

Are You Working Smarter or Harder?

By Sheila Hawkins

How effectively are you managing your work load? Maybe your work load has control of you. If you're not in control, one thing to look at is the number of hours you're working. For some, extra or longer hours are the rule, not the exception, which is not a good thing. It can increase your stress level, which can end up impacting your physical health.

Adding extra hours to your work day in order to get things done really doesn't increase your productivity. Productivity decreases due to the physical and mental fatigue that result from the extra work hours. Studies have shown that performance actually decreases about 25% when work hours are increased for prolonged period of time. At this rate, there is no way to get it all done. If you're going to add hours to your work week, make it the exception, not the rule.

In lieu of adding the extra hours, consciously and purposely manage your workload. When you're consciously managing your tasks, you can complete what you have to do without feeling overwhelmed and you can do so without adding hours to your work week as a regular practice. The key is to **work smarter, not harder**.

Here are some things that will have you working smarter not harder:

Don't over commit-Know what you are capable of handling. Before you commit to something, make sure you have the time to dedicate to it. Saying "no" never really hurt anyone

Prioritize your tasks- Knowing the importance of a task is important. Assign a level of priority to every task on your list, and then place it in your calendar accordingly. Not assigning a priority can cost you precious time or cause you to add extra hours at some point to get something done.

Know your prime time-We all have a period of time during the day where we are at our best and we each should know when that time is for us. Your prime time is key to getting things done and will greatly assist you in managing your work load and keeping extra hours off of your agenda.

Work on the tasks that are important but not urgent. Usually people find themselves working on those things that are urgent but not important. Things like non productive meetings, interruptions and the mail. What we really want to be able to focus on are the things that are not urgent, but important. Those are the things that involve prevention, planning, seizing opportunities and recreation. Knowing that 80% of our desired results come from 20% of high leverage activities, we can see that the greatest payoff would come from working on those things that are important but not urgent. By doing so, you position yourself to spend less time handling crises; working smarter, not harder.

Break larger tasks down into smaller pieces so that the larger task is easy to accomplish. Look at it as though you are eating a meal. You eat a meal one bite at a time. Break the larger task down into components or bites and take each one of those on individually. When you finish one of the components, celebrate your

accomplishment. It doesn't have to be anything big, but do it. It will help to fuel you along and get the other pieces of the larger task done.

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Sheila Hawkins is President and CEO of **Third Eye Group** based in Detroit, Michigan. The company provides customized professional organizing services for individuals, small businesses, entrepreneurs, non-profit, and community based clientele; transforming environments and initiatives. Services are tailored to the needs and personality of the client helping them transform environments and behaviors to create order and peace in their lives.

Services include home and office organizing, time management, productivity training and coaching, event planning and project management. Additionally, the company provides workshops for individuals, business owners and company work teams. Learn more about Third Eye Group by visiting www.thirdeyegroup.org or contact the company via email at info@thirdeyegroup.org.