

White Paper on the Road to Overcoming Overload



Filtering – On High Value Roles

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.

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.

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

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>



[Baha & Margaret
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Integrity⁺
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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?”

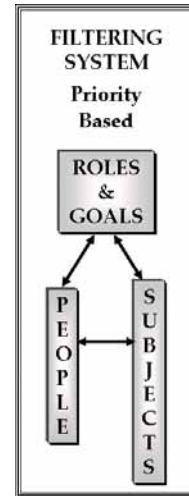


Diagram 4

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 Roles

How Do You Describe Your High Value Roles? Back in the 1600's, Shakespeare told us that all the world's a stage, and each of us have many parts to play. On the stage of life the roles you play are more important than the titles you hold. We challenge you to filter by focusing on the highest value roles.

In the 1600's Shakespeare wrote in *As You Like It*: "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts"¹

Shakespeare provides us with powerful imagery that we hope you will keep in mind as we challenge you to filter on high value roles.

Suppose you meet a stranger at a party. As the conversation develops you indicate that you work for XYZ Company. He proceeds to ask you, "What role do you play at XYZ Company?" What would you say? Do you have a clear answer that communicates the high value you bring to your work environment?

Most of us when asked such a question quickly provide our title. If the questioner persists, we respond highlighting our functional or organizational responsibilities or work habits. It is easy for us to define our roles based on what we do. We forget that we are not called human doings, but we are called human BEINGS because our roles are best defined by what we are expected to BE, not merely by what we are expected to DO.

While some titles imply certain roles they seldom portray the high value roles that we need to aspire to deliver. History books are filled with individuals who had impressive titles but their lives were void of valuable contributions to the people around them. At the same time many walked this planet with humble titles fulfilling great roles and influenced many lives for good.

Titles and organizational structure come with their own baggage and implied values that are often misleading. Titles often bring certain expectations of priorities that are not realistic or may even drive you to compromised priorities. Titles cause you to act based on legacy assumptions and expectations that are ill defined or poorly communicated.

If "All the world's a stage," then on this universal platform, we all have the same title. We are all actors. Our success on the stage of life is not based on our title. Our value is directly related to our ability to play our high value roles, be supported by and provide the needed

A high Value role is a role that stretches you and causes you to grow beyond your comfort zone. In the process you delegate lower value roles, roles that you have outgrown to others who will be in turn stretched as they play them.

support for others who share the stage with us. It is critical that we pay utmost attention to what we are expected to **BE** as we enter and exit.



Recently, I was speaking with a Deputy Minister of Health about the mistake we often make of placing people in leadership roles based on their business or clinical skills without giving enough attention to their social and caring qualities. A person's knowledge or competencies do not necessarily ensure that he or she is a good fit for the roles assigned in an organization.

Mr. John McGarry, President and Chief Executive Officer

On the various stages of life you need to take an active part in defining your roles. If you do not exercise that ability, others will assume roles for you. They will assume roles that reflect their own priorities. They will impose definitions that are biased by their own expectations, not necessarily by your abilities and limitations. They will impose role descriptions that may be in conflict with your values. Being active in defining your role involves honest communication and negotiation with those who share the various stages of life with you.

Our experience as husband and wife highlights the importance of negotiating and re-evaluating personal and business roles. We have been married for over 31 years. As a newly married couple, we were highly committed to having the best relationship possible. Having come from different cultural backgrounds, our expectations of each other's roles were significantly different. Our assumptions were gravely faulty. It was not until a major crisis occurred in our relationship that we realized the importance of defining our roles as husband and wife. Until then we had stressful conceptions of what we were expected to **BE**.

When we became parents, these roles as husband and wife had to be re-examined and modified. Again, when we became business partners in Integrity+ Consulting we had to re-negotiate our roles; as husband and wife, we were committed to bringing the highest value possible to our new clients. We needed to find ways to complement each other as business partners.

Since our work requires extensive research and client communications we agreed that Margaret's primary role is to be "the brain" of our partnership. She feels comfortable with this role and it fits her temperament and love for research. On the other hand, Baha acts as "the mouthpiece" for our communication needs. He is good at this and it suits his sanguine personality. As we realigned our roles we both feel fulfilled and our clients appreciate the high value they receive from our workshops.



As I grew older I learned that I couldn't be all things to all people. Learning to negotiate for realistic expectations is a vital skill that will help you avoid becoming a victim of an overloaded life.

Ms. Pat Clinch, Director Organizational Development

Your world is a multi-faceted stage. As you face each day you have unlimited opportunities to play many roles on a variety of stages. Before you get involved in any role, you must answer some critical questions:

1. Do you support the value proposition of the drama that is being performed on that stage?
2. Can you and the key participants in the drama engage in open communication regarding your role and that of others on the stage?
3. How do you define your role?

Assuming that your answers to questions 1 and 2 are positive, then the next critical step is to define what are you expected to **BE**. One of the simplest ways in defining what you are expected to be is to agree on the most important **adjectives** that describe each role.

As we are called “**human beings**” our success on the stage is highly dependent on the ability to embody the character we are to **BE**. Our success is directly related to our ability to communicate the attitudes and the value of the person we are expected to **BE**. Our effectiveness is impacted more by the soft skills we are expected to demonstrate than by our knowledge or competencies.

Until recently, hiring practices were heavily based on a person's academic and business achievements. We often assumed that if the person held degrees in a specific field, he or she would do well in certain roles that require assumed knowledge or competencies. We wrongly expected a person with similar titles in other places to be capable of handling similar profiles. Today behaviour-based interviewing and examining character references are more important than the resume a candidate may present. It is critical that we ensure the proper fit of the candidate on the new stage he or she is expected to perform.



In the business world, whether you are a senior leader or junior manager, priority based filtering is a key success factor. Having roles that are clearly aligned to corporate objectives is vital to personal and business effectiveness. One of the key roles of a leader is to rely on experience and filter away urgency from his people. This will help them focus on what is important and not be distracted by urgent demands. When talking to overloaded people I often find that as much as half of what they are doing is working on the wrong thing or spending too much time on things that do not deserve so much time and should be put aside. **Mr. Jim Wright, Operation Executive**



It is very easy to let professional roles overtake personal life. Recently, I stepped back and examined my roles as a young mother, wife and manager. I quickly realized that children, by virtue of their dependence, seem to take priority in my personal life. This, coupled with professional demands, made it easy to overlook the needs of my spouse who seemed independent and self-sufficient. Now I am paying more attention to my role as a wife and the critical importance of developing my relationship with my spouse.

Ms. Donna Johnston, People Manager

Summary

- ✓ Defining your roles is one of the most critical steps in developing your filtering system.
- ✓ If you do not participate in defining your roles, others will assume them for you.
- ✓ A simple approach in defining your roles is to list your most important roles along with the most important adjectives that describe each role.
- ✓ Compare how you describe these roles with the description of others who share the same stage with you.
- ✓ Negotiate appropriate compromises, where needed.
- ✓ Do not allow your desire for perfection to hold you back. Take any step towards defining your roles at work, at home, or at play. It is worth it.

ⁱ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959), II, vii, 149.