

Handling conflicting priorities

Do you have several equally important things to do, all at once, probably all right this minute? Of course you do. Here are some task-juggling tips:

- Clear the decks. Deliberately setting aside less-important tasks—preparing attendance reports, for example, or replenishing office supplies—does more than just free up a few minutes of precious time. It also helps you get those things off your mind and not waste time worrying about what you aren't doing. Tell people when you plan to take on those lower-priority items, or delegate them to others.
- Rotate your attention. This is another way to keep from worrying about what you aren't doing. When priorities conflict, it's better to give each project a nudge forward in turn. This way, nothing is delayed by inattention for too long, so everyone who's clamoring for results gets something to chew on fairly soon. You're less likely to procrastinate on tackling a big project if you take small steps.
- Think and plan your actions. We know one manager who, when faced with a crisis, invariably goes to lunch. Far from wasting time, he uses the break to prepare himself and create an efficient plan of action. When the meal's over, he's fully prepared to accomplish far more than when it began.