



The Advisor

Organizational Effectiveness News & Trends

November 2009

Over-Worked? A Rx for More Sanity



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ClearPath Alliance is a GPS for executives navigating change. We enable leaders to accelerate strategic initiatives for superior results.

Warehouses, databases, and people only have so much capacity. When they are full, they are full. When the upper limits of capacity are reached, something has to be moved, deleted, or left undone to free up space - be it square-footage, megabytes or mind-share. Read on to learn a 6-step process that can help you remain effective when you find yourself maxed out.

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Over-Worked? A Rx for More Sanity

Do It All, And Do It Now!

The world is moving fast, and seemingly getting faster. The expectation has become, "Do it in real time". In our practice, we often see executives spending their days (and nights) valiantly attempting to respond to every email, every voice mail, and every action item - regardless of the true value to the business, let alone the impact to their direct reports, their family, and their health.

- What was once "drinking from the garden hose", is now more like "chugging from Hoover dam".
- Besides global competition, there is a deluge of information via the Web and social media.
- Leaders/staff are drowning. They know it, their colleagues know it, and their loved ones know it.

What Got Us Here?

We try to match the pace of action all around us. So much to understand, to think about, and to react to. Our good intentions, to do the best we can and keep things running, are both admirable and a slippery slope. In our experience though, running a highly effective and profitable organization requires making trade-offs based on the best information we know at the time, anticipating risks, and being prepared for unintended consequences. So, what is different when it comes to us and life/work balance?

- Our success is often measured by our ability to consistently crank out large volumes of work.

We facilitate dialogue that sparks new thinking, defines the real work to be done, and leads to decisions about what to do differently.

- We pride ourselves in being the go-to person; the one who can take on any and all projects, and still deliver "value-add" to the business.
- We are recognized, rewarded, and promoted for jumping on the hand grenade in time of crisis.

Why Don't We Stop?

One word, "fear". There is often little praise or recognition that our plate is only so big, and to add one more thing something else must come off. Instead, we are often told to stop complaining and get a larger plate! What would happen though, if we were to say "No", or "Not Now"? Who knows for sure, but most of us assume it cannot be good!

- We might appear weak, unmotivated, or not a team player.
- We may miss out - signing the next big contract, deciding the next big initiative, or getting a promotion.
- We could be laid off, or see our annual bonus cut.

A Way Forward:

Only so much can be done in a given timeframe with the resources available. What's the solution? Our work with clients suggests a 6-step process that can help you assess the risk of managing your capacity, and making the best choices for you, your organization, and your life:

1. **Acknowledge your limits.** Recognize you have them and if exceeded often, there are costs - your mood, relationships, and health. As importantly, when you say "No", you will likely disappoint someone, and that can be OK. Your manager, peers, direct reports, or significant other, children, friends will often appreciate a more energized and sane you.
2. **Choose wisely.** Use your business savvy, industry analysis, prioritization tools, and mentor's advice to decide which projects to decline - those with the least likelihood of success, sustainability, corporate support, and/or business benefit.
3. **Clearly state why.** Make a compelling case. Tie your reasoning to your organization's mission and vision, annual operating budget, or 5-year plan. Focus on what you will do instead that will create more value - more attention on a critical project, or troubled department.
4. **Come prepared to negotiate.** If "No" is simply not an option, then make a case for more resources, budget, or time - whatever will help you successfully meet the deliverable, and reduce the personal cost to you in trying to get it all done.
5. **Know when to yield.** Gracefully concede, and do what you have to, when there is no way out. Realize you will be better prepared for conversations in the future.

6. **Learn to let it go.** You may follow all these steps, do your homework, and still have the same (or more) workload. Take comfort knowing you were proactive and took action. Be conscious of your attitude - others notice. Acceptance and being positive will serve you in the long run.

Summary:

If a warehouse is full, you cannot get to the items you want. If a database is full, it will run more slowly when trying to produce the reports you want. And, if our brains are full, from trying to do it all - all the time, we will lose our capacity for clear thinking and innovation.

The metaphor is clear, the train is moving fast, and if we want to remain resilient and on-track, we must confront and manage our fear of saying "No". We must also prioritize what we are paying attention to, or deal with the consequences of business and personal crashes. Start today and trust in your decisions!

Actions to Take Now!

ClearPath Alliance has worked with numerous leadership and project teams to help them clarify and prioritize their work, resulting in more sanity, better outcomes, and retention of key talent.

If you're thinking your organization would benefit from short-term solutions and/or planning for next year we can help. **A conversation or meeting is free** - and may be the first step you need to move forward in meeting your 2010 goals. Contact us today, call Jeff Freedman at 858-292-5361 for a consultation.

Free Business Self-Assessment Survey

The "Organizational Survey" is quick and effective way to determine the health of your business. Click on the link below to download a free survey and conduct your own confidential self-assessment.

Organizational Survey

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