

Quick Guide: To do ... or not to do?

That is the question and an excellent one, but is it the one you ask yourself each morning when you arrive at work? Instead of asking 'what shall I do today?' see below for the top ten tips on how to plan your day by preparing a To Do List.

- 1. Plan the next day at the end of the previous working day.** Once you get into the routine of doing this it will only take a few minutes before you pack up for the day. The task is completed while your brain is still in work mode and the following morning you are spared time-wasting and indecisiveness while you gear yourself up for the day ahead.
- 2. Mind map or jot down randomly on a sheet of paper what you need to do.** Seeing this visually means you can start to group similar tasks together, decide what is possible to do the next day, and prioritise what is important.
- 3. Limit yourself to ten tasks.** Resist the temptation to be overambitious in the number of tasks you set yourself – you will only be setting yourself up for failure.
- 4. List a couple of quick tasks first** that you know you will be able to cross off your list quickly. Crossing off tasks is very satisfying and doing this will motivate you to continue.
- 5. Alternate** the heavier, more mundane, involved tasks with some 'nice' ones. It is almost like rewarding yourself with something good for your achievement. Try it – it works!
- 6. Break up larger tasks**, which can often be the more mundane tasks, into bite-size chunks. Plan to do part of the task each day for a week rather than tackling all at once. It is much more manageable this way.
- 7. Group similar tasks together.** So, list together the phone calls that you need to make, then all the typing tasks, put figure-type tasks together etc. When you come to do these tasks your brain will be in that mode rather than flitting around to different tasks.
- 8. Allocate the amount of time each task will take.** This is an excellent way of seeing if you have planned too much for the time you know you will have available.
- 9. Build in extra time between tasks.** I usually refer to this as a '**buffer**'. It allows for tasks to take slightly longer as you are allowing for interruptions or distractions. Allocate 'buffers' depending on how many interruptions you feel you get in a day.
- 10.** When you look at your initial mind map or jottings of what needs doing, **remember there is always tomorrow and next week!** You must prioritise what is important and has deadlines for today. The rest can wait.

I hope this helps with your daily planning. Nearly forgot: remember to allow for lunch and leave on time after you've planned the following day!

Compiled by Judith Di-Castri