



Is Your To-Do List Running You Ragged?

By Lara Galloway, the Mom Biz Coach at Take Aim Coaching, LLC

For some of us entrepreneurs, making a task list is an effective way to manage our time according to our priorities. And for others of us, it's a nagging reminder of all that we haven't done. We create these lists with the intention of getting the tasks done, but sometimes the tasks just roll over from one day to the next, and then the next, and then the next... Eventually, you can't even find the paper you wrote the list on. No doubt this can leave a person feeling defeated and overwhelmed when there is so much to be done.

It's clear that creating task lists or to-do lists makes sense to most busy people (like all the businesswomen I know). But just writing down everything that you need to do won't get it all done. A huge, detailed list of things that need action can actually have the opposite effect, causing you to get even less done. Why?

It has to do with your focus and The Law of Attraction. The Law of Attraction says that what you focus on expands. So here you have created this huge list of everything you need to do, and as you watch it grow rather than shrink day after day, your focus is on the unfinished tasks. No doubt you to feel defeated and unable to do much of anything.

So how can you make your task list work for you? Here are a few tips that I hope will make you happier, less stressed and more productive!

1. Go ahead and dump it.

If you have a million thoughts swirling in your head, it will help to get them down on paper. Don't worry about prioritizing them for now--just capture your thoughts. Need to clean the hall closet? Write it down. Is today the day to pay the bills? Add it to the list. Got some phone calls you need to return? Put those on the list, too. Oh, and don't forget to take a shower.

2. Create a "Projects" list and a "Today" list.

These are two separate things. Sorting all your invoices for 2008 and getting a website up are tasks that take other steps to get them done. Your "Today" list includes tasks that you plan to get done, well, today. Calling a prospective client to schedule a meeting, revising the first draft of your website's homepage and shopping for groceries are action items that belong on your "Today" list.

3. Now think priorities.

What is most important to you? Make sure the items on your lists reflect this. Which completed tasks will give you the most bang for your buck in terms of your priorities? These are called "high payoff actions," and completing them moves you forward toward your goals.

4. Where do you want to end up?

As you write up your task lists, ask yourself where you're going. One of the biggest stumbling blocks with regards to time management is not knowing why you're doing what you're doing. If you think about why you want to get a task done and how it fits with your goals, you are more likely to do it, and to feel powerful by completing it.

5. Only put things on your "Today" list that you intend to complete today.

It's a good idea to create your new "Today" list at the end of each day or first thing in the morning. You'll have a good idea of what needs to happen that day, how much time you have to get these tasks done, and what the priorities are of that day.

6. Then chunk it.

The items on your "Projects" list could be both high priority and high payoff actions, but they are often too big to complete in one pass. Take a look at each of your projects and decide how to break them into smaller chunks. For instance, you could break your "create a website" project into smaller chunks like "choose a color theme," or "research and bookmark sites that appeal to me." These two tasks would become part of your "Today" list.

7. Be as specific as possible.

"Return phone calls" could swell into an all-day phone-a-thon, but naming the people you'll call would work well on a "Today" list. Each time you put this extra thought into the tasks on your list, you'll have done some of the work for that task in advance. Clarity always helps when you have a lot to do.

8. Do the happy dance.

At the end of each day, take a look at your "Today" list and take stock of all you've accomplished. Most of us rarely take time to do this. Create a ritual of celebration when you complete your "Today" list. Go talk a walk, play with your kids, read a few pages of a magazine or book, answer personal emails, have a glass of wine... You choose whatever feels like a reward for your efforts.

One of our jobs as moms in business is to do all we can to create harmony between our work life and family life. Creating and using task lists effectively is a great step in the right direction.

Want an online tool to help? Try this: [Simple.ology: The Simple Science of Getting What You Want.](#)

Lara Galloway is the "Mom Biz Coach" of Take Aim Coaching, LLC. Her purpose is to support moms in business who make their work a lifestyle choice. She helps them make more money doing what they love while taking care of priority #1: family. For more information about Lara and her coaching services, visit www.mombizcoach.com and sign up for her *free* ezine, or share your thoughts on her blog at www.laraencasa.wordpress.com.