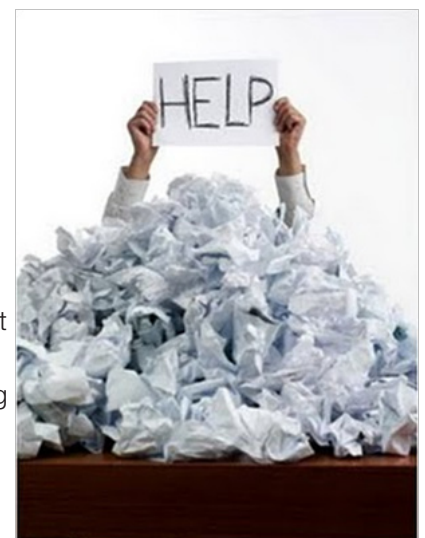


10 TIPS FOR PROJECTS THAT NEVER END



In a project-based organization, it's easy to keep shifting non-deadlined projects down the priority list to make room for other more time-sensitive tasks. Use the following tips to keep important projects moving forward.

- 1. Meet deadlines for high priority billable work;** clearly this is important.
- 2. Move other important tasks forward each day.** These shouldn't be on anyone's "To Do List" if they aren't important, so it's crucial to move them forward (or acknowledge when you're stuck). Take a careful look at your To Do lists. Check through filed emails and project updates to be sure that everything you've said you'd do is listed.
- 3. Identify the quick wins. Is there anything on your list that can be done in 15 minutes or less?** Block out an hour tomorrow and get 4 of those done! Continue daily until they're off your plate – you'll be amazed at the renewed energy you feel when countless small unfinished things aren't hanging over you.
- 4. Set deadlines for the important but not urgent items.** Break them into small (one hour) tasks and make those tasks urgent by setting deadlines. Give yourself one hour each day to get one of those tasks complete. Add up the anticipated hours to give those overall projects a realistic deadline.
- 5. Cluster your day-to-day work.** Depending on your role, this will be different for everyone (i.e., responding to phone, email, mail, or unexpected requests). Allocate a reasonable amount of space each day to these tasks – they're an important part of a customer-service business. However, they can't take over your whole day – or there won't be room for the billable work or other important tasks in 1, 2, 3, and 4 above.
- 6. Be accountable.** If you've agreed to do something, the person who delegated assumes it will be done reasonably quickly – otherwise he or she would have delegated to someone else or kept it him or herself. If you've agreed to do a task and find it sitting for more than 2 days, check in with an update and renegotiate the agreement.
- 7. Reprioritize.** Project work tends to change, so it's important to reprioritize at a personal, team, or organizational level depending on the tasks. Don't do this in isolation – just because something has shifted down your priority list doesn't mean that it's not still a higher priority task for someone else, for a reason you may not be aware of. If in doubt, consult!
- 8. Avoid the "tyranny of the urgent."** It's easy to be distracted by immediate requests that come in emails, instant messages, and phone calls. Acknowledge receipt, but pause to insert the new tasks into a realistic spot on your list rather than leaving what you're working on to accomplish a lower priority item.
- 9. Use prime time wisely.** Some tasks take more physical or mental energy than others, so allocate your time to maximize your productivity. Rather than staring at a blank screen when you're not feeling creative, take a break by moving to more mindless tasks that also need to get done. Similarly, when tasks begin to feel tedious, switch gears to another important project that's using a different set of skills.
- 10. Build in rewards and celebrations for getting things done.** Whether tallying up ticky marks for each task completed (and celebrating when you hit 50) or marking significant project milestones with lunch out or an hour of pampering, take time to celebrate your successes. Acknowledging progress will inspire you to continue with projects that never seem to end.



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