

Small Business Key issues - Overwhelmed in business



Smith

The scenario: I love what I do but I never seem to “catch up”. Life feels like it moves faster everyday: Just when I clear up one list of things to do, there’s a fresh crop to handle. How can I maintain this pace, manage others and still feel like a balanced person?

Coach: Harvey Smith.

I have yet to meet a client who doesn’t feel as you do. Some feel it occasionally. Some daily. Some live with it like a low-grade fever. Most of my clients are very busy. Too busy. They want to regain a sense of control. We have to learn control, and we have to make wise choices where to focus the asset of our time & attention. I walk clients through five principles for “control sanity.”

1. When overwhelmed, make time to be grateful. Many of us focus on what is not happening and not enough time appreciating what we already have accomplished. As a coach I ask overwhelmed clients, "What do you like and respect about your boss, your staff, your partner or your career?" "What are the things you are most proud of in your life?"

It is important that we break the habit of negative “self talk”. We all know how it is when our thinking is circular and we can only

see what is wrong. Wrong with ourselves. Wrong with our company. Wrong with our coworkers. Instead, recall previous successes that had a positive outcome.

Think of something you actually admire in a co-worker. Don't dwell on management's imperfections, find something to acknowledge. Everyone can find things about themselves and others that are worthy of a nod. Whenever a negative train of thought starts to overtake your internal conversation, consciously stop and replace it with something more uplifting.

2. Prioritize. Break tasks down by importance. In "Ten Things I Wish I'd Known-Before I Went Out into the Real World", Maria Shriver recalls when she was pulled in many directions - career, family, society. Her mother offered something like this, "Of course you can have it all. You just can't have it all at the same time."

It is more productive to

get something done well than do many things haphazardly. If you feel that you are being asked to do more than humanly possible, work with your boss to prioritize projects and deadlines. If you’re the boss, delegate. If you cannot make a deadline, don’t wait until the last minute to renegotiate timing.

3. Write things down. This may sound too simple, but I have clients who immediately feel a sense of control by putting everything on paper. A crowded mind forgets ideas and appointments. Trying to keep lists in your head compromises your concentration. I have a client who would write dozens of notes and never remember where he put them. His single list makes a noticeable difference in his control and organization. He is more “present” in each task.

What’s your system for remembering activities? Have one “to do” list that you look at every day and a calendar that never leaves your side. I have had clients with multiple calendars, resulting in multiple mix-ups. Have a consistent and centralized system.

4. Be conscious. Become more aware of how you’re spending your time. Notice what things are wasteful and decide how you can

streamline the time-wasters.

5. Know how you add value to the organization. Focus on those strengths, then create a plan to delegate responsibilities. One of my clients had a hard time keeping her calendar, but her assistant thrived on details. Now she calls or emails her assistant when she makes appointments. At the end of each day the assistant presents her with the next day’s schedule. Simple solution, but one that has made a huge difference in this person’s life.

It’s your life. Your time. Most importantly, your mind. Control your mind’s approach to feeling overwhelmed and you will go a long way to managing the workload.

Harvey Smith is a business coach, small business consultant and sales trainer. He is the past president of the International Coach Federation, Charlotte Chapter. ICF is the primary worldwide resource for business and personal coaches and sets accreditation standards for coaches. Charlotte’s ICF chapter has 40 coaches.

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