

Work Smarter, Not Harder



If you are like many Americans, your firm's reducing its work forces, leaving you to work harder, longer hours, giving you more responsibility and perhaps paying you less for the effort.

If you are facing less time and more responsibility, than this article is for you! Here, we share a round-up of advice and tips – provided by friends and associates – for working smarter, not harder. Here they are:

Have a routine: "Every day, as soon as I get to my desk, I look over my calendar, go over my notes from the previous day and think hard about what I'd most like to accomplish.

I prioritize everything numerically, Then, I realistically plot out my entire day, literally hour by hour. Whatever I can't get to that day, I jot down for the next day, when I will go over my notes again and re-prioritize. "

Get organized: "Spend some time thinking about the biggest stumbling blocks in your office. Do you constantly run out of ink? Than keep a stock-pile of ink.

Are you misplacing important notes? Resolve to write everything in one notebook and carry it with you at all times. Drowning in paper? Take a moment every day to throw out unneeded mail, brochures and catalogs. "

Set long term goals: "First, you must be sure of your specific goal, be certain it is achievable. If it is, then you must go about making the process tolerable. Do this by setting short term, achievable goals and find a way of rewarding yourself when you achieve them. No matter how you mark these milestones, you will get a boost of enthusiasm to continue. Accept that setbacks are a normal part of life and focus on getting out of the weeds and continuing on your way to progress."

Self impose accountability: "If you have a high priority project that you are procrastinating with, set a realistic deadline date and then make it public. Once you put it out there for the world to see, you will be driven to stay on course and complete it."

Delegate: "Are there people or services that can help you stay focused, motivated and productive? Your assistant can handle things like data entry. The local pharmacy probably has a delivery service that can help you cut back on your "coffee breaks". Think outside the box!"

Manage time through batching: "Batching is a cool time management system that helps to maximize concentration and reduce distraction. It increases your productivity, creativity, and focus, while decreasing the stress that comes from procrastinating. By simply grouping similar tasks – checking email, phone and snail mail, for instance – you can streamline your workflow. " The Pomodoro Technique is one method for batching tasks. For complete info, visit www.pomodortechnique.com

Just say no: "If you are working at maximum capacity and your performance will suffer (or your already-long hours will increase) simply say NO to new projects. This is most successfully executed when you sit down with the person making the request and have an honest, face-to-face discussion. Your frustration and overwhelmed aura will resonate through your body language and your voice. NEVER say NO by email. You risk being misread and misjudged."

Embrace team work: "To work smart it is essential that you understand the functions of those people/departments around you. Chances are, there is someone else in your firm who is doing similar work and by sharing ideas and information, the effort can become much less taxing."

Don't be a perfectionist: "It doesn't matter if your weekly status update is perfect if most people who receive it simply file it or throw it away. If your effort is disproportionate to the value of the task, reduce the frequency or minimize the details of this effort."

Use technology: "Virtual meetings, file sharing, voice recognition software are just a few of the thousands of advancements that smart business people are embracing. Take advantage of the amazing age we live in ... Plug in and your productivity will soar."