

Overloaded? I'll Bet You Are

Have you ever stopped to figure out how much you have to do versus how much time you have to do it? Probably not. Probably too scary!

In an ideal world, you'd presumably love to have more time available for new or unexpected things. Have time to just "be", catch a breath and think about your job and your life. Maybe be creative, find new or better ways of doing things, get ideas, inspiration even.

But the likelihood is that you're overloaded. There's an exercise I do on the courses I teach where I get people to figure out how much work they have to do versus how much time they have available to do it. Back in the 1990s, overload levels of 30 to 50% were pretty common – with the occasional person being a 100% or more overloaded.

Nowadays, I find that at least half the people I do this exercise with *are a 100% or more overloaded*. Let's be clear what this means.

That's twice as much work as they have time available to do. Overload levels of 200% are not uncommon. I have seen people more than 300% overloaded.

Of course, this just confirms what we all already know. We are becoming even busier – not only in work but in life generally. As each year goes by, we find ourselves working harder and harder. We spend more time at work, thinking about work, bringing work home with us. Work now invades our personal life in a way that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago or to our parents. And as a result of this invasion of and consequent reduction in our personal time, we find we are now madly busy outside of work as well.

Remember when the media used to talk about having to “educate people for leisure”? The very notion raises a bitter or incredulous laugh these days.

And the stress related to all of this has increased. As I write this we are about four years into what will probably become known as the Second Great Depression. There is no real sign that it is going to end any time soon. And so there are layoffs, redundancies, downsizing, offshoring.

“You’re lucky to have a job.”

“You’ll have to do more with less.”

“Just work smarter not harder” (whatever that’s supposed to mean).

“If you don’t do it we’ll find somebody who will.”

“We have no choice, we have to do it.”

Any of this sound familiar?

It’s this . . .



. . . when it really should be – this.



So, how are we to deal with all this? How are we to continue to take on these massive levels of work? And even if we can climb to the top of this work mountain, what about the rest of our lives? Our loved ones, families, children, hopes, dreams, ambitions, things we wanted to do with our lives that have nothing to do with work or earning a living? Is life in the industrial world in the 21st century just to be about work, bringing home the bacon and paying the mortgage?

And of course the answer is that it had better not be. Our lives had better not end up like that. And they don't have to.

Because there is a way out of all of this.

And to find the way, all you have to do is learn one simple skill.

You have to learn to do less.

*"They always say time
changes things, but you actually
have to change them yourself."*

- ANDY WARHOL

