

The Tyranny of the Urgent

Thanks to my client and good friend, Hugh Fisher, for sharing this with me.

Charles Hummel wrote a great booklet I highly recommend entitled The Tyranny of the Urgent. Mr. Hummel points out that “the urgent” demands our attention and monopolizes our time at the expense of what’s truly important. We find ourselves stuck in “crisis” mode, dealing with that day’s troubles, backlogs of calls to return/e-mails to reply to/quotes to get out...

An unforgiving taskmaster, the urgent saps energy and creativity. More importantly, it robs you of the time and resources to devote to more important matters. Direction...strategic change... innovation... growth...rarely are these the product of a mind preoccupied by the urgent.

Many of us find ourselves trapped in the urgent due to the needs of others. True, smaller staffs have meant more for all of us to do, but it’s still up to us to establish and manage realistic expectations. If we accept another responsibility or project that has to be done by Friday without defining reality, we’re inviting urgency.

Technology can be great, but how long does it take you to go through your e-mails? I receive between 500 and 1,000 per day, the majority of which are junk. I needed even better technology in the form of advanced spam filters to save me from technology. How about other internet use? Most people don’t realize that a few minutes here and there spent updating social media sites, online shopping and watching videos compounds urgency.

Do you have “pet projects” that you like to do, but someone else could just as easily accomplish? Retaining these projects instead of delegating the work to someone else is volunteering to stay mired in the urgent. Similarly, do you wrestle with giving control over certain work to others? If so, you need to face the issues: either you don’t have the right people who can do the work; or you fear it won’t get done right (limiting other person’s opportunity for growth and success); or you simply don’t want to give it up and you would rather be swamped by the urgent.

Victory over the Tyrant

Additionally, there are two steps I’ve found successful when battling the urgent. The first is to prioritize. Everything. And the top priority is “the important”. With rare exception, I’ll schedule from ½-hour to an hour daily to focus on the important. I’ll put it right into my calendar, so that I don’t have to “find time” for it. Urgent may be all around, but that time blocked out for more important issues gives balance. It actually rejuvenates me, helps with focus, and contributes more to a sense of accomplishment than all of the urgent. Of course it takes discipline to say “no” when the urgent tries to crowd out the important. But hey, the urgent will still be there.

Second, I establish and prioritize an important quarterly goal. Every three months, I identify something important to be accomplished in that 90-day timeframe. I also identify activities up front which I need to do to accomplish my goal. Then throughout the quarter I track my progress on those activities and towards accomplishing the goal. At the end of 90 days, I've accomplished something truly important—rather than being continually victimized by the urgent.

We at Design Basics can help you identify and accomplish “the important”, contributing to your success. Because we know what's most important to today's home buyers. *Want to break the shackles of the urgent?* Call us at (800) 947-7526!