

White Paper on the Road to Overcoming Overload



Title Imposed Roles (Part 1 of 2)

If properly motivated, we all desire to give the highest value possible to our community and those who are important to us. While we all wish we could do more, most of us struggle with the ever increasing demands placed upon us. We try to prioritize but our To-Do lists get bigger and goals seem to be more elusive. As a result, most of us feel overloaded.

The objective of this paper is to help you overcome the vicious cycle of overload while adding higher value to your community and those important to you. Our goal is to:

- Present some **thoughts** that could help you focus and prioritize based on the highest value roles that you can play
- Provide some **tips** towards making this happen while improving the value you contribute on the various stages of life.

Back in the 1600's Shakespeare presented us with wonderful imagery when he told us that **the whole world is a stage and all men "and women" are players on it. We each have our entrances and our exits and each, at different times, plays many parts.** On the stage of life we have an opportunity to play many roles. Our success depends on our ability to choose the most appropriate roles and fulfill them with excellence. Conflicting priorities happen when we engage in **too many roles**, play on **too many stages**, and/or take on roles imposed on us and are not best suited for us.

The skill we ask you to consider is to learn to prioritize and focus on **the highest value roles that bring the greatest impact on the lives of people important to you.** We suggest that the responsibility of identifying, selecting, and equipping yourself for these roles ultimately rests with you. On the differing stages of life it is critical that you seek appropriate input while owning the responsibility of defining what you are expected to be and what you are expected to do.

Once you define your highest value roles, you can focus on them by articulating specific, measurable, and realistic goals for each role. As you take more control you will have the ability to eliminate lower value roles and goals as well as most of the demands others place upon you.

How do you define your roles?

On a theatrical stage the success of an actor is not so much based on his or her ability to recite the text or act the motions as much as it is on the ability to embody the qualities and attributes of the character he or she portrays. The same applies on the stage of life. Your success is not based so much on the **DO** part

Note:

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

* If this page was sent to you by a friend we invite you to subscribe to our e-letter "On The Road To Overcoming Overload." Please go to <http://www.nomoreoverload.com/request.asp>



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of your role as it is on the **BE** part of the role. We often focus on **DOING** the right thing but neglect **BEING** the right character in relationship to our important people.

You may ask how we define the important people. We suggest that the important people are:

- **The people who HELP you define your roles and**
- **The people who are most CRITICAL to the achievement of your goals.**

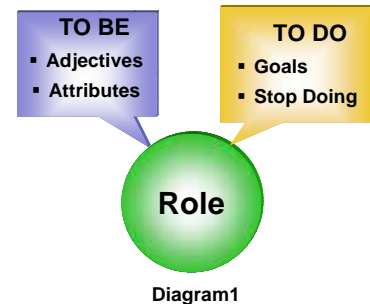
Such people will differ depending on the stage of life you are considering. They will also differ based on the role you want to play. Yet, at all times it is important that keep such important people as few as possible.

Tips for defining your role:

Regretfully, too often our interactions on the stages of life have been governed by the titles we hold. **This is what we call title imposed roles.** Title imposed roles bring many differing definitions based on personal, organizational, and historical biases. This can cause misleading and burdensome expectations.

For illustration, let us assume that on your professional stage you hold the title **“Manager”**. The expectations this places upon you will vary based on who is addressing you and what they expect you to do. By moving away from **“title imposed roles”** you can redefine your stage presence by breaking it down into more definable roles such as coach, model, resource, overseer, watchdog etc. This will help you decide which of these deliver the highest value and are deserving of your focus.

Diagram 1 highlights that you can define your role based on what you should **BE** and **DO**. To define what you are expected to **BE**, we encourage you to use attributes or adjectives. To develop what you are expected **TO DO**, we ask you to use verbs as you consider tangible and non tangible deliverables that can be translated into smart **goals** for your role as well as what you can **Stop Doing**.



The following three part step-by-step exercise will help you develop, define, communicate, and negotiate your high value roles to the important people around you.

PART ONE: Development:¹

1. Take a blank sheet of lined writing paper and give it the heading **“TO BE”**. On the left side mark a column wide enough to place a one-word list of roles.
2. List all the reasonable roles that relate to your professional stage. Be creative but realistic, avoiding title imposed roles.
3. Take another blank lined sheet and give it the heading **“TO DO”**.
 - a. On the top half of this sheet write **“Top 5 Things I Must Do”**
 - b. On the bottom half of this sheet write **“Things I Could Stop Doing”**.

¹ The attached Appendix provides a template you can use and give to others.

4. Now take this set of two papers and make ten photocopies of each so you can give them to five people who help you define your roles and five who are critical to the achievement of your goals.
5. On the first **"TO BE"** sheet of roles you listed, choose the five roles that **you deem most valuable** and prioritize them 5 to 1, with 5 being the most important role.
6. Against each of the five top roles **write the five best adjectives or character attributes** that you believe most accurately describe this role. For example, if you choose coach, appropriate adjectives may be "available", "disciplined", "knowledgeable", "fair", and "committed".
7. Take time to contemplate the adjectives you just wrote. What positive images do they communicate? How do you picture your priorities and activities changing to fulfill such attributes?
8. On the **"TO DO"** sheet list the top 5 things you must do or **accomplish** if you were to succeed in that role. Prioritize them (5 to 1). This list can later form your **goals for a period of time**. You may find that some of these goals may be tangible and some may be non-tangible. Where possible, try to be specific, measurable and realistic.
9. Now consider a simple fact. **You can never start something without stopping something**. Take time to list what you could stop doing to make room for your new goals. Write your thoughts down in the **Stop Doing** part of this second sheet.

Note: If you wish you may repeat steps 8 – 9 for each of your top 5 roles.

10. Examine your roles, thinking of the important people that should influence and impact your life:
 - a. List five important people who can validate, support, or help you clarify your role. Such are people you strongly respect or people to whom you are accountable.
 - b. List five important people whom you respect and consider as being critical to fulfilling the goals you listed.

PART TWO: Validation:

1. Take the ten sets of photocopies you made in Step 4 above. Provide each of the ten important people you listed with one set each. Explain the process you did in Part One without revealing the input you wrote.
2. Ask your important people to follow the same process and provide you with their input as they consider how you can improve **the impact you can make** on their lives and others.
3. Ask them to return the completed sheets to you within 5 days.

PART THREE: Enhancement:

1. Once you have received the input of your important people you have an excellent **thinking and discussion tool**. You will no doubt see some differing opinions. Do not discount the wise and sincere input of your important people. Use their input to enhance your role definitions and refocus your goals. Do this without abdicating your ultimate responsibility to define your roles and committing to your own goals.
2. Write a clear and simple definition of your top five roles using the most descriptive adjectives or attributes.
3. Write the five most important goals that you wish to focus on indicating what you would like to see happen as well as the activities you would undertake to achieve such accomplishment. Be sure to

add a target completion date in conjunction with each activity. We recommend that you use short one to three month goals.

4. Share your final copy of roles and goals with your important people. Where appropriate, seek their help in holding you accountable to the needed disciplines.

What you have created here is a **dynamic tool - not a strait jacket**. Periodically, review your roles and goals as well as your list of important people to ensure that they fit your changing world.

Applying your role to the differing stages of life:

Life offers us many stages on which we perform our roles. **Diagram 2** illustrates that we can place these stages into three groups:

- **The Personal / Family stage** includes interactions with yourself, immediate, and extended family.
- **On the Business/ Professional stage** you interact with colleagues, employers, employees, customers, suppliers and regulators.
- **On the Social / Community stage** consider aspects of your community, social, and political life.



In **Diagram 2** you will note the overlapping circles. This overlap is designed to highlight the fact that while the approach we described above is transferable from one stage to the other, great benefit can be realized if you can play similar roles on differing stages. This will help you leverage similar attributes and develop similar goal related disciplines.

For example, if you have chosen to act as a coach on the Business Stage it would be of great value if you see yourself as a coach to teenage children on the Family Stage and or a coach to a community fund raising event. In a similar manner, if you were called on to be a controller of the family finances you may find this experience helpful as you try to control critical projects at work as well or volunteer for the control operational tasks in your community hospital.

Summary:

- Life demands will always increase. Mislead by our titles, others impose expectations upon us that are based on their assumptions and biases. This is often a cause for overload.
- Life provides you with the opportunity to play many roles on its various stages.
- We encourage you to raise your value contribution by focusing on your highest value role and the related goals.
- While seeking the input of a few important people, take ownership of this evolving process that can impact your professional, personal, and social life.

The value of our lives is not measured by what we make but rather by the impact we leave on the lives we touch while on the stage of life. Consciously or sub-consciously on the stage of life you touch many lives.

Play your role with excellence. It is worth it.

Example of Attributes or Adjectives

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Adaptable | <input type="radio"/> Conservative | <input type="radio"/> Evangelistic | <input type="radio"/> Practical |
| <input type="radio"/> Affirming | <input type="radio"/> Connected | <input type="radio"/> Fair | <input type="radio"/> Professional |
| <input type="radio"/> Aggressive | <input type="radio"/> Conservative | <input type="radio"/> Friendly | <input type="radio"/> Provocative |
| <input type="radio"/> Analytical | <input type="radio"/> Creative | <input type="radio"/> Generous | <input type="radio"/> Realistic |
| <input type="radio"/> Attentive | <input type="radio"/> Distant | <input type="radio"/> Goal Oriented | <input type="radio"/> Resilient |
| <input type="radio"/> Articulate | <input type="radio"/> Decisive | <input type="radio"/> Helpful | <input type="radio"/> Responsible |
| <input type="radio"/> Available | <input type="radio"/> Demanding | <input type="radio"/> Honest | <input type="radio"/> Reliable |
| <input type="radio"/> Biblical | <input type="radio"/> Dependable | <input type="radio"/> Independent | <input type="radio"/> Resourceful |
| <input type="radio"/> Calm | <input type="radio"/> Detached | <input type="radio"/> Insightful | <input type="radio"/> Supportive |
| <input type="radio"/> Charismatic | <input type="radio"/> Determined | <input type="radio"/> Knowledgeable | <input type="radio"/> Tactful |
| <input type="radio"/> Clear | <input type="radio"/> Diplomatic | <input type="radio"/> Loyal | <input type="radio"/> Trust Worthy |
| <input type="radio"/> Collaborative | <input type="radio"/> Direct | <input type="radio"/> Methodical | <input type="radio"/> Trend setter |
| <input type="radio"/> Committed | <input type="radio"/> Disciplined | <input type="radio"/> Passive | <input type="radio"/> Understanding |
| <input type="radio"/> Compassionate | <input type="radio"/> Encouraging | <input type="radio"/> Perceptive | <input type="radio"/> Warm |
| <input type="radio"/> Competitive | <input type="radio"/> Entrepreneurial | <input type="radio"/> Persevering | <input type="radio"/> Wise |
| <input type="radio"/> Communicative | <input type="radio"/> Ethical | <input type="radio"/> Personable | <input type="radio"/> |
| <input type="radio"/> Conscientious | <input type="radio"/> Experienced | <input type="radio"/> Persuasive | |

Please help me define what I am expected [TO DO](#):

The top 5 things I should do: (Start each item with a verb.)
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Things I <u>Could</u> Stop Doing:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.