Y
your inbox is overflowing. You have three different to-do lists, including one on your mobile device. Not to mention the one in your head. Dread is creeping in and wreaking what used to be a job you were passionate about. It’s time to make some changes.

“Most of your dread doesn’t come from the work itself. It comes from how you think about the work,” says Jason Womack, a workplace performance expert, executive coach and author of Your Best Just Got Better: Work Smarter, Think Bigger, Make More. “The psychological weight of unfinished tasks and unmade decisions is huge. There is a constant feeling of pressure to do more with less. You can’t change that reality… but you can make peace with it.”

First, Womack says, you’ve got to accept that you are never going to get it all done. The to-do list is updated daily. Instead, try giving yourself the satisfaction of a job well-done with these work-smart tips:

• Time blocking and prioritization. Look at your to-do list, figure out where you have blocks of time to act on those items and then prioritize. “I keep my defined ‘work’ actions to 15 to 30 minutes each,” Womack says. “These are the chunks of time I can use to stay focused, minimize interruptions and work effectively.”

• Take technology shortcuts by setting up a Microsoft Office rule that sorts incoming emails to specific folders. Or keep your current projects in a cloud folder so they’re accessible on the go. If you don’t know how, ask someone who’s tech-savvy to help.

• Figure out what distracts you. Identify what is blocking your ability to give all of your attention to what needs your attention. Is it the constant ding of emails? Mute the alert sound. Is it employers or colleagues who need “just a minute” of your time? Block off visitation hours. Once you know the triggers, you can begin to make subtle changes so that you wind up getting more done.

The Endless To-Do List: Three Ways to Work Smarter

By Amy Anderson

Pennsylvania’s ACT 101 program has been helping college students since 1971 realize their dreams of earning a college degree. Established by Pittsburgh-based state legislator K. Leroy Irvis for Pennsylvania residents with documented needs, Act 101 today operates at 35 Commonwealth institutions of higher education. On their website, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), which now oversees the program explains that Act 101 “provides services to academically and financially disadvantaged students … so they can successfully complete post secondary study.” Duquesne University’s ACT 101 program, renamed Pennsylvania Acts in 2009, was established in 1977 and has played a key role in assisting thousands of both full- and part-time undergraduate students explore future careers, access tutoring, obtain financial aid and ultimately graduate. University’s ACT 101 program, renamed Pennsylvania Acts in 2009, was established in 1977 and has played a key role in assisting thousands of both full- and part-time undergraduate students explore future careers, access tutoring, obtain financial aid and ultimately graduate. Pennsylvania Acts students. For example, to help students prepare for mid-terms and finals, the program holds test preparation sessions, where topics such as study techniques, time management, mnemonics and test-taking are emphasized. In addition, students are offered post-graduation planning sessions. Learning coaches work closely with graduating seniors to assure that they are meeting all requirements necessary to move forward with life outside of the University. Finally, the Pennsylvania Acts staff helps with employment as the Learning Skills Center offers eligible students a number of work-study positions. Through the services provided by Pennsylvania Acts and its dedicated staff, Duquesne University’s Act 101 program has provided and will continue to provide our students with valuable services designed to guide their steps toward a prosperous future.
HAVE A PLAN
by John Maxwell

Most people allow their lives to simply happen to them. They float along. They wait. They react. And by the time a large portion of their life is behind them, they realize they should have been more proactive and strategic.

I hope that hasn’t been true for you. If it has, then I want to encourage you to develop a stronger sense of urgency and a pro-strategic mindset. As you plan and develop strategies for your life and growth, I want to share with you some of the things I’ve learned that have helped me in the process.

1. Life is very simple, but keeping it that way is very difficult.

Despite what others might say, I believe life is pretty simple. It’s a matter of knowing your values, making some key decisions based on those values and then managing those decisions on a day-to-day basis. And at least in theory, the longer we live and the more we learn, the more experience and the more knowledge we acquire—well, that should make life even simpler. But life has a way of becoming complicated, and it is only through great effort that we can keep it simple.

2. Designing your life is more important than designing your career.

If you plan your life well, then your career will work itself out. If you don’t believe you can succeed in your career in the long term, you’re not very likely to give it the planning attention it deserves.

Planning your life is about finding yourself, knowing who you are and then customizing a design for your growth. Once you draw the blueprint for your life, then you can apply it to your career.

3. Life is not a dress rehearsal!

There is no warm-up for life, yet that’s the way many people seem to be treating it. Each of us goes on stage cold, with no preparation, and we have to figure it out as we go along. That can be messy. We fail. We make mistakes. But we still need to give it our best from the very start.

We don’t get a rehearsal for life. We have to do the best we can in the moment. But we can learn from others who have gone before us and found success. They should inspire us to plan as best we can and then give our all. Comedian Fred Allen once said, “You only live once. But if you work it right, once is enough.”

4. In planning your life, multiply everything by two.

Give two times the effort and energy to growing yourself. And allow yourself to grow slowly and with deep roots. Remember that a squash vine or tomato plant grows in a matter of weeks, produces for several days or weeks and then dies when the first frost comes. In comparison, a tree grows slowly—over years, decades or even centuries; it produces fruit for decades; and if healthy, it stands up to frost, storms and drought.

2011-2012 ACT 101 STUDENT PROFILE
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

by Ameya Ranade

The pie charts and bar graph below depict ethnic, gender and academic performance data pertaining to Duquesne University’s 2011-2012 ACT 101 student population.

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20 rules to help us handle the challenges, accomplish what we want and create a beautiful and satisfying life.

1. With eyes of gratitude, notice all the beauty around you.

2. Smile as you recognize the many blessings in your life.

3. Joyfully say “thank you” to all who contribute to your life.

4. Pick up the mirror and ask, “How can I be more helpful here?”

5. Commit to putting more love into everything you do.

6. Feel joy in the knowledge that your life has meaning.

7. Know that you count—and act as if you do.

8. Take a deep breath and cut the cord to any unhealthy dependency.

9. Let go of blame, stand tall and take control of your reactions to all life experiences.

10. Learn something valuable from all life experiences—good or bad.

11. Do your best and let go of the outcome.

12. Act responsibly and lovingly toward yourself and others.

13. Rise above your fear, and focus on all you have to give to the world.

14. Be patient and trust “It’s all happening perfectly.”

15. Quiet your mind and trust that your inner wisdom will lead you wherever you need to go.

16. Relax knowing you can handle all that needs to be handled.

17. Reach out and invite others into your life.

18. Reach out and invite others into your life.

19. Always choose the path with the heart.

20. Touch the world with love wherever you go. 

2011-2012 PENNSYLVANIA ACTS STUDENTS - GRADUATION STATUS

Undergraduates graduated in 2011-12: 131 24%
Undergraduates still pursuing degree: 237 76%
Total PENNSYLVANIA ACTS students: 350 100%