

Work Less, Accomplish More

Adapted from “Work Less, Accomplish More” by Beverly West, www.monster.com

If you’re feeling overworked, overwhelmed or just plain over it, the following time-management tips can help you maximize your productivity so you can accomplish more — and get home earlier.

Separate Work from Home

“Between responding to personal emails, instant messaging and fielding cellphone calls from my kids, it can get very hard to stay focused on the tasks at hand,” says Dana Bilbao, a producer for a Los Angeles-based entertainment company. So when Bilbao is in the office, she tries to concentrate on her work as much as possible. Then when she’s at home, Bilbao can really deal with her issues there without distraction. “I wind up having better quality time both places,” she adds. Separating your work duties from home-related ones will allow you to keep your mind on work when you’re there and, in turn, procrastinate less, feel less overwhelmed and accomplish more.

Establish Boundaries and Stick to Them

While it’s always great to try to make everyone happy all the time, it’s just not possible in a workplace governed by the irrefutable laws of time and space. Learn when to say no. “There are times when it is absolutely right to go above and beyond the call of duty on the job,” says Jason Bergund, a New York City-based production coordinator. “When it’s a real emergency, then I don’t mind staying late or going out on a limb. But that’s different than just letting people dump their last-minute work on your desk so they can make it home early.” While you need to do your work, you also need to take care of yourself and know your job’s boundaries.

Get Organized

Time spent hunting for files or lost phone numbers could be used for making progress on your to-do list. Good organizational structures are essential in any time-management plan. Kim, an administrative assistant for a New York-based securities company, spends a few moments each day sifting through and responding to email so it doesn’t become a mountain of unorganized cyberjunk.

Bilbao prioritizes using notes. “Sticky notes posted on my keyboard are my method for reminding myself of the most important and immediate items on my list,” she says. “I think people should try out a few systems and see what works best.”

Make Time for Yourself

Any well-constructed to-do list must include time for relaxing or you might wind up too stressed out to do anybody any good. “The second I drop the kids at school, I take a moment to breathe,” Bilbao says. “It’s the most important moment of my day. I switch gears from caring for kids to working with grown-ups.”