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# Notes from a New Director on Surviving the Steepest Part of The Learning Curve

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*AADCAP New Division Directors Roundtable*

*September 2021*

## On Managing Time

- There are 168 hours in a week. Seek balance across the course of a week recognizing that the day to day may be unbalanced. <sup>1</sup>
- You cannot do everything, but you can do a lot. Choose where you will focus your time/energy. If you don't choose, others will choose for you.
- Set clear (SMART) goals.
- Do the most important thing first. You can only ever have ONE top priority.
- Schedule time to review and clear inboxes; review long term and short-term goals. <sup>2</sup>
- Have a plan for how to use time confetti (5 to 10 min tasks).
- Say no to anything that doesn't move you closer to your goal.
- When you can't say no, ask for help "I want to be able to do this new thing well. What should I put on hold to make this new thing a priority?"
- Remember Hofstadter's law: It always takes longer than you expect, even when you account for Hofstadter's Law. Also remember the law of diminishing returns.
- Identify your slowest hiker: what is the constraint that, if removed, would eliminate other obstacles?<sup>3</sup>

## On Managing Myself

- Be patient (with yourself, with your chair, with the institution).
- Always do your best and then let it be good enough.
- Keep striving to do better.
- Don't waste energy on nonsense.
- Develop a mindfulness practice.

- Do the job you are charged to do (keep your eye on the ball).
- Insist on doing the right thing.
- Examine the stories you are telling yourself.<sup>4</sup>

## **On Managing Others**

- Listen.
- Be honest and authentic.
- Communicate the goal. What is the most important thing?
- Set clear expectations and check-in/follow-up.
- Seek alignment of others' personal goals with what you want to achieve.
- Be accountable, especially to the people most important to you.
- Acknowledge mistakes, make amends, move on.

## **Resources:**

1. Laura Vanderkam, *I Know How She Does It*
2. David Allen, *Getting Things Done*
3. Greg McKeown, *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*
4. Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead*  
Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*  
James Clear, *Atomic Habits*  
Daniel Pink, *When*  
Daniel Coyle, *The Culture Code*  
Simon Sinek, *The Infinite Game*