

Manage your Workload

One of the principles of our economy is growth and growth is obtained by cost reduction and production/sales optimization. As a result of the permanent optimization of the work processes, we all face a high workload which - if not managed well - can lead to stress.

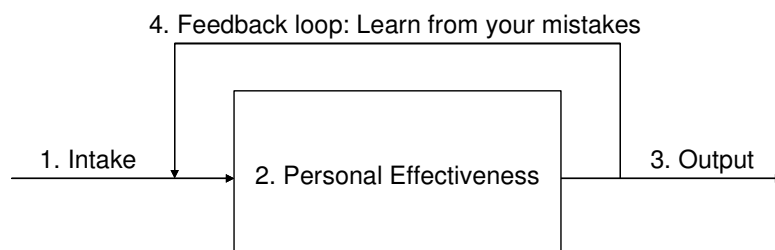
This article introduces a simple tool for self-assessment and workload management.

Workload management model

The model is based on an existing model about controlling manufacturing processes and displays that managing your workload comes down to four aspects:

1. managing the intake of new work
2. increasing one's personal effectiveness
3. managing your output
4. learning from your mistakes

Graphically it looks like this:



Manage your intake

The first thing to begin with is to look at your intake of new work. This calls for some assertiveness, because unless you tell people you have more work than you can handle, how will they know? So:

- Learn to say 'no' or 'not now'. And you can only say 'no' when you know how much work you already have and how long that will take. Never feel guilty about saying 'no', one can only do so much in a day.
- Ask whether you are the right person to do the job, perhaps someone else might be more skilled or have more time than you.
- Make a point about letting others know what your projects are, so they can assess beforehand whether to ask you or not.

Increase your personal effectiveness

Many books are written and many courses are given on personal effectiveness, so we will not go into this in detail, but here are some of the highlights:

- Goal orientation: Make sure that you know what your goals are, what the management expects you to achieve in your role or function. Helping others doesn't necessarily lead to good end-of-year assessments, achieving your goals does.
- Work with a To Do list, in order to at all times know what's still to be done, by when.
- Setting priorities: prioritise your tasks in three categories:
 1. Must do – the things you have to finish today
 2. Can do – the things that can be finished tomorrow
 3. Nice to do – great ideas that you like doing, but actually do not have to be doneFinish the Must do first, with a Nice to do in between, and only then start on the Can do's
- Plan your work: work with a day and week planning and block timeframes for specific jobs in your agenda, so you will get more control over your day and time
- Shield yourself off: every now and then switch off your phone, incoming mail beep, so you can be really focussed and productive for a while, after which you answer your voice and e-mails and are open again for ad hoc urgencies.

Manage your Output

Managing your output comes down to:

- Delegate: if there are tasks or parts of tasks that can be done by others, delegate as soon as you can
- Deliver on time: always deliver on time or communicate as soon as you think you will not be able to deliver, so others can take action
- Watch out for perfection: it takes 20% of your time to finish 80% of the work, it's the last 20% that consumes the rest of your time. Sometimes 80% is good enough already and you end up wasting a lot of time on details.

Learn from your mistakes

If you work with a (week) planning it also becomes possible to evaluate weekly how you have been doing this week, and what you want to be doing better next week. Making this a habit and planning your weekly evaluation will increase your effectiveness by at least 10%!

Hopefully this short article has given you some ideas about how to manage your workload. After all there is nothing wrong with working hard. What is exhausting is to be working under permanent pressure, with the idea that the work is never done.

Give it a try, pick a few ideas mentioned and implement them in your daily work. The only thing you need to watch out for is to not take on even more work because your effectiveness has gone up!

STARBUSINESS
LIBERATING HUMAN POTENTIAL