



Man in the Mirror

Glen Ballard and Siedah Garrett are brilliant.

Unless you're a real music fan (or, in the words of my husband: "a font of useless information"), you probably don't know these names. However, these two have the writing credits for Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror." Ah...!

Hold on, now. Before you launch into the chorus, let me tell you why Ballard, Garrett and, more importantly, *their song* is on my mind.

Many times when folks are not experiencing the desired success, or when reputation is tarnished, the initial response is to look around. The action (or inaction) of everyone within a stone's throw, and even some who have long since been gone, becomes the focal point. And, while these individuals probably did contribute in some way to the present state of affairs, there's often one person whose participation is overlooked or minimized.

Man in the mirror...

Sometimes we're where we are because, at least in part, there's been some *self-sabotage*. And, until we come to grips with the role that the man (or woman) in the mirror has had in the situation, it's unlikely that any headway will be made.

So, we wrap up our exploration of self-sabotage in this month's edition of **EA Insights**. May what's written here help you to see yourself a little more clearly so that, like the man in the song, you can change your ways!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC



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Quotes

"My office is a mess. I hate filing, so papers and journals and books just pile up. ***[H]elp me organize my office."

~Frankie Bailey

"There's always the day-to-day learning[.] Training is a never-ending process for us."

~Bob Blanchard

"The board of directors and I have been planning this transition for several years as part of a well-crafted and orderly succession process."

~James Boyd

"A kind of malaise falls over you, and you realize you had the main chance and you blew it. You start looking for scapegoats. It takes a while...to look in the mirror and understand most of their shortcomings were their own."

~Douglas Brinkley

"Courage is very important. Like a muscle, it is strengthened by use."

~Ruth Gordon

"We've had more ups than downs. But more than anything else, I think we've had so many learning

Self-Sabotage (Part III)

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We've got three final behaviors that round out our look at the ways we can undermine our own success. (In case you missed the earlier articles, feel free to go back to [Self-Sabotage/Part I](#) and [Self-Sabotage/Part II](#).)

Behavior #8: The Cowardly Lion Syndrome

You know that good-hearted, but terribly fearful, character from *The Wizard of Oz*. We chuckle at the lion's inability to speak up and stand up for himself (or for others) as he made the trek down the Yellow Brick Road. But, really, how different are we than *he*?

You see, you sabotage yourself when you allow fear to get in the way. Need examples? Think about yourself in that brainstorming session, when the ideas were flying, but you stifled yours...fearful that they wouldn't measure up. Think about the time you foresaw a glitch with the new system, but you said nothing so as not to be labeled a Negative Nellie, only to see thousands of dollars go down the tubes. Think about the time that new opportunity opened up and you were just as equipped as anyone else for the role, but you shied away because it would require interacting with larger personalities or would call for much more visibility.

The point is this. When you give in to a lack of courage or conviction, you do yourself a disservice, and you put the entire team at a disadvantage. Why? You deprive yourself of the opportunity to contribute meaningfully, and you prevent others from benefitting from what you have to offer.

What do you do? Consider your voice a muscle. To build it, you must use it. But, just like your body after a long stretch away from exercise, you can't just sign up for the next marathon. You've got to work up to it. So, develop the equivalent of a My Voice Exercise Plan. Seriously, for example, think about that next meeting and the topics likely to be on the agenda. Pre-plan a question you can ask or a recommendation you can make, and write it down. At the appropriate time during the meeting, raise your hand or interject, and go for it. Do the same for the next meeting and the one after that. Exercise that vocal muscle, and soon expressing yourself will come more naturally.

Behavior #9: Ignoring the Importance of "Move One, Fill One"

"Great news...you've been promoted!"

"Congratulations, you're retiring!"

"We're going to miss you, but your new job sounds like a wonderful opportunity!"

It's honesty time. Face facts. You will not remain in your current role forever. At some point you will move up, on, or out, right?

I can hear you now. "June, that's *good* news. How does *sabotage* enter the picture?"

You're right. The ability to move into the next phase of life and career is, indeed, a good thing. However, the piece that sometimes gets lost is that, when you move *out* of a role, you leave a *hole*. Unfortunately, it's possible to get so excited about the new, personal opportunity that you become negligent about minimizing the impact of the gap that your departure causes.

That's the potential self-sabotaging activity. It comes when you think about *self* to the exclusion of organization. It comes when you think about raising *personal* stature without considering how to involve and empower others along the way. It comes when you walk out...one last time...today, leaving a mess rather than lending order for whomever must pick up the work tomorrow. And so, when you move on without adequate preparation, you leave behind a tarnished image and you sabotage yourself.

How do you avoid this? Succession planning is the key here. First comes recognition; then comes action.

opportunities that I think now it's going to cause us to accelerate our growth process."

~Leonard Hamilton

"[T]here seems to be a trend to moving top management around so they get more well-rounded experience. I think that's a good move and may be a part of the company's succession plan."

~Richard Hastings

"I'm definitely a messy person.... I know where everything is, but I just can't organize. *** It's bad; I really need to take control."

~Katie Holmes

"We've all got to look in the mirror."

~Jack McKeon

"The only courage that matters is the kind that gets you from one minute to the next."

~Mignon McLaughlin

"We're willing to look in the mirror, see what we see and do what we have to do to make this ... better."

~Earlon McWhorter

"Instead of yelling at everyone else, people have to look in the mirror and just start worrying about themselves. Instead of getting on others, guys have to get going and take control ... themselves."

~Sean O'Connor

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by each experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

~Eleanor Roosevelt

Some mistakenly think that succession planning is reserved for the C-Suite, but that's far from true. And, that's why *recognition* is Step 1. It's important to grasp that everyone should be preparing...now...for the transition out of one role and into another. That's what succession planning is all about.

But, then the *action* -- Step 2 -- must follow. Who else knows what's on your plate and its status so that the work can be picked up and carried on without you? (*Choose someone, and fill him in.*) Whom have you been training -- both so that you can be a part of building into another and so that you are equipping someone to fill in as you move on? (*Identify someone, and begin making the investment in her growth.*) Have you taken the time to organize your work, your space, and your files so that necessary information can be located and progress will not stop simply because you're not sitting where you do right now? (*Clean up your space, put things in order, create an index or diagram so that everything does not come to a grinding halt on the day you move out.*)

Just as a relay runner doesn't come to the end of her leg of the race and just drop the baton, don't you do so either. Be sure that you're both planning and taking the steps necessary to execute a smooth hand-off. Your team...and your legacy...will be the better for it.

Behavior #10: Been There, Done That

Whether it's because you've finally finished school, reached a desired career stage, or just had another birthday, you run the risk of becoming stagnant. That is, the growth stops.

Halted development is a sure-fire path to self-sabotage. The world is ever-changing. But, if the *world* is constantly moving, and *you're* standing still, that's soon to be a problem. You may be able to rely on your current knowledge or expertise for a while, but soon you'll find yourself at a loss. And, the blame will fall right at your doorstep...because *you* stopped growing.

What can you do? Be committed to life-long learning. Take a class or training course. Shadow someone who's a little farther along than, or who has a talent different from, you. Volunteer for an assignment or committee that will allow you to stretch into new areas. In other words, do anything possible to keep from growing complacent. Complacency kills your drive and, when you project a nonchalant attitude or a disinterest in advancement, the result often is a fall-off in opportunities that otherwise would have been presented.

So, be honest. Are you sabotaging you?

Not sure? You can find out.

Getting the sense that the answer is "yes"? You can put an end to it.

Why don't you let **Executive Advantage** help you turn things around? [Contact us today](#) to explore how we can partner with you. We're here to help you build your thriving career or business.

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"Here's the deal. I want people reading. We are professionals, and we need to be reading and studying. We need to have a life-long learning mentality."
~Gerald Shields

"I have always had the courage for the new things that life sometimes offers."
~Wallis Simpson

"Organization is all about space management. If you find the best way to maximize your space and designate a place for everything, you'll be able to organize to a T."
~Mark Tepe

"Courage is not the absence of fear, but the conquest of it."
~Unknown

"Each time we face our fear, we gain strength, courage, and confidence in the doing."
~Unknown

"I think it is a sad day for the company and we are going to miss him. But, typically of him, he has planned his own succession immaculately."
~Simon Wolfson

"There is a need for an integrated system, which includes best practices, tools and processes, to ensure succession planning and performance development of the management talent pipeline at all managerial levels, not only at the CEO level."
~Med Yones

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.

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