

## **Express your needs, maybe no one will object**

I repeatedly observe that my clients do not articulate their needs enough in their current job. They expect that this will not be met with understanding from their superiors. In fact, I advocate negotiating personal concerns, especially during the application process, as the leverage for asserting them is greater at this point. But if well argued, personal needs can often also be asserted on the job; perhaps never as easily as today.

### Peter Näf

My client worked in product management at a bank and led a team of four employees. Among other things, he was responsible for developing new products. This was the part of his job that interested him the most and motivated him to take on this role at the time.

Due to the hectic day-to-day business, he had far too little time to deal with conceptual tasks. In line with the logic of the well-known Eisenhower matrix, the urgent daily news of varying importance kept him away from the important but not immediately urgent project work.

### **B tasks must be planned**

The so-called B tasks in the Eisenhower matrix, which are important but not urgent, can only be managed through reliable planning. I asked my client how many time slots of what length he needed per week to work undisturbed on his projects. He told me two times three hours. I suggested that he enter these two time slots in his calendar each week. He should also switch off his e-mail during these times, instruct the secretary

not to take any calls and tell his employees that they should only disturb him if the building was on fire.

This approach was unthinkable for him. He argued that they had an open-door policy at the bank and that he always wanted to be available for his employees in line with his personal management philosophy. He expected both his employees and his superiors to oppose this request.

### **Convincing with good arguments**

I motivated him to implement the new schedule anyway and was confident that all his stakeholders would be understanding when he explained his reasons. It is also reasonable to expect employees to write down questions that they cannot help themselves with and present them all together.

By the next meeting, he had implemented his new work plan. His employees and superiors not only had no objections to this approach, they even thought it was an exceptionally good idea. Two of his peers immediately followed suit. After all, they were all familiar with the problem of not being able to work through persistent pending tasks due to constant interruptions.

Working from home has alleviated this problem somewhat, as conceptual work can be done at home. However, a disciplined approach is also required here in order to consistently eliminate all interruptions during block times.

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