

Getting the Job Done

I've been fighting a cold, my dog fell ill and we had no choice but to bring a kitten in from the barn. The stress of bringing a 5th animal into the house, functioning on little sleep due to the cold and then no sleep at all due to a sick dog, made me take note of how difficult it must be for working parents to stay focused at times.

We don't have children and have never had the stress of working and worrying about our kids, although I know of many parents who would have preferred to be at home nurturing their child rather than at the office trying to keep their attention on all the responsibilities of the day.

How do we juggle all the balls and still remain focused on the task at hand? Is it possible to do a great job with the interruptions, worries and stress that plague our everyday lives? We live with stress – meeting deadlines, getting the kids off to school, arriving at that business meeting on time, buying the groceries, fighting traffic, paying bills, dealing with telephone solicitors when we're rushing to prepare dinner. It's non-stop and then the unthinkable happens; someone falls ill, a family member loses a job, a death – even that major promotion we've been hoping for may come at a time when we're least prepared for it.

How do we do it; and if we do it, do we do it well? I like to believe that I do the best I can. I like to believe that I put into practice what I teach and that is: I never lose sight of who I am - what drives me and what holds me back. Knowing myself allows me to do what I always do regardless of the amount of stress in my life. I make lists and I prioritize. Knowing that when I'm tired, feeling miserable and worried – I stick to that list as if it was my mentor. I diligently follow its direction, crossing one thing off after another as I accomplish each task. It allows me to maintain control over, at least, some areas of my life. It is the only way I know to stay focused. One could say that what I really do is set goals for myself, little goals - goals that are necessary in directing my efforts towards accomplishing the objectives of the day.

I may not always be able to do a great job, but at least I get the job done, on time and without error. What I know is that without setting those goals I accomplish less and experience more stress.

Whether it's for the long-term or the short-term, goal setting makes sense; organizing ourselves helps us stay on track, and prioritizing keeps us focused on what needs to be accomplished and what can wait for another day. Should we be doing this on a regular basis? My response is a resounding yes. Although tired, stressed and worried, it's easy for me to fall into a habit that has proven to sustain me regardless of the circumstances. Without this habit of mine, I wouldn't be able to concentrate - my focus would be more on what to do than just doing it. When feeling ill, what I really want to do is to crawl into a warm bed, and although my mind still drifts to my worries, my day is easier to cope with because of being organized, setting goals and prioritizing. I'm confident that this

practice keeps me from disappointing anyone, least of all myself. Because I believe in the fact that these good habits pay off, I've provided some tips on developing them.

Tips to better organization:

- Prior to leaving the office at night: make a list of everything that still needs to be done
- At the beginning of the next day: Listen to voice-mail messages and return any calls that do not require a lot of time or effort
- Add calls that do require some thought to the "to-do" list you started the night before
- Prioritize your to do list by number: #1 being the highest priority
- Read your e-mails and highlight those that need to be replied to; file or delete the balance accordingly
- Focus on your "to-do" list
- Just before lunch; conduct any research, make any calls, etc. that need to be done in order to return your phone calls or respond to e-mails
- After lunch: respond to all voice mail messages and e-mail messages
- Return to your to-do list

Handle an interruption by asking if it can wait and set up an appointment to deal with the issue at a more appropriate time.

There are many issues that interrupt our plans and we all know that we will not get everything on our "to-do" list done, but by consulting it at the end of the day, we allow ourselves the opportunity to realize what we did, rather than did not, accomplish. Habits don't change overnight, but as we develop this system for ourselves on a regular basis, the payoff is that we can at least return home at the end of each day knowing that we are organized for the next day.

Linda Constant
Constant Resources
Affiliated with Optimus Performance 2007
613.678.3469
lconstant@optimusperformance.ca
www.optimusperformance.ca