authors and more. These discussions have accelerated the development of my forthcoming book, ***Slow Down to Speed Up: Harnessing the Power of Pausing to Improve Leadership, Advance Your Career and Get Things Done.***

### 2. Gather new ideas

When you speak to people outside your immediate sphere, you gather ideas and points of view that are otherwise beyond your line of sight.

### 3. Get some distance

Getting out of the office provides you with a reminder of the world outside of the corporate office. It's a welcome breather that allows you to return with a renewed sense of perspective. During some of your ventures out of the office, allow yourself to simply be quiet - to observe what's happening around you and thoughtfully reflect on your approach to your work and your impact as a leader.

### 4. Share ideas

Speaking with strangers may seem like an odd way to

pressure-test your ideas but hey, as long as you're not giving away company secrets, this is a low-pressure way to see whether your ideas make sense to your potential customers. You may very well come back to the office with increased confidence in your approach. Or you might use what you've heard to develop new ideas that help you do things better, faster or with greater appeal in the marketplace.

## 5. Come back refreshed

Let's be honest. Being cooped up in the same office, same building - working closely with the same set of people day after day - can be tiring and tiresome. Even under the best of circumstances, getting out of the office for a bit of fresh air and a change of scenery is a healthy and energizing activity. When you return to the office, you will be far more focused and productive.

**Leaders, it's no luxury to get out of your every-day workspace.** Whether you try my coffee shop experiment or find other ways to broaden your perspective and renew your energy, get out there today and try something new. And while you're at it, encourage your team to do the same. Make it a best-practice for them to reflect on what they've learned and report back with new insights, ideas, approaches and innovations.

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## Exceptional Leadership Tip #40

Top performing CEOs, pro athletes, and accomplished actors all work with remarkable coaches.

Do you?

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For over a decade, top global organizations have requested Liz's help in resolving issues such as creating extraordinary client relationships, increasing market persuasion, and driving productive collaborations in an increasingly complex world.

Liz advises senior leaders at some of the world's most successful companies, such as Johnson & Johnson, Thomson Reuters, Bristol-Myers Squibb and AmerisourceBergen Corporation, among others. She uses her expertise in human behavior to drive commercial success. She helps her clients drive innovation, exert influence and lead their organizations through change.

A thought leader in organizational excellence, Liz provides expert commentary for such publications as the Wall Street Journal, NY Times and USA Today. She earned her PhD in Psychology at the Derner Institute for Advanced Psychological Studies. Her undergraduate degree is from Cornell University. Liz graduated Cornell Phi Beta Kappa and Cum Laude.

She is a member of the American Psychological Association and the Society for the Advancement of Consulting and author of the eagerly awaited forthcoming book, *Slow Down to Speed Up: Harnessing the Power of Pausing to Improve Leadership, Advance Your Career and Get Things Done.*

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## Contact Us:

For information on how we help top executives, **send us an email** or give us a call at 800.846.4546.

We look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, please **visit us** any time!