

Slow Death By a Thousand To Do's: An Answer—The “Rotating” To Do List

By Suzi Elton

Do you live your life constantly attempting to finish your To Do list? Are you demoralized on an ongoing basis because the To Do list grows as fast on one end as it shrinks on the other end? Does it seem like your To Do list is a stack of items about two feet high, and consumes all your time? Do you wonder if there is any meaningful way to manage your To Do list and not be “run” by it?

Consider the “Rotating To Do List”. The concept is that you always organize your To Do list with the highest priority items on top, and handle the most important items first. It's called a rotating To Do list, because the most important things naturally rotate to the top of the list, and off the list when accomplished. Unimportant items naturally rotate off the bottom of the list when you realize they do not need to be done. Items rotate up and down the list according to their importance.

1. All items are arranged in order of priority. You always focus on and handle the top item on the list first and keep your focus on the top few items every day.
2. You handle as many other items on the list as you can, and stop when you want, without guilt or negative self talk. If items are not really important, they will naturally fall off the bottom of the list. If you have a lot of minor items that bug you, set aside a day once in a while to just get as many of these things out of you way as you can.
3. If there are consequences involved in a particular To Do item, it is a high priority item, and needs to be put at the top and handled first.
4. A simple way to create a rotating To Do list is to type it on the computer using bullets. Once typed, rearrange the bullets in order of priority.
5. Use your list every day, and keep it where you can consult it first thing every day. Make it something you revise at the end of the day or first thing in the morning. That way, you have a clear plan of action for your day every day.
6. When revising daily, simply remove anything that's been completed, and add anything new. Rearrange the order of priority with the most important things on top, and go.
7. You could even consider keeping another list at the bottom of your To Do list, or on the next page. Call this list “Accomplishments”, and simply cut and paste any items on your To Do list that you have completed onto your Accomplishments list. This will give you a great feeling of perspective when you wonder where your time has gone.

Maintaining focus on accomplishing highest priority items first gives a great feeling of satisfaction and competence. It eliminates the negative feeling of being constantly bogged down in minutia. It helps us make progress on the things we consider most important. Doing that makes us feel like winners rather than losers to To Do trivia.

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