



JOHN HADFIELD | KIM

Nodding in agreement? A never-ending To-Do list? Random ideas filling your head and driving you crazy? Client demands that you promise but can't seem to deliver? All those 'things' that impact on you personally, can also impact on your family, friends and workmates and I dare say it's a negative rather than a positive impact. Still nodding in agreement? Read on!



ANOTHER DAY – ANOTHER MILLION THINGS TO DO!

The eternal balancing act

When every day is a balancing act between the urgency of customer work and the things that are really important in your life. Things, that IF you just had time to complete some of them – would have a positive impact on both your life and your business.

Imagine you're standing, in control, with your arms out-stretched – on one hand you balance the word IMPORTANT and on the other, the word URGENT. Can you visualise that? It is early morning, a new day, yesterday is in the past so everything before you is for you to decide – your future. Remember you are in control, calm and enthusiastic to greet the new day. Don't pretend, but intend to start every day just like that.

Consider Your Options

Far be it for me to even attempt to solve this complex problem in a thousand word article, however, I will proffer practical steps to guide you down a pathway to greatly improving the interaction between you and your team and maybe even those prickly customers.

Define **IMPORTANT** in your work place.

The ground-breaking projects that offer long-term positive endemic changes, such as:-

- Installing new business systems to save significant time/money into the future
- Developing your key people, including yourself, to improve outcomes on a daily basis.
- Investing in staff training to better equip a few selected personnel and upgrade their skills to assist you in achieving your vision for the business.
- Employing new staff to assist, or if it is just you – ask yourself “what am I doing today that needs improvement and/or refinement to better deal with the day to day issues in the long-term?”

Take the lead from Dwight D. Eisenhower, a master of organisational skills, he knew the REAL difference between urgency and important. If you are working on insignificant 'urgent' emails from a pushy customer, then perhaps you have lost sight of a very important project? If you are checking emails every few minutes, you might not know the difference.

Define **URGENT** in your workplace. Real, potential or imagined?

- The qualification of a sales lead or quote to ensure you and your team react in an appropriate manner to capitalise on the business. Consider if the quality of the client or the work warrants the urgency or should the timeframe render the project to the dump it list!
- Your “Gold Class” clients have just contacted you to put together a project due to an unexpected event in their business.
- A supplier's rep requests a meeting today as they are in the area, for some random discussions which could be done quite easily by phone or in a meeting well down the track.
- A discovery meeting with a client with huge potential, you've had a few phone chats and finally they've contacted you with a pending project
- You have signs and prints to install tomorrow and it's been dropped in your lap to contact the landlord or your team won't be able to complete the installation.

There is help! Back to Dwight Eisenhower's Urgent/Important Principle – it's all about “Using Time Effectively, Not Just Efficiently”

Image #1 may offer a good insight:

The concept diagram in Image#1 describes organising your tasks.

Important and Urgent

Often the balance act between urgent and important activities is critical – eg unforeseen balanced with tasks that you may have left to the last minute. Avoid last minute tasks by planning ahead and stop procrastinating. The prudent organiser always leaves free-time in their schedule to allow for the unexpected and unplanned.

Important but not Urgent

These are the tasks that really help you achieve goals and deliver critical and important projects. Planning to fulfill the tasks relies on you building your time management skills. The key is doing things effectively without ignoring the reality of the day to day processes. If tasks are forever 'off the tracks' – then review the process!

Not Important but Urgent

Now the fun starts – once you embrace this new awareness, you will realise that the urgent but not important tasks are those that are holding you back from achieving those goals. So “can I reschedule or delegate”?



Focus Matters – we recommend defining the difference by focusing on the most important work. Yes, some days are a balancing act. However, getting the balance right, hones your decision making skills, enhances your focus and greatly improves your organisational ability. Choice is about YOU making the decisions, not having others control your focus.

If you follow other patterns in the sign and print business, it may not be your focus which is an issue, it may be issues with embedded speech patterns.

Consider this:

Phone rings, you chat to a very good customer about a project, which you quoted say 3 weeks ago. Talk leads towards timing– don't say – when do you want it? EVER. Why? You already know the answer is “tomorrow” as they've wasted 3 weeks procrastinating. Our tip is to come back to them after you FOCUS, with ‘at the moment our delivery is 10 – 14 working days’.

Yes, sure they may spit the dummy, however, ANYTHING you do from here on makes you the winner. Let them know you can do it in overtime for additional cost, or as a great customer you will get them out of trouble. ANY way you have started on the focused road of you making decisions to improve your business. Effectively creating an opportunity to minimize the stress and remove a few deadlines while hopefully gaining their respect and understanding.

Using Dwight D. Eisenhower's Principle

It basically boils down to that good time management aims at being effective as well as efficient. You need to spend time on things that are important and not just things that are urgent.

- Important activities have an outcome leading to achieving your set goals.
- Urgent activities place the emphasis on immediate attention. In essence it's reasonable to presume they are someone else's goals.

Once you embrace the difference between important and urgent, you then can focus on what matters.

A 'To Do' list:

In applying this principle, try a simple to do list, for example:-

1. Number of item
2. Description of project/action
3. Priority
4. Due date
5. Tick boxes for progress stages
6. Lastly tick boxes for completed – because some day, it just feels so good just to finish a few things.

To use this principle, list all the activities and projects you have to do. Try to include everything that takes up your time at work, however unimportant. (If you manage your time using a To-Do List or Action Program, you will have done this already.)

Need Help?

Why not give us a call on 0418 161 600 or send an email to john@controlzone.com.au and ask for our free word document called “To Do list” I'll email it to you.