

Professional Dedication: A Stabilizing Force In Turbulent Times



So many outside influences are affecting a job right now. Whether you're working from home or in an office, the nature of how we conduct ourselves, wearing a mask, social distancing, how we interrelate with our colleagues, is all in a new place. It's a balancing act of all these other considerations – particularly when working from home – that add to the complexity of this window, and things that took a certain amount of time previously take much more.

It's often hard, given the challenges the pandemic has unleashed, to feel productive, excited...dedicated. Some of the simplest things, like having a cup of coffee with a fellow team member and brainstorming ideas for a project, are now impossible (except over Zoom). With all of the hurdles and restrictions we're facing, you might often feel as if you're spinning your wheels, as if you're in retrograde motion. What can you do to move forward, whether at home or in the office?

A Mantra of Focus

First, establish, and stick to, a mantra of focus. When working on tasks, allocate sufficient time to be productive and complete those tasks. Zoom calls can easily deplete a schedule when we might have to get other things accomplished, so try to schedule them around projects and deadlines. It's most effective to schedule beginning *and* end times for calls – don't leave them open-ended. Interacting with people when you hit a wall is a great solution, but sometimes you need to isolate yourself in the short-term to complete some of your projects.

Keep a calendar of what you need to get done, and by when, and stick to it, so you don't miss any deadlines. It's best to combine a paper calendar with your Google or Outlook calendar, for regular reminders. Have in mind what you want to accomplish each day and week and align short-

term goals with long-term goals. Write it all down, establish your personal KPIs and assess each week if you're achieving them.

New Processes

Determine what you should and shouldn't focus on. Using a revisionist mindset, now is a great time to redefine those areas and "freshen up" your goals and objectives. Quality time to think things through is necessary. Plan individual meetings with yourself. Execute these self-meetings and determine what you really want to do from sessions of planning and reflection.

Trim extraneous items from your to-do list by prioritizing and ranking every item on the list in terms of importance, then figure out how you work most efficiently. Are you better off ticking smaller items off your to-do list, then tackling bigger projects, or are you better off diving into bigger items and clearing the decks of smaller-scale work once the larger stuff is completed? Keep a notebook or journal alongside your to-do list, to jot down ideas. Some of these ideas may make their way to your list, while some may help color and complete the items you've already listed. Consider this your springboard, not an anchor.

Turbulent Times

The election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, Democratic control of Congress and unprecedented issues at the Capitol are making many people nervous about what they do and how they do it. Political changes, both small-scale and sweeping, typically create uncertainty, both in the marketplace and in our lives. The best response is to hold to your mantra of focus and stay productive. It was Plato who described excellence as a skill that takes practice, rather than a gift. The best way to respond to the current turbulence and uncertainty is to continue this practice. Find a way to prevail. It will quell your anxiety.

A Shoulder to the Wheel

In these unprecedented times, we're all looking for ways to thrive, rather than just survive. We're obviously at home more than ever, spending more time with family, often separated from friends. Many of us are looking for a rudder, for direction, for dependability and stability. You might surprise yourself by finding it in your dedication to your work and to your career.

Robert Frost once wrote, "the best way around a problem is through it." By putting your shoulder to the wheel, or your nose to the grindstone, and maintaining your dedication to your work and career, you might feel more grounded, connected to yourself, purposeful. It's been hard not to feel adrift these days. Finding a renewed professional dedication might help you steer straight and power forward.