



## **Three Hundred Reasons Why You Can't Get Things Done By Dr. Jim Beaubien**

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Are you too busy? Do you have a hard time getting everything done? Are you in a fire fighting or crisis management mode? Do you lose track of things? Do you spend enough time on your priorities? Is your current approach impacting on your quality of life? If you are a leader or a manager and you answered yes to most of these questions, you're not alone. It's a common experience that goes with the territory.

Here's why it happens. The average senior executive is responsible for stewarding a minimum of 150 to 200 items at any given time. Some have many more. I've worked with people with upwards of 400. Most don't realize the scope of their responsibilities and few have developed a system for managing all of these items.

Here's what you can do about it.

Begin by developing a comprehensive list of all of the things you have to do. Itemize everything that involves deliverables. Include items that stem from routine work e.g. monthly reports and non-routine work e.g. special projects. Also identify all the items you've delegated. The objective is to get everything you are responsible for onto one master control list. Don't rush it. It's not unusual to take a month to complete this step.

Develop a simple system for routinely tracking these items. I recommend a traditional action plan with a couple of additions. Create a six column form with the headings: item #, what, who, target date, review date and status. This master list allows you to monitor both the things you are responsible for and the things others are responsible to you for.

Computerize your list. You may do this in your calendaring system or on a spreadsheet. I prefer a spread sheet such as Excel because its sorting capabilities allow you to easily break the list down into sub lists e.g. you can sort by person, by project, by department, by date or by items completed.

Begin and end your day with your list. Focus on your priorities. Look at what you have to do and what you've accomplished. Make this a routine. It will give you a sense of control and take much of the crisis out of your life. Routinely refresh your list. Review the status of existing items, add new items as they come up and transfer completed items to a 'done' list (this is where sorting capability is handy). Keep the done list forever. Periodic review will help you maintain perspective and give you a sense of accomplishment.

Try it. It's worked for others. It will probably work for you.