A GRIP ON THE GRIND

Papers piling up at a rapid pace? Learn how to handle your workload

If most days at work your to-do list is left undone, you drag assignments home when you should be relaxing and 500 or so unread e-mails point their fingers at you every time you open your inbox — then it's time to get organized. Laura Leist, an organization and productivity consultant, gives us tips:

1. "It's always best to plan for the next day at the end of day," says Leist. "I say pick three really important things that you need to get done.

A lot of times people pick too many things to do and they feel like nothing is accomplished."

2. "Once you picked your three tasks, those are things you should do first."

She recommends holding off on the little things you can scratch off the list first. "You want to work toward getting the bigger stuff done."

3. "It's unrealistic to say you're going to work on a project for eight hours in the day, because things always come up," says Leist.

"It's more realistic to say, 'I'm going to spend two or three hours a day on this project.' Then you'll have other time during those days to work on other projects, too."

4. Implement a task-management system — and use it daily.

"You need something to keep track of the current things you're working on and a place to store your ideas for future projects," says Leist.

She suggests applications such as TeuxDeux.com, RememberTheMilk.com an ActionMethod.com.

5. "Use your calendar to schedule projects you are working on, meetings and networking things you're going to," says Leist.

This way, you can look back at the end of the day or week and see what didn't get accomplished. Then move those tasks forward to the following day or week.

Laura Leist, CPO, is the author of *Eliminate the Chaos at Work: 25 Techniques to Increase Productivity* and the founder of Eliminate Chaos – a business and residential organizing and productivity consulting services firm.