

## Talk Does Not Cook Rice

By Kim Dannies

It's Fall and time for full throttle: there isn't a better season to set goals and execute detailed action plans. As a business consultant, it is my job to move the motivated forward by charting new directives that will flow powerfully right on through 2007.

When we launch new initiatives- full of determined enthusiasm- there is always the danger of contracting a case of "analysis/paralysis" along the way. Analysis/paralysis involves the over-analysis of a specific issue or task to the point where the issue/ task can no longer be recognized or performed, and a resolution for the objective is lost. It's different from procrastination in that we delude ourselves into thinking that we are very busy- we're working very hard! But like a dog chasing its tail, we're not really getting anywhere.

A common version of analysis/paralysis is over-performing on insignificant tasks: perpetually getting "ready for the work." For example, if we find ourselves rewriting the Staples list, shopping for new exercise tops, or reorganizing our computer files in lieu of pitching to a new client, doing the cardio workout, or implementing technology to move our business forward, we are stuck in analysis/paralysis mode. Also known as the 'busy body syndrome', it strikes when the action planning segment of goal setting has not been detailed thoroughly enough. Instead of operating from a customized work/life action plan, we are navigating from a hamster wheel.

At this stage of stagnation my clients will hear me say "Talk does not cook rice." which translates to: "You can act as busy as you like, but you are not really going forward in achieving your goal." It's critical to ask at this juncture: "Why am I doing this particular thing and what is it that I expect to gain?"

Why do perfectly competent people succumb to analysis/paralysis? There are two common reasons:

1. **FEAR:** people become virtually paralyzed from the fear of making a mistake, so they over-think, sometimes obsessively, just to be sure.
2. **AVOIDANCE:** many people are not exactly sure at any given point of the day just exactly what it is they are supposed to be doing, so they refrain from making hard choices. That's when minutia flows into fill the gap: unnecessary phone calls and conversations, surfing the web, another cup of coffee, and suddenly it's "hey where'd the day go?"

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Whether the decision is the purchase of a new Lexus or what to order for lunch, analysis/paralysis is a hellish state to operate from; it devours self-esteem. This type of insidious fear can stem from a variety of past experiences such as the trauma of making a big mistake as a child, having a parent who didn't honor mistakes as learning moments, not believing you are qualified to make the decision, believing you always make mistakes and can do nothing right, or always second guessing decisions you do make. Anxiety may be at the root of the problem and clearing that up could make all the difference in the world. In any case, it's worth taking a hard look at our strategies for performance. It's time to cook the rice.

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