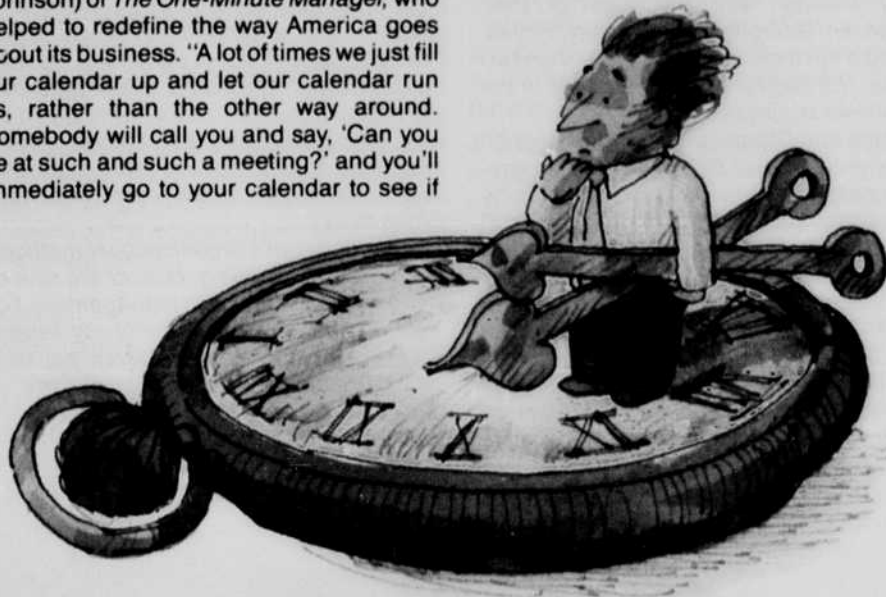


But simply managing the flow of paper is not enough to stay on top of your job. Even if you are diligent in your follow-up detail, and even if you keep a meticulous calendar of appointments, you could still be mismanaging your time. "One of the big problems people have is they let their calendar manage them rather than their goals," observes management expert Kenneth Blanchard, co-author (with Spencer Johnson) of *The One-Minute Manager*, who helped to redefine the way America goes about its business. "A lot of times we just fill our calendar up and let our calendar run us, rather than the other way around. Somebody will call you and say, 'Can you be at such and such a meeting?' and you'll immediately go to your calendar to see if

Once your goals are defined, you've got to go about achieving them, which brings us back to paperwork. Nearly every key transaction or exchange you will make on your first job will be carried out, in some form, on paper, and you will most likely have to wade your way through a mass of paperwork to accomplish your goals.

Knowing what to do with a piece of paper—from an inter-office memo to an in-



you're free, but what you should be doing is seeing where the appointment fits in with your goals before you make a decision."

One of the easiest ways to stay organized on the job, then, is to clearly define and redefine your goals on each and every project. If you know precisely what result you're looking for from a given action, then you will more than likely develop the skills to achieve those goals. If you're uncertain of your goals, then there's a good chance you'll be tentative and uncertain (and, hence, disorganized) in your actions.

"The way you save the most time is to determine up front what the goals and objectives are," agrees Blanchard. "All good performance starts with clear goals. It takes time to clean up the messes we've made that are caused by the lack of communication around goals."

And, in order to clearly define and establish career goals, Blanchard tells young professionals not to be afraid to ask their superiors for help. "So often people let their pride get in the way, and they don't know exactly what they're doing or what the assignment is all about," he says. "They'll never be organized because they don't know what they're supposed to do. What you need to do with your boss is not be afraid to ask for help. If you do, there's no way you can lose. If your boss gives you help and direction, then you win. If your boss doesn't, then you break even because you didn't have it before."

invitation, to an order form—can often spell success or failure in the organization department. To help her clients traffic the flow of paper, organization expert Winston has devised something called the TRAF system, which refers to the ability to toss, refer, act on or file any piece of business correspondence.

Your first chance, using Winston's mindset, to toss a piece of paper comes when you first receive it. If it's junk mail—an invitation to a function you're not expected to



respond to or attend, for example—get rid of it. Throw the roughage away before it gets a chance to accumulate. Sometimes the mere sight of untended paperwork is enough to slow you down.

When you refer an item to someone else—either by sending it to a colleague's attention for further information, or passing it on to another department—don't think of it as passing the buck. It may be that another person in your department is better equipped to handle the matter.

If, however, you plan on eventually taking action on an item, act now. There's no sense putting off the simple execution of a simple matter, unless of course some sort of crisis rears its ugly head, in which case you should carefully file the item where you can quickly locate it at first chance.

And, of course, if you've got to file something, file it somewhere you can easily find it. Devise a system which works best for you, one which helps you prioritize your paperwork load.

"There are only four and a half things to do with a piece of paper," Winston says, referring to her four-step TRAF method. (The "half", she says, is for those of us who actually want to read the thing before we do anything else with it.) "The ability to process and manage paper, I really feel, is a key aspect to being able to see where you stand, to know what you have to do when you have to do it.

"But what it all comes back to is organization," she says, "and what it means to organize, to be organized, is that your life is set up in the home or in the office to make things comfortable and easy for you, so that you can find what you want to find when you want to find it. And I firmly believe people need at least some form of organization in order to do that."

TO DO OR NOT TO DO

We are a list-happy society. Most likely all of you have kept one list or another during your lifetime, perhaps a shopping list or a research list or a list of frequently-called telephone numbers.

Most likely, too, you will keep something resembling a "To Do" list once you begin your first job, a task-by-task agenda detailing everything you set out to accomplish in a given day or week. The trouble with "To Do" lists is they tend to get out of hand, and unless you make smart use of the things, "To Do" lists will do a number on your sense of achievement.

"Your goal in a given day should not be to do everything on your 'To Do' list," counsels *One-Minute Manager* co-author Blanchard. "Your goal should be to do the most important things on your list. A lot of