

Get more of the right stuff done

When times are tight, you may think that getting more done is a matter of cramming more activity into every day, hour, or minute. Greater efficiency does contribute to productivity, but it's important not to confuse efficiency with effectiveness, says author and consultant Jeff Davidson.

"Think of efficiency as taking the right approach to a job, doing it quickly and correctly, and generating results," Davidson says. "Effectiveness means undertaking the right task, with the goal of producing a desired, worthwhile effect."

For example, efficiency is calling on a high number of customers in a day; effectiveness is learning something from each customer that helps you improve your product or service.

In the push for productivity, Davidson says, many workplaces labor under the illusion that "motion and activity are more important than closure and results." Ironically, the very technology that is supposed to enhance productivity can end up reducing it.

"Call the office!"

Davidson cites the double-edged sword of the cell phone. "You can get things done with a cell phone," he notes. "However, the nature of what you get done is highly skewed." Just as the man who has only a hammer sees every problem as a nail, the cell phone user tends to do

things that require the cell phone whether or not they're effective. People end up calling their offices every hour or half-hour because they can, but is that useful?

Wrongly placed emphasis on getting more done can take a personal toll as well. "Some professionals proceed as if they can handle everything as long as they stay focused," Davidson says, "like the sales manager who wants to increase his department's quarterly volume by 12 percent, inspire his territory managers each day, enroll in an evening course at a local university, spend more time with his wife and kids, rise to a position of leadership in his professional society, and maintain peak fitness." Such driven people race through activities, he says, without pausing for reflection to determine if they are achieving what they really want from their work and, in fact, their lives. The result is exhaustion and very often a loss of creativity and clear thinking.

"On a daily basis," Davidson says, "recognize that with any type of activity, while efficiency is desirable and admirable, effectiveness is mandatory."

Fast follow-up: Davidson is a consultant and speaker (www.BreathingSpace.com), and author of *Breathing Space: Living & Working at a Comfortable Pace in a Sped-Up Society* (BookSurge, 2007).

The Sodexo logo features the word "sodexo" in a bold, blue, lowercase sans-serif font. A red swoosh underline is positioned beneath the letters "o" and "d". A blue starburst graphic is located above the letter "o".

Making every day a better day

VOLUME VII, NUMBER 2

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 This issue printed on 30% PCW recycled paper.