As I approach the busiest time of my year, I thought it would be best to re-explore some of the steps I try to follow to get me through it. Although many of the steps have stayed the same, I have found that there are other actions I try to follow to improve my situation and get me through the craziest time of year in my job.

Workloads shift and move many different directions throughout a year. How do you handle those ups and downs that could be the differentiator between establishing yourself to go to the next level and drowning in your own to-dos? If you can start to envision the balance between you and your work, it may allow you to avoid the dreaded burnout and find the peace of mind that you have been searching for.

**Develop a Plan to Prioritize**

What do your methods look like for prioritizing your assignments? How do you differentiate between the "needs to get done asap tasks" and the "does not need to be done until the end of the year tasks?" No matter what your process is, it is vital that you start breaking down your items in a more realistic and specific way to get moving through your workload. When prioritizing your items for a specific day, try to determine the single item that needs to be the number one priority for that day. At the end of the day this one item is an essential task. It needs to be complete or for some long-term projects at least started. This should help you in determining the things you know you will need to focus on and get done first. Remember, although all items might seem important, it is necessary to realize what level of importance they fall into. Are they important to just you and your goals? Are they important to the goals of someone else you work with? Are they important to building revenue? Are they based off a deadline? Try to really think about the difference and where they should fall in your priority list for that day. With a little planning and prioritization on a daily and weekly basis all items will get done, but in a more efficient and effective way.
Do One Thing at a Time

Simply put, you can only do one thing at a time. Remember, it is those who concentrate on but one thing at a time who advance in this world.

Know When to Say No

We can all sometimes be a ‘yes man.’ We want to be able to do everything and take on any responsibility that is thrown at us. In the past most of us have said yes to everything when it came to our careers. We said yes to this project and this favor and the end result was of course our growing workload. We went about our days and eventually the workload would get under control and you always made it out fine. Fast forward to when you said yes again only to make the heavy workload reappear. I have (slowly) learned that sometimes being a "no man" can help benefit your career.

Take the project that you were just offered. Does the project help you and your career grow in value? Did someone ask you to do that project because of the value you would give it? Or did they ask you because they know you would say yes and do it anyway? By saying no sometimes, it can increase the overall value of those things we do say yes to. Think about that project and determine what type of focus you can and want to give it. Does it move you or give you passion? Does it make you happy to work on it? Can you give it the attention it deserves? Knowing the benefits of saying no in certain situations and knowing the right way to say it, does have the possibility of working you towards a successful career.

Utilize Others Unique Abilities

Your co-workers can be a fundamental part of helping you balance a full workload. By using their unique abilities you can come into contact with a whole other set of experiences, expertise and knowledge that can be applied to your projects and tasks. Not being afraid to reach out to them is the key. For some of your to-dos, having that extra hand or resource could be the difference between you getting the job done and coming up short on that assignment. When you can recognize the need for help when you are extremely busy, you can see that the expertise of other people within your firm can help you move through and get out from underneath many of your daunting tasks.

Eliminate Unnecessary Work

Take a look at your task list and determine one key thing, what can you eliminate? What is on your list that is not critical to the overall success of your job or the firm? Identifying these items will free up time to focus on those things that truly matter. There are going to be some items that
cannot be fully eliminated. Take these items and shift them to another time. This time will occur when you have more down time and can spend your days giving them the attention they deserve.

**Take Care of You!**

There is no way you will ever get through heavy workload periods if you don't take care of the most important thing – yourself! Remember to continue to follow your healthy best practices during this period. Make time in your day to exercise. Even if it is a quick 20 minute walk, at least it gets you moving. Take the time to stop and eat lunch and have a snack throughout the day. Getting in those healthy foods will give you the energy you need to push through. Practice a good work-life balance. When you are home, be home, be present. Allow for the work items to remain at work. Try to separate the two. Sometimes the simplest balance tip to take a break from a stressful assignment or workload is to just breathe. Take five minutes and focus on something else that won't elevate where you are already at. Take a moment and walk around your office and enjoy the break of a bit of exercise and fresh air. It is important to realize that another part of balance is also including in some of those "life things" that can calm you down and bring you back to the center.

**You Will Survive**

Although you think that being this busy will never end, realistically it will and you will get through it in one piece. Often times in the wake of your busiest times of year, you often learn something about yourself. You will overcome, you will get through it and you most likely won’t remember why you were so stressed in the first place. Remember, this too shall pass.

*As a Project Manager for Boomer Consulting Inc., Erin Cheever plans, organizes, secures and manages resources for the firm’s many service and program areas. Along with providing assistance and constant communication with clients and sponsors, and serving as an event liaison, her primary duties include overseeing and managing the specifics of CIO Advantage, CEO Advantage, Consulting, ℃Leadership Academy, and the Producers Circle.*