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## ***Overworked, part 2***

By Paperitalo Staff

When we asked you last week if you felt you were overworked, a resounding majority of you said "no." We'll just keep that our little secret, for if your boss finds out, they will certainly find some more things for you to do! I know with our employees around here, I always have a pile of tasks it would be nice for them to do and as soon as I detect someone has a little breathing room, I add one on.

Last week I gave you a task in which I asked you to make a grid each week and evaluate at the end of each day whether the tasks you had done were a waste of time. I hope you are doing that and will continue it for a month, using the feedback you give yourself to make some long term smart decisions.

It is important as you continue with this task to make sure, however, that your decisions are intelligent ones. If, for instance, you are one of those people for which attendance at the morning production meeting is optional, you might 9 out of 10 times or even 29 out of 30 times say that attendance at this ritual is a waste of time. In this particular case, this does not mean you should not do it.

Why? This meeting can help you in many, many ways, even if that assistance is only rare. First and foremost, it keeps you in the loop. Your valuable contribution to the mill depends on you being in the know as to what is going on. You cannot get this without being there. In other words, that one in thirty payoff may be really huge. On a personal level, not being at the morning production meaning means you cannot defend yourself and your team if an accusation flies nor can you promote yourself or your team if an opportunity arises. So we have to be smart about what we think is a waste of time.

Now we are past the morning meeting, we can move on to other activities. If you have not reached this point yet, you will: your valuable activities, i.e., those that are not a waste of time are going to fall into two and only two categories: (1) those requiring human cognitive skills and (2) those requiring human creative skills. Frankly, everything else can be done by computers these days.

So for your next assignment, please take your grids and label every box as either "CO" for "Cognitive" or "CR" for "Creative." If you have any that do not fit into one of these two categories,

focus on them, these outliers, like a laser beam and set them aside as a special group which we will deal with next week.

If you have a number of people reporting to you, you may wonder where to put the time you spend with them. It is probably going to be some combination of CO and CR. For if you are instructing them, you will need to be highly CR while watching their reaction and responding to it (a CO activity). Motivating them follows the same pattern.

Looking up the ladder to your boss, the pattern repeats. We can conclude, at least until they build better computers for everyday use (they already have such "better computers" in the lab), our human interactions will continue to be something we cannot delegate to machines.

What we can do, though, is get better at our human reactions so that we do not have to continually go over the same ground. This starts with hiring the highly qualified, in every sense of the word, communicating realistic expectations to them and supporting them when they need help. Much easier said than done.

Let's wrap up this week with another subset of task and a way to deal with it. There may be a CR or CO task that clearly falls in your area of responsibility, but for which you have no talent. Perhaps, for instance, it is your job to write some sort of summary report for your department once a month. You hate to write, it is terrible assignment and, through procrastination and lack of natural talent, it just causes a tremendous waste of time. If you have subordinates and you can detect one of them has the talent to do this, you can delegate it to them, allowing you the opportunity of doing final review and issuing while assigning the work to the one most talented (read: most efficient). If you do not have the luxury of a subordinate to assign this task to, perhaps you can restructure it to make it easier to do. For instance, if in the past our example report has been mostly narrative, perhaps you can rework it so it is in outline form, or becomes a spreadsheet in which relevant parameters are changed each month. Using your CR to make a long term change in a repetitive task to reduce its time burden is a one-time excellent use of your time.

Have you checked the gauges on your personal fire extinguishers lately? These devices have a tendency to become old and non-functioning. Now would be a good time for an exhaustive inspection of the ones in your vehicles and homes.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##