

# TRANSFORMING COMBAT ZONES INTO COMFORT ZONES

Newsletter – July 2010

Many of us maintain at least one to-do list. After all, it is a great tool for keeping track of tasks that need to be addressed. However, the difference between having a truly useful list and one that just suffices will be determined by how each entry is worded. It doesn't matter whether you are capturing work related tasks, planning your summer vacation or managing a home improvement project the same basic principles apply when creating a to-do list.

A to-do list is basically a list of tasks with specific deadlines that need to be done **NOW**. It is not meant to include bigger picture ideas, projects or future goals that contain an element of vagueness or have yet to be broken down into a series of smaller steps.

## Tips For Creating An Effective List

- 1. Make Only One List.** Avoid the temptation to start more than one list related to any one area of your life. For example, maintain only one list of work related tasks. If you create more than one list, valuable time that could be spent on the actual tasks will be spent making and managing the lists.
- 2. Keep The List Accessible.** Whether you use a paper-based or electronic system for creating and maintaining your list, be sure you have easy access to it at all times.
- 3. Capture All Key Information.** Be sure to clearly state the tasks that need to be addressed by using action verbs (call, e-mail, draft, etc.) to describe them and include the due date for completing each task.
- 4. Be Specific.** Your list should include actionable tasks related to a project instead of just identifying the project by name. The project name by itself is too vague as there are typically many steps involved and there isn't any indication of which step needs to be tackled first.
- 5. Prioritize Tasks.** Assign priority to the tasks on your list based on their importance. In doing so, consider when they need to be completed as well as their impact on your goals.
- 6. Update Your List.** Review your list at the end of each day to confirm that all new additions are plainly stated and that the next day's priorities are clearly noted.

Your success in managing your list will be directly correlated to the tools that you use to create and maintain it. While a paper only system works for some and

electronic system for others, sometimes a combination of both proves to be the best solution. By choosing the option that you are most comfortable with, you will avoid creating an obstacle that will divert your focus from the tasks at hand.