



The Training Connection, Inc.



The Training Connection's Roundtable

So Much More than Workload Management Tips and Tricks

MARCH 2017

By Roger Cote

Starting out the 2017 Program Coordinator Roundtables, Nicole Chamblin—a TTC productivity training partner—addressed a topic that is relevant to the hearts of many busy professionals: managing an overwhelming workload.

As she introduced herself and the day's topic, Nicole said, "My hope is that you'll get at least one idea today that can help you feel better about how you manage your stress, and that ever-present overwhelming project workload."

Hack # 1: Work the 80/20 rule.

20% of what I do is giving me 80% of my results. Conversely, 80% of what I do is not giving me results.

Nicole offered what she called "life hacks" to help us delve into and identify issues that challenge our ability to manage our workload and activities. Notice I said manage "activities" and not time. Nicole reminded us that you can't manage time, only activities.

One of the hacks I resonated with was Getting Vision Clarity. Nicole said that getting vision clarity is like plugging in coordinates to your GPS; it helps you get from where you are to where you want to be. She quoted Joel Barker:

*Vision without action is just a dream.
Action without vision just passes the time.
Vision with action can change the world.
-- Joel Barker*

Nicole noted that most of us get stuck in the second line of this quotation. "We're always busy. We're always seeing action and movement; and we kind of confuse activity with accomplishment. And that's when we start to feel stressed out." She suggested that

we learn to identify what we want to be our legacy, and what we need to do to get from where we are today to that vision.

Nicole introduced the concept of getting "funnel vision," a process in which we learn how to make sure that the things we do on a day-to-day basis are tied to the legacy vision. She said that we need to learn to ask ourselves, "How is what I am saying yes to going to help me reach my goal?" The idea is that if you can draw a line from what you are going to do back to your goals, you can feel good about an action or activity that is on the to-do list. But if you realize that you are spending time on something that is not connected to your goals, then you can feel good about saying "No." She called the common affliction of trying to say "yes" to everything "suffering from volunteeritis."

Hack # 2: Use a task decision tree.

Comparing tasks to determine which one is more important. Compare one with another, then compare the winner of that analysis to another thing on the list and continue until you have a winner. That becomes task #1.

One of the roundtable attendees, Rebecca Crawford, said that she recently learned to use the phrase "Yes, if..." instead of no. "Yes, I can do it, if I don't do these three other things." Rebecca said that the approach helps her prevent shying people away from asking for help if you say no a lot, because you don't want to come across as a naysayer. However, folks need to know the consequences of saying "yes" to a task request. "Yes, but..." "Yes, however..." were alternative phrases offered to help those asking for your time to understand the tradeoffs and the need to prioritize.

Nicole continued the topic discussion with a reference to Dan Thurmon, a conference keynote speaker who literally juggles various items to illustrate the point



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So Much More than Workload Management Tips and Tricks (continued)

of how much we can practically manage at one time. Nicole said that Dan points out that at any given point in time, you can only really manage (meaning have your hands on) maybe two things; everything else is up in the air. Where we feel stressed out is when we try to catch everything at once.

Nicole continued, "How can we be deliberate about what we throw up into the air so we can be focused on the things that we are catching in our hands?" She used the example that at different points in life, we might decide that we have to focus on career, so starting a family would have to wait; or we might decide that we need to go back to school, so we'd have to cut back on community work. Nicole insightfully offered that we should "Be purposeful about what you're going to be off balance about. And give yourself permission to throw some things up in the air." "Our brains are designed to hold onto the open-loop things

that are not complete." If we keep the nice to do tasks around, (someday/maybe tasks) every time we see them, they distract us.

Hack # 3: Apply the ABCDE prioritization method.

Essentially, A is most important to E least important. Create a priority list of just A and B projects.

A—Something that I have to do because it has serious consequences.

B—Something that you should do as it has some consequences.

my tasks to increase my chances of reaching my end goals.

Thank you Nicole for your professional insight and comprehensive introduction into an important challenge that we all face in our daily personal and professional lives. And thank you to Rebecca and others who contributed to the idea exchange during this information and energy packed roundtable.

~Roger Cote

Note: The article provides a quick look at a few topics covered during the roundtable. For more information on other hacks or references that Nicole used during her presentation, please reach out to us at The Training Connection; we're happy to share.



Join us for our next Mentoring Roundtable on:

June 23, 2017 from 1:30 - 3:00

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