whitepaper

Getting Things Done

By Bob Cusick

Getting Things Done

One of the biggest fallacies in life is that in order to get things done – you have to do MORE. This is especially true when the economy is in one of it's "down" cycles, or when you're launching a new business or software product.

There's a big temptation when you're creating something new to just "work harder." Do more. More marketing, more features, more platform support, more blogging, more money raising... just MORE.

But you can actually do less - and get more done.

Whether your a one-person-band or part of a small start up - you will have to wear lots of different hats (sometimes all of them) - that much is a given. However, if you can apply a filter to your activities - you'll find that you're actually able to accomplish more - while doing less work.

Let me explain. Let's say that you're working on the next great "it" and you're working on your own, and you've decided to bootstrap it until things get rolling. As we all know - there are 101 things that need your attention and that must be done in order for you to get that first, all-important sales dollar.

If you're like me - you find yourself pulled in all directions all the time. Between getting the actual product done there are manuals to write, a website to create, graphics, promotions, Google Ads, blogging, order fulfillment, technical support, marketing, advertising, forums to post to, social media to keep up with - not to mention your offline social life and family time.

The key to accomplishing more by doing less - is actually very simple. You need to ask yourself a single question before you start down a particular task: "How much money will this generate (or save) me?" It doesn't necessarily have to be about money. If you're a teacher – the filter could be "How many students will this help?" If you're a housewife – the filter might be "How will this make me more efficient?"

The point is - if you begin to apply a filter to your list of activities - you'll find yourself changing what you do, and it will be easier to prioritize all the stuff you have to do on a day-to-day basis.

Now, I'm not really a big "list" guy. I don't have a compulsive need to write detailed lists and get them "checked off." But, I will say - if you ask yourself that (potentially) million dollar question "How much revenue will this generate for me" - you'll be more focused on what you do, and will be able to make measurable progress toward your goal.

Come up with an outline list of all the things you need to do to make that first sale for a hypothetical software company. For example:

1) Product Development

      - Debug login section

      - Add paging feature

      - Get latest URL to outside testers

      - Investigate iPhone version

      - Investigate Blackberry version

2) Product Marketing

      - Finish website

            - Add page for ordering

            - Add comment page for support

            - Fill out the "about us" section

            - Make a version for mobile devices

            - Link blog to main site

      - Add blog entries

      - Post to forums to raise awareness

      - Take out banner ad on xyz.com

      - Make PDF brochure

      - Write "intro" email

      - Update social media with blog entries

Of course your list will be more comprehensive - this is only a guide. But in taking a look at all the stuff that "needs to be done" - ask your question: "How much revenue will this generate for me?"

If you put each task through that filter - you may decide that getting the mobile version stuff can come out in 1.x. You can also see that getting your site where people can actually buy something directly relates where tasks like "fill out the about us section", while important, can wait until you get the basics done.

Once you've put all your items through the filter - it may wind up looking something like this:

A) Product Launch TO DO:

1) Product Development

    - Debug login section

    - Add paging feature

    - Get latest URL to outside testers (by Monday)

2) Product Marketing

    - Finish website

        - Add page for ordering

    - Write "intro" email

B) Directly After Launch:

1) Product Marketing

    - Finish website

        - Add comment page for support

        - Fill out the "about us" section

        - Link blog to main site

    - Post to forums to raise awareness

- Make PDF brochure

- Write "intro" email

C) 1.x Enhancements

1) Product Development

- Investigate iPhone version

- Investigate Blackberry version

2) Product Marketing

- Finish website

- Make a version for mobile devices

- Take out banner ad on xyz.com

D) On-going tasks:

1) Product Marketing

- Add blog entry (1x per week - Wednesday afternoon)

- Update social media with blog entries

- Post to forums to raise awareness (2x per week - Wednesday & Friday afternoon)

You'll still accomplish everything on your list - but what you wind up with is a prioritized list of just the stuff you need to do in order to answer the question "How much revenue will this generate for me?" Everything else, no matter how "fun" or "interesting" needs to be put on hold until the appropriate time.

That's the only part that really sucks. Sometimes you have to do the "gotta' do" rather than the "like to do." But, in the end, you're the only one that can determine how much _____ (fill your filter in here) your actions will generate for you.