

BALANCING TOMORROW, TODAY™

by Dr. Stacie



How does one go about simplifying life at work? Isn't your job supposed to be, well, *work*? And isn't work supposed to be, you know, *hard*? Okay, so now that I have opened this can of worms, what makes work "work" anyway? And if we even dare ask, how can we simplify tomorrow's work life, today...and still get paid to do it?

You are probably sitting back now, wondering how I'm going to pull off this tall order! And actually, I am happy to inform you that I have been practicing the art of "do less, accomplish more" for over twenty years now. Like balance, doing less and accomplishing more is a process that you always practice. What I am excited to share, however, is how effective it is in the workplace.

First, let's take a look at what makes work "work." I find that anything complex and/or chaotic in the work environment intensifies my experience of "work." If I have clear expectations of what I need to do for my job, it doesn't seem to involve as much work. As soon as the complexity level rises—meaning, I have more responsibilities without clear direction and/or authority—my job suddenly seems hard and I have to exert myself much more to achieve the same level of results.

The experience of complexity is very similar to when my work environment becomes extremely chaotic. This is when I find the organization I am working for doesn't have a clear and long-term vision of the value they can deliver to customers, that focuses everyone and helps us overcome shifts in the business environment. This lack of focus creates an inability to effectively apply resources and direct efforts within the organization, making everyone less productive, and let's face it, pretty cranky. The problem is, no matter what your position is in an organization or what type of organization you work for, you not only feel these tensions, but your effectiveness on the job is impacted as well.

We have seen how a lack of clear responsibilities combined with the lack of authority to fulfill these responsibilities or to get things done makes your job frustrating and more than difficult. We've also seen how hard it is to work in an organization that doesn't know or communicate how it envisions serving its customers, not just today, but tomorrow and the next twenty or more years.

So what makes things such as life and work seem simpler? To me, simpler means easier, more relaxing, and maybe even a little fun. Although none of these things seem to have any relationship to work, I'm going to put them together anyway and show you what happens!

So how we simplify tomorrow's life, today – at work? Take a look:

• If you don't have a clear and comprehensive job description, ask to sit down with your employer and create one together.

Work is simpler when you know exactly what is expected of you.

• Work with your employer to ensure you have the authority to achieve what is expected of you. Many employers expect great things from you but don't realize that you don't have everything you need to achieve the results expected. This could be tools, training, resources, time, helpers, or the authority to obtain what you need to get your job done.

Work is simpler when you have everything you need to do your job.

• Ask your employer to sit down with you and explain your organization's long-term vision (from your customer's point of view) so you can understand what you are all working to achieve and how you can/do contribute to that vision. *This one is a little tricky, but well worth the effort.*

Work is simpler when you understand the long-term value you are building.

• Finally, when you spend your time *doing* your job instead of figuring out what your job is supposed to be and getting what you need to perform it, your work life becomes simpler and productivity goes up.

Work can be easier, relaxing and fun when you know what to do, how to do it, why you are doing it, have what you need to do it, and can see your contribution to something long-lasting that customers truly value.

So take a step today, toward a simpler tomorrow, by taking the guesswork out of work. You deserve to have a relaxing day building value...because if you are, then you will!

Many thanks to all of you who have been sending me e-mail requests. Please send me your questions, feedback, and topic ideas for future columns and I'll take a crack at it! As always, all correspondence will be kept confidential.

Dr. Stacie Morgan is the author of **Professional Strategy in a New York Minute**. How to get the right job, the right promotion, the right pay, and the right respect (New Strategy Press). For more information visit her website at www.balancedmanagement.com or e-mail her at stacie@balancedmanagement.com.