



If I Coulda Woulda Shoulda

I've *always* loved music.

In fact, my musical tastes are quite eclectic. Barry Manilow, BeBe Winans, Beethoven, Bootsey...it really doesn't matter. The melodies, the harmonies, the orchestration, the tempos all intrigue me.

But, most of all, I'm a lyrics girl. Meagan Trainor may tell you that it's all about that bass; not true, in non-instrumentals, it's really all about those lyrics. Listening to the words -- the stories told to music -- is perhaps my favorite part of the experience.

Lou Rawls was a masterful, musical story-teller. Back in the day, he crooned about love gone wrong in "If I Coulda Woulda Shoulda". Poor English and corny title aside, this song was deep. Here's the main part of the chorus:

If I coulda woulda shoulda, that's what folks always say.

If I coulda woulda shoulda, and it's always too late.

I know. Deep, right? (*Okay, don't laugh at me.*)

Those lyrics are poignant because, although Lou was singing about lost love, they apply in so many other settings. How often do you hear excuses about what *could* have been done, *would* have been done, *should* have been done...*if*? How often do such words cross your mind or lips? Hmm...

With that in mind, in this month's **EA Insights**, we tackle the topic of "No More Excuses." Let's figure out together how to confine the "if I coulda woulda shoulda" sentiment to that old song and prevent it from taking up residence in our lives!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Quick Links

[EA Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[Strategy Support](#)

[Process Improvement Support](#)

[People Development Support](#)

[Contact Us](#)

Quotes

"I don't like to keep making excuses, but..."

~Robert Alner

"Not managing your time and making excuses are two bad habits. Don't put them both together by claiming you don't have the time."

~Bo Bennett

"I have this little litany of things [to] do. *** It's so easy to make excuses. Even professional writers have days when they'd rather clean the toilet than do the writing."

~Octavia Butler

"Fear of danger is ten thousand times more terrifying than danger itself."

~Daniel Defoe

"He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else."

~Benjamin Franklin

"Bad excuses are worse than none."

~Thomas Fuller

"It's kind of hard to put your finger on it. There are a lot of things that you could sit here and make excuses about or something."

~Joe Gibbs

NO MORE EXCUSES

No More Excuses!

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Back in 2008, as my husband and I were noodling what this new company -- **Executive Advantage** -- would be, we knew that we wanted to launch a firm that would address a serious issue we were seeing in the workplace. Too many people were just going through the motions. They were simply surviving day-to-day, but they weren't thriving. As folks say, they were "just fakin' it, til they could make it." However, for many, efforts to reach the "make it" stage seemed elusive. And, that became our rallying cry; we would do our part to help people, within organizations and as individuals, to do less *faking* and more *making*. Hence **Executive Advantage** was born!

In the days since our launch, I've engaged with scores of people. I hear a lot of stories about where folks are, where they want to be, and why they're not there yet. There are many bona fide reasons for the gap between the current-state and the desired-state assessments that they share. Invariably, though, there also are a good number of excuses that flow.

Excuses...

An unknown poet penned that, "Excuses are the tools of the incompetent, which create monuments to nothingness. Those who specialize in them are seldom good in anything[.]" *Ouch!* Harsh words, but oh how much truth they hold. If you are serious about moving forward, and extracting yourself from a "fake it" state, then you've got to grapple with the issue of excuses. Let me offer three steps that might be helpful as you do so.

Be Honest.

Honesty is the first step.

Listen to yourself; hear what that small internal voice is saying, and hear what you actually are verbalizing. If you're hearing the "if I woulda coulda shoulda" refrain, then you're making excuses.

Note that there's a difference between *explaining* what happened and *excusing* what happened. The former -- an explanation -- goes something like this: "*I was facing X. I took the following steps. The result was Y. Here's what I think about how it all went down.*" That's an explanation. When your response begins with something akin to "*You see, what had happened was...*," this, my friend, is not an explanation; it's an excuse in the making!

The goal is to be honest with yourself. Recognize the situations, the topics, or the people that may prompt your excuse-oriented behavior. Until you see this as an issue, you won't be able to do anything else.

Define the Issue.

According to Gertrude Stein, "A rose is a rose is a rose." But, I will tell you, all excuses are not made equal. You've got to determine what's behind your excuse. And, to do that, it's time for a little soul searching.

There are many reasons why people fall into the excuse trap. In my experience, though, three big categories exist.

Apathy -- People may excuse away their inaction, delayed action, or poor action because the task to be performed wasn't a part of their agenda in the first place. If you are only doing something because you feel you have to, if you haven't really bought in, the energy and the effort to get it done, much less to get it done *well*, often is missing. So, when that unwanted task ends up undone, half done, or sloppily done...well, the excuses are likely to follow.

Laziness -- Sometimes we find ourselves making excuses because we were just lazy. (*There, I said it!*) How often do you just not like certain activities? These may be tasks that involve a skill stretch that you just don't have the energy for right now; they may be

"Don't make excuses. Make things happen. Make changes. Then make history."

~**Doug Hall**

"It's time to stop wasting time and get to work[.]"

~**Kelley Heck**

"I think what weakens people most is fear of wasting their strength."

~**Etty Hillesum**

"There's only so many times you can say, 'This is the time to get things rolling'. ***

Eventually we have to pull it together. It's really no more excuses.... It's pretty much put your money where your mouth is and find a way to do it."

~**Antawn Jamison**

"There are a lot more expectations and a lot fewer excuses. It's time for us to see where we really are."

~**Thomas Keith**

"Don't allow the enemy to steal your dreams through doubt, fear and procrastination. Take action today."

~**John Lemme**

"Under the influence of fear, which always leads men to take a pessimistic view of things, they magnified their enemies' resources, and minimized their own."

~**Titus Livius**

"I could stand here and give you all sorts of excuses..., but I have vowed to be proactive[.]"

~**Mike Modano**

"If you really want to do it, you do it. There are no excuses."

~**Bruce Nauman**

"I do not believe in excuses. I believe in hard work as the prime solvent of life's problems."

things that you just don't like to do (even though they need to get done); they may be jobs that just don't motivate you. Everything on the inside is whining, "Nooo, not now. Not me." And, when it comes time to answer for your avoidance, delay, or minimal time investment, the response is...an excuse.

Fear -- Excuses also tend to get pulled into action as a way to grapple with fear. Why didn't that thing happen at all or happen well? If you're honest, sometimes the real reason is that you were afraid. "I could fail, and then what?" or "I could succeed, and then what?" Because fear of the "what ifs" takes over, you may not do, you may partially do, or you may poorly do. And then, when you personally, or with others, must review, the excuses begin to flow.

So, while honesty about your "excuse-itis" is the first step, honesty about what's underlying it is an important second step. Do your best to understand why you are functioning (or not) as you are.

Get to Work.

All of the internal effort in Steps 1 and 2 is great, but what do you do with what you've learned? After all, thinking about your situation, without tackling it, is likely to provide fodder for what? You've got it; another excuse!

You've got to get to work to turn it around. And, in many respects, this is the hardest part of the process.

Getting to work means being on constant alert for those excuses that you're tempted to make to yourself and/or to others, and it's calling them what they are. *Getting to work* means pausing to diagnose what's below the surface -- what's happening in your life that might tempt you to fall into excuse mode -- and then, where possible, to get in front of it. In other words, you want to arrive at workable approaches to those situations or people that spark apathy or laziness or fear *before things get too far along* so that you can address these matters proactively rather than reactively with an excuse. Finally, *getting to work* means continually developing yourself and your ability to plan, implement, assess, and explain so that you're able to replace a pattern of excuses, which "creates monuments to nothingness," with one that helps you to achieve more of your goals and to thrive.

Be honest. Are you just surviving rather than thriving? If so, a pattern of making excuses may be a part of what's holding you back. Why don't you make a commitment *now* to turn things around? Reach out to us at **Executive Advantage**. We're here to help you increase your success. Contact us today. No more excuses!

©2017 Executive Advantage, LLC. All rights reserved.

~James Cash Penney

"If you don't want to do something, one excuse is as good as another."

~Proverb

"Excuses are seldom truthful, often handy, and rarely productive. Don't make excuses; make things happen."

~Rhuberta Shaler

"I do not have excuses, I only have reasons[.]"

~Ivonne Sanchez

"You don't fix the problem until you define it."

~John W. Snow

"There's never any excuses. You either get it done, or you don't get it done."

~Robbie Tobeck

"We have to compete a lot harder than that. *** Excuses are hollow, plain and simple[.]"

~John Torchetti

"Don't make excuses, make good."

~Unknown

"Human beings have used their incredible abilities to develop a staggering array of limiting beliefs, justifications and excuses for every occasion. What a waste."

~Robert White

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.

View our profile on [LinkedIn](#)



Join Our Mailing List