



The war on busy-ness

It's no wonder we call it "Business," though more often than not, it should be *"busy-ness."* Ask any business-person "how are you doing?" or "how's it going?" and most will respond with "busy." The word "busy" is an empty yet powerfully addictive word. Its use has become a reflex for many people and finding a replacement is not an easy task. Not to mention that telling someone you are "busy" implies to the inquirer that you are over-committed and you don't have time for them.

But, I have a confession... Like so many business professionals, I too have a lot on my plate and I am perhaps one of the biggest offenders of "busy-itis" (translation: inflammation of the part of the brain that causes us to say "I've been so busy lately"). In today's business world, we not only juggle multiple balls, we have to do it while singing the national anthem, driving to our next meeting and sipping a latte. Now yes, it is true that all of us are, in fact, busy but the real question is: do we need to constantly tell people we are busy and is there a better way to respond to an inquiry of "how are you doing?"

I recently read a few articles(1) proclaiming the evils of the word "busy." I agreed with the premise of the article yet it offered up few satisfying alternatives I could put into action immediately. I wanted something simple that could replace my "busy" crutch. I tried out a few phrases, and in doing so, established a few

guiding principles for formulating an effective response:

1. The response should be neutral-to-positive. No downers...not at least right off the batt. Save the harsh dose of reality for when you get into the conversation.
2. The response should be short enough to replace the word “busy,” “I’ve been so busy,” or “busier than ever.” (and other variants of the word/phrase)
3. The response should be descriptive and engaging. It should prompt a question or some reaction from the inquirer.

If you don’t have a story or something interesting to tell the other person – which is OK – tack on a question to engage the inquirer.

4. With that in mind, I quickly came to the conclusion no one word could slay the “busy beast” and it would likely take string of words to kick the habit. I came up with the following formula for structuring the response:

Adjective + Action Statement [+ Question*]

**question is optional*

So, when asked...

How have you been? -OR- How are you doing?

You can now answer with...

Adjective

(Below are a few positive adjectives to choose from.)

1. Amazing
2. Awesome
3. Excellent
4. Fabulous
5. Fantastic
6. Great
7. Incredible
8. Magnificent
9. Marvelous
10. Outstanding
11. Phenomenal
12. Sensational
13. Spectacular
14. Splendid
15. Stellar
16. Stupendous
17. Super
18. Superb
19. Unbelievable
20. Wonderful

Then add your...

Action Statement

(Below are a few interesting action statements I came up with. Yours should be reflective on what you have been doing, working on or engaged in.)

1. I feel like I solve a bigger and more colorful Rubik's cube every day...

2. I've been mastering the art of unscrambling eggs...
3. Fighting the swamp monster... (as in "being swamped")
4. Slaying Dilbert daily...
5. Working on some great projects that are really making a difference...
6. Some people make widgets; I make widgets work better...
7. Building bridges between IT and business...
8. Learning something new every day...
9. Traveling the world from one exotic destination to the next.
10. Building a sand castle, one grain at a time.

If you stop here, we can assume the inquirer will ask another question and probe deeper into your action statement. Depending on the situation, you can even elaborate on your action statement, tell a story or an anecdote. This is where reading the situation is crucial. If your inquirer is stone cold, has no reaction or does not probe deeper, pivot to a question to the inquirer...

Question

1. How have YOU been?
2. What's been going on with you?
3. Where have you been traveling lately?
4. Have you taken any good vacations lately?
5. How is __[insert name]__? What has he/she been up to lately?

Or just "how 'bout them Cubs?"

The point is: whatever technique you use, however you choose to respond to someone's inquiry, look beyond "the busy" and say something engages the other person and lets the person know you have time for him/her. For me personally, I am working hard to take the "busy" out of "business."

Footnotes

1. [Why I'm Eliminating the Word 'Busy' From My Vocabulary and 10 Words to Use Instead of 'Busy'](#)



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(nice to meet you)

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