



Give Up. (sort of)

Running your own business, especially when business gets tough, can make many people feel caught in a weird bind: they know they can't do everything, but at the same time they should be doing a lot of things, but knowing *which* what to do feels almost impossible because what if they choose wrong? Eek! It feels overwhelming, which is actually quite a rational response because, well, the list of things to do, when looked at as a whole, is, quite simply, enormous and never-ending.

When you get in that place, you may find yourself going to your office or studio and sitting there all day, getting nothing done although you have felt busy all day. If you get up in the morning and dread going to work, you may be in this place. If you find yourself shuffling papers, cleaning and re-organizing your desk, or moving one pile of stuff to another pile, you may be in this place.

I think it is sort of an occupational depression, for lack of a better term. Mind you, I'm not a therapist! But I think we all get into mental places where we get overwhelmed with what we have to do--both in our personal and business lives--and it brings us down. I call those things the *haftas*--I hafta go to the grocery; hafta pay bills; hafta write a new Manual... When you get a bunch of haftas, it feels almost impossible to do any of them, especially in the business context. It's like drowning in haftas.

If you've been reading my stuff for any time, you know that I get all over people to be consistent and persistent in their marketing. It's very important to reach out to your targets regularly and often. It's important to keep researching new potential targets. It's important to keep shooting for yourself. Being consistent and persistent in your marketing means there is always something to be done. Unfortunately, this can lead to an overwhelming hafta pile, especially when you add in your other business activities like paying bills, invoicing, etc.

One way to deal with this overwhelming pile is to write down on individual pieces of paper the things you think you need to get done--as individual tasks like *shoot one image for myself* or *update my target list by adding/editing at least 20 people*--put the pieces of paper in a hat, pull out one, and do that. Just do that one thing. After you do it, reward yourself by doing something fun like playing an online game (for a limited time--set a timer!) or having a nice lunch. When you are done with that one task and its reward, reach in and pull out another task. Repeat as needed.

This technique works for a lot of people. It takes the need to prioritize out of the equation and you get something done. You only have to commit to doing whatever it is that you pull out of the hat, no excuses. No pulling out a task and saying "Nah, not that..." Pull...do. Period.

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However, when the hafta pile gets too enormous and you just can't get yourself to commit to the "hat trick," then you need to try something more radical: give up.

No, I'm not suggesting you give up being a creative or the like, don't worry. By "give up" I mean forget entirely about your hafta list and give up trying to do anything productive for the day. Take the time, instead, to find what you've lost. When you are that overwhelmed, it is often a sign that you have somehow disconnected with your creative center--that thing which made you decide to follow this crazy career path and/or which inspires you to be the artist you are inside.

Okay, sounds a bit flaky, but it's not just for creatives--everyone hits that wall sometimes. I'm sure you've heard of the *mental health day off*, this is the same thing sort of. I know I have been in that place myself both personally and professionally from time to time.

Like the hat trick, giving up requires a commitment to follow the very basic rules: 1) I will not do anything "productive" for a day/2 days/(whatever time period you select); and 2) I will do something totally fun during that time. This means you can't go to the dentist or take care of household tasks--you are gifting yourself the time to play, to reconnect with something inside of you that you have been smothering, and play you must. You are giving up on doing any haftas, and I mean **any**. Instead, go to a museum, a movie, make music, go climb a rock wall or surf or ski, etc., take your lover/partner to a hotel for the day, go dancing (do not do something **for** your kids, though--this needs to be about you completely)...just give up on being a responsible businessperson for a *limited* time, and recharge your batteries.

When your time limit is reached, go back to your office and, if needed, try the hat trick. I think the best thing you can do, though, is to go shoot something personal when you get back to "work." After taking the time to recharge, you will likely re-find that missing part of you that will help you get back into the swing of things. Your pile of haftas will still be there, sure, but you will be able to face it knowing that it's in your control. And you will remember that the most important hafta you have is to shoot for yourself--to make your art.

The world will not end if you don't get through your pile of haftas...after all, the pile is self-renewing so you'll never be done anyway. Give up.

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