



# NCSEA

National Council of Structural Engineers Associations

## Structural Connection

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### Make an Impact – Do Less, Better

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How often have you gotten to the end of a busy day only to realize that you didn't accomplish many, if any, of the tasks you had originally planned to tackle when you got out of bed in the morning. If you are like me, this happens far too often.

Most of us start the day, the week, the month or the year with goals we want to accomplish but for various reasons we seemed to get sidetracked, reacting to the things that happen to us throughout the day instead of sticking to our original plan. The simple act of opening our email can send us down a path of responding to the requests of others instead of tackling that article or award submission that will get us some exposure and help us win the next job.

We increasingly live in a world of more. More information, more email, more meetings and more deadlines. We are all extremely busy but most of us feel that we can barely keep up. We look for ways to be more productive so we can get ahead of it all but end up feeling like our day is being dictated to us. All of our attention gets focused on responding to others and getting things done and the important stuff, the stuff that requires focused attention, thinking, and creativity, gets squeezed out. We become too busy to do the things that will make a real impact.

The fact of the matter is it's easier to respond to email or tackle the small, ten minute task than it is to dive into that complex project that will make a real impact. We get to cross things off our to-do list and feel productive but ultimately, our long term goals suffer and we look back on our day, week or month and wonder what we accomplished.

As engineers we often get lost in the weeds, focusing on the details of the problem at hand, the next task on our list and the upcoming deadline. Far too often we fail to take the time to sit back and think about the bigger picture. What projects will really make a difference? What tasks will help us reach our goals and become more successful. This should be where we focus our time and energy.

So what is the solution to our world of too much? I would suggest that we stop trying to be more productive and start being more strategic. Trying to do more is a losing battle. There will always be more email to respond to, more meetings to attend and more tasks to complete. Instead we should focus on doing fewer things and doing them better. We should decide what our priorities are and set our daily agendas accordingly. Focus on the impactful. What are we good at? Where do our passions lie? What tasks will allow us to add value? What tasks will be remembered six months from now? This should be the stuff we focus on.

I implore you to consider making 2016 the year that you let your priorities set the agenda. Make an impact by focusing on fewer things but doing them better.