

# White Paper on the Road to Overcoming Overload



## Filtering On High Value Relationships

### Background

*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.

**M**ost 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.

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 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

#### Note:

\*\* This whitepaper is extracted from our book *Overloaded? From overload to balanced living*. See inside the book at [www.amazon.com](http://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>



[Baha & Margaret Habashy](#)

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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?”

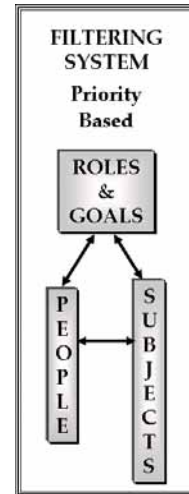


Diagram 4

### 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 Statements 1 to 7 of the [Effectiveness and Overload Gauge](#)

## Filtering On High Value Relationships

*Who Are Your Important And Teachable People?* People are your information exchange partners. Your value proposition is directly related to the positive impact you have on the people touched by your roles and influenced by your goals. Here you are encouraged to identify your important people, your teachable people, and your draining people.

As knowledge workers, most of us add value by impacting the lives of other human beings for good. Even those of us who care for animals and natural resources must admit that the final link of what we do is often related to the well-being of humankind.

Every one of us who knows how to do good and neglects to do so, is short-changing his fellowman of the best we can offer. With this in view, we must always inventory our relationships and assess our ability to impact the lives of others for good.

We have been taught that all people are equal. Yes, all people are equal under the law, all people are equal in the Day of Judgment, and all people are equal when it comes to death and taxes. But not all people are equally important when it comes to prioritizing our personal and business relationships. Our time, energy, and resources are finite and we need to invest them where we can deliver the highest value and where we have the maximum impact.

### Important, Teachable, and Draining People

In his thought-provoking book, *Restoring Your Spiritual Passion*, Gordon MacDonald suggests that in our lives we have different types of people.<sup>i</sup> We recommend reading his book along with Stephen Covey and his bestseller, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.<sup>ii</sup> Here we wish to provide you with an illustration that could help you filter life demands based on the impact you have on people and the impact people have on you.

Diagram 7 illustrates three circles based on the impact of three different people groups. They are:

- The circle of accountability holding your Important People
- The circle of influence which holds the Teachable People
- The circle of concerns which holds your Draining People

1. **The circle of accountability:** While all human beings are important not all of

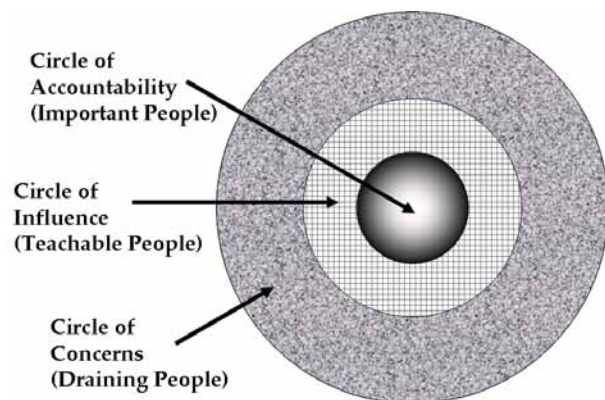


Diagram 7: Circles of Relationships

them should have the same priority in our attention or focus. Here we recommend that you consider the important people as **the people who help you define your roles and the people who are critical to the achievement of your goals.**

On the stage of life the **people who help you define your roles** are important people because they appreciate and understand the roles you need to play. They are individuals with whom you have a strong, open relationship that allows them to provide input into your values and character. They are people who are committed to your success and/or whose success is highly dependent on your success. In many cases they are individuals to whom you are accountable or those you ask to hold you accountable. The important people may include special family members, key people in your business organization and others you consider mentors or great influencers on your values and thoughts.

We should hasten to say that some of the important people who have helped us define our roles are writers. Through their writings and ageless wisdom they have impacted many for good.

The people who help you define your roles may be different for each role. But at all times keep that number to a mere handful; otherwise you may be faced with the confusing task of prioritizing conflicting opinions.

*Also, the important people are those who are critical to the achievement of your goals. SMART, high value goals are often achieved through interdependent relationships with others. Such people often, directly or indirectly, derive benefit from your success. These people may include your children, colleagues, key customers, and/or suppliers of the products and services you need.*

Once again, you will find that as you grow in your value contribution you will need to prioritize and reduce the number of people who are critical to the achievement of your goals. If you do not do this, you run the risk of diluting your impact and relationships.

As you take inventory of your important people, do not overlook counting yourself in that list. Your values, character and attributes are the most critical factors in helping you define your roles. Your health, talents and abilities are most important assets in helping you achieve your goals.

2. **The circle of influence:** This circle holds the teachable people who are influenced by your character and/or your attitudes. They admire your behavior and your life values. They consider you a model in certain aspects of your life and wish to learn from you. Teachable people are in your circle of influence by their choice and your invitation. With them you have a mentoring, coaching or leadership relationship.

The teachable people are committed to you and you invest time and interest in them, helping them grow. You seldom expect tangible or monetary rewards from your teachable people. However, as they grow you are energized and rewarded by seeing them progress and do well. Sometimes your teachable people are the people to whom you can delegate some of your roles and responsibilities as you move on to higher value roles, goals and activities.

Let us see how this works. Suppose you realize that you are on too many committees and you want to free more time for your family. You approach one of your teachable people who can benefit from the experience of being on that committee and help him or her decide to take your role. As you do this you move to a new role in his or her life. You may become a coach or an encourager. As you watch him or her fulfill a new role you are satisfied and fulfilled by such progress. At the same time you are freed to pursue higher value roles, goals, and activities.

Your teachable people are the legacy of a life on life investment - the legacy you leave as you move on life's journey. Your teachable people are the ones who will most likely have the fondest and best memories of the impact you have had on their life.

3. **The circle of concerns:** This circle holds the draining people. These are the people who do not fit in the first two categories. People concerns are the most draining of life experiences.

- Draining people are individuals whose behaviors and attitudes bring you concern and over tax your emotional well-being while resulting in little improvement on their part.
- Draining people repeatedly face the same problems, complain about the same issues but seldom take action to change eventual outcomes.
- Draining people are often critical of others, disruptive in meetings and seldom proactive in facing life challenges.
- Draining people often deal with superficial symptoms and are seldom ready to confront the causes of problems.
- Draining people enter our lives in a variety of forms. They come in the form of individuals as well as in the form of negative media reports, editorials, or TV programs that promote violence and negative behavior or lifestyles.

As we work with clients in our workshops we see one common observation.

Regretfully, most business leaders spend far too much time with the draining people; they seldom clearly identify their teachable people and take the important people for granted.

**Baha Habashy**

In dealing with the draining people you need to avoid them, reduce your exposure to their draining behavior or remove yourself from their life circumstances. Fortunately, if you focus on your important and teachable people your life will be so full that the draining people will find it hard to have access to your life.



A question we are often asked is, “**Can important people be draining people as well?**” **The answer is yes.** To illustrate, let me share with you three experiences:

### **My precious girl:**

Like any father my firstborn, Rebecca, was the apple of my eye. Rebecca was very critical to the achievement of the goals I set as she called me Daddy. Many parents will relate to the sudden change that happened when my precious girl became a teenager. My very important person became one of my most draining people. She told me that she did not need parents anymore.

Fearful and anxious, I struggled with this sudden change. While she became one of my draining people I could not abandon my role as her parent. What I had to do was limit my exposure to her destructive moods swings, avoid confrontations, and find common grounds for reasonable communication.

Today, Rebecca is in her twenties. While still her parent, my goals and relationship has evolved. Rebecca has become one of my most delightful, teachable people.

### **My Only Client:**

During a year of economic recession and poor business I had one very large client-my only client. All eyes were focused on how we were doing with this very large and complex piece of business.

As the key relationship manager for our company, my key contact at the client site was a very draining and volatile woman with a very bad temper. She was my very important and very draining person with whom I had to have almost daily stressful encounters. The more desperate I was for the business, the more abusive this client seemed to be. Motivating my account team was becoming impossible.

One day, after a very volatile exchange I had to express my inability to cope with this abusive attitude and offered to resign and even cancel the whole deal. In anger she left the office as I began to think of what might be the end of my career.

The next day she called a meeting with my boss during which she apologized for the way she had been dealing with my team and me. With emotional sincerity she complimented me for my integrity and the value of the trust she had in me. My very important, very draining person became one of my best business friends for many years thereafter.

### **My negative boss:**

Through my thirty-eight year career I have had many bosses. Some were excellent; others not so good. Let me tell you about “Joe” (not his real name). Joe used to say that he “liked to play the role of the devil’s advocate”. Anytime I had a good idea he would say, “Let me be

the devil’s advocate”. Then he would proceed to point out all the rational and irrational reasons why things would not work out and why I would surely fail. He was very skilled in uncovering all the negatives and making the brightest day dark. One day when Joe commented “Let me be the devil’s advocate,” I reached my fill with Joe. In frustration I said, “You know, I never liked the devil and I do not want to work in hell.”

Joe was one of my important and draining people. I had no chance of changing his attitude. My only option was to look for another job. I am glad I did.

Here you have three examples of important but draining people. Three different methods of approach you can use: **avoid, confront and change what you can.**

**Baha Habashy, Author**



As a Christian minister, the model of Jesus Christ impresses me and I try to follow His example. He prioritized His life around people. He knew His important people and focused on them. He spent much time praying and talking with God and that helped Him define his important roles. At the same time, he focused on those who needed his teaching and healing ministry, as they were critical to the achievement of

his goals.

Early in His ministry He identified twelve teachable people and focused on them. And within that group he identified Peter, James and John in whom he invested extra effort and time. They eventually became among the first to carry his legacy of impacting the world for good.

**Rev. Ernest LaFont, Pastor and Police Chaplain**



### **Exercise**

In the following Template C:

- Take time to list five important people in your life. Indicate reasons why they are important to you as well as the most important role or roles **THEY** play in your life.
- In a similar manner list five teachable people in your life. Again indicate why they are important to you as well as the most important role or roles **YOU** play in their life.
- If you wish, list five draining people in your life. Again indicate the reason why they are draining to you as well as the role **THEY** play in your life.

**Please note:** If this is the first time you are doing such an exercise, you may find this awkward in the beginning. **Please do not let this hold you back. Remember your goal is progress, not perfection.** Later on this will become second nature to you

# T

## emplate C – People Inventory

I= Important T = Teachable  
↓ & D= Draining People

Indicate role important people play in your life &  
Role you play in the lives of others↓.

I T D	Person or organisation	Reason for importance	Related Roles
I	Margaret H	<i>I made a lifetime commitment to her. She is critical to the achievement of my goals.</i>	<i>Partner</i>
T	Rebecca	<i>She needs my advice and friendship. Helps me develop as coach</i>	<i>Protégé</i>



To me, the important people are not limited to those in authority over me. Important people are those that help shape my roles and are interested in my personal development. Important people include my dear wife, because of her commitment to me, and to a differing degree other family members and friends because of the positive influence they have on my life.

On the opposite side, draining people often have a negative impact on the achievement of my goals and on how I feel about the roles that I undertake.

It is important to filter out draining people in order to avoid their negative impact. The first step I took in filtering out draining people was to identify them based on their negative effect. The next step was to limit my exposure to them by making our encounters more structured and controlled. Finally as I realized that in filtering out these people in this way I also risked losing potential positive benefits such an individual may bring to my own goals or development so I have tended to re-evaluate this labeling often.

**Mr. Doug Stirling, Director of Corporate Accounting**

### Summary

- ✓ Your life's value is directly related to the impact you have on the people you encounter on the various stages of life.
- ✓ Life provides you with three different circles holding three differing groups of people.
  - **The circle of accountability** holds your important people who help you define your roles and are critical to the achievement of your goals.
  - **The circle of influence** holds your teachable people who learn from you and grow through your influence on their lives.
  - **The circle of concerns** holds the draining people who bring extra concerns to your life and are seldom impacted for good by your relationship.
- ✓ As you focus on the important and teachable people you will have little time for the draining people.
- ✓ People may be important, draining, and teachable at the same time. Take an inventory of your relationships to enhance your impact and reduce the risks of negative exposure.

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<sup>i</sup> Gordon Macdonald, *Restoring Your Spiritual Passion* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986).

<sup>ii</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).