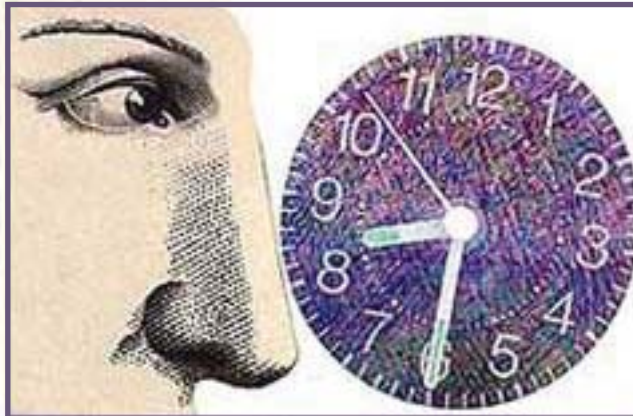


COACH *Notes*



**Getting Things Done...
On Time!**

There is a well-known axiom in business that “failure to plan is planning to fail.” Well-known, and, all too often, honored in the breach. It is planning, in its many guises, that ultimately has the greatest impact on whether you finish a task or project on time.

But for many of the tasks thrown our way at work, planning seems to be an unthinkable luxury. Assaulted by emails, barraged by phone calls, sliced and diced by meetings and interruptions, the idea of planning a day, let alone a longer-term project, is almost laughable. And if someone else isn't imposing unrealistic deadlines on us, we'll commit to them ourselves, agreeing to be somewhere or accomplish something in impossible time frames.

While a lot of this comes with the territory of modern life, there are some things you can do to help increase the odds of getting your projects done on time.

Protect Your Calendar

Your calendar isn't your to-do list. Loading up your planner with the 19 things you want to accomplish each day just creates frustration, not productivity. Instead, separate the functions of your calendar and your to-do list, and use the calendar only for events that are time-specific.

“But the Nibblers Ate My Day”

Julie Morgenstern, author of *Never Check E-Mail in the Morning*, calls them the “nibblers”—interruptions,
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procrastination, perfectionism and meetings—because they will definitely consume your workday. Meetings and interruptions can be managed with a variety of tactics, starting with controlling your email habit, as the title of her book suggests. Procrastination and perfectionism are best fought, she says, with the ultimate weapon for expanding your day, planning.

Always Identify the Next Action

Trying to finish tasks on time can often fall victim to the “urgency vs. importance” dichotomy that stresses working on the important over the merely urgent. But in addition, to finish a project, every step is critical, even the “unimportant” ones. If you are building a boat, caulking the hull so it doesn’t leak may seem more important than buying the anchor. But both tasks have to be done if you are going to put to sea.

According to productivity guru David Allen, what’s really critical is to determine the next action, the next physical thing you have to do to move your project forward. “Finish Phase II” isn’t an action. “Email Bill in accounting to release the funds for Phase II” is an action. By always keeping track of the next task for each of your open projects, you can always be productive without wasting time figuring out what to do next, which will help keep your project on track. *

Playing the Inner Game to Win

Tom has worked at his company for more than four years and knows he does a great job. His boss even tells him so. He’s been wanting to ask for a raise for several months, but it just never seems like the right time to ask. At least, that’s what he keeps telling himself.

But could it really be that Tom is afraid of rejection? Or on some level—perhaps a subconscious one—he doesn’t feel he “deserves” to get paid well for the work he does?

“In every human endeavor there are two arenas of engagement: the outer and the inner,” says Tim Gallwey, author of *The Inner Game of Work*. “The outer game is played on an external arena to overcome external obstacles. The inner

game takes place within the mind and is played to overcome the self-imposed obstacles.”

You can try harder to change by taking more action in the “outside,” physical world. But if you’re powered by limiting beliefs and negative feelings, chances are you’re just going to go faster in the wrong direction.

So how do you effect real change, change that starts from within? The first step is to identify just what is holding you back. Some common internal roadblocks are:

- **Fear.** Probably the most popular culprit, the list of fears is endless. Whatever your fears, they prevent you in some way from experiencing your full potential.
- **Thinking small.** If you expect less, you get less. You have to think big and believe you can have success before you will actually experience it.
- **Being out of balance.** When we overfocus on certain areas of our lives to the exclusion of others, we experience stress and incongruence. Creativity is then compromised.
- **Lack of motivation.** Without passion for what you’re doing (or at least a big payoff), it’s difficult to get moving in any direction.

Once you determine your specific roadblocks, it’s time to face them head on, reprogramming your beliefs and defining (or redefining) your life priorities and purpose. Working with a coach helps many to determine a practical strategy for navigating the roadblocks. Steven Covey of *Seven Habits* suggests writing a personal mission statement (as you would for a company) and then organizing your life around it.

For the goals that seem impossible to accomplish, Barbara Sher, career counselor and best-selling author, suggests throwing an “idea party.” Get a group of people together and take turns throwing out your ideas and their obstacles—you’ll be surprised at some of the creative answers you’ll receive.

But whatever you do, keep looking inside. Take responsibility for what you create externally and work on winning the inner game. When you do, you’ll start winning in the outer world, too. *