

Management Article 2011

What to Do When Your Boss Gives You Too Many Tasks – And how to increase your productivity

First, don't complain about it. Not to your boss. Not to your fellow workers. Not to your spouse. And not to anyone else. Instead, take charge of your own schedule.

Take an inventory of the work you are assigned over a week's time and sort the tasks into four groups:

1. important-and-urgent
2. important-but-not-urgent
3. not-important-but-urgent
4. not-important-and-not-urgent

Figure out how much time you are devoting to each category. Make sure that 80% of your time is devoted to important tasks. If it's not, promise yourself that you will make adjustments.

Recognize that you can't focus on more than five significant tasks at a time. If there are more than five big tasks on your plate, make yourself a promise to do something about it.

Make an appointment with your boss and show him the list of tasks you've been given. Have five of those tasks highlighted. Say, "I've identified all the projects I'm working on now and have highlighted five that I believe are the most important. Can you look over the list and tell me if you think I'm right in planning to spend most of my time focusing on them?"

What I see in many consulting assignments is that people really have too much to do. But their failure to have SOME method of organizing their tasks kills them. Also I find people are unwilling to invest time in solving an issue, to minimize its recurring negative effects. For instance, they won't take an hour to reorganize their files, so they spend 1 extra minute per day finding things. They genuinely feel that they don't have the hour, so they spend one minute per day for the REST OF THEIR LIFE. Think about that math. By taking the time to solve a root problem, you really can "recover" extra time, even hours, per day, which then allow you to be more productive, and happy.

A real life example? I save a template for writing these articles every month, rather than recreating it. Also, I typically write 3 articles at a time. The editors love it as my stuff is usually early. I love it because I don't stress at the last minute. I can write 3 articles in an hour or two, and I know if I stop at the end of the month to write one, it takes at least an hour to do just one, so I save one hour each quarter. It may not seem like a lot, but when you apply that to lots of tasks, you will increase your productivity with the "found" time. I also put an alarm in my palm reminding me when its time to write 3 more.

Remember, only you can make BUSINESS GREAT!

Ron Sturgeon, founder of [Mr. Mission Possible](#) small business consulting, combines over 35 years of entrepreneurship with an extensive resume in consulting, speaking, and business writing, with 4 books published and 2 more expected in 2011.

A business owner since age 17, Ron sold his chain of salvage yards to Ford Motor Company in 1999, and his innovations in database-driven direct marketing have been profiled in [Inc. Magazine](#). After the repurchase of

Greenleaf Auto Recyclers from Ford, he and a pair of partners executed a turnaround and sold it to Schnitzer Industries.

As a [consultant](#) and [peer benchmarking](#) leader, Ron shares his expertise in strategic planning, capitalization, compensation, growing market share, and more in his signature plain-spoken style, providing field-proven, high-profit best practices well ahead of the business news curve. A big part of his experience and practice is currently devoted to helped small businesses on the internet using their web site and search engine optimization.

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