

White Paper on the Road to Overcoming Overload



Filtering On High Value Goals

Background

Can Filtering Help You? The challenge most of us face is not in choosing between the good and the bad. The challenge is filtering, to choose between the good and the best. Developing your own filtering system will help you focus, prioritize, and choose what is the best.

Most of us develop bad habits not because we desire them, but because we do not have enough motivation to break them or avoid them. We would change our bad habits if we had sufficient rewards from changing them, or if we were faced with the negative consequences of our bad habits. As human beings, we are subject to the law of “the carrot and the stick”.

The motivation to change our overloaded world must come from within each of us. As we think of the ever-looming demand of our growing economy and the increased pressure this will bring, we hope that fear may motivate some of us. As we think of the immense future growth potential, we hope that all of us are challenged by the opportunity we have to bring higher value to society and to those who are important to us. Those of us who accept this challenge will reap great personal rewards and benefits.

In other words, each of us must develop our own motivation based on an honest understanding of the high price we are likely to pay for our overloaded lives if we do not change, and the potential rewards we are likely to gain, if we do change.

The priority based filtering system is a strategic tool that provides a thinking process. We believe that given the opportunity to think carefully, most of us will be motivated to change for the better. Based on our clients’ experiences, as you use this thinking tool, you will develop your own filtering system that will help you **focus on higher value roles, goals, and activities**.

Diagram 4 illustrates the priority based filtering system as a dynamic interrelationship of three critical areas:

1. **Roles and Goals:** Your roles and their related goals are the primary driving force in this filter. Roles are different from job titles and are seldom defined in job descriptions. In our hurried and busy lives we seldom take time to define the roles we play on the stage of life. We decide and act without regularly examining our actions in relationship to our

Note:

* This whitepaper is extracted from our book *Overloaded? From overload to balanced living*. See inside the book at www.amazon.com

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critical goals. This can change as you define your high value roles relating them to high value goals and use this to help you filter the information you receive and the demands placed on your life.

2. **People:** As a knowledge worker, people are your information exchange partners. The people in your sphere of life are the target and recipients of your value proposition. As you think of people you must include yourself as one of the most important people. Your personal well-being and the information you need for your growth and development are the vehicles by which you provide and increase the value you bring to others in the world around you.

Some may suggest that to think of value as it relates only to people is rather narrow and selfish. While this may be true, we must realize that all things were created to add value to mankind, as mankind assumes the caretaker role for all things created.

3. **Subjects:** The information subjects that you seek and collect are a support infrastructure to help you play your role and achieve your goals and deliver high value to the people around you. In our information-cluttered world we must stop and ask, “How does this information help me relate to my roles and goals and how will this information benefit my interaction with my important people?”

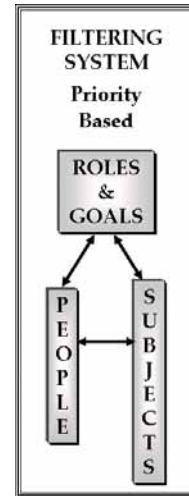


Diagram 4

Summary

- ✓ We indulge in bad habits when we lack the motivation to focus on what is best.
- ✓ To overcome the overload problem we must individually be motivated by the potential of adding higher value and consider the risks associated with the negative impact of work and information overload.
- ✓ You can filter wisely by relating your high value roles and goals to the people who are your information exchange partners, as well as the subject matter and the information you collect and need to support your roles. Please note:
- ✓ This section will be of particular value to those who had a high score in the statements 1 to 7 of the [Effectiveness and Overload Gauge](#)

Filtering On High Value Goals

What Are The SMART Goals That Direct Your Life Priorities? Goals energize you and direct your progress. Once you define your high value roles it is critical that you articulate specific goals that help you prioritize your activities and track your progress.

While your roles define what you are expected to **BE**, your goals define what you are expected to **DO**. Living without goals leads to an aimless life. The old saying is true “If you aim at nothing, you will surely get there.” Accepting a role without defining what you are expected to do could lead to unrealistic expectations of yourself and others. This often results in disappointments and overloaded lives. Unless you actively participate in developing your goals, others will assume them for you.

Someone has suggested that we all have goals. Some are clear goals; others are fuzzy goals. Some are good goals and some are foolish goals. Here we want to discuss the importance of smart goals. **SMART** provides the acronyms for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**greed upon, **R**ealistic and **T**ime dependent.

Specific: Goals need to be specific. In sport a goal is a very clearly marked point. We suggest that a specific goal is one that can be verified by one of the five senses or can be confirmed by scientific measurements. If you were to say that your goal is to be a good coach, then this is subjective and open to interpretation. It is highly based on the image you and others have of what a good coach is like. But if you were to say that you want to coach five people in e-mail etiquette, then you have a more specific goal. Specific goals are smart goals because they communicate value that justifies the discipline and effort required to achieve them.

Measurable: Having a measurable goal allows you to gauge your progress towards reaching it. So if you were to say that your goal is to find five people to coach, then you can measure your progress as you find the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth person. Measuring progress is a very critical self-motivator. Measurable goals are smart goals because they help you make appropriate and timely changes to your action plans when necessary.

Agreed upon: Before you embark on any goal you must be sure that your goal is agreed upon by all those have an important stake in it. Unless you and the five individuals you have targeted for your coaching role agree on their need for your coaching, you have no chance of achieving your goal. In other words, agreed upon goals are smart goals because they are backed by the support of other people who are committed to the same outcome.

Realistic: A common mistake encountered by most of us is that we underestimate the effort and the investment required by most goals. One thing that has helped us very much is to “aim high and goal low”. It is good to set high and lofty visions but it is wise to set realistic goals. Setting realistic goals that can be easily achieved will encourage you as you progress to higher value goals and activities.

Time dependent: Like any drama on a stage a smart goal has a starting and a finishing point. Goals with endless timelines lead to frustration and apathy. Your smart goal should read “to coach the five members of my operational team in e-mail etiquette for thirty days, starting today.” Time dependent goals are smart goals because they help you avoid the natural temptation to procrastinate.

Now it is important to note that no goal is 100% assured. Smart goals are a statement of faith - faith that is compelling and reasonable. We live in an imperfect, often uncertain world. Very often fear of failure holds us back from setting goals. Do not let your desire for perfection and risk aversion restrain you from determining goals. If need be, list appropriate assumptions associated with your goal. Remember, goals are outward expressions of your roles. If you do not set them clearly, others will assume them for you.



I am still working on improving my work life balance. This is not easy with the high demands of the sales world. But I have learned to be more diligent in clarifying my priorities and managing people’s expectations of me. You can never please everyone. If you spread yourself too thin, you will please no one.

We live in a culture where we are often valued based on what we do. My advice to the overloaded person is to be brutally honest with yourself and clearly define what is important to you. At the end of the day there are very few things that significantly impact our life. Prioritize aggressively and reprioritize if necessary; this will allow you to keep your commitments. People will respect you more when they know where you stand.

Ms. Susan Malenica, Regional Director, Business Development



Exercise

1. Consider one of your most important roles. It could be one of the roles you listed in the exercise in the previous template; for example, it could be the role of a **coach**.
2. Using the following Template B that follows, define two SMART goals associated with this role. For each goal write the **accomplishment** you want to see happen.
3. List the **actions** you need to undertake towards reaching this goal. Start every action statement using a **verb**. Note that for each accomplishment you may have more than one related action or activity.
4. Indicate the target completion action date for this action.

Please note: If this is the first time you are doing such an exercise, you may find this awkward in the beginning. **Do not let this hold you back. Remember your goal is progress, not perfection.** Later on this will become second nature to you.

Template B – Goals Inventory

Role	SMART Goal – What? What do I want to happen? (Accomplishment)	How? How will I know it happened? (Actions)	By When? Target date
<i>EX-Person</i>	<i>Improve health by losing five pounds</i>	<i>Get medical check</i>	<i>Jan 20</i>
		<i>Exercise 60 minutes/ 5 days week</i>	<i>Feb –June</i>
		<i>No snacks mid day</i>	<i>Feb - June</i>

Summary

- ✓ Your high value roles must have meaningful outcomes associated with them.
- ✓ If you do not participate in defining your goals, others will assume them for you.
- ✓ **SMART** goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**greed upon, **R**ealistic and **T**ime dependent
- ✓ **SMART** goals are the best way to define what you are expected to **DO** on the various stages of life.
- ✓ Goals are a statement of faith based on your best understanding of beliefs and estimates.
- ✓ Define your goals by writing what you want to see happen as an accomplishment. Then list the actions you need to take towards achieving your accomplishment along with the target completion date.