



The Customer Communicator Web Extra



Don't let the holidays stress you out

The most effective way to accomplish what you need to during busy times is with thorough planning. While your time is precious, spending a small portion of it every day to plan your activities really does pay off. The key is to include everything you do — even relaxation time.

1. The first step is to clear away the clutter in your workspace.

This helps to get both your mind and workstation ready to tackle the busy times ahead. Group your paperwork into categories, file what you're not using, and put it all away. Make sure the files you use most often are located close by — in your desk drawer or in a vertical file on your desk.

2. Next, create a "master list" of your regular monthly tasks and activities,

as well as the dates by which each need to be completed. Include everything that requires your time during the day — phone calls, email correspondence, meetings, breaks, lunch, etc. Next, add any special holiday items (e.g., helping with office decorations, holiday office parties, etc.).

3. Prioritize the month's tasks and assign each to a specific day.

Put a "1" next to highest-priority items that must be completed within a specific time frame; a "2" next to those tasks that are important but can be completed any time during the month; and a "3" next to those that don't have a specific deadline.

4. Organize your tasks/activities by month, week, and then by day.

Review your entire month. Look for weeks and/or days where your tasks exceed the amount of time that you need to complete them. Transfer those items that are not time critical (i.e., with specific deadlines) to those days that are not as time crunched. Try to balance your tasks throughout the month.

5. Now consider all of your holiday-related personal goals and activities.

List all the tasks and activities necessary to reach those goals. Prioritize your holiday items by designating those tasks that have to be done with an "A" and those that you consider "nice-to-do" items with a "B."

6. Return to your monthly schedule and assign your A-list items to specific days.

Be realistic about your time and energy levels — if you see that Mondays will be extremely hectic this particular month, try to avoid planning any potentially draining A-list activities on those evenings after work. After you have scheduled all of your A-list tasks and activities, fill in any B-list items — or consider postponing them until another less busy month.

7. Now that you've scheduled your time for the month, spend 10 to 15 minutes every day before your shift begins to create a daily to-do list.

Prioritize the tasks you need to accomplish that day. At the end of your shift, take a few minutes to check off the items that you've accomplished and transfer any uncompleted tasks to the next day's to-do list.

8. Before you leave for the day, clear your desk of any work that accumulated during the day

— paperwork, Post-it notes, invoices, etc. File it, pass it on, throw it away — don't let the clutter pile up again.

