



Dear Friend,

The Calendar

Do you ever resist flipping the calendar page at the end of the day on November 30?

It's not that you have some deep-seated phobia about paper or datebooks. Rather, it's the realization that, by turning the page, you're welcoming in *December*...the last month of the year. And, December raises within you the awareness that you're not where you thought you would be, you've not done what you'd planned to do, when the year started.

Well, my friend, refusing to turn the page won't change the fact that it is...indeed...December.

So, what do you do? How do you grapple with the rapidly approaching end of the year and your own personal mash of "dones" and "undones"?

Good questions! Join me for the next two issues of **EA Insights**. This month we'll take a look at how you can get a handle on the year that's about to end. Then, come on back next month as we plan for the new year.

Even if 2016 hasn't been all you'd hoped it would be, you can use this year's experiences as the foundation for a successful year to come!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Examine the Past to Excel in the Future

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Executive Advantage clients will tell you that I'm a stickler for debriefs. There's tremendous value in stepping back after a meeting, or an event, or a project and impartially dissecting it.

Now, mind you, the level of benefit is directly tied to the intent of this post-mortem. If the purpose is to point fingers and cast blame...*buzz*, diminished return. On the other hand, if the goal is to learn, celebrate, and



In This Issue

[Examine the Past to Excel in the Future](#)

[Quotes](#)

Quick Links

[EA Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[Solutions for Businesses](#)

[Solutions for Professionals](#)

[News](#)

[Contact Us](#)



"Quotes"

"Transparency is the best disinfectant."
~Keith Ashdown

"This is a full review without preconceptions. We are going to give this transaction a very robust examination."
~Stewart Baker

"Only an independent ... investigation ... will accomplish what we need -- a thorough, comprehensive review which is only concerned with getting to the truth[.]"
~Kathleen Blanco

"This is laying the groundwork of future, more extensive review of the ... planning process."
~Dee Boersma

"[I]t's continually improving. Now, we'll debrief with [them] and others, look at it with a microscope, and figure out how to improve things for next year."
~Jeff Hanle

"We certainly take these reports seriously and will review ..."

continue tweaking...*ding*, exponential return.

So, we've reached December. What better time than now to pause and examine the year that we're about to usher out? Taking a moment for an honest look backward provides the information needed for a realistic look forward.

Let me offer a helpful debrief format. Next month we'll cover thoughts about planning for the future.

What were my/our goals for the period, and why was each one important?

If you simply ask yourself whether it was "a good year" or not, you'll get an incomplete and largely unusable response. Instead, listing out each goal for the period allows you to isolate the specific expectations you had for yourself or your organization.

I also find it helpful to revisit why each goal was important. The practice of reconnecting with the "why" is crucial because it frames the rest of the debrief conversation. It helps you to remember what each goal was intended to add or how it was supposed to position you for success. This examination also exposes goals that seemed absolutely essential during planning but that, over time, have been shown to be less integral to personal or organizational success.

Which ones did I/we meet? Which ones did I/we miss?

No explanations. No excuses. Just answer. 'Nuff said.

Why?

Okay, there *is* room for understanding what happened with each goal; there must be. To make this a meaningful step, though, and not a game of "Hot Potato", you must be disciplined. Do your best to avoid allowing explanations and excuses to flow before the situation -- good, bad, or ugly -- is adequately considered.

I find that what works best is to laser in on each outcome and the process that was employed to reach it. What went into that success? Why were expectations just met? What contributed to a failure? Where is there an opportunity for continued growth no matter what the end result happened to be?

As you think through the "why" of the situation, consider:

What happened in the world around me/us? In other words, how did factors outside of you influence the outcome you experienced? There may have been events or changes that were unexpected. You may have received assistance or brokered partnerships that were unforeseen. Or, external factors may have gone exactly according to plan. In an unbiased manner, reflect on the outside elements and how they impacted success for each goal.

Where did I/we excel, where did I/we perform satisfactorily, where are minor tweaks needed, and where do I/we need real work? Once the contribution of others is analyzed, it's time to turn the mirror on you. How did your performance play into the outcome? Again, the rationale for this step is three-fold. You want to recognize what you're doing really well and understand why that is. You want to see clearly how you could move an okay outcome up a notch or two or, at least, maintain and not lose ground in that area. And, you want to get a grip on your misses so that you have bona fide lessons learned that can be used for the future.

Debriefs really do have value. They help you grasp what you did right so you can repeat it. They help you uncover what went wrong so you can avoid it. But, you lose out if you don't take this step at all or if you don't commit to carrying it out in a transparent manner.

The ***Executive Advantage*** Annual Review Process is a great way to access an unbiased thought partner or work-session facilitator to help you and/or your team debrief. Let us join you to do this critical look backward so that you can move forward with greater success.

[Contact us today.](#)

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to determine if there are areas where the ... Department can further strengthen its ... initiatives."

~Rob Kenny

"It's natural to want to go back and review decisions and find out 'Are they appropriate for today, and are they appropriate for the future'. And that's the issue[.]"

~Leon LaPorte

"I think if [he] loses this election, ... [o]ne of the questions people will ask post-mortem is 'How did [he] forfeit the advantage he had[.]'"

~James Lindsay

"We need to have a post mortem discovery of why the trial went on for such a long time, why the prosecution was not more selective."

~David Owen

"We have devoted a significant amount of time and resources to our review[.]"

~Richard Parsons

"As part of a strategic review of our businesses..., we have determined [this] is no longer a strategic fit[.]"

~Steven Rogel

"We missed far too many chances[.]"

We will now complete the classification matches and conduct a post-mortem

when we return."

~Wallace Tan

About Executive Advantage

At ***Executive Advantage***, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about ***Executive Advantage***, contact us [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

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