

FIRED UP & FOCUSED

Hey there, Racheal Cook here, host of the Promote Yourself to CEO podcast and founder of the CEO Collective. Welcome back to the fired up and focused challenge. We are diving into your to do list today. So here's the thing. For most of us in today's modern society, we are constantly overwhelmed and bombarded with all of the things that we have to do. We are constantly facing interruption. Our social media notifications, our inboxes are pulling at our attention, and our mind is just starting to feel cluttered and overwhelmed. And when we are feeling cluttered and overwhelmed, we can't think clearly. And when we can't think clearly, we simply can't do our best work. So we want to go from a mind full of all of these tasks and to do's to having space, to being able to be mindful and actually do our best work.

When your mind is overflowing with your to do list and all of these ideas and things nagging and clawing at you, it has a negative impact on your life and your business. It starts to slow you down. It will keep your energy low. It ensures that your focus is low and ultimately you're not 100% present for anything. It will keep you feeling overwhelmed and anxious and can actually start to lead to procrastination, because you feel like you don't have time or energy to get big picture projects accomplished and you just run out of bandwidth. You feel like you don't have the attention span available for the big picture projects for the high level thinking and work that will get you where you need to go in your life and business. So our goal right now is to free up that bandwidth. And I want you to help make this shift from feeling like your mind is full of that unending to do list and all these tasks that are nagging at you to feeling mindful. You have the time and energy to do your best highest level work.

So we are going to start today's challenge with two exercises and I really want to make sure that you know doing two is going to be important. Do them both. If you only do the brain dump, you might find yourself feeling more overwhelmed. So you have to do the second exercise to prioritize it. Okay, so we're starting with the brain dump. This is a pretty simple exercise. It's all about creating white space in your brain by getting it out of your head and onto paper. And I really recommend that you pull out a sheet of paper. Do this hand to paper. There's a lot of research about the connection between writing things out by hand and it will really help you with your mental energy and clarity.

So pull out a sheet of paper, grab a pen and then set a timer for 15 or 20 minutes. You can set it on your phone, your kitchen timer, whatever it is. And I just want you to write out everything that is running through your mind. Everything going on that you know you need to get done. Now, this could be business related tasks. It could be personal related tasks. It could be related to your family, your health, your finances. Does not matter. Get it all out onto the paper. And when you think you've got everything down, I want you to challenge yourself to just go for another five minutes. So hit pause and I'll be here when you get done in 20 minutes.

Okay, now that you've cleared out your to do list from your brain, we are going to prioritize it. We are going to prioritize that big brain dump and actually make these things in order of how important they are and how urgent they are. This step is really essential because chances are the things that start to clutter up our mental energy, all of those ongoing tasks, are not usually the high value tasks. They're small things that just take a little bit of time and energy, but we don't want to let that busy work drive our focus. Prioritization truly is the key to managing it. Now, before we start, I want to make a note here. Separate out your personal

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from your business. Chances are on your brain dump you had a lot of stuff going on in there. We want to separate out personal from business because otherwise it'll be really hard to prioritize things.

Make sure that we have some boundaries between business and our personal life so that we're not feeling overwhelmed or stressed out. This strategy literally comes from the classic book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey. It is one of the most powerful strategies I've ever learned to help me prioritize things in my life and my business. And we're going to apply it with the lens of those five core task areas that we talked about yesterday.

So the first area is urgent and important. These are things that are true emergencies. They need to get done right now. It is essential that you handle them this minute or something bad will happen. Now, if you're finding yourself with lots of tasks in this area, you might be feeling really stressed out, highly anxious, and you might even feel a sense of fear or dread. This is not a great place to be running a business from because ultimately your business should not be an emergency. If you're always putting out fires, you're always going to feel stressed out. You'll never have the life and business you really want. So the tasks that go right here, these are things that, again, are urgent and super important. Like tax deadline coming, you must get this done. You just got a notice and you must handle it immediately by that deadline.

The next area is not important, but still urgent. These are tasks that have to get done all the time. They are usually recurring tasks, but they usually won't make or break your business. These are going to be a lot of admin of operations, of customer service types of tasks. So an example of this could be sending out the new client welcome package in part of your onboarding of a new client. These are things that once you create a system, it streamlines how long it takes for you to do it. You've already got the templates. You've already got the contracts. You've already got everything kind of in order. And you can even get to the point where you delegate these tasks out.

The next area here is going to be not important and not urgent. I know this sounds kind of crazy. You might be thinking about your huge to do list that you've just brain dumped. And what do I possibly have on here that is not important or not urgent? Well, chances are, you might have some things that are should dues that you heard you should be focused on, but they actually don't move the needle in their business. So I really want you to question if that task is important to your business. Remember the 80/20 rule. If it is not moving your business forward or helping you achieve a goal, then why are we doing it? I often see this coming up when people hear that they should do something like go join the next big social media platform. And they hear that that's the next big thing, they should go join it, but they don't really get results from social media. They're getting mostly their clients from referrals. So we have to question how much time and energy we're actually spending on that type of task. Okay? You can stop doing those things. So question everything. Is it really moving the needle? Maybe we can stop doing it.

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And the final area is important, but not urgent. These are the tasks that will move your business forward. These are going to be the marketing activities, the sales activities, the business development activities, the CEO level development activities. So your own education and development as the CEO learning to lead like a CEO. These are not 911 emergencies. These are things that are going to help your business long term. Now, as a CEO of your business, your goal is to spend the majority of your time and energy here, because this is directly tied to revenue generating activities. We want to start shifting all of the other to do's that are taking up your mental energy, taking up your time, and get them streamlined. Get them systematized as quickly as you can so that you can spend less time there or pass them off. You might even be able to automate some of those things. There's a lot of great systems out there that can automate many tasks that you have to do regularly. And we want to make sure that we're putting more of our time and energy into the revenue generating bucket.

Okay. Time to take action. Go ahead and download your workbook. If you haven't already, do your brain dump first and then we're going to sort out your to do list. Now this first time around, you might have a lot of tasks that are in the urgency column and that is normal. We need to think of this like a hard reset. Have you ever had a time where... I know this happens in my house a lot, especially right now, where it's just like the house has kind of gotten out of control, the kitchen's crazy looking, the dishes are spilling everywhere, there's stuff all over the place, laundry hasn't been folded. And we really just need to do like a hard reset on the house to clean everything up, get it all set back to normal, and then it's easier to maintain. Well, the same thing here, we need to do like a hard reset on that to do list.

So you might find you have a lot of urgent tasks that need to get handled. Some of them are going to be really important. You have to handle them immediately. Some of them are going to be things that you know you can't let those things just fall way behind because it will become even harder to get yourself out from underneath that. So I really want you to think about that. Now, as you are handling those tasks that are urgent, but not so important, it's okay to take the time right now as you're doing them to set up your system, to set up your checklist. So my example in this challenge was about creating that new client info packet. Maybe you need to have a whole onboarding checklist and go ahead and get those templates ready, get that master folder ready, so that it's even easier next time you're onboarding a new client.

You can go ahead and document those things now so that you have a system, you can start to streamline it, and you might be able to begin to automate it or delegate it next time. It will become even easier for you. And finally, remember, this is a process, okay? Don't be hard on yourself. It might be overwhelming the first time, but once you start to prioritize it and you start crossing things off that list, you decide what you don't need to do or what you can delegate, it is going to be a game changer. So I can't wait to hear your insights. Head over to my Facebook page and let me know your big ahas. What has happened as you have done your brain dump and then prioritized it. I can't wait to hear from you. I'll talk to you tomorrow as we start to boost that productivity even more.