Handling Multiple Projects with Success

Today, companies are stretching their bottom dollar as far as they can by utilizing the employees they have. The hiring process can be time-consuming, and sometimes without great candidates or results. Also, companies are facing budget shortfalls and cutbacks due to economic issues. Therefore, the current employees are given more projects and tasks to manage as previous positions remain vacant.

Many of you have probably asked the question: "How can they give me more duties and projects to manage when I'm already stretched as far as I can go? How do I add more hours to my workday or work week to accomplish the extra projects when I am not approved for overtime? How do I handle my own duties plus juggle everyone else's without missing any deadlines?"

There has been much debate about the concept of multi-tasking. Studies have found that multi-tasking can actually reduce productivity by up to 40%, because the human brain cannot give its full attention to two tasks at once. In addition, a variety of potential risks, hazards and negative health effects associated with multi-tasking have been identified. The disadvantages can include lack of focus, memory and learning impairment, increased frequency of errors/mistakes, and increased stress levels to name a few.

As with all things in life, there must be a balance. When it is necessary to make progress on several work items within a short timeframe, knowing how to PRIORITIZE is the key.

➤ Determine what is URGENT and IMPORTANT – Based on the Eisenhower Matrix or the Urgent-Important Matrix, here is a way to categorize tasks or activities.

	Urgent	Less Urgent
Important	Do First	Schedule
Less Important	Delegate	Don't Do

This categorizing helps you to focus on the most critical items first so you can direct your time and energy accordingly. A video tutorial is available online at: https://www.eisenhower.me/eisenhower-matrix/.

➢ Avoid Distractions – Too many distractions rob you of valuable time from the workday. Whether working from home or in a company environment, try to minimize those things that keep you from accomplishing your goals. What is a distraction to some people may be a benefit to another. For example, working with noise in the background, like music or a news program. Some may find it relaxing while others are hindered. Certain people like busier surroundings and others like peace and quiet to get things done. Sometimes, in a work environment, you may not have much control over the noise. However, ear plugs or noise cancelling headphones could be a good option for those who need a quieter backdrop to stay in their zone of productivity.

➢ Do Not Procrastinate – The task that you are dreading the most may not take very much time to complete in comparison to some of the projects on your To-Do List. Instead of dreading it and pushing it to the back of the pile, just set your mind to FOCUS on accomplishing that one item first thing in the morning. You will find yourself relieved once you've tackled it.

➢ Keep a Task List (either on a note form or in some electronic form or program) nearby throughout your day and week with the urgent, important, and necessary items which are required. Make a note near each one of the specific deadline to have it ready. Check off the list as you get the project or task completed. This will help with the fear of omitting or forgetting a project, and you can also see the progress you have made in your work week.

➢ Repeat Tasks or Projects – Items which are required on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, such as reports, financials, summaries, etc. To manage these items, make a repeating appointment on your calendar for this "report" so that the calendar program will actually do the reminding for you to update/complete it by the due date. Also, investigate your options to find a way to automate this repeat process to make it easier with updates (i.e., auto email a group of people with additional information, setting up a query to run new data, creating formulas in spreadsheets to do calculations, etc.).

➢ "Design Your Roadmap" – Plan ahead and estimate time needed to accomplish each project/task. Say you are going on a road trip. Everyone loves those! You make certain preparations like planning your route and stopping points (for fun or rest) and allowing enough drive time to reach the destination. It's the same concept with project management. You make a plan for the amount of time it will require to get from start to finish and block out your time each day to focus on getting to your "destination". Also, just like when taking long drives, you need to get out and stretch after a few hours in a car, your body and mind need a "mental break" to refresh and regroup. Stepping away for a brief time may even give you more clarity, more energy, or fresh ideas about that project or other items on your TO DO LIST.