The Stigma Turbine: (De)Stigmatization in the Real Estate Market
Jane E. Machin, PhD, Ann M. Mirabito, PhD, and Natalie Ross Adkins, PhD

Identifying and Managing the Buying Center
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How Emotional Intelligence Shapes Sales Outcomes Through the Stressful Sales Role
Richard G. McFarland, PhD, Joseph C. Rode, PhD, and Tasadduq A. Shervani, PhD

Newly Hired Agents Who Fail Should Try, Try Again
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Integrating Psychological Capital into Your Sales Organization
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INSIDER: Smarter, Faster, Better
Erick Huntley, MBA Candidate

INSIDER: The Productivity Project
Courtney A. Harris, MBA Candidate
Productivity, as defined by dictionary.com, means “the quality, state, or fact of being able to generate, create, enhance, or bring forth goods and services.” Productivity is a wonderful business buzzword, but what real-life impact does it have? For Charles Duhigg, this question can be answered with three simple words: Smarter, Faster, Better. Thus, when posed with the question, “Can you be more productive?”, nearly everyone would respond “yes,” but the question “How?” is much more difficult to answer.

Productivity can be addressed with a multitude of approaches. One can focus on creating stronger teams that promote a safe environment for expressing ideas. Another area of focus could be how to manage others in a decentralized manner, so that those closest to the problem are able to directly impact the solution. A third focus could be innovation by using real-life experiences that solve issues at work. The following three topics are a small sample of what it looks like for you as a real estate agent to progress toward becoming Smarter, Faster, and Better.

THINK POINT # 1: What Motivates You?

There are times when you find that you are stuck in a rut. Every task set before you seems mundane and trivial, so you put forth less and less effort. Eventually the smallest tasks may seem like the most difficult to complete. The importance of self-motivation is without question. Statistically, self-motivators tend to earn more money than peers, report higher levels of happiness, and are more satisfied with their jobs, families, and lives. So, how do you push through those times when we feel unmotivated?

Motivation, basically, boils down to feeling like you are in control. Tasks or chores can be made into choices to give a feeling of more control. Psychologists from Columbia University published research in the journal *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, showing people who feel they are in control, work harder and push themselves more. Additionally, tying your menial task to the greater goal or a meaningful decision gives a sense of purpose. In this way, these small tasks help to realize the bigger picture and what you hold as goals and values for your life.

As a real estate agent, you are confronted with many tasks that could be mundane including completing, submitting, and filing real estate documents, coordinating appointments, showings,
open houses, and meetings, and responding to emails and phone calls. Charles Duhigg wrote about his experience responding to emails and found that he would put off the task over and over again in favor of watching TV. Therefore, taking lessons from his own book, he transformed replying emails from a chore to a choice to give him the determination to follow through. Initially, he responded to several emails with a single sentence answering the main question. In effect, he used his control to make a choice; for example, “Do I attend the meeting or not?” Once he made the choice, filling in the rest of the email required less thinking because the choice had already been made. You can make the same simple decision with regard to which appointments or showings matter most to you or which leads are most important for you to develop. Ultimately, by completing these tasks, you will be getting closer to the why you are in this profession. Whether it be providing for the future of your family, purchasing a dream house or car, or being able to live comfortably. Answering the simple choices will lead to accomplishing your goals.

THINK POINT # 2: How Do You Get From Here to There?

Goal setting is a major source of productivity because it can help turn vague aspirations into concrete plans. An easy way to begin goal setting is through the SMART goal system:

- Specific
- Measureable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timeline

Having a goal that is specific and achievable forces us to focus on what steps are required to accomplish the goal. These requirements also help to ensure that the goal is realistic. If the specifics or achievability change, the goal may have to be changed to make it realistic. Measurability and timeline force discipline and tangibility into the process rather leaving the goal as a vague aspiration.

SMART goals by themselves are not enough because it is easy to create goals that are easy to accomplish and not make any progress in developing your business. Sometimes the elation of a completing a goal will outweigh the need to struggle and grow with more difficult goals. This is why GE developed stretch goals to pair with the SMART goal system. Stretch goals are meant to be so ambitious that initially, it may be unclear how to achieve them. GE found that their employees were utilizing the SMART goal system, but the company wasn’t advancing. GE was not becoming more productive. Therefore, they challenged specific departments to create goals that seemed impossible at first, but when they were combined with SMART goals, the path forward began to take shape with the help of this process. The division manufacturing airplane engines cut defects by 70%.
For a real estate agent, a stretch goal might be to sell more houses than everyone else in your office. At first, this goal seems daunting because you may not know what steps are required to become the number one agent. However, this goal will look more achievable when you break it down into SMART goals. First, you might consider the number of houses you need to sell to become the number one agent. Once you know how to measure the stretch goal, individual SMART goals will create a concrete plan of action. One SMART goal could be generating 50 qualified leads every month using resources including paid advertising, social media, and your company website. This goal is specific and measurable (50 leads), achievable and realistic (using marketing assistance), and on a specified timeline (every month).

SMART goals can either be deterministic or fluid. Some goals require you to fulfill a one-time task that is crucial to achieving your ambitions. Other goals need to be adjusted as you become more efficient or discover new methods for productivity. Whatever these goals are, make certain that they align with your ambitions, dreams, and values.

**THINK POINT # 3: Are You Focused?**

Have you ever been in the middle of showing a house, thinking that everything is moving smoothly, and you are so close to completing a deal to suddenly find that everything is falling apart? This could be a common occurrence if you haven’t prepared properly. As your showing begins to fall apart, you can’t repair any damages that have occurred. Things falling apart may result from two common issues: cognitive tunneling and reactive thinking. Cognitive tunneling occurs when you lose ability to direct your focus and you grasp at the easiest and most obvious stimulus. Tunneling could occur due to a desire to answer every question that a client has to reassure the client s/he is making the right decision. While reassuring the client is helpful, you might find that you are responding to the client without understanding what is at the heart of his/her complaints. You may feel that you have assuaged any fears, but the client may feel that you don’t understand his/her wants and needs. Reactive thinking occurs when you build habits, so that responses come naturally without concentration. While reactive thinking can be good for staying focused on day-today tasks, it can be detrimental when interacting with a client. It is important to be prepared and have answers to client’s questions, but, each client is different, so preset answers may have negative impacts.
Charles Duhigg illustrates mental models with the health of an infant. A nurse was monitoring the infant’s vital signs and saw that the baby was eating and sleeping, and that the heartbeat was strong. A different nurse, utilizing mental models had a clear picture in her head of what a healthy baby should look like and saw that this baby had many symptoms, that when combined, were cause for concern. She saw that the baby’s skin looked mottled, belly was distended, and the pinprick in her heel was a blot instead of a small dot. To some nurses, these symptoms are just data points, but to the nurse utilizing mental models, this was a baby that needed immediate medical attention.

Creating mental models will help to increase focus and avoid cognitive tunneling or reactive thinking. A mental model is a picture in your mind of what you expect to see. With a mental model, you can visualize your interaction with a client. It is essential in your mental model to visualize the interaction with as much detail as possible in order to determine how you will respond. You should both visualize verbal communication and non-verbal communication, so you can manage what your client needs to see and hear. Just as the nurse saw that the baby did not fit her model of what a healthy baby ought to look like, you can do the same with what a happy or satisfied client should look like.

**Conclusion**

There are many paths to becoming a more productive person in your real estate career. One of the biggest steps to becoming more productive is knowing what your end goals are and who you want to be. Once you have this final destination in mind, you’ll have a true motivating factor, a stretch goal for your SMART goals, and a mental model for which to compare your life. Being productive in itself is a choice, and if you choose to do so, you on your way to becoming *Smarter, Faster, Better*.

**Recommended Reading**


**About the Author**

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Erick is a graduate student from Lynnwood, Washington. He earned his bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Whitworth University and his master’s in biochemistry from Baylor University. He is currently pursuing his MBA at Baylor University and plans to leverage his skills in both chemistry and business to great value.