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HOW TO GO ON A PAPERWORK DIET

In a recent interview with *Association Management*, Lee Grossman, director of management services for Helene Curtis Industries and author of *Fat Paper — Diets for Trimming Paperwork* (McGraw-Hill), suggested the following tips for keeping your paperwork from piling up:

1. *Strive for results, not paper.* Most managers have been conditioned to accept paper as part of the job. But you're not paid to handle paper, only to get results. Much of the paper you now receive gets in your way, eats up valuable time, and hinders you in the pursuit of results. Resolve to slim down.

2. *Create less paper right at the start.* Talk to people instead of writing letters. Use the phone and personal visits more, and the typewriter less. Eye contact is the best communications medium, and observing body language lets you in on messages between the lines. If, as a manager, you set the tone, the rest of the office will follow.

3. *Use perspective to trim paper.* Pretend you can no longer put things in writing. Which papers would you really miss? Are there any you couldn't do without? If you can bring yourself to toss away only half of the papers you don't need, you'll find you've made a big

dent in your paper pile.

4. *Try to keep your office routine simple.* If work can be done by simple machines, avoid complex computers. Don't fall in love with systems that generate paper; often they become the rationale for new systems and still more paper.

5. *Survey your paperwork needs.* Decide whether you need a high-speed photocopy machine. Perhaps you can get along just as well with a slower model. You'll be surprised how soon the number of copies drops.

6. *Fight fat files.* Not only do they keep you from finding the papers you need, they can be a sign of an ineffective executive. A basic rule is not to keep things "just in case they might be needed." Keep only essential paper. Put a destruction date on correspondence before filing it. Weed out the files regularly. Answer letters promptly. Don't procrastinate.

7. *Appoint a paper controller.* Assign that task to one individual who will scrutinize each office report and form now in use to be sure it's necessary or hasn't outlived its function. See if some forms can be combined. Maybe the number of copies of each essential form can be reduced. Try cutting the distribution of reports and memos to see who screams the loudest. Put back only what you have to. Limit distribution of memos to a "need to know" basis.

8. *Keep your paper diet thin.* Once you've eliminated much unnecessary paper, take steps to see that it doesn't build up again. Develop a secure climate in your office so that supervisors won't feel the need to overcontrol with paper, and employees won't seek "paper protection" for their jobs. When workers have enough satisfying and productive work, they won't seek busy work.

10 WAYS TO COPE WITH PRESSURE

Most of us would agree that when the demands upon us are too great or the urgency of them too immediate, we are in a very uncomfortable position. What should we do about it? Robert P. Savoy, a civilian electrical engineer with the U.S. Air Force, suggests 10 common sense ways to approach this problem:

1. *Realize that it is possible to handle a pressure-filled job comfortably.*

Certainly there are countless examples of people who do it daily: presidents or prime ministers of major nations, cabinet ministers, presidents of great universities, executives, congressmen, etc. Surprisingly, the list is a large one. While it is true that one often reads news accounts of high-ranking officials succumbing to heart attacks, nervous breakdowns and other physical disorders stemming from their high-pressure jobs, the large majority of people in those jobs cope with them easily and delight in the prominence that the pressure confers upon them.

2. *Analyze the pressure that you feel bearing down upon you.*

Usually this analysis should focus on the demands made of you. Ask yourself questions such as: "Who is making this demand?" "Why is he making this demand?" This analysis may not give you immediate relief from the pressure of that demand, but it will suggest ways of reducing the pressure.

3. *Postulate in your mind possible strategies to use when the next similar situation occurs.*

For example, suppose that your boss tells you that he wants a letter out of the office by the end of the day. Suppose, further, that you have analyzed this requirement and have discovered that getting the letter out by the end of the week would be equally satisfactory as far as job effectiveness is concerned.

You can now see that you have found an opportunity to reduce the pressure of this one demand. Since this situation is a common occurrence in many offices, a number of

you are responding with, "Yes, but what if the boss says that he wants the letter out by the end of the day anyway?" The answer, of course, is that you get the letter out by the end of the day, if the boss insists on it.

Does this mean that your careful analysis has been wasted and that there is nothing you can do to reduce the pressure of your job? Not at all! Maybe your analysis of the situation was in error. Perhaps your boss knows more about the situation than he confided in you when he gave you the letter-writing assignment. Maybe, if the additional facts known only to your boss were made available to you, you would agree that the letter needed to be out of the office by the end of the day.

Another possible explanation is that your boss is an intense, hard-driving person who rarely relaxes around the office. Your analysis is, in fact, correct, but your boss won't listen to logic or reason. However, you may now be aware

— and for the first time — that the prime cause of the pressure of your job may well be the personality of your boss. Knowing this fact, you may wish to look for another job or to find techniques to live more comfortably with your boss in your present job.

4. *Learn to plan your time effectively.*

A great deal of pressure may fall upon you simply because you are a procrastinator. Your boss may want that letter out by the end of the day because he had previously asked you to get it out last week — and the week before — and you haven't gotten it out yet. If you are that badly disorganized and procrastinate that often, you will find that every one of your bosses will be a difficult person . . . and with good reason. If, instead, you had organized your time more effectively, you would have gotten that letter out last week when you were first asked to do so.

5. *Reduce the pressure that you place on others.*

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If you don't need a letter by the end of the day, don't ask for one on such a tight schedule. If people don't need to come to your meeting, don't insist they do. By easing the load that you place on others, you will give them time to do their other work. You will also notice that your credibility will improve as staff members learn you really mean it when you *do* ask for something.

6. *Find a hobby that truly relaxes you.*

In order to refresh the body and spirit after a day of high-pressure work, it makes good sense to have a hobby — any hobby! All that matters is that you can absorb yourself in the hobby and momentarily forget your pressures of the day. In any job, there are long hours, policy conflicts, personality differences and other irritants that tend to grind a person down. A good hobby can provide needed refreshment after one has been ground down by the high-pressure job.

Is Your Hobby Relaxing?

You should apply caution, however, in the pursuit of your hobby if you really wish to relax. For example, I have a friend whose hobby is jogging. This friend carefully times his route each time he jogs and strives to improve his time over that route every time he goes out. When he is not trying to improve his time, he is striving to increase his distance. In any case, he always places a new demand upon himself whenever he goes out to jog. By applying this overly intensive, goal-oriented approach, my friend has converted his hobby into a pressure situation more demanding than his work environment. In this fashion, his hobby in no way relaxes him; he might just as well remain at work. Even if we find it necessary to be intensely goal-oriented at work, we may do well to dispense with goals when we are relaxing.

7. *Employ fantasies to dissipate tension.*

Psychologists tell us that it is healthful to vent anger through fantasies. This technique is particularly effective for the executive in a pressurized job with the accom-

panying high emotional levels.

It is obvious that a direct expression of anger toward your boss or a coworker is unproductive, and may even cost you your job.

It is important, however, that you not hold intense anger within yourself. Anger is a powerful feeling. To deny anger or to withhold the expression of it can be personally destructive. It is vital that feelings of anger be vented. Since a face to face confrontation of violent anger may lead to physical violence, it must be avoided at all costs.

The use of fantasy techniques to express anger is, therefore, helpful. These techniques permit the expression of anger without running the risk of hurting yourself or others. A recommended technique is to visualize the target of your wrath in your mind's eye and then let him have it with all of the furor, expletives and profanity you can muster. Try beating a pillow with a tennis racket or a baseball bat. Wow!

The Auto Approach

If you are a really busy executive, a recommended approach to use in the privacy of your own automobile is to shout loudly and slap the seat alongside of you. If you can get all of your work-related anger out of you before returning home, you won't need to vent it on your spouse and kids. Similarly, on the way in to work in the morning, vent the anger that has accumulated toward your spouse and kids so that you will not need to discharge it at the office. (Incidentally, this automobile approach is not recommended for the executive who travels in a car pool!)

8. *Become the master of your job.*

When an executive has the necessary knowledge of his job, he usually finds that responding to the unending demands of the day becomes much easier. A telephone request can be quickly answered by a fact rapidly retrieved from a mind well-stocked with information about one's organization. Similarly, a request for a copy of a letter can be easily handled if the executive has an effective filing

system and has thoughtfully planned ahead by installing a copying machine in his office. The executive who truly wishes to master his job can use his spare time to deepen his knowledge about his organization and to develop the most effective ways of sharing that knowledge with others.

9. Learn to anticipate.

Even the most gifted executive will still find his job most demanding if he cannot smooth his way by anticipation. Most any job can be studied to the point that future demands can, in great measure, be anticipated. Of course, the future cannot always be predicted, but if 60 per cent of next week's demands can be prepared for this week, then the remaining 40 per cent can be reacted to as they arise. An intelligent way to reduce pressure, therefore, is to plan ahead.

10. Have a "quiet time" during the day.

Many articles are currently circulating which extol the benefits of meditating, relaxing, sitting quietly, and like disciplines. It is not the intent of this article to advocate any single discipline. Rather, its point is to state that it is desirable to have a quiet period every day.

Recharging Your Batteries

The reason for this is to calm our inner anxieties so we can better cope with the pressures of the day. The quiet period may be likened to the recharging of one's batteries. With our batteries recharged, we can confront pressure from a more vigorous posture, and by so doing are far more likely to cope with it successfully.

Find a spot in your home not commonly used by your other family members. Be sure that you have a chair to sit on and some reading matter so that you will have something to do while there. If your family is cooperative, request that you not be disturbed while you are in your quiet area. If your family is not cooperative, proceed to your quiet area anyway, and bear with whatever interruptions you get.

Try to spend at least 15 minutes a day in the quiet area. Be sure that you move to the same spot

each day for this exercise, so you will come to associate this area with your quiet period. This will help you to get into the mood as soon as you step into the area. Have some pleasant reading matter available in the area and you will soon find yourself relaxing and forgetting the pressures of the day. Furthermore, as your batteries start taking on their charge, you will lose your fear of the pressures of tomorrow.

The 10 rules just described are practical suggestions that will help you to cope more successfully with the pressure of your job. Not all of them, however, will fit your temperament or your situation. Try one or two of them to see if they will reduce the pressure of your day. If these one or two are not successful, then try them all.

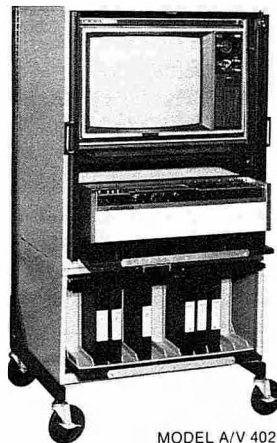
With time you will become the calm, serene person that you want to be, because you will know that you can cope with pressure successfully. — Reprinted with permission from *The Toastmaster*.

REDUCING ABSENTEEISM

On a typical working day, about 2 million U.S. employees fail to show up for work. Why and what can be done about it? The Administrative Management Society Newsletter excerpted the following list of causes and solutions from an article by L.R. Higgins and R. Stidger in the "Employee Relations Bulletin":

- *Uneven workflow*: when possible, iron out the peaks and valleys.
- *Boredom*: consider some form of job enrichment.
- *Too little responsibility*: reward highly motivated employees by increasing their responsibility.
- *Poor relations with supervisors*: A solution depends not only on teaching a supervisor to communicate, but on his willingness to learn.
- *Personality clashes*: prompt and open resolutions are the only solution. — *Government Training News*

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