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The Post-It Note Approach to Time Management

I want to introduce a new strategy that you can start putting into place at any time.



By [Joelle K. Jay@JoelleKJay](mailto:JoelleKJay)



IMAGE: Getty Images

In addition to the shortcuts I discussed in my [last column](#), I want to introduce a new strategy that you can start putting into place at any time. This is a strategy I learned from

coach Kevin Lawrence, and it has helped many leaders establish a new relationship with time.

The 5 D's are: "Do it, delete it, delegate it, decide on it, and date it."

The "it" in these cases usually refers to some small task or action item--every time you have to get through a stack of email, voice mail messages, or a stack of paperwork, the 5 D's are crucial. You will drastically cut the time you need to get through the stack.

To elaborate, here are the 5 D's and how you can use them to maximize your time:

Do it means do it *now*. Use this for any task that takes fifteen minutes or less.

Delete it means there are some things that *do not require your response*. Just because someone sent you the message/document/suggestion doesn't mean you have to reply. If an item doesn't advance a relationship or achieve an important goal, get rid of it.

Delegate it means pass it on to someone else who can handle the job. They don't have to do it better than you; they don't even have to do it as well or as fast. They probably won't. But unless it's a top priority or specific result that you and only you can deliver, you're not the right person. Pass it on. Don't abdicate the responsibility; you still need to be sure the task gets done. This is not a game of hot potato. It's a way of reorganizing work so the right people do the appropriate jobs for maximum efficiency and results.

Decide on it means no more moving items from one stack to another, telling yourself, "I'll get back to that." Will you attend the meeting or won't you? Will you agree to that request or won't you? Make a decision. Move on.

Date it means that you get to choose *when* you will give big-ticket items your undivided time and attention. Figure out how much time you need and block it out in your schedule. You can forget about it until then.

To put this into practice, try writing a mini-version of the 5 Ds on a sticky note and put it near a stack of papers, projects, emails or administrative tasks. Set aside some time to tackle the tasks using the 5 Ds. Notice how they cut down the time it takes to finish the tasks. Set aside some time to tackle the tasks using the 5 Ds. Notice how the 5s cut down the time it takes to finish the tasks.

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Joelle K. Jay, Ph. D., is an executive coach specializing in leadership development. She strategizes with business leaders to enhance their performance and maximize business results. Her clients include presidents, vice presidents, and C-level executives in Fortune 500 companies such as Microsoft, Google, and Adobe. She is the author of *The Inner Edge: The 10 Practices of Personal Leadership*. For a free summary, go to www.TheInnerEdge.com or email Info@TheInnerEdge.com.