

White Paper on the Road to Overcoming Overload



Filtering - Keeping Overload at Bay

Can Filtering Help You? The challenge most of us face is not in choosing between the good and the bad. The challenge is filtering, to choose between the good and the best. Developing your own filtering system will help you focus, prioritize, and choose what is the best.

Most of us develop bad habits not because we desire them, but because we do not have enough motivation to break them or avoid them. We would change our bad habits if we had sufficient rewards from changing them, or if we were faced with the negative consequences of our bad habits. As human beings, we are subject to the law of “the carrot and the stick”.

The motivation to change our overloaded world must come from within each of us. As we think of the ever-looming demand of our growing economy and the increased pressure this will bring, we hope that fear may motivate some of us. As we think of the immense future growth potential, we hope that all of us are challenged by the opportunity we have to bring higher value to society and to those who are important to us. Those of us who accept this challenge will reap great personal rewards and benefits.

In other words, each of us must develop our own motivation based on an honest understanding of the high price we are likely to pay for our overloaded lives if we do not change, and the potential rewards we are likely to gain, if we do change.



From an old workaholic I say to all workaholics, young and old, learn to prioritize and filter out what is not important. This is the most important thing you can do for yourself and for those for whom you care. If you do not, you may wake up one day and find that the price you have paid is way too high. And then it is often too late to renegotiate. Believe me, I speak from experience.

Ms. Nada Pavic, Business Development Manager

The priority based filtering system is a strategic tool that provides a thinking process. We believe that given the opportunity to think carefully, most of us will be motivated to change for

Note:

* This whitepaper is extracted from our book *Overloaded? From overload to balanced living*. See inside the book at www.amazon.com

* If this page was sent to you by a friend we invite you to subscribe to our e-letter “On The Road To Overcoming Overload.” Please go to <http://www.nomoreoverload.com/request.asp>



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the better. Based on our clients' experiences, as you use this thinking tool, you will develop your own filtering system that will help you **focus on higher value roles, goals, and activities.**

Diagram 4 illustrates the priority based filtering system as a dynamic interrelationship of three critical areas:

1. **Roles and Goals:** Your roles and their related goals are the primary driving force in this filter. Roles are different from job titles and are seldom defined in job descriptions. In our hurried and busy lives we seldom take time to define the roles we play on the stage of life. We decide and act without regularly examining our actions in relationship to our critical goals. This can change as you define your high value roles relating them to high value goals and use this to help you filter the information you receive and the demands placed on your life.
2. **People:** As a knowledge worker, people are your information exchange partners. The people in your sphere of life are the target and recipients of your value proposition. As you think of people you must include yourself as one of the most important people. Your personal well-being and the information you need for your growth and development are the vehicles by which you provide and increase the value you bring to others in the world around you.

Some may suggest that to think of value as it relates only to people is rather narrow and selfish. While this may be true, we must realize that all things were created to add value to mankind, as mankind assumes the caretaker role for all things created.

3. **Subjects:** The information subjects that you seek and collect are a support infrastructure to help you play your role and achieve your goals and deliver high value to the people around you. In our information-cluttered world we must stop and ask, "How does this information help me relate to my roles and goals and how will this information benefit my interaction with my important people?"

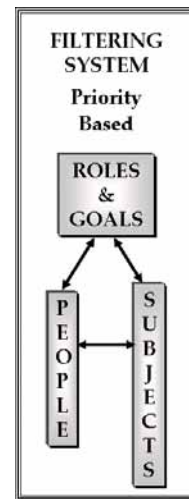


Diagram 4

In general, people never admit that they are overloaded. The first step to overcoming overload is to accept the reality of overload. The second step is to be willing to make personal change within the business culture you are working in. Once you have made the commitment to change your causes of overload, it is important to communicate your desired plan to the various levels in the organization in a manner that is appropriate to each person.



In our organization we have created what I call a listening culture. In such a culture, the employees have the freedom to discuss issues openly, share constructive feedback and advice. If you are overloaded, it is important to share how you feel with someone who can listen to you and support you in making appropriate changes. A peer or a caring manager can be a vital resource in times of stress or overload. **s. Grace Cunningham, Manager, Human Resources**



Information and work overload is a common, and for many of us, a constant problem in the workplace today. This is a reality that I had to face. My first step in fighting my overload problem was to acknowledge that it was a personal problem that I had to solve myself. I also had to admit that if I did not conquer the problem that it would have a seriously detrimental impact on my life. Only then could I make the mental shift and take personal responsibility for fixing the overload problem.

The second step was to realize that as it was a significant problem the solution would not be reached with a simple set of techniques and tools. Rather, this problem required an integrated solution. While techniques and tools were helpful, for me the real breakthrough came from changing my attitudes, and in clarifying my roles and goals.

Mr. Doug Stirling, Director of Corporate Accounting

Over the years I learned that it is very important to set realistic expectations of others and myself. As a leader there will always be more to do than you are able to do. It is very easy to fall victim to unrealistic self-imposed expectations. There is always more that you wish you could control than you really do control. You must learn to say no, so that you can say, “Yes” to the truly important priorities. Another important lesson I learned is that you cannot be responsible for things over which you have no control. It sounds simple, but so often we get caught up in trying to manage things that are really not ours to manage or we are held accountable for results in areas over which we have no control. Both approaches lead to stress! As a result you cannot assume responsibility for what you do not control. Accepting such reality has had a great impact on my work life balance.



Ms. Karen MacDonald, Regional Director, Quality Improvement and Education

Summary

- ✓ We indulge in bad habits when we lack the motivation to focus on what is best.
- ✓ To overcome the overload problem we must individually be motivated by the potential of adding higher value and consider the risks associated with the negative impact of work and information overload.
- ✓ You can filter wisely by relating your high value roles and goals to the people who are your information exchange partners, as well as the subject matter and the information you collect and need to support your roles. Please note:
- ✓ This section will be of particular value to those who had a high score in the
- ✓ Statements 1 to 7 of the [Effectiveness and Overload Gauge](#)