

The 5 Essentials Top Performers Use to Keep Daily Overwhelm at Bay

Adapted from Overcoming Overwhelm: Recapture Your Time, Energy and Focus

By Bob Wendover

“Why does Ellen sail through the day while the rest of us struggle to stay on top of everything?” This is a question Aaron has been thinking about for months. He watches Ellen in meetings. He connects with her on projects and just observes her in the workplace. “It’s just not fair,” he thinks.

Perhaps you’ve had the same feeling about one or more people where you work. While you battle to keep up with all the work and pressures, these individuals look relaxed. They get stuff done in a shorter time. They make all the right decisions. They avoid all the busywork everyone else seems saddled with.

The individuals who seem to be so relaxed, efficient and effective share certain attributes. I know, I have been studying them for a long time. They have developed the ability to leverage their energy. As a result, they can focus by avoiding what has been called “decision fatigue.” In other words, they make many fewer daily decisions than those around them. They have learned these practices from others. These ideas might have come from conversations with the people they admire or perhaps observations of how those people navigate the typical day.

As a result of these conversations, they began to see patterns in what they observed. Then they adopted those behaviors themselves. Bottom line? *You need to do the same thing if you’re going to beat your decision fatigue and overcome your feelings of overwhelm. Trust me, it’s not that hard. It just takes some focus and perseverance.*

First, **emulate the best thinkers around you.** In many cases, these people are not the official leaders in the organization. But they are the individuals other people look to for ideas, guidance and inspiration. It might be

engineering colleague who always gets to the root of the problem before anybody else. Maybe it’s the warehouse supervisor everyone looks to when the shipping department gets backed up. Perhaps it’s the customer care person who can handle any situation. Who does this kind of thing where you work?

Ask yourself, “Who are the best decision-makers I know?” They might not be in your workplace. One person might be a neighbor. Another might be a member of the Rotary Club. Maybe a third person is someone you know from where you used to work. Identifying three or four of these people is enough to get started. You’ll discover others over time.

Once you’ve identified these individuals, ask yourself, “*What do they do that I should be doing?*” In other words, “What habits of mind do they practice that would benefit me as well?” Those best able to manage the decisions and pressures around them have developed a certain sense of consistency and self-discipline. These attributes guide their words, actions and attitudes. They practice certain rituals and routines. This enables them to remain focused in the midst of pressure and chaos.

Their outlook helps them to look past present crises and keep an eye on their goals. They are optimists who look for the good in others. These positive relationships help them leverage time and build influence. Wouldn’t you like to have this kind of focus and energy? You can, but it takes time to develop.

Next, ask yourself, “*What are these people not doing that I should not be doing?*” Life is full of temptations and distractions. If you’re not careful, these distractions can turn into habits

that sap your energy and impair your focus. You might be losing your edge every morning by checking social media or watching the news first thing. Wouldn't it be better to read something inspirational or go on a walk? Maybe it's that triple-shot caramel macchiato that powers you up at 7AM, but drags you down by the middle of the morning. Perhaps you end up in distracting conversations all day because with the way you've positioned your desk. Each one of those chats you have drains a bit of energy you could use elsewhere.

Second, surround yourself with people who will feed and encourage you. Simply put, we become who we spend time with. These individuals may be friends, colleagues, industry connections or other people whom you have come to admire. These colleagues can serve as a source of support, a resource for ideas and connections, and means for accountability. Talk to the people who seem to sail through the day and make the best decisions. Chances are, they belong to an informal group of peers to whom they turn for inspiration. As much as they are supported by these people, they work to support their colleagues as well. Get to know these individuals. Ask them about their mindset and what they do to maintain their edge. Most will be happy to share. Understand, however, that they will expect you to practice the same discipline if you want to become a part of their professional or social circle.

Third, ask yourself "What tasks and decisions can I eliminate, delegate or automate? *What am I doing that doesn't really need to be done?* Examples of this might be a task you complete out of habit, even though it is no longer helpful. Maybe technology has replaced it, but you don't want to take time to learn the software. Perhaps it's a report your boss assigned long ago and is no longer valuable. Even a 15-minute task performed once per week, turns into an hour a month or one and half days per year.

What tasks and responsibilities can I delegate to others? Too many times, we convince ourselves that completing a task is just easier than delegating it. Part of this rationalization is sometimes the sense of control we would lose. But in holding back, we add to our own burden. We also deprive someone else of the opportunity to learn something new. (Look for ideas on how to do this successfully in Chapter Seven)

What tasks can I automate? It's been said that there's an app for everything. That might not be totally true, but there are certainly lots of applications that can be leveraged to reduce your day-to-day burden. Incidentally, the best thinkers come up with a list of possible tasks to automate and then delegate the task of finding these solutions to someone else. (Look for ideas on how to do this successfully in Chapters Six and Nine)

Make a list of all these possible eliminate, delegate and automate items. Then work through the list, one or two at a time. Don't turn this into another distracting project. If you resolve one of these items once every week or two, you will have saved yourself several hours of time and energy after a few months. Keep this list and add to it as you become aware of other unnecessary tasks. After years of doing this, I have become very aware of all the little nuisance tasks that can sap my time. You will too.

Fourth, dump your pride and ask. Have you ever put off asking for help because you think it would be embarrassing to do so? Yeah, me too. Don't let this kind of self-talk add to your stress. Those able to avoid overwhelm are great connectors. They'll ask for help from anyone. They recognize the value of reaching out for insights they may not have considered. They seek out the people in any specialty, sometimes paying substantial fees for their expertise.

There truly is no such thing as a dumb question. In fact, sometimes the person providing the answer will realize how insightful your question is to them as well. When it comes to reducing

decision fatigue, asking for help is one of the best places to start for a solution. While this book is full of great ideas, ask your peers. They're facing the same distractions and demands as you. Why not sit and strategize together? Working collaboratively on a problem, enables you to leverage your time, skills and knowledge.

Fifth, keep your goals at the forefront. I know! That might seem unrealistic when you're feeling overwhelmed. But a major source of decision fatigue and overwhelm is the dissonance we feel when we don't complete what we want to accomplish personally and professionally. The best decision-makers are acutely aware of this challenge. They develop rituals around their goals to ensure they are not lost in the chaos of daily work. These include:

- Reviewing them every morning as a way to begin the day.
- Posting them prominently in workspaces, vehicles, and bathrooms, kitchens and other places they frequent.
- When you are asked to take on new tasks or commitments, ask yourself how it will,

or maybe will not, fit into your goals. If it is not a fit, what can you do to eliminate, delegate or automate it? (I realize that this can sometimes be challenging when the boss sets an expectation. But even then, there might be room for adjustment or negotiation if you come up with an alternative. (See Chapter Seven for more detail on this idea.)

- Announcing your goals to respected colleagues and asking them to hold you accountable. Offer to do the same thing in return. Once again, overcoming overwhelm is a community effort.

While establishing these rituals can feel strange at first, reflect on their value. When the distractions of the day arise, these well-practiced rituals enable you to remain focused. This will also remind you to eliminate, delegate or automate as many of these nuisances. In Chapters Six through Eleven, I identify more than 100 of the specific tactics and ideas you can use to leverage these essentials and overcome your feelings of overwhelm. Let's get started!

Bob Wendover is the award-winning author of *Overcoming Overwhelm: Recapture Your Time, Energy and Focus*. He has spent the past 35 years showing employers how to adapt to the ever-evolving workforce. In this high-energy, interactive session, Bob reveals how top performers avoid the demands and distractions of today's workplace. Attendees have raved about his down-to-earth approach to one of life's biggest challenges. Bring Bob in for one of the most meaningful and results-oriented sessions your team has seen in years. For more information -- <https://commonsenseenterprises.net/stop-helping-me-keynote/>