



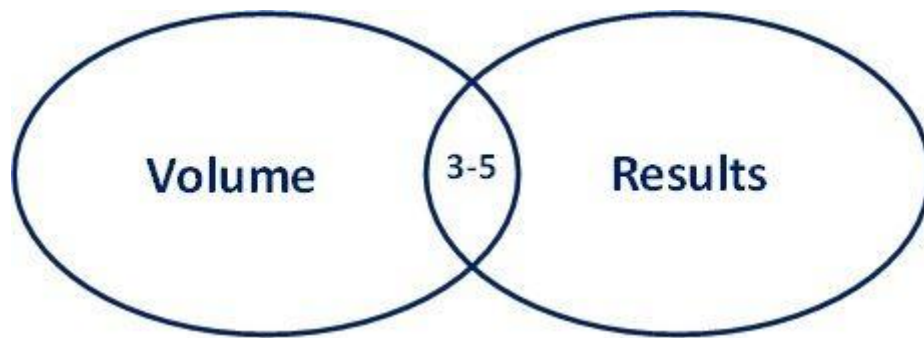
Narrow The Focus To Increase Productivity

Only by narrowing the volume of deliverables on the horizon can we ensure that what we focus on gets done. It's like having a laser focus to cut through our workload and achieve our meaningful goals.

Recently I was working with a mid-level manager and she was frustrated by the number of deadlines that she was missing or, if she delivered on time, the quality was not what she wanted. As we delved deeper we found that she had very little or no focus on what she worked on, she was busy but not productive, she was constantly being driven by the reactive deadlines. The problem she had was that she was trying to deliver on too much and as a result her attention was spread too thin.

When we are focusing on too many deliverables we find that the amount of attention we give to each is insufficient to get the results we want. The way to overcome this is to narrow the focus down to the 3-5 most important deliverables. Now this doesn't mean that we forget about our other

deliverables, we still need to “spin the plates”, it just means that we spend less time on them. If we take the 3-5 main focus activities and book time in our calendar to work on them we will have a more concentrated focus on each.



Research by FranklinCovey showed the following:

When we focus on only 1 – 3 upcoming deliverables we will fully deliver on them all (by deliver I mean on-time, on-budget and on-quality)

If we focus on 4 – 10 deliverables our delivery will drop to 1 – 2 of them and.....

If we focus on 11+ deliverables our delivery will drop to zero. That's right, nothing will be delivered to our expectations.

You can read more on their [blog “Transforms Goals”](#) or get their [book “The 4 Disciplines of Execution”](#)

So how do you narrow the focus?

First you get a clear understanding of all the deliverables you have on your plate. A good way to do this is to write them all down in a list (for most of us this can be quite a daunting task). Once you have your list you prioritise them based on importance to the organisation. You may need to have some discussions with other stakeholders to clarify their true importance. You then take the top priority deliverables and again narrow your focus to the most important 3 – 5. These are the ones that need to have time booked in your calendar to work on over the next week or so. Make a decision and **STICK TO IT**. You may need to push back on the “Time Bandits” who will try and steal your focused time for their priorities.

Call to action:

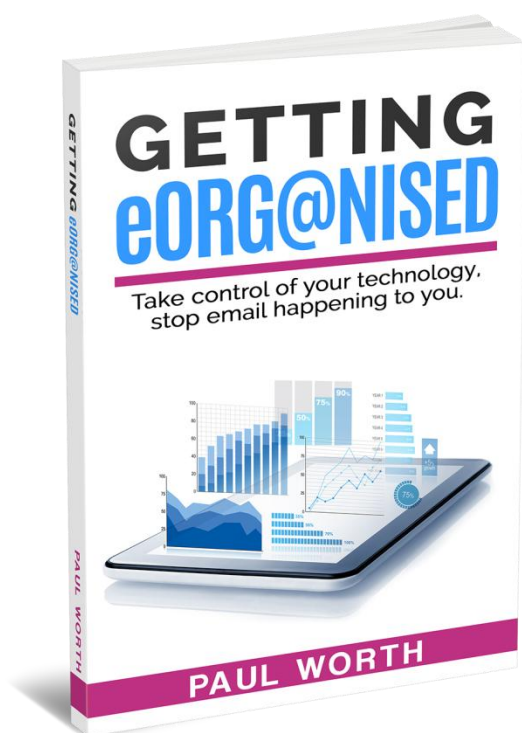
So what are the 3 – 5 key deliverables that you have coming up? Can you “narrow the focus” and cut into them like a laser beam? Once they are delivered you can then pick out the next most important to focus on.

Remember to keep “spinning the plates” on the other goals outside your new narrowed focus.

Love to hear your thoughts.

Till next time. Cheers, Paul

PAUL WORTH is a productivity expert with over 20 years of experience in email management, through his productivity program “eOrganising”, he has helped thousands of individuals and teams improve their efficiency and effectiveness in the management of their email workflow.



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