



How much time are you spending on activities that directly relate to your objectives?

In today's fast-paced digital world, it's easy to get distracted by the non-stop flood of requests coming from cell phones, land lines, pagers, instant messages, business e-mail, personal e-mail, faxes, and face-to-face interruptions. Just that sentence sounds overwhelming to me!

This kind of volume, unfortunately, doesn't inspire most of us to focus proactively on our objectives; instead, it supports us in being reactive and not thinking as clearly as we could. I hear clients say, "I work on e-mail throughout the day, and the quicker I get though it, the quicker it goes away!" This approach doesn't promote proactive thinking, which is necessary to create clear strategic actions that map to meaningful objectives.

Imagine if you were able to press the pause button on your remote control and all the employees in your company immediately stopped what they were doing. If you asked each of them, "What are you doing right now and does it directly impact one of your objectives?" I think you'd be extremely surprised to find out how many people would say, "No, this activity doesn't relate to one of my objectives." It would be a revelation for most of the employees as well!

All of us want to do a good job and make a difference; however, that doesn't mean that what we're doing actually impacts our objectives. Most of us are measured by performance reviews that

Quick Tip: Adding Hyperlinks to A Task

Once you have a task defined and categorized in your Objectives Category, the next step is to insert the documents related to the objective such as the metrics. A simple way to do this is to put a hyperlink to the appropriate document directly into the task.

Inserting hyperlinks into a task:

1. Click the Insert button on the toolbar.
 2. Select "File" - the option with the paperclip icon.
 3. In the Insert File Dialog box, browse through your documents to locate the document you want to link to the Objective.
 4. Select the file you want and single left click.
 5. Click the drop-down arrow on the Insert button.
 6. Select Insert as Hyperlink
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directly link to objectives. This process enables us to keep an appropriate focus based on the overall goals and mission of the company. So if you want to have good performance reviews, it's important to keep a constant focus on your objectives and complete activities that relate to them.

Here are three actions you can take to assist you in staying focused on your objectives:

1. Keep them in front of you where you will see them
2. Review them consistently for progress and new actions
3. When processing e-mail, v-mail, etc. always ask the question, "Does this relate to one of my objectives?"

1. Keep your objectives in front of you

I suggest that you create a Category in the Outlook Task Module called Objectives. In some cases the nomenclature in your company may be different, for example, objectives may be referred to as commitments or goals. You will want to use the term your company uses when you create this Category. Once you have this Category set up in Outlook you can then create a separate Task for each of your performance review objectives and categorize them under your "Objective category." This lets you have them directly at your finger tips.

This is a simple step to take, but most of our clients do not have their objectives this "handy" -- they are buried in a document somewhere or the objectives they have are no longer relevant to their job. If this is the case you will need to create an action to review your objectives with your boss so you can create ones that are suitable.

It is very important for all the employees in a company to have clear objectives. Clear objectives are the only way to maintain focus, measure

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success and be productive. The definition that MPS uses for productivity is "Consistently completing strategic next actions that link to meaningful objectives." Clear objectives act as a reference point for creating strategic next actions. If your objectives are unclear or you don't remember them, how can you determine what your strategic next actions are?

2. Review your objectives consistently for progress and Next Actions

I recommend that you schedule a recurring appointment on your calendar for one hour each week to review your Objectives Category. During this time, ask yourself three questions for each objective: "Where does it stand today?" "Where do I want it to be?" and "What are the Strategic Next Actions that need to be completed to move it forward?" You can then schedule these Next Actions on your calendar to ensure you have the time to complete them.

3. Does this action relate to one of my objectives?

When you react to the overwhelming flow of data coming at you during the day it's easy to respond to activities that don't map to your objectives. We end up responding quickly and forget to pause to make really good decisions. While processing your e-mail and v-mail, I recommend that for each item you stop and pause and ask the question, does this action relate to one of my objectives? If it does, great, however if it does not, you'll need to consider how to renegotiate the action or eliminate it all together. This will take a little time; however, it will ensure you spend your time more wisely.

Conclusion

The MPS definition for productivity is "Creating Strategic Next Actions that link to meaningful objectives." With this in mind, it is important to have clear objectives "handy" and to consistently review and focus on them. This will help you increase your productivity and achieve your

objectives -- leading of course to better performance reviews and, hopefully, improved compensation as well as a better balance in your life.

If you want to learn more about our methods, one great way is to get my new book, *Take Back Your Life! Using Microsoft Outlook to Get Organized and Stay Organized*. The book was just published in September, and it's getting a great response. You can order a copy [here](#). If you do get a chance to read it, drop us a note telling us what you think.

Onwards and upwards...