

Missing (or Meeting) Deadlines

I wonder why deadlines are so filled with angst for many people and, more interestingly, why do people miss deadlines? In PEPworldwide's extensive experience of changing forever the way people work, we see and hear a number of reasons. In our experience, one of the major reasons people miss deadlines is because they have a great capacity to over promise, and under deliver. You say "yes" to a piece of work without really understanding how much time and effort it involves, and without understanding how much work you currently have on your plate.

The second major reason for missing deadlines is that you don't have good clarity about what you have been asked to do. Due to this lack of clarity, when you have an extremely busy week, with half a dozen (or more) significant things you have been asked to do, you will tend to only do the things that you are clear about.

Understand that when you are given a significant piece of work, and for whatever reason, good or bad, you say "yes" to the work, then you have, in the other person's mind, agreed to do the work and meet the deadline. If you do not meet that deadline, then it can have a very significant impact on other people. They are relying on you to do your bit so they can then do their bit on it. And they need to do their bit because they've promised someone else. And inevitably, they take a keen interest in the deadline because they are frequently more senior to you in the organisation.

So what's the impact of missing deadlines for you, especially when other senior people are vitally interested in the work? You see people responding to the impending doom of the rapidly approaching deadline for a major piece of work in very predictable ways. They come to work earlier, and stay later; they will take work home and do it there to the detriment of their families, all equating to working longer to get the work done. They damage their relationships with others they work with, because they call in favours to share the burden. They do these things because they want to maintain their reputation. And they frequently run out of time with the result that the quality of the work is not as good as it could or should be. They put additional pressure on those who were relying on the work to be completed with the appropriate quality.

What can you do to address these deadline issues? Here are some simple and relatively easy strategies you can follow:

- Get organised, so you can find the information you need to do the work quickly and easily. There is nothing worse than not being able to find critical information when you need it.
- Ensure you give or get clarity about what exactly needs to be done and that negotiate achievable deadlines.

- Ensure that you track your delegated work – you wouldn't believe how often you hear people say "If it's really important, the boss will remind me". This comment is particularly common to busy work places.
- If you work in an environment that misses deadlines, don't give someone else an important piece of work, without a 'plan of attack' from them about how and when they will achieve it, and then regularly review the progress so you can assist as appropriate.

The first step is to examine if there is a problem. If there is, then begin to change the culture of how you work. Seek agreement as a team, division, department or branch about how you are going to get your work done efficiently and effectively so it becomes the way you work from now on.

All of these improvements are taught in the Personal Efficiency Program (PEP). If you want to know more about what we can do to help you change forever the way that you work then please contact us via our website <http://www.pepworldwide.com.au/index.cfm>.

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