

Are You Overloaded?

When you're asked to do too much.



by Jeff Davidson

WHEN YOU'RE ASKED TO take on too much at work, stay too many hours, or handle more than you're comfortable handling, the ability to assert yourself is valuable. Suppose you work for a boss who's highly demanding? How do you keep your job, turn in a good performance, maintain sufficient relations, and still have a life?

You say *no* without having it sound like: "That's something I'd really like to tackle, but I don't think it would be in our best interest since I'm already on XYZ." "I can certainly get started on it, but because of the DEF deadline and the XYZ event, I'm certain I won't get into it full fling until the middle of next month." "Hmmm, help me here; I'm not sure what level priority this should be in light of the lineup I'm facing."

Being a Bit More Forceful

Here is some more language, mildly more forceful, that you may need to draw on: "I'm stretched out right now to the full extent of my resources; if I take this on, not only will I not be able to give it my best effort, but the other things I'm handling will suffer."

"I'm requesting that I not be put on assignment JKL, if that's okay with you. I've worked long and hard for several months now, and if I don't regain some sense of balance, I'll put my health at risk." "Is there anyone else who could take that on? I need to get a better handle on what I've been assigned. In a couple weeks, or month, when things calm down, I may be able to work something else into the lineup." "I wish I could. I've been burning the candle at both ends; if I start to burn it in the middle there'll be nothing left."

In Dire Situations

Suppose your boss is demanding beyond reason, and despite your protestations to the contrary, keeps piling on the work and responsibilities. No matter how effective you are at asserting yourself and how often you do it, you seem to be besieged with more assignments, more projects. If this is the case for you, the first thing to do is to stop and assess the situation. *Here are three basic options:*

1. *You can leave your present posi-*

tion, department, or organization. This is radical, but may be the best option.

2. *You can push for a compromise situation where you take on some of the new work* (or all of it), but you'll receive added resources (more staff, bigger budget, or more equipment).

3. *You can knuckle under and simply take on the added assignments with no additional resources.*

Since the middle option is most desirable, assert yourself to make your situation easier. *Here are some words you can use if you're willing to only take on some assignments:* "I believe I can handle the STU assignment, but the rest simply has to go to the other department. I'm snowed under now, and it won't be of any value to anybody if I can't deliver." "Of all these projects, which is the one that is most important? That's the one I probably ought

to tackle." "I appreciate what you must be up against. I'm already working over the max, but I'd like to help you by taking on the VWZ assignment."

Get the Resources You Need

You need adequate resources to tackle what's assigned to you. If you need a bigger budget, new equipment, or other resources, put in writing precisely what you need and why, giving your boss the ammunition he or she may need to make it so. Convey that *what's being asked of you* is not something you can simply add to the fray, but rather *it will require blood, sweat, and tears—money, time, and effort.* **SSE**

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ACTION: *Get the resources you need in your job.*