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Richard Tong

Recommended Resources

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About the Author

Diane Westmead wrote this ebook to help people learn to handle and benefit from the increasing amount of raw information around them.

Diane says, "I believe that sharing the tips and strategies I've learned and used at school and through my adult life will give almost anyone ideas to improve their results and also to find more time and energy for all areas of their life."

Diane explains everything in simple, easy to follow steps that have worked for her and people from a wide range of backgrounds.

"These tips can help students of any age or background, families and business people".

"I am sure that parents will find information which they can use themselves and which may also help their children with their studies".

But, Diane emphasizes that her book is not entirely focused on study techniques and information handling.

"I learned that getting the best results from any area of activity will only happen when we focus on being the best we can be in health, outlook and interactions too".

"I include some ways to improve our personal well-being which will make taming the information handling problems much easier".

Everything in Diane's book is based on her own experience and what she has learned from helping a wide range of people with diverse backgrounds and goals.

Diane said, "I think that everyone will find easy ways to improve their handling of information which will have a positive and lasting impact on their future".

Introduction

This book will help you to control and get better results from your use of the ever-increasing flood of information you get every day.

New technology was supposed to make everything easier. Has it eliminated most of the paper in your office? Probably not!

Paper and shelves of files or back-up hard drives cover every inch of space in the average office or schoolroom.

We have been given more and more to learn and much of the information becomes obsolete almost daily. But, we have to keep records and learn the new and better systems – it is vital if we want to learn and keep up to date about everything which is important for our personal and business success.

For most people, the results have been mixed at best. We have more powerful computers, but they just bring us even more information of varying quality which we have to sort and review before we can start to absorb the relatively small amount of material which has real value to us.

And the demands on our time are also continuing to increase.

In school, there are more subjects, more students and less teachers. The students have to become more self-sufficient even before they have enough knowledge or experience to be able to judge the usefulness and quality of much of the material they see.

In business, each person is expected to be more productive than ever before, to keep abreast of the rapid advances in their industry while doing their work more efficiently.

We also have to develop good interpersonal skills to deal with our colleagues, clients and suppliers.

I can promise you that this ebook will help you in all these areas.

It cannot make you an expert in everything.

It is a [guide](#) that will help you to:

- Reduce the amount of material you get each day while minimizing the risk of overlooking material of real value.

- Reduce the amount of material which you store for reference or later use.

- Improve your ability to absorb the key points about the material you actually need to know.

- Set up systems for getting the information and other material you really need.

- Set up systems for distributing [information](#) you produce with maximum effectiveness.

- [Reducing](#) the effects on you and your personal life from information overload so you have a better lifestyle and better business or study prospects.

This guide will include some information about areas which I believe are important for anyone that wants to improve their handling of any type of information and the results that they get from it.

That includes how we organize information and where we get our information from.

I'll include tips about:

- Using your [memory](#) better (there's no such thing as a bad memory unless it has been affected by some medical condition or injury).

- Better ways to make your notes.

- Getting yourself fit to study and take action on what you learn.

- Improving your self-talk (this is vital!)

- Finding a better reason to get the work done.

- Cutting down the amount you need to do and getting better results at the same time.

- Finding more time for personal activities and why this is so important.

- How to get tips from experts for free!

- The need to set [goal](#)s.

- How to make goals meaningful and achievable.

- How to set up and make the best of support groups.

- How to make the best use of the time you have.

- Beating procrastination and writer's block forever.

- How to improve your interpersonal skills and why they are so important

- How helping others can help you.

For many people, the first [step](#) is to reduce the amount of information which they expose themselves to.

Is it Still Valuable to You?

The best way to start reducing the amount of information which you have to deal with is to cut back what you are already receiving.

Then, put stricter filters on what you get in the future.

Start by reviewing whether any of the material you get is no longer relevant to your needs.

Emails are one area where it's very easy to over-indulge.

Many people put off cancelling email subscriptions which they have no current need for, even when they are paying to get them!

They just let them accumulate in their email folder and often don't even open them to see if there is anything that might actually be relevant to their current needs.

I know a few people that actually saved money just by reviewing the emails they were getting. They found they were paying for some which were no longer providing them with anything which they had any need for.

The subscription was usually very low and they'd just let it continue. Cancelling those emails saved them time, bandwidth and money!

You will probably also be investing time on other material, such as television programs and other media which you do only from habit rather than because of any value you get from it.

I'm not suggesting you do away with computer games, television or whatever entertainment you enjoy. But, ask yourself if each one is really giving you enough entertainment for the time you invest or do you continue to watch or play because it's just become a habit.

I found that I was watching a lot of news programs but always felt very depressed afterward. The constant emphasis on the sensational and negative events and commentary was making me less motivated. I decided to take a

week's holiday from some of the programs which I had been watching for years in some cases.

I found other things to fill the time I saved.

It took me less time to get the news which was actually relevant to me from the local paper and then follow up particular stories on the Internet. That saves time and money!

Multi-tasking or Uni-tasking?

If you usually have the radio or other device on while you deal with some of your work, I suggest that you turn it off for a couple of sessions and see if you get more done with less effort?

I was surprised how much easier it was to do complex tasks and how much less time it took when I was completely focused on the work.

For years, I believed that we were all meant to multi-task. But, researchers are now finding that many of us were never as good at multi-tasking as had been previously believed.

The data from recent, more carefully controlled tests on larger groups of people showed that most people did much better when they minimized the distractions around them.

The researchers say that our brains don't focus equally well on the various inputs but switch between them very quickly. Unfortunately, each switch of focus has a short period of adjustment which affects our ability to deal with each task, and also the quality of our memory about what we have been doing or learning.

Recognizing Procrastination

This is one of the most common and damaging problems which people have.

I hope these tips will help you to recognize and deal with it.

Almost everyone can find reasons for delaying action on some important work.

We wait:

- Until we have more information about the topic.

- Until we have enough time to do the task without interruption.

- Until we get back from vacation.

- Until .... you name it!

Each of these "reasons" for delaying action might have some truth in them but, most times, they are not sufficiently important to cause delay and the inevitable increased pressure we would have when the deadline looms even closer.

We have to ask ourselves, "What will be the benefits of doing this task now instead of doing something else or doing nothing?"

After I asked myself that question a few times, I became more focused on the potential results instead of the reasons for delaying action.

I found that this simple mind-shift reduced my tendency to procrastinate in most cases. The improved results and rewards which came later helped even more to make the mind-shift permanent.

We may actually have other reasons for our procrastination. They can be harder to defeat because they are things which we don't acknowledge even to ourselves at times.

Sometimes, we may be afraid that we will find ourselves not capable of handling the task which we have taken on. So, we put off starting to work on it.

This fear is not easy to address. We know that we should start, but the fear of failure can be a very strong barrier to overcome.

When you have an extremely difficult task, you need to invest enough time and effort to reveal the actual level of difficulty. That may be much less of a problem than you had feared when you didn't have as much information. Knowledge is a great antidote for fear.

At least, you will know about any factors which may give you trouble and you can plan to deal with them.

Perhaps you can get help on any points you are not well-versed in from other people. That is always likely to be easier if you start early and have more time for preparation and consultation with other people.

If you are close to a deadline, you will probably find that the people who you want help from are too busy to give you that help in the short timeframe which you have available.

A common reason for delay is that the time is not right or you don't have all the important information which you think that you may need.

But, the time is never going to be perfect. If it was, you would have no advantage because everybody that was competing in that area with you would also be hugely successful.

It's important to remember that many of the most successful businesses and products have been started when the economy or other factors were in a slump. So, today is probably the best day to start developing that bright idea.

Successful people make the best of the conditions as they are. They take action, become very successful and, at the same time, improve things for themselves and others.

If we all waited for someone else to take the first step, nothing would ever improve.

Another technique which helps to reduce the desire to procrastinate is to ask "What is the worst outcome possible from starting now?" Usually, the answer

will be less of a problem and more of an opportunity than we had realized while we let worry cloud our vision.

The proven antidote to worry and frustration is action.

But, don't forget that you also must have a plan.

Dealing with Procrastination

The best and simplest way to deal with procrastination is to focus on the need to complete the important tasks and look at anything which delays their completion, and to [check] whether it is valid or some sort of delaying tactic.

The real answer to procrastination, when there is no medical or psychological basis for the condition, is action.

Also, we must recognize that we can often make a start on a project even if we are waiting for some important information or we don't have enough time to complete the whole task in one period.

Are there other people whose work is delayed because they are waiting for your input?

Maybe some important part of your other work cannot proceed until you get this task under way?

Let's quickly re-examine some of those reasons for delay which I listed earlier in this chapter:

Until we have more information about the topic: The temptation to wait until we have all the information is common, but can mean that it is out of date when you release it.

It is usually better to start with the information you have. Then, mention that you will send an update if you get any information later which affects the current topic in any significant way.

Until we have enough time to do the task without interruption: Many people say this but they ignore the fact that most of us have many conflicting demands on our time and [energy] every day.

Waiting until we have a large block of uncommitted time will mean that we delay the work and also waste a lot of time.

Most tasks, however large and important, can be divided into many smaller pieces. All of us can easily find some small blocks of time where we can do some of the small parts of the larger project.

If we make a habit of wasting these small segments of our day and delay action on the major project, we will find that we a re wasting days of productive time in a year which could have produced extra income to provide us, our family or even our community with badly needed benefits.

What Do You Tell Yourself?

It's important that we don't sabotage our efforts by telling ourselves that we cannot do something. When we do that, the information is absorbed by our subconscious which records it as fact, not just opinion.

Over time, the influence of that stream of negativity in our self-talk will degrade our willingness and even our ability to complete many tasks.

You may not realize that you are talking yourself down or that this common habit will have any serious effect on your future results.

That's common with any habitual behavior.

Testing this is very easy. Just listen to what you say to others about your own actions over a couple of days. Many people say things like, "I can never remember names!" or "I can't help being late, however hard I try!"

Statements of this kind are intended to deflect criticism of some mistakes which we make. They may cause people to hold off criticizing us directly but they won't improve the impression which those people build up of you professionally or personally.

Although our reputation and the potential for more opportunities to work or socialize with them can suffer because of the poor image which we project to others, the major damage which these statements have is on our own self-image.

The information which we feed into our subconscious is the main force which affects the self-image that builds up in our subconscious and becomes the driving force behind our actions and achievements.

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This powerful part of our brain absorbs everything we say and also **every thought which we have**. But, it accepts everything as being accurate, without validating it.

When we constantly tell ourselves that we cannot do something well, the result is that we come to expect poor results anytime that we try to do that activity!

If you are often late or forget people's names, the best thing to do is to apologize and make sure that you are more on the ball next time.

I'll share some simple and effective tips to help with these areas later in the book.

To reverse the negative effect of this self-talk, start telling yourself that you know the importance of being on time for your appointments and will not be late in the future, that you can and will make the effort to remember names and other important details.

As you start to reverse the mental image which is formed inside your own head, there will still be occasions when some delay or memory slip happens but your mindset will improve rapidly.

You can help this along by recording your successes and any genuine compliments and recognition which you get in a diary. That's not being smug; it is a resource where you can remind yourself when you hit a bump on your road to success, that you have met and defeated bigger problems and you know that you can continue to do so.

You will find that most people will appreciate the effort you are making and be very supportive.

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Build Your Self Esteem

If you don't really believe that you can accomplish your goals, you can either:

- Fight on while your subconscious keeps your responses below the level you are really capable of.

- Give up.

- ✓ Accept you have the ability to improve and move ahead.

"Whether you think you can, or you think you can't - you're right."

- Henry Ford

Some people think that self-image, like meditation and other techniques are nice ideas with little practical use or benefit.

My own experience is positive and I am not surprised that many researchers are reporting that there can be measurable benefits from these techniques. But, always with the proviso that you plan your progress and then follow your plan.

More and more people are reporting their own positive experiences, so I suggest you try this technique.

It does not require any significant change to your routine, is almost free (a couple of small notebooks and some colored markers which you may already have), and will only take a little time and concentration.

A good first step is to examine your self-talk and any guidelines which you have absorbed and follow which may be affecting your ability to perform at your best level in either your personal or business life.

Regrets

Many of us continue to let regrets about disappointments from long ago occupy our thoughts and make us depressed or discouraged.

The situations and even most of the people may no longer have any relevance to our lives but we let them influence us in a negative way. The time wasted on past failures alone could be enough to develop a new and rewarding relationship in our business or personal sphere!

If you find it difficult to get rid of these old mental scars, you might want to write the details on a single sheet of paper and then burn the paper and flush the pieces away.

Another method which a friend claims to be effective for her is to put the incident onto a mental movie screen. Only you can see it.

When you run it through your mind, imagine that you are watching it from outside of the actual event. Then, mentally destroy the film. You might want to imagine that the film burns. The main thing is that you "see" it destroyed so it has no further influence or control over your thoughts or emotions.

Whether you use one of these methods or just decide that you will not let the old wounds continue to hurt you, the next step is important.

Reinforce your self-image with a special personal diary.

Deeds Diary

It is common for many us to store up any negative event or comment about us or our activities but few of us put as much effort into storing memories of our successes and the positive statements which we have earned.

All of us can remember successes, small and large. The sad fact is that we often focus on those things which we did not succeed at, perhaps because of the negative reaction of people that we loved or respected, such as parents, teachers and close friends.

One method of restoring the balance in our own minds is to start a "Deeds Diary" where we record our successes and our happiest times. This is not a

regular daily diary of events but somewhere for us to record the good things which happen because of and to us.

You might be surprised to find how much it can help you as just any negativity which may be affecting your outlook.

It's not the whole answer, but the results are likely to be worth far more than the low cost for a diary and a pen.

Take Charge

One of the most important steps in improving our handling of the information we get, is when we decide to set our own limits and take responsibility for the results.

You may believe that you are too old to learn to be able to improve your current skill levels.

While doing my research for this ebook, I read about a large study in North America which compared the skills and abilities of younger and older workers.

One of the findings was that the younger people, especially those who had been able to access higher education, had better skills in some areas and better prospects.

But, there was also significant data which suggested that many older people had very good skills in the area of "fluid intelligence" which was based on experience and judgment.

This was not uniform. Generally, those people who had the best grasp of these skills had other qualities:

- ✓ They were healthier because they treated their physical and mental state as a priority matter, not an afterthought.

- ✓ They had more highly developed social skills than many other people in their age group who had settled into a rut where there was little excitement or novelty.

- ✓ They were often more involved in activities like volunteering which kept them alert. And continuing to meet and enjoy the company of different people and new situations.

The research acknowledged that people with early educational advantages did better than most, but also suggested strongly that people who had generally missed out when they were younger should not give up. They could often improve their current ability to handle the demands of our rapidly evolving economy and technology by learning to use computers.

Some would have difficulties doing that but, where the hardware and qualified teachers (or enthusiastic volunteers) were available, almost everyone might significantly improve their ability to participate in work and social activities involving technology.

I have helped a few people learn about computers and firmly agree that almost everyone has potential waiting to be brought to the surface.

One of the best incentives is to let them learn to use a program which is related to a subject which they have an interest in.

If you want to improve your own computer skills or help friends or family, look for some program which relates to the current work or hobbies of the particular person you want to help.

Setting up a computer assisted activity which helps them do their gardening or even learn more about their favorite actor, makes the benefits of learning to use the computer very obvious to them.

Copying for Profit

One technique which is very useful for developing your skills in handling information or in any other area which is important to you is to copy a role model.

If you can, spend some time with them.

If, for any reason, that is not possible, study their methods and read or watch anything which will help you to learn their methods and attitudes.

There are many characteristics which you can expect to find that will be shared by the most successful people in any area of activity.

They will be confident of their ability to handle whatever challenges are put in their way. One athlete said to me, "You look at challenges as steps to get over rather than stops you struggle with."

They are prepared to work a lot harder now for the chance to achieve much greater rewards later.

They work a bit longer than anybody else. One Olympic athlete said that he was always the last person to finish a gym session, even if it was just by ten minutes. But, those blocks of ten minutes added up to a Gold Medal, so he thought it was worth it.

A Better Memory in Weeks!

One of the most valued and least understood abilities is to have a good memory.

You've seen the advertisements and have probably wondered if you could really improve your memory, even just a little?

Apart from people who have some impairment which affects their ability to retain and recall information, there are just two types of people; those who have a good memory and use it and those who have a good memory and don't use it to anything like its potential!

If you want to improve your memory, then you just need to start making it work harder and not accepting that you have a poor memory. Harry Lorayne, acknowledged as someone with a powerful trained memory, was unable to keep up with his classmates at school and was doing very poorly in every test which he took. That's a common experience, but most children probably decide (or may be told by a parent or teacher) that they have a bad memory.

Harry Lorayne realized that he was not able to remember the material which their teachers explained to them, but he felt there was probably something he could do to improve his ability to store and recall information.

So, he began to look for ways to improve his retention and recall.

These are the things which you need to work on to improve your memory.

Pay attention when you are given the information. Many people forget names and other important information like phone numbers because they don't give sufficient attention to it when they hear it the first time.

It just takes a few seconds of focus and you will have the name or other information for life!

Use the information. When someone gives you their name, use it in the next sentence which you say to them. I want you to have confidence in your memory, but you also need to make a special effort to imprint the new information into your subconscious.

If you can associate something about that person with their name, so you have a picture as well as the name, it will probably imprint more clearly. However, just a little concentration will make your impression more indelible and likely to be easier to recall.

If you didn't hear it clearly, ask them to say it again or even to spell it. They won't mind – they'll appreciate that you are paying attention to them. This will help to give them a good impression of you at the same time.

Link it to other information which you have. All the information we get is stored by the subconscious, but the information which we focus on can relate to other material we already have, and will be more quickly recalled when we need it.

Understand how you will use or benefit from the information. When we put some value on information, it becomes more likely that we will be able to recall it when needed. If the person you are meeting for the first time is someone that likes golf as much as you do, then you will have a common interest which will keep their information easy to recall in the future.

Review the information to ensure that you have it correct. When you have time, review the information. Don't just read through your notes. Do an occasional mental review to check if you can recall it without checking first.

Don't depend on memory alone. I am confident that I will remember information about my personal and business contacts, appointments etc., but I always keep a file copy as backup.

Help Your Memory to Help You

I hope that my suggestions have reassured you that almost everybody has a fairly good memory and can probably improve the results we get without a lot of effort.

You will need to invest some time but I believe that you will be amply rewarded through the rest of your life for that.

This section explains some Memory Aids which will cost very little or nothing, but can be very helpful.

Study Group

I have found that sharing a task really does make it easier. If you know other people who have to learn the same material, try to get one or more of them to join together for some sessions.

There are a number of advantages with the group approach, even when it is just a group of two or three.

The sharing of information and opinions can help increase each person's knowledge and also give them ideas for using the information which they had not thought of by themselves.

A group will only work if the people in it are genuinely supportive of each other. When someone is struggling on a particular point, the other group members will be able to help them.

There is a special benefit you get from helping someone else by sharing your knowledge and techniques.

You will find that explaining something to another person is a great way to reinforce or improve your own understanding of that part of the topic.

Accountability

Working with someone else puts on a feeling of accountability to the other person which can be very powerful.

I joined with one other person when we were studying a subject.

We both felt that having someone who was prepared to help us, encourage us when we were down and share their work with us, made each of us determined to keep up with the other person so that we were able to contribute on an equal basis.

We agreed to contact each other twice each day. That's not necessary in every group but we used the morning chat (about ten minutes usually), to report what we'd studied the previous evening and what material we'd be looking at that day. In the evening, we'd just say whether we'd done what we had planned and any problems which the other person was often able to help with).

We didn't criticize each other but made suggestions when asked by the other person. The regular checks made both of us more determined to keep up than we might have done if we were studying alone.

Flash Cards

This method is still widely used because of its low cost, simplicity and effectiveness.

Just get some blank cards of reasonable size and write the questions which you want to review on one side, and then put the answers on the other.

I always write the question and the answer together on the other side. I was told that seeing them together helps to reinforce the answer in our minds.

The same person suggested that using different colors and small pictures could also help to improve retention of the information.

Mix the cards together without turning any of them over and then read the question on the first card.

When you say an answer, turn over the card to confirm whether you are correct. If so, put the card aside and read the next question.

If you did not have the correct answer, slide the card back into the stack at any random point.

Then, try the next question.

Another option is to use computer generated flash cards. There are a wide variety of free and commercial programs available. Some are designed to help with learning particular topics such as a language or a technical subject.

Unless you are sure that you need particular advanced features in a program, I suggest you start with a fairly simple program or just use those features which you have an immediate need for.

This will help to keep you focused on the study material instead of becoming bogged down with the bells and whistles which the programmer has made available.

Flash cards are mostly used to review material in textbooks but you can use them to improve your retention and recall of material which you get from a lecture or other live event.

When you start to review and edit your notes from a talk, put the most important points on to some new cards at the same time. Just rephrase them as questions and answers.

Write any points which you are unsure about on cards too. Then, when you get clarification on them, write the answers on the other side of those cards so that you ensure you include them in your study.

Lists

Everyone uses written lists to remember things sometimes. But, they are not always effective. We may not put important items on the list or bury them among a lot of less important items and overlook them when we read the list after we get to the shop or wherever we will use the list.

I was surprised how easy it can be to memorize lists successfully where the lists were not too long. This method is very handy for shopping and other routine tasks and anywhere else where we need to deal with a number of items in a specific period of time.

It also has the added benefit of keeping our minds sharp without putting very great demands on us.

The only requirement is to be able to form a mental picture of each item. The better your focus during this simple step, the better your early results are likely to be.

I think that most people would be able to handle, say, ten items, on their first list. There's no reason you could not try more but the important thing is to become comfortable and confident with the process so that each future list can be almost guaranteed to work. Some people can easily handle one hundred or more items on a list!

Write down your list, one item to a line, and then concentrate on the first item. Make a mental picture in your mind of the first item, but exaggerate it in some way. This is the key step to success with this process.

The results which I and my friends and colleagues have got from this simple idea make me very confident that you will also benefit from it.

When the first picture is in place, concentrate on the second item from your list. You will probably find it easier to make an exaggerated visual image of this item than it was for the first one.

Now, start to make visual images from each of the other items on your list.

The next step is very important and it is also fun to do.

Get a picture of the first item from your list in your mind and then add the picture of the second one to it in an unusual (and preferably funny) way.

Then, continue through your list, by making a picture where both the second and third items appear. Then, make one with the third and fourth items.

After you have done this a few times, you will be surprised how easily you can remember the whole list and also the relationship between the items. For instance, if you have eggs as the fourth item, you will know that nails are the fifth item and you need to go to the hardware store after you get your eggs at the supermarket.

This is a simplified version of one of the methods used for some memory demonstrations. With enough time and practice, there is almost no limit to the number or variety of items where you could use this technique.

Another Way to Use a Memory Aid for Lists

If you are not a person who finds it easy to make mental images, try this anyway because you will find the exercise improves your visual sense in a fairly short time.

But, you might prefer to use a [system](#) which is based on familiar images instead of ones which you have to create from your imagination.

This system has been working for more than a thousand years. The ancient Greeks used it, so I am quite comfortable in suggesting that you try it.

First, I want you to think of several different rooms or locations in your home. It works best if you imagine that you are walking from one to the next from one end of the [home](#) to the other.

Then, imagine the first item from your list at the first location. If you can exaggerate the picture, that can help to make it more memorable.

When you have that in your mind, mentally walk to the next location and "see" the second item there.

Continue your imaginary walk through your home adding a new item at each location.

This should be a little easier because you don't have to think about which item follows another; the location will point you to the next place and that will remind you of the next item which you have to get.

The good [news](#) is that you won't ever fill up your memory and there is little chance of confusing the items on this week's list with those from one which you made a couple of months ago.

That's because the current research indicates that the most developed brains of any humans use only a small proportion of the available circuitry and our subconscious will overwrite old and no longer required lists very efficiently.

Electronic Memories

The almost limitless variety of electronic devices has made this easier for many people, though some of us struggle with the need to become proficient in using them successfully.

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Although the newest devices have impressive capacity and are fairly easy to use, they have not replaced the need or the importance of keeping our own mental faculties in the best shape possible.

Any device may malfunction or be damaged at some time. So, it is still very important to keep a backup of all important information.

The Internet - Good and Bad

"Getting information from the Internet is like taking a drink from a fire hydrant." *- Mitchell Kapor, Founder of Lotus Corporation.*

Mr. Kapor's perceptive comment explains the biggest problem with easy access to information – there's too much of it and it will overwhelm us if we let it.

There are other problems as well, such as security hazards and bad, or even deliberately misleading, information.

Dealing with that constantly increasing flood is a factor in other problems for us, whether we are studying or working on our business.

We sacrifice our precious family time to try to keep up with what we fail to handle in our regular work hours.

That causes us to become stressed that we do not seem able to handle the workload as well as our colleagues.

More stress comes when our relationships suffer because of the intrusion of our work into our family time.

There are some interesting terms thrown at this. My favorite is "infobesity".

Many teachers tell their students that knowledge is power but the reality is that the power comes from knowing what information is really useful and being fairly ruthless in keeping the rest to a minimum.

I hope that my suggestions in this ebook will help each reader to improve how they handle the flood and get the best possible results from their efforts.

Keep Distractions at a Minimum

Distractions are a serious problem that we have to cope with whenever we are trying to do our work.

Emails are just one type but they can dealt with in batches at times which are most suitable for us.

People who drop in or phone are another significant problem. Sometimes, their input is relevant to your work, but probably not the task you were focused on when they called.

So, you need to make a mental adjustment before you can give them your attention.

A string of interruptions will affect your ability to perform at your best.

All this communication is actually degrading the quality of our output.

Here are some tips for handling interruptions. None will work in every circumstance.

Don't answer the phone: If you are in the middle of something which requires your attention, ignore the ringing phone. Remember that you will lose concentration when you pick up the phone and also have to mentally adjust when you are able to get back to what you were doing.

If you are able to enforce it, have a set period when you don't answer the phone. If you can't do that, keep calls to the minimum length possible without being rude. Set a time limit on the call and hold to it.

If you promise to call someone back, do it.

Drop-in Interruptions: There is not much you can do if it's your boss, but try to keep other interruptions to a minimum length.

Sometimes, the problem is that you gave someone insufficient detail about some question they asked you. That happens to most professionals at some time. They have been doing a particular task so long that the details are handled automatically. So, unless you take particular care, it's possible that

you might not mention some significant but minor step in the process when explaining the procedure to someone else. Try to ensure that you cover all necessary information the first time.

Sometimes, you might be able to get someone else to help them with their particular problem.

If the person is a client who came in to see you, always take them to the other person in your organization. If they have phones and you are redirecting the call, always give the other person their details and then introduce the client to your colleague before hanging up on the call.

Get people used to the idea that you keep your door open whenever possible but should not be interrupted when it's closed.

If some people interrupt you frequently, try to find a way to reduce the problem. If they come to you for information, you may be able to provide them with a source which they can look it up for themselves.

I know that some won't do that. That's when I ask them each time, "Did you check that manual I got you a copy of?"

Quick Tips

RSS feeds

Use RSS feeds to get targeted information in an easy-to-handle form.

You can use readers such as Feedburner (now owned by Google) or many other services to connect to those feeds which most interest you.

You should check the Privacy Policy of any service which you are thinking of using if you have any concerns about whether they collect any specific or general information about the people who use their service, which feeds they access and how they might use the aggregated information.

If your friends or colleagues share your interest in a particular topic, each of you could connect to different sources and then share the most relevant posts from those you each get.

That's okay by the people providing the feeds because it means more genuinely interested eyes on their material. But, always check the terms of use for the feeds which you subscribe to.

Quite a lot have advertising in them, which helps to pay the provider for their time and work. If it gets too much, just unsubscribe.

Many people start to get overwhelmed by the number of RSS Feeds which they sign up for.

You will probably have to do some culling from time to time or you may, like some of my colleagues, soon be getting some feeds which you never bother to check. That means wasted time and effort, just like we had with our overloaded email accounts.

One friend mentioned she has three feeds which go to different accounts; one for the stuff she needs to check every day, a second for those which she needs to check but not so often and the third is for those of friends or which relate to her personal interests which she usually checks quickly when time permits and then catches up with only at weekends or in her own time.

You Time

The pressures on us to do more in less time with less resources and the stresses which affect us so strongly because of the pressure often push people into working harder and longer with serious negative effects on their health, relationships and the results which they get from their efforts.

We need to keep in mind that we are working for something more than the paycheck.

If we are not, then we are missing out, however much we put in our checking account each month.

It is likely that the pressure will ensure that we never get to enjoy the rewards we accumulate.

But, it's also likely that we will be filled with regrets if we don't make sure that our rewards include good health, sufficient relaxation and lasting relationships.

The important thing to work out is why you are working as hard as you do?

If you focus on some material reward, you will find it much harder to maintain your drive after a few years.

If it is something which is far in the future, you will probably burn out before your efforts pay out.

Make sure that you set up small rewards for yourself and those closest to you as you proceed toward your larger goals.

That will help to ensure that you do reach and even exceed the goals you set for yourself.

Without a strong "Why", you will never reach anything like your full potential.

Dealing with Paper

The first question with any [information](#) you get in any form is, "Do I need this?"

Then next is, "What do I need to do with it?"

The third is, "Do I need to keep it for legal, business or personal reasons."

Those three simple questions will reduce your retention of paper by probably at least 50 per cent.

How do you store your records? I'm told that disk drives and CD's, DVD's all deteriorate. Check you data disks of each kind every six months. Then, decide whether to move them to more durable devices or make them unreadable and discard them. Be careful – make sure they cannot be read!

The current best practice for storing information is USB drives and similar items with minimal moving parts (what moves, erodes !).

Scan all new USB drives for viruses and malware before use. At least one company has been ruined when a "free USB drive someone inserted into the company system sent all their confidential information to a hacker!

Check with your local geek as the technology is evolving faster every minute.

Although we've been promised the paperless office for many years, almost every person in business is swamped in information which they get in paper or electronic form.

These are my top tips for dealing with the flood so that you can ensure you have time for the other important parts of your [life](#) outside of your office.

If you're finished with it, dispose of it. Do you have three backups of every email you got since your first Windows 98 [computer](#)? Do you even have a machine which can read those old files?

Devote a period of time to eliminating the old files which are not required to be held for legal, [business](#) or personal reasons.

Don't make it a full-day project> Give it an hour or two at most.

Then, keep a lookout for files and other redundant material as you move around your work area. Put a couple of open-topped storage baskets (different colors) in one corner. Toss material which is not sensitive and not needed into the appropriate basket when you find a file or piece of paper.

Make sure that your cleaner, if you have one, knows to leave the baskets alone.

Although most charities will no longer accept older model computers and related equipment, some have arranged for some salvage companies to pay the charities a nominal amount (it adds up!) when people give the companies the old equipment, if they can salvage anything from it.

Before you dispose of any equipment ensure that the hard drives have been wiped with heavy duty programs like the Government use to erase their sensitive information.

Identity theft and commercial data mis-use are serious problems which can ruin individuals and businesses. Don't take chances. If you can't be sure of doing it correctly yourself, there is a company or a college student in your town who can do it for you.

Don't work too long in one session. Your ability degrades and so will your results.

Resources

The Latest News in every Topic- Alltop.com

http://lifehacks.alltop.com/

Alltop.com tries to provide the answer to, "What's Happening" in every subject which that might interest you. The site collects headlines from what they consider the best sites and blogs which cover that topic.

You can set up your own page on the site. An interesting concept but it does not try to provide answers, just point visitors to potentially useful sources.

Unless you manage your time there, you can get overloaded again very quickly!

Duck Duck Go

duckduckgo.com

A site which promises quick site searches, programming and totally anonymous searching. They say that they do not collect information about their users and what they search for.

It's no secret that services like Google collect information about the people who use their services and make use of the information in various ways.

If you want to try to keep your information and your activities more confidential, this site may help but you always need to do your own due diligence and **don't put out any information on the Internet which you want to keep private**.

Memory aids from lumosity.com

http://www.lumosity.com

Sharpen **Memory** and Improve Focus With Scientific Brain Games & Tools

Harry Lorayne

http://www.**harrylorayne**.com/"Give Me One Evening and I'll Give you a Better-Than-Photographic **Memory**!"

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