



## Slowing Down – just may make you more efficient

Do you ever ask yourself the question “Where does all my time go?” Managers on the fast track are constantly asked to add more tasks to their professional and personal schedules. Quite often, it is felt that these tasks are all manageable but, more often than not, seem to get out of hand.

What do successful “fast-trackers” do to balance their commitments and achieve a more balanced life? They SLOW DOWN! Slowing down involves the following three criteria: setting boundaries; saying no; and being present. Think about it, if you set your boundaries, you know what you can or cannot take on. You begin to realize what is important and what you can say no to. Finally, with everything going on, if you can honestly be “present” in the task at hand, not only will you enjoy your work but you will actually see the accomplishments that you are achieving.

The idea of slowing down seems easier in theory than in practice. Have you ever just planned to do nothing? Try it and see what happens. You immediately begin to start thinking of things to do ... watch TV, take a walk, clean the house, or finish a project for work. It really is hard because our culture demands that we stay busy.

To manage our fast-paced schedules, try applying the aforementioned strategy. To get you started, let's define what it means to set boundaries, say no and be present.

### Setting Boundaries

A boundary is a limit you place on a given task, relationship, or experience. Boundary management is simple in theory but can be rather challenging to implement.

Consider the task of managing people. You have a great employee but you find that you spend more time doing his or her work than your own. As a result, you are logging longer hours and spending less time on your professional development and with your family, two things very important to you.

Your challenge is to set a boundary where you can be a resource for your staff but still have the appropriate time needed to manage your responsibilities. By doing this, you not only free up your schedule but you also empower your staff members and make them more efficient.

## Saying NO!

Setting boundaries may sound easy, but the key to keeping or maintaining them is saying no. Too many times, as managers, professionals, or family members, we feel that saying no is an acknowledgement of failure. After all, if we say no, someone else is being denied. Saying no does not have to be this hard and as you learn to do it, you will find that you actually have more time to attend to those tasks within your set boundary. Therefore, you position yourself as someone who is thoroughly committed to completing a task and contributing to the success of a project. The key here is to say no to those things that will not contribute to the success of the project on which you are focused. Saying no does not mean that you will never attend to those requests you denied, but rather that they are not your present focus. By doing this, you will not only accomplish more tasks but find that you have more time for those things that are important to you.

## Staying Present

Mastering the ability to set boundaries and say no allows you the needed space to stay focused on a task. Have you ever been working on a project, get distracted and forget where you put your pen? Even where you were on a project? Have you come in from outside and the phone is ringing and after you hang up, you forget what you were doing before the telephone rang? These are all examples of not being present during a given task. Those who have a strong ability to stay present don't get distracted because they stay in the moment with what they are doing. Try it. Next time you are walking your dog, be with the walk. If you are writing a report, think of nothing else but the content of that report. This can take some time to get used to, but at the end of the day you will be a happier, more balanced person.

Setting boundaries, saying no and staying present are three key skills in a strategy which allows you to slow down. While practicing these skills you will find that your life becomes more balanced, work is more enjoyable, and the opportunities around you become crystal clear.

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