

# The Issue

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## Becoming Proactive

*Develop a Propensity for Action*

### CFOs2Go Partners

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### **Chris Chillingworth**

Partner, CFOs2Go

At CFOs2Go, we pride ourselves on getting our clients to drive their companies by looking through the windshield, and not the rear view mirror. But doing so presupposes that the entrepreneurs have a propensity to take action. Not all of them do.

Owners come in all personality types. The most successful ones anticipate problems, understand change is a part of any long-term strategy, proactively address problems as they arise, understand their weaknesses and backfill the voids with complementary talent, and have a never-give-up attitude.

Others must experience the mishap in order to take action to prevent it in the future. In their case, it's a little like being told there is a 99% chance of a magnitude 8.0 earthquake within days, but deliberately not buying insurance, and, *worse*, hoping that in the event of "the big one," simply being able to pay the premium afterwards. We all know that the insurance business doesn't work that way.

Hopefully, the mishap, whatever it is, shakes them out of their complacency, and into a more active role. For anyone who finds that they are simply "letting things happen," here are a few tips to shake you out of that role (you'll see that a lot of these thoughts are not my own, but I've tried to give credit where credit is due):

**Have a Plan.** The Plan can be as simple as a series of actions that must be taken and a date associated with them. Actions without deadlines are simply goals. Post the Plan in a prominent place where you will run into it

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frequently: your refrigerator door, bathroom mirror, or as the screen saver on your computer come to mind. Most important: “Never leave the sight of a priority without taking action it”<sup>i</sup> If you make yourself this one promise, you will be surprised at what you accomplish.

**Prioritize.** “Ready, Shoot, Aim. Take massive action.”<sup>ii</sup> “Begin with the end in mind, and die empty.”<sup>iii</sup> The operative word is Begin. Start the process. “If you don’t know where to begin, the thing you fear most is probably a good place to start.”<sup>iv</sup>

Observe and take feedback. Calibrate along the way. There is no shame in modifying your plan as you go along. The shame is never executing on your plan.

And don’t waste time on trivial things. You’ll never accomplish everything on your list, so why not let the shortfalls be the trivial ones.

**Enlist Assistance.** You don’t have to do it all. You do what you can do, I’ll do what I can do, we’ll get others to do what they can do, and together we can accomplish miracles. Delegate.

Hire good people. Take the time to hire right the first time. Nothing will consume your time and energy more than dealing with a poor hire. Employ the services of a qualified recruiter to find not only the right qualifications, but the right “fit.” If you can’t afford full-time solutions, look to consultants. You can literally buy the “best” of someone’s services for a fraction of the annual cost of bringing someone on board full-time.

The entire business model of CFOs2Go is based on these two premises: we will find you either (1) the right full-time solution, or (2) the right part-time solution. Full stop.

**Understand Obstacles.** “The brick walls are there to stop the people who don’t want it badly enough. They’re there to stop *other* people. Brick walls are there for a reason. They give us a chance to show how badly we want something.”<sup>v</sup>

Look at obstacles, not as problems, but as challenges to be overcome.

**Don’t let bad decisions fester.** “How do you make good decisions? Experience. How you get experience? Bad decisions.”<sup>vi</sup> We all make bad decisions. Deal with them and move on. If you’re going to fail, fail quickly.

**Buy Insurance.** Protect yourself against losses you cannot afford. Self insure the losses you *can* afford. Use the services of a qualified insurance professional to assist you in identifying the risks your business faces, and transferring the risks you cannot afford to another party.

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**Embrace Technology.** Make yourself more efficient. The advent of SmartPhones and Tablets has made this extraordinarily easy and inexpensive (many applications, or “apps” are free). Be an early adopter. Challenge yourself to know what technologies are coming down the pike. Adopt those that serve you and incorporate them into your daily routine.

Pay attention to what the young are doing, as their interests are likely to drive future technological development. Can you say, Social Media?

**Read.** Yes, I said read. This may sound a little bit counter-intuitive, as most of us would consider reading a passive activity. And, after all, isn’t this message about becoming active?

Think about it, though. All of human knowledge throughout history has been transmitted through the written word. That hasn’t really changed. Technology has made reading accessible and easy. Books, publications, periodicals and news can now all be accessed online. Technology (see above), in the form of the aforementioned SmartPhones and Tablets, low cost of memory, and almost universal access via cellular or WiFi transmittal services, has allowed us to bring enormous amounts of data with us wherever we go, without the burden of massive amounts of paper. We can read when we want, for periods as short as a few minutes in line, on public transportation, or while waiting for a meeting, put whatever we were reading down, and pick it up next time precisely where we left off. We can highlight, annotate, comment, forward to others, and save all or any part of what we see, in a readily accessible and retrievable format. How’s that for efficiency?

So, my suggestion? Use your spare moments to read. Read, in particular, what’s new in your industry, what challenges others are facing, and what other successful people are doing. Fill your mind with the blueprints for success.

#### **Footnotes**

<sup>i</sup> Anthony “Tony” Robbins.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Aeneas Williams, upon his induction into the National Football League Hall of Fame, August 2014.

<sup>iv</sup> Unknown.

<sup>v</sup> Randy Pausch, late Professor, Carnegie Mellon University.

<sup>vi</sup> Unknown.

<sup>vii</sup> [www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com)

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### Summary

The word “proactive” is defined by Merriam-Webster as, “acting in anticipation of future problems, needs, or changes.”<sup>vii</sup> I like to think of it in terms of “Propensity for Activity.” The very definition lends itself to actions taken to reduce risk, minimize negative outcomes, and enhance the possibilities of achievement. Isn’t proactivity one of the fundamental cornerstones of business success?

If you would like to “enlist our assistance” in your plan to become more proactive, please give me a call at (408) 309-1343 or contact me via e-mail at [cchillingworth@cfos2gopartners.com](mailto:cchillingworth@cfos2gopartners.com).



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<http://www.2gocompanies.com/cfos2go/team/practice-groups/technical-accounting-practice-group/>

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