

PETER SCOTT CONSULTING

Briefing Note November 2018

Prioritise and delegate

What do you have in your in-tray at the moment?

Some matters may be important while others may have less importance. There may also be matters which are urgent but may or may not be important. How will you prioritise dealing with these to achieve the best for your firm and do so in a way that helps you avoid burnout?

Important Vs Urgent?

Differentiating the important from the urgent is not always easy and as James Caan (of Dragons Den fame) has said

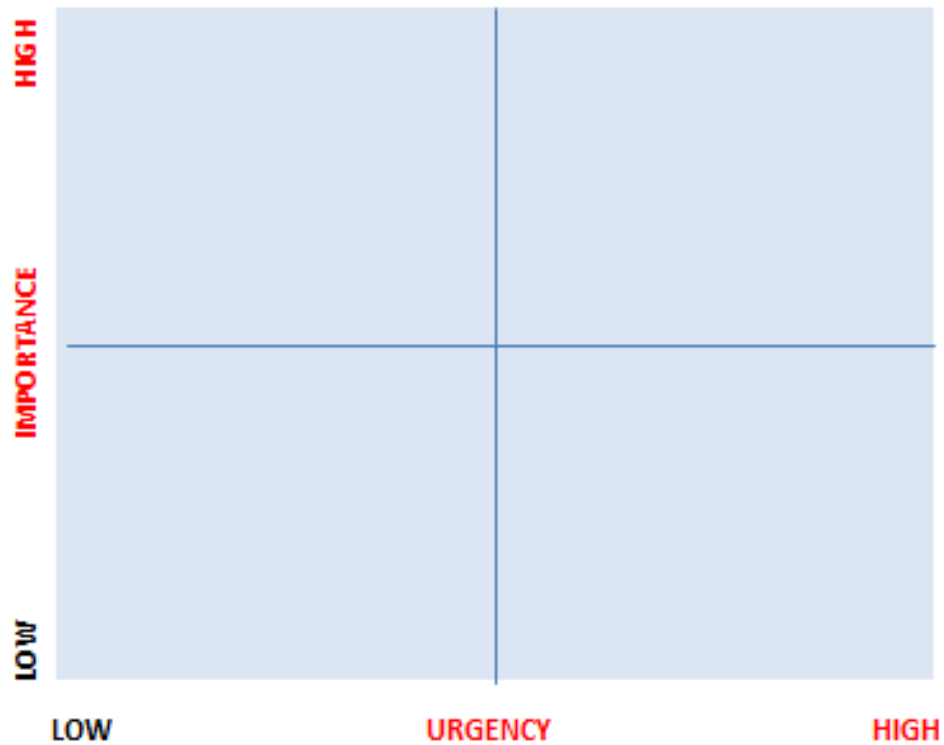
“Being ruthlessly focused means you have the ability to cancel out noise [i.e. something that seems so much more important than the actual task] and focus on what is important. It’s a strength in itself to be able to say something is not critical”

And many urgent matters only become urgent because they have not been dealt with earlier when they should have been.

Take a blank sheet of paper and list all the matters you are currently dealing with. They will probably fall into one or more of these categories:

- **Strategic**
- **People**
- **Operational**
- **Financial**
- **Reputational**

Using the chart below, plot where each of those matters should be placed in terms of importance and urgency.



Using the chart in this way will enable you to better prioritise your work by deciding whether the tasks in hand are of:

- High importance / high urgency
- High importance / low urgency
- High urgency / low importance
- Low urgency / low importance

To delegate or not to delegate?

You should then ask yourself who should be dealing with each of those tasks.

Each matter you have plotted on the chart should be tested to decide which you should deal with and which should be delegated to others.

For example, should you as a Managing Partner be involved with every single 'people' issue or should you limit your involvement to only those people matters which are of high importance to the firm as they may raise serious reputational or financial risks? Everything else should be delegated.

When I was a Managing Partner I gathered together my professional team (Finance, HR, Marketing, IT, Risk and Facilities) and said this to them:

“Even though my door is always open to you, I do not want each of you coming in here every five minutes asking me for my decision on something. Each of you is a highly experienced professional and I only want you to come to ask me something when you really consider you are not able to deal with it yourself.”

Saying that **empowered** them, and thereafter they carried out their roles more effectively and without asking me for decisions on everything. However, they also knew that when they needed to involve me I would be there to help. Importantly, taking that step allowed me to focus my time on the most important aspects of my role for the good of the firm.

Filtering matters in an in-tray in this way will work not only to clarify for a Managing Partner and a firm what is important and must be dealt with as a priority but will also help a Managing Partner to ensure his or her continued wellbeing, which itself should also be a priority for a firm.

Are you and your firm prioritising your wellbeing?