

# The Secret To Getting Everything Done

Do you feel like there's not enough hours in the day? Try eliminating one item from your to-do list.

By Lisa Evans in Fast Company

Staring at our lengthy to-do lists, we all wish we had just one more hour in the day to accomplish it all. Maybe then we could achieve that work-life balance that constantly seems to evade us.

Back in 2010, a coalition of Canadian women argued 24 hours simply wasn't enough to fit in all the responsibilities of work and family life. They made headlines when they campaigned for a 25-hour clock.

While it doesn't seem that extra hour is coming anytime soon, leadership and productivity expert Tasha Eurich says that's okay. In her new book *Bankable Leadership: Happy People, Bottom Line Results, and the Power to Deliver Both*, Eurich says the key to achieving work-life balance is not to try to do more by extending our day, but to do one less thing per day.

Eurich bases her "One Less Thing" (OLT) principle on the law of diminishing returns. "Just because we invest more time in something doesn't mean we're going to get more results," she says.

Eurich says she came up with the OLT principle after a former boss made a comment that although the company had a lot of really smart, motivated people, he wished they had more smart, lazy people.

Just because we invest more time in something doesn't mean we're going to get more results. "Not lazy because they're not getting things done, but lazy because they're finding the simplest ways to get things done," says Eurich. "Realizing when you should stop investing time and energy into something is probably as important as knowing when to start."

Knocking something off the to-do list doesn't come easy to many of us. To help you decide what to take off, Eurich outlines three questions to ask when implementing the OLT principle into your workday:

## 1. Can This Activity Be Focused So I Can Spend Less Time Completing It?

"[Around] 64% of executives think they have too many priorities," says Eurich. Rather than delving into every single task that crosses your desk, the OLT principle requires taking a step back and reevaluating each task to determine whether it takes priority over another. Limiting your priorities allows you to focus on the right things that will add value to your work.

"People are so overloaded, they become intellectually lazy," says Eurich. "The irony is that they would have more mental space and time if they just asked themselves a couple of quick questions beforehand." Prioritizing your to-do list can not only help you be more productive, but more successful as well.

During the course of her research, Eurich found as an executive team's number of priorities grew, revenues declined, while those with one to three priorities showed above average industry growth. Focusing your mental and physical energy on the right things, and spending no more time than necessary to produce the results you need is the first step to doing one less thing.

## 2. Can I Delegate This Activity To Another Person Or Group?

Eurich says delegating is one of the most important skills that many of us are not doing effectively. Entrepreneurs in particular often have a difficult time delegating to others.

"There's a pride that comes with saying everything relies on you. It's harder to give things up because it becomes part of your identity as an entrepreneur," says Eurich, who said she has experienced difficulty delegating the accounting aspects of her business. "Usually the things that we need to delegate are the things that we don't do very well."

By hiring a bookkeeper to remove the spreadsheets from her desk, Eurich says she could concentrate her time and energy on the tasks she does well and she enjoys doing.

### 3. Do I Have To Do This At All, Or Can I Stop This Activity Altogether?

In her book, Eurich cites the example of a COO who spent five hours every quarter with her team putting together a financial report over a four-year period. But in the last year, she noticed that nobody in the company had commented on the report. She decided not to do the report to see if anyone missed it. The result? No one made a peep. Upon investigation, the COO discovered that the priorities of the business had changed since she was first asked to compile the report, and no one had been looking at it for the last two years.

Prioritizing your to-do list can not only help you be more productive, but more successful as well. The story serves as an example that adding a task to your to-do list simply because it's something that you've always done may not be the most efficient use of your time.

When deciding whether to keep a task on your to-do list, ask whether a task or activity is adding enough value to justify the time it takes to perform. Weekly department meetings often fall into this category of things that can be eliminated. Ask everyone on the team if they find the meetings a valuable use of their time, or whether it's just become an accepted practice to meet every Wednesday at 9 a.m. Questioning whether or not the meeting is required or relevant anymore can help you knock something off your plate.

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