GETTING THINGS DONE:
MANAGING YOUR BRAIN AND FOCUS
Feel Overwhelmed?
HOW’S YOUR RAM SPACE?

Did I email George?

What happened on Scandal last night?

Where did I park my car?

I need to buy milk.
MORE TIME VS. UNINTERRUPTED FOCUS

“I believe that in the modern era, most of us are hamstrung by our devices, and the associates in our life clamoring for our attention. It’s as if we are running the race of life with heavy leg weights on. It’s a miracle we finish anything, and when we do, the quality suffers from our divided focus. We lack the freedom to focus our entire being on a single project.”

-- Tim Sanders, author Love is the Killer App
WHAT DAVID ALLEN SAYS
LEVELS OF WORK

50,000 + Life
40,000 + 3 to 5 year vision/strategy
30,000 + 1 to 2 year goals and direction
20,000 + Areas of responsibility and focus
10,000 + Current projects
Runway Current actions
FIVE PHASES OF MASTERING WORKFLOW

Collect
Process
Organize
Review
Do
COLLECT: ROUND UP THE CATTLE

What is on your radar? What open loop do you have?

Conduct your mind sweep
COLLECTION TOOLS

Notepad or journal (paper or digital)
Digital apps (Clear, Any.Do, Wunderlist, etc.)
Dictation Tools/Apps (Jott, Dragon, etc.)
Email
Voice Mail
WHAT IS MY NEXT ACTION?

Do it.
- Think two-minute rule.
Defer it.
Delegate it.
PROCESS

Weekly review each Friday or Monday

Postponed decisions

Daily:
- What is it?
- Is it actionable?
- What’s the next action?

Lists:
- Meeting with the Boss
- Meeting with the Team
PROCESS

Projects
Someday/Maybe List
Waiting For
@Calls
@Home
@Office/Computer
@Errands
@Agendas
ORGANIZE

Calendar
- All appointments
- Day specific actions
- Day specific information

Email Folders
- @Action, @Waiting for
- Inbox: New email, action items
- Everything is deleted or filed
WHAT WE KNOW NOW
HOW YOUR OFFICE LOOKS MATTERS

Career Builder “hoarding” study:
• 28% of employers say they’re less likely to promote someone with a messy work area
• 2 in 5 employers say disorganized work areas negatively impact their perception of employees
• 13% of workers have files that are 5 years old or older
• 6% of workers have files that are 10 years old or older
INTERUPTION RESEARCH

Every 11 minutes
25 minutes to be back on track
40% of time we don’t go back
Short-term memory loss
MULTITASKING IS SO 1990’S
THINK: Solotasking!

Researchers studying the brain and cognitive abilities keep discovering that we need to focus on one task at a time to work effectively.

Men and women lower their IQ by 10 points when they’re asked to do two things at the same time.

So we’re making ourselves STUPID!
MULTITASKING

Cautious multitasking:

- Don’t do two important tasks at the same time.
- Okay to do eat sandwich and listen to a webinar.
- When you need to focus, put down the other thing and focus.
WSD – WRITE STUFF DOWN

Get It Out of Your Head!
WHAT IS YOUR MIT?

Most Important Thing

Can only deal with four of your own MIT’s per day.

Before leaving for the day, write down what your MIT’s are for the next day.
THE POWER HOUR

Do the most important first.
30 to 90 minutes of focused, uninterrupted time per day
Limit distractions
E-MAIL INTERRUPTIONS

Not the best for an emergency or something critical
Pick up the phone
Don’t send an email and then call the person to see if they got it.
Turn off the e-mail alert.
Having the CC talk.
BCC for group e-mails.
MYSELF, INTERRUPTED

Managing Ourselves
- “Thinking” time
- Set a timer (20 minutes) to focus on one task
- Meet regularly with staff and co-workers
- Golden Rule applies
- Extrovert vs. Introvert
MANAGING E-MAIL

Make a decision

- Delete
- Delegate
- Defer
- Do it
MANAGING E-MAIL

Taking Action
- Keep action e-mails in your inbox but delete or file the others
- Use Color Code categories on e-mail, calendar entries and tasks
- The One-Minute Rule: If it takes one minute or less to reply, then do it.
EMAIL GUIDELINES

If an email goes beyond three exchanges, it’s time for a phone call.

With the auto fill-in feature on Outlook, make sure your emails are going to the RIGHT person.

If you need an answer right away, don’t use email.

You don’t have to send “thank you” and “you’re welcome” emails. (Use No Need to Reply)
MANAGING E-MAIL

Set up Rules and Alerts
- Under “Tools”
- Or right click on e-mail
- Set up alerts if receive an e-mail from the boss
- Put unwanted e-mails into Deleted Items
- Put list serve articles and other e-mails into Outlook folders
- Can make an exception to every rule
E-MAIL TRICKS

Click and drag e-mails to calendar, contacts, and tasks

Sort by size or name

E-mails you’re keeping
  • Create file folders
  • Periodically purge
  • Detach attachments
EMBRACE DIGITAL

Purge paper files and scan the rest

Article management: EndNote, Mendeley
OUTDATED THINGS WE NO LONGER NEED

Phone books
Take out menus
Message slips (voice mail, email, messaging)
Conference bags
Toners for printers you no longer own
The stuff you never unpacked
STOP THE FRENZY

We’re too busy worrying about all the stuff that we have to do that we don’t do it.

We keep waiting for the perfect time, the perfect tool, the perfect collaborator, the perfect idea, etc.
ARE YOU PROCRASTINATING?

We distract ourselves with more pleasant tasks.

Sometimes procrastination is obvious (Facebook, email)

Sometimes not so obvious by working on less important projects and tasks because it’s easier.
PUNCH OUT PROCRASTINATION

Break large, complex projects into smaller pieces

Be ruthless in controlling your work environment (eliminate distractions, clear calendar)

Create mini-deadlines so you have an even pace for your project

Reward yourself when you meet the mini-deadlines

Severe procrastinators may have a deep-seated fear of failure and may need help from a therapist.
BOUNDARIES: ELASTIC PANTS

Parkinson’s Law from 1955: “Work expands to fill the time available for its completion.”

Boundaries are powerful.

You need to know where you draw the line.

Say when (Regarding Henry).
BOUNDARIES....

“When you come in on time (whatever that time is) and leave when you say you will, you send a very important message to others: that you value your time.”

-- Jason Womack
TAKE A VACATION. PLEASE.

Don’t call in.

Don’t e-mail.

Don’t come in the office and say you’re not really here. If we see you, you’re here.

Plug in the Blackberry and leave it at home.

What kind of message are you sending to your team and staff? **Your vacation is for them too.**

This place will be okay for a week or two without you. Trust me.
JUST DO IT!

What can I do where I am?
How much time do I have?
How much energy do I have?
What’s the value to me if I do this vs. something else?
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