

## Best Practices: Decide Delete Decline

Written by Julie Desmond  
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Start every day with a list? Yawn. Actually refer to the list throughout the day? Okay, sure. Start every day by crossing off most of what is on that list? Now we're talking!

People who manage time for a living say the best list is the one that frees us up to tackle the items that matter: what will have the most impact over the shortest period of time? In three quick steps, you can have more summer in your days, more vacation in your summer and more productive work hours when not working isn't an option. Simply decide, delete and decline. First, decide what matters most today, this week and long term. Look at your to-do list and make decisions about whether the items that appear there will impact any of the goals that matter most. If a task doesn't move something forward, put it on the back burner, the bottom of the list, a separate page. Somehow get it out of sight, so you're not tripping over that item while on your way to something more critical.

Next, check your email with one finger on the delete button. Is this message of any value? Is action required? If you cannot respond immediately, when will you? Flag messages with a date and action reminder, and move on. If you have responded, delete the message. If you receive feeds and junk mail, look at them and then delete. Nothing drags us away from what matters like the noise of things that don't. Unsubscribe to junk mail, so you can spend more time deleting other things.

Finally, just say no. Meetings, volunteer opportunities, fundraisers, links to interesting pins and fascinating articles... Decline all invitations, at least emotionally, unless and until you have determined that accepting is imperative, either to yourself or to someone else. I know a guy who says no to everything. At least initially. This is not the best practice everyone should adopt. However, the word NO is a useful tool. Keep it handy and use it often. NO tends to pay for itself - the more you use it, the less often you need it. People you interact with regularly will learn to invite you when you are required, and will tend to explain why they need you, rather than expecting you to accept every invitation.

So what are you going to do today? Decide what matters, delete what you don't need and decline what distracts you. Then go enjoy a powerful, productive workday.

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