

Information Overload Day – Every Day!

By Barbara Hemphill

Social scientist Bertram Myron Gross coined the term "information overload" to describe a phenomenon wherein a computer system cannot process a large volume of data. However, it also occurs in people when our cognitive abilities are overburdened, causing loss of productivity and, frequently, sleep!

According to the Days of the Year Calendar, October 20 is "Information Overload Day!" If you're like me -- and if you're reading this, I'm sure you are -- every day is information overload day!

Five of the foundational productivity principles apply to this situation:

1. Control what you can so you can cope with what you can't!
2. You have to give up what's good to get what's best.
3. Every repeated action needs a SYSTEM.
4. Today's mail is tomorrow's pile.

and of course,

5. Clutter is postponed decisions®.

1) Control What You Can

The first step in making a difference in any area of your productivity is accepting the fact that you can't change others, but you can change yourself. You can complain all you want to about the media, your email, or junk phone calls, but it won't make any difference. You can turn it off!

2) Give Up the Good to Get the Best

There is an abundance of useful information available, but we need to focus on the best information to maximize our productivity. That brings up the question, "What is the best information?" Here's a simple idea familiar to anyone who has been around me for very long: Ask the question, "Does this information help me accomplish my work or enjoy my life?"

3) Every Repeated Action Needs a SYSTEM

You can utilize a SYSTEM (Saving You Space Time Energy Money) in so many areas of information overload. Growing up on the farm in Nebraska, my daddy frequently said, "Half of any job is having the right tool." (He was almost right. Many of our clients have the right tool, but they don't take advantage of all of its capabilities!) The best way to create a SYSTEM is often using a tool. Here are three simple possibilities:

- A password manager
- An email management program
- A checklist for your daily routine

4) Today's Mail is Tomorrow's Pile

One of the significant contributors to information overload is procrastination, which is often a result of perfectionism. As a friend once told me, "A perfectionist is someone who takes great

pains and gives them to everyone else." The pain we give is often to ourselves! That leads me to the final principle:

5) Clutter is Postponed Decisions®.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by information, ask yourself the question, "What is one action I can take today to reduce the information overload in my life?" Don't agonize; pick one thing. Then let someone know what you've decided and ask them to hold you accountable!

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