

## Back to Day One

By Jeff Davidson \* May 1, 2014



Consider the activities you undertake when you move to a new town. You obtain local phone books and other directories. You find a doctor, a dentist, and other healthcare providers. You call utility companies to make sure your services are running the first day you move in. You get to know which stores carry the kinds of goods you desire. You meet people at work, around the neighborhood, and around town.

Soon, you develop a network of resources that enable you to get domestic things done, like eat dinner, have a well functioning car, a dental checkup and so on.

At work, when you assume a new HR post, you arrive at a desk that is, hopefully, clean and clear. Soon enough, you'll fill it up with supplies, files, directories and personal items. You arrange it to make your work space, a place where you can be productive, and ideally, balanced and happy.

### Surround Yourself

The road to accomplishing both short- and long-term tasks works much the same way. You surround yourself with that which will be useful in the clutch. For short-term tasks in particular, it makes sense to have adequate supplies. If you're writing with pen and paper, the old fashioned way, then you need to have those ready. If you're making conference calls, then the equipment, numbers, pass codes, and such resources need to be in place.

If you're tackling first-time tasks, those things for which you have little or no experience, marshaling your resources takes on an added level of importance. What mentors and gurus can you contact to give you a crucial bit of advice, the right file path, or key phone number on your way to accomplishing something right now?

### Get it Together

As a useful exercise before tackling the next short-term project, flesh out the resources you'll need to successfully handle a short-term task. On that blank page, list what you might need in terms of equipment, supplies, staff help, guidance, money and time. The more involved the short-term task is (i.e., a half-day or day-long task), the more valuable this exercise becomes. The exercise itself takes no more than a minute or two and costs nothing. The added measure of using insight and perspective is invaluable.

For any given short-term task, variables such as equipment, supplies, staff help, guidance, money, and time may or may not be significant. Making notes about the variables that will be significant will serve you well.

### Start Simply

Much of the hesitation that occurs before the start of a short-term task is due to erroneous assumptions. For example, if you have to compose a letter or brief report, you might be hung up on starting with that perfect opening sentence or that powerful opening paragraph. Yet, launching into the letter or report is not contingent on nailing the opening part from the outset.

It's often to your advantage to simply start writing and later go back and determine what sentence or paragraph makes for the best lead. The same is true for other tasks you face.

If it helps, allow yourself to take a small step to get started. This might represent simply opening up a file folder, making a phone call, arranging a meeting, or finding a website. The strange and wondrous thing about the human brain is that it likes to continue progressing on the same path it is already on.

One minute of activity in pursuit of a task helps lead to the next minute and the next. Almost independent of how you get started, for most short term tasks, the fact that you did get started clears a major hurdle on the path to completion. You may not be able to get them started in exactly the manner you prefer. It might be raining outside. Construction crews may be making noise on the next floor. If you had your way, you'd rather get started on something else. Start on the task anyway.