

Could you use a “Stop Doing” list?

By Inez O. Ng

One of the tried and true organization and time-management tools is the trusty old “to do” list. I was trained to diligently put one together at the end of the day for the following day, and whatever tasks I failed to complete, to carry it forward. This system has worked well in helping me prioritize and focus. But I have also heard many of my colleagues complain about having too much on their list, and feeling very discouraged and overwhelmed by the sheer number of items on their “To Do” list. To help ease the overwhelm, I want to introduce the concept of the “Stop Doing” list.

I first read about the “Stop Doing” list in “Good to Great” by Jim Collins. He stated that one of the commonalities of the companies who were able to propel themselves from being just good to being great is that they all looked at what they were currently doing that they needed to **Stop Doing**. I am implementing this idea in a slightly different way, but I think a “Stop Doing” list can actually help your productivity and effectiveness.

So how do you decide what goes on your “Stop Doing” list? Here’s what I suggest you do.

For the next week or two, each time you work on your “to do” list (and if you are not using one currently, I strongly recommend you start), or blocking off time for specific tasks in you planner, ask yourself this question: **“does this task add value or generate positive results for me and my organization?”** If the answer is no, it should go right on top of your “Stop Doing” list.

If the answer is “yes”, ask yourself a second question: **“am I the best person to do this task?”** The first question tells you whether you can eliminate a task. This question tells you whether you can delegate a task. I know for solo-business people, you automatically think that you have no one to delegate any tasks to. But actually, that might not necessarily be true. Today, there is a whole network of virtual assistants who can handle a myriad of administrative work for you. Some accept work by the hour, and some accept work by the project. If you are interested in this resource, check out www.assistu.com

For some people, you may have to then overcome your resistance to delegating. I’ve heard many of the reasons. Do these sound familiar?

- “By the time I explain it to someone else, I could have done it myself.”
- “I can’t trust somebody else to do it right.”
- “It costs too much money.”

Some of these are completely legitimate concerns. However, before you dismiss the idea, consider the following:

- Is the task repetitive so that the up-front time investment to train someone is actually worth it 3 months down the road?
- Are you the most qualified person to complete the task, or could someone else do it in less time with less effort for better results?
- If you didn’t have to do the task, what would you choose to spend that time on, and what impact will that have on your business, or your life?

So, after considering these tough questions, add your delegated task to your "Stop Doing" list as well and send them elsewhere, and I guarantee you will feel better. Even though I wrote this article for people struggling with overload at work, the same approach can be applied to create a "Stop Doing" list for home. Think of the possibilities – you can delegate laundry, and cooking, and yard work, and cleaning, and what else?

Seriously, the current state of our lives is that there is generally too much to do and not enough time. So, go through this exercise at least once and see what you can shed from your "to do" list. If you like the results, then establish a routine and do this every 6 months or a year. The point is that you want to spend your time on high impact tasks, and work that you enjoy.

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