



## **If Everything is Important, then Nothing is Important...**

By Sara Caputo, MA

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I love the phrase “If everything is important, then nothing is important”. I have no idea who said it or where it came from, but I’m sure I read it somewhere at some point, and I use it a lot. There is something about it that is so concise, so precise, so to-the-point. It addresses our obsession as a society to multi-tasking and speaks to everything from our in-boxes to our life values. Eight tiny words... One huge impact!

As a productivity consultant, one of the largest areas that I focus on with clients is their time management system. We often sit down together and go through their calendar & time systems with a fine tooth comb. The goal is, of course, to “create more time” and inevitably, the conversation turns toward priority setting. How it is that they determine what is most important and what deserves the most amount of attention and focus first, second, third and so on. Over the years, I have heard many great ideas, tools, tricks and methods around setting priorities, however, ultimately they all come down to this simple idea: Individually, we each know better than anyone else what we have to get done.

With that said, here are three “individual” criteria for setting priorities and organizing your time.

1. **Judgment** – you are the best judge of what you have to do... Let your feelings sharpen your judgment. For some, this may sound counterintuitive. Let my “feelings” be a part of my judgment? Have you ever felt anxiety, guilt or sheer panic when you realized that your presentation is due in two days and you haven’t started looking at any materials to put it together? Those feelings can either be paralyzing or used as a springboard to move forward... and fast! Often, the more panic we feel, the more in-tune we become with what we need to get done!
2. **Relativity** – some tasks are always more important than others... Let yourself be guided by the question: “What is the best use of my time right now?” I suggest writing this sentence on a sticky note & sticking it to the top of your computer so you see it often. It’s a powerful question and one that really helps us become realistic with what we should (and shouldn’t) be doing at any given moment.
3. **Timing** – Deadlines have a way of dictating priorities... Always give yourself a required START time in order to meet your deadline. Most of us are good at the deadlines, but start times? Here’s my theory... the

deadline doesn't really matter if you haven't started. It is really easy to get bogged down with multiple responsibilities, projects and tasks. If you have a few minutes at the end of the day, a great use of 15 minutes is to take a look ahead, see what is coming up, what is due on which dates, and plunk them onto your calendar. For example: Project X is due on May 15 – I know I need 3 days to work on it. I look ahead, I see what's on my horizon and I realize that my date to start on it is on April 30<sup>th</sup> in order to give me the time I need. Even if you don't officially start on the 30<sup>th</sup>, it'll be there staring you in the face as a (gentle) reminder!

The next time you are faced with a pile on your desk, a slew of emails and multiple projects and you find yourself saying that it's all important, remember these eight tiny words... "If Everything is Important, then Nothing is Important"!

### About the Author

Sara Caputo, MA is a productivity and organizing consultant who has been streamlining environments and simplifying lives for years through consulting, coaching, and training. Sara is the owner of Radiant Organizing, a professional organizing & consulting company, based in Santa Barbara, California.

She is passionate and dedicated to helping people create more space in their lives for the things they love. Sara's commitment, intuition, and facilitative approach to organizing has helped numerous businesses and individuals pave their way towards living more productive and balanced lives. She believes that by creating more order in our lives and eliminating unnecessary chaos, we can participate more fully in all levels of life!