

Career Rx

By [Lisa Chenofsky Singer](#)

*As appeared in TheAlternativePress.com on September 2, 2010
(www.TheAlternativePress.com)*

Overwhelmed at Work?

Are you overwhelmed at work? You are probably not alone. With corporate restructuring and rightsizing, more work is left for fewer people to accomplish. While the financial necessity of scaling back to meet recent changes in the market are to some degree understandable, many years of 70 hour weeks may not be sustainable. What can be done to handle the added demands and hyper perfectionism that can characterize some work environments?

Time management is often herald as a solution to harried staff. What if there is actually too much work to go around? The idea that being better organized is going to solve all your problems is often not the case. The answer may be in setting priorities rather than trying to fit it all in.

People tend to do what is easy first, rather than what is important. There is no anxiety involved in doing what you can easily accomplish, but is this the best use of your time? In restructuring an office, the senior leader may take on tasks that are intended to inspire others to pitch in on tasks that fall below their level of training. Let's say a task involves restocking the coffee machine. This can be perceived as an egalitarian gesture by the rest of the office, and this leader will likely have no trouble accomplishing the task. This gesture is only meaningful if the individual is doing their own job well in addition to offering a humbling gesture for the office. Establishing the mission, properly communicating it and inspiring others is part of the senior leader's role. If the things that are of paramount importance are diluted by those tasks that are urgent but unimportant, there will be no company staff left to drink the coffee.

The idea of prioritizing your life also needs to incorporate non work related responsibilities. Think of what the cost of being present at work when your children or your partner need your help for a life changing event. Will you be able to maintain productivity at work while your family falls apart? The inverse of this question is also true. Would taking a mental health day on the morning of a big client presentation advance your life in a meaningful way?

In order to satisfy the needs of your work, your family, your professional development and your physical health, you need to be able to prioritize. The act of prioritizing does not mean catering to whomever shouts the loudest and it does not have anything to do with guilt. It involves a conscious and rational review of the needs around you and focusing your efforts on the most critical issues first. If you are honest with yourself and those around you, those who have to wait will understand.

Determining priorities requires that you understand what your goals are. These goals should include all the dimensions that comprise your life. As mentioned above, they include work, health, family, growth and anything else that may be important and in no particular order. The biggest challenge becomes in prioritizing things that are important but not urgent. An example of this could be your health. While exercising regularly may be an important part of your physical well being and contribute to your ability to perform well in other aspects of your life, it is not critical. This activity is generally the first thing that is ignored in times of stress. There may be days when other priorities trump a trip to the gym, but a long term

neglect of your body can result in catastrophic results. Though an individual day at the gym or a cancelled medical check-up may not be critical, long term goals require that it has a place in your priorities.

Navigating stressful times requires a strong set of goals. You must also be confident that the goals you set are the goals you want to achieve. They can include supporting a child in their education, being a loving partner, being an innovator in your field. Once these goals become clear to you they will act as a compass for all the small and large decisions that you make in your life. Those around you will come to understand who you are and what to expect of you. In the end, the person who wants a fresh cup of coffee will have to fill the machine, or possibly not if they have a higher priority.

Lisa Chenofsky Singer is the Managing Director of Chenofsky Singer and Associates LLC www.ChenofskySinger.com, providing Executive and Career Coaching and Human Resources Consulting.

Lisa's extensive human resources and coaching experience with Fortune 500 companies, small enterprises, medium-sized firms, and non-profit organizations gives her the unique ability to bring together wide-ranging perspectives on career transitions, executive and leadership development. She has consulted with a wide variety of sectors — consumer goods, financial services, healthcare, media and entertainment, pharmaceutical and life sciences, publishing, professional services, technology, and non-profit. Lisa has a passion for motivational speaking, conducts career forums, and provides executive and career coaching.

Lisa's greatest strength is that she enables individuals and organizations to see themselves in new ways, freeing them to achieve their goals. Lisa can be reached at Lisa@ChenofskySinger.com.