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11 Ways For Business Leaders To Better Establish Priorities



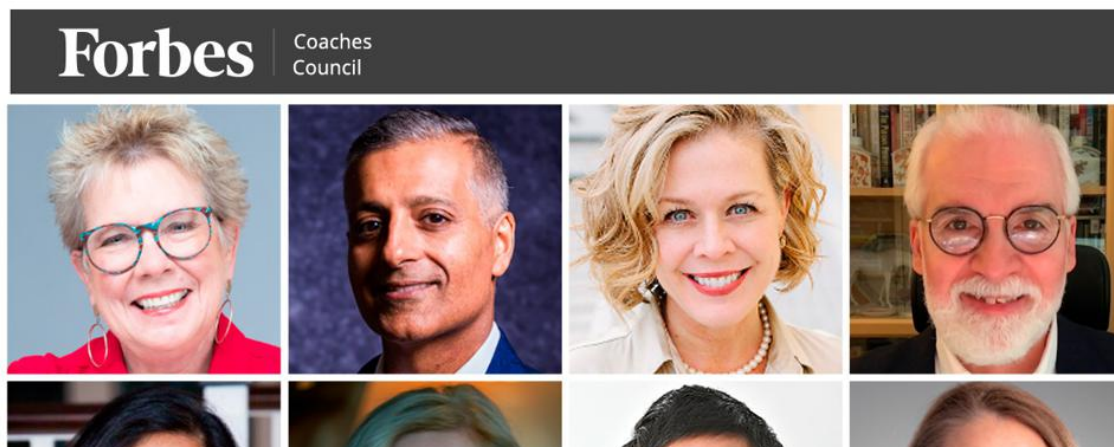
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Leadership

Business leaders have a lot of competing interests vying for their time. When you're dealing with a million moving parts each day, you learn to become a master of the pivot, constantly adapting as circumstances change. Nonetheless, determining which priorities to focus on at any given moment can still be a huge challenge.

One of your most critical responsibilities as a leader is to determine what the top priorities are for both the company and yourself in executing the business strategy. How does one stay focused on the big picture when you're being pulled in myriad directions? Below, 11 members of [Forbes Coaches Council](#) share their expert advice on how business leaders can better establish priorities.





Forbes Coaches Council members share ways for business leaders to better establish priorities. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.

1. Slow Down And Reflect To Move Faster

Having coached thousands of executives over the years, I have seen an increase in people working endless hours to get things done and be productive. Missing is the ability to slow down and make time to reflect. On a daily basis, we need to ask ourselves, “What are my priorities today that will have a positive impact?” In a time of rapid change, we need to slow down in order to move fast. - [Wendy Hanson, BetterManager](#)

2. Focus On What Will Help The Business

As a business leader, there will always be times when you need to fight fires. However, to best establish priorities when you’re being pulled in all directions, ask yourself, “Will this help the business?” Sometimes, just taking a pause and asking this question can be enough of a reset to help you prioritize what needs to be done next. - [Rakish Rana, The Clear Coach](#)

3. Step Back And Evaluate Next Steps

For a leader striving to prioritize, remembering “when I go slow, I

go fast” is beneficial. When leaders are on the proverbial hamster wheel, they are too close to the fire to see the big picture. Take time to step back and evaluate what needs to happen next and when. You have to be intentional to do this on a regular basis, and it is easy to fall back into the old pattern or excuse of being too busy. - [Michelle Braden, MSBCoach, LLC](#)

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4. Let Some Key Anchors Guide You

Uncertainty forces you to reprioritize frequently. However, there are some key anchors that should guide your priority-setting. First, maintain the connection with your clients to ensure the best experience and their satisfaction. Attract and develop the best talent. Be clear on your purpose and ensure your strategy is widely communicated. And finally, capture the adequate resources to grow and develop the business. - [Luis Costa, Luis Costa - coach · facilitator · speaker](#)



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5. See Where Business And Personal Priorities Intersect

Mind map both your business and personal priorities and focus on the points of intersection. Always revert to undertaking these first, before expending energy on the other ones. Focusing on the intersecting priorities will not only create corporate value but also personal value, which will build motivation, credibility and trust in your ability as a leader. - [Arthi Rabikrisson](#), [Perna Advisory](#)

6. Keep Your Major Priorities Top Of Mind

Look at your three major priorities and keep them top of mind by reviewing them on a weekly, monthly and yearly basis. How are you delivering on them? If they change midway through, adjust and keep tracking. Also, make sure that you are delegating and

developing all of your direct reports so that they are on track with their top priorities as well. - [Lyne Desormeaux, Desormeaux Leadership Consulting](#)

7. Use An Urgent-Important Matrix

One way to think about priorities is to use a 2 x 2 matrix to list “important” versus “urgent” matters. The top priority is to deal with items in the top right quadrant, which are important *and* urgent. It is also possible to use two 2 x 2 charts, each with four quadrants—one for yourself and another for the company. The urgent-important matrix can also be an effective communication tool for sharing your thoughts with your co-workers. - [Thomas Lim, Singapore Public Service, SportSG](#)

8. Commit To A Daily Prioritizing Routine

Setting an intention, committing to and being accountable for following a daily prioritizing routine helps you better manage your ability to be effective. There are five steps to effective prioritization: Identify and list all priorities, clarify and label top priorities, strategically delegate activities and tasks to expert team members, check off completed items, and check on the status of the rest. Update this list at day’s end. - [Lori Harris, Harris Whitesell Consulting](#)

9. Focus On Energy Management

High performance and productivity come down to a high level of self-awareness, meaning effective energy management over time management. Leaders need to know when they are in their “flow” zone and focus on tasks only they can do; outsource the rest. Too

many agendas are dictated by others because there are no boundaries. Adding white space for hobbies, time for exercise and thinking is what catapults productivity. - [Petra Zink, impaCCct](#)

10. Create And Stick To A ‘Must-Do’ List

Don't use a "to-do" list; instead, create a "must-do" list. Each day, make a list of all the things that you want or need to get done (your to-do list). Now, pull out the top three priorities that will have the greatest impact that you must do to be successful. These things will help move the needle in your role. Focus your day on completing these items and revisit your to-do list only if you have time. - [Shelley Hammell, Sage Alliance, Inc.](#)

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11. Consider Which Priorities Will Impact The Most People

Establishing priorities is a constant process. I recommend that leaders always consider which priorities will impact the most people. These should be on the top of a leader's list. And second, I recommend thinking about the tasks you can do to unleash the positive efforts of others. Jump on those as quickly as possible. If great people's efforts have halted because of you, it is important to rethink! - [Susan Madsen, Jon M. Huntsman School of Business](#)

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