

How to Conquer Shiny Object Syndrome

I've become maniacal about how I spend my time. As a sufferer of 'shiny object syndrome,' it's easy for me to get distracted and flit from activity to activity without having anything to show for my time. This ranges from 12 half-read books on my nightstand to countless notebooks filled with ideas and sketches for an entertainment cookbook five years in the making with no true manuscript to show for it.

I know myself well enough to recognize that I get energy from two competing forces - on one hand, I love variety and opportunity and having lots of balls in the air, on the other hand completing something motivates me to take on more and stay focused on achieving a single goal.

When I feel myself starting to spin - whether it be I'm struggling with 'where do I begin?,' or 'am I working on the right thing?' I consistently find clarity by using the Five Whys (5Ys) tool... The idea behind the tool is straightforward enough - keep asking yourself WHY until you hit on the root cause of your problem... But it's harder than it sounds... Since each answer forms the basis of the next question, to bring clarity to the root cause of a problem you need to be asking the right questions from the beginning.

Once you feel you've landed on the root cause of your problem you identify a couple of action items to address the issue once and for all.

5Ys is a tool used heavily by companies with a continuous improvement culture. There are a lot of versions of this tool floating around. Check out the 5Y I created to ensure I'm spending my time on the right things. I always find it helpful to see a tool in practice so I included an example of how I used the 5Ys to help me pinpoint why I haven't YET realized my dream of starting my own business.