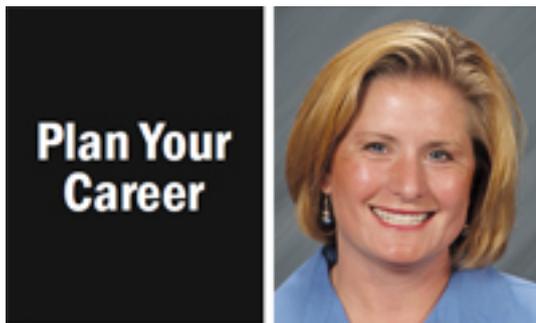


SOS: Under a deadline, under pressure

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Thursday, 01 December 2011 12:55



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Writing under a deadline brings out the defiance in me. I do it all the time and despite my best efforts, I sometimes fall behind. The words that ring in my ears are: are you surprised to have arrived here? No, I knew it was coming. Yet, all the other deadlines came, too. There is a better way to work. What I am about to tell you works for me. I should use it more often.

SOS is the description for an international Morse code distress signal which over time has come to be associated with the phrase, "Save our ship." A sea captain in trouble will send out a signal pleading for assistance. While a sea captain's deadline might be particularly acute, SOS can save your ship, too, if you are overwhelmed, out of time and sinking fast. The key is to Strategize and Organize so you can Succeed.

Strategize. When is your deadline? Look at a calendar, mark the day, date and time, and keep it top of mind. Ignoring your day of reckoning won't make it go away. What has to happen by then? Make a list of even the most minute tasks (wrap gifts, label gifts, bring gifts to Grandma's).

Organize. Take a bird's-eye view of your project to-do list. Can one task lead to another? Can you complete some tasks simultaneously? Consider that some tasks might be okay to skip, while others can be done by other people. Catering a party, for example, might be too expensive to delegate, but hiring a neighbor to clean the house the day before the event could free you up to do your own cooking. Some people skip the cleaning altogether until the guests leave. Put an Optional column on your to-do list and use it liberally.

Succeed. When you know what you must do, how you will do it and by when, you can knock off one task at a time until your work is complete. No more worrying that you might forget something. No wasting time trying to decide what to do next. You invested a short time on strategy and organization. Your success is a natural outcome.

SOS. When the seas get rough, save yourself.

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