

Lynne Cunningham's  
Book Review

*I just read a book that I think should be added to your Service Excellence Library.*

<b>Book</b>	<b><i>Getting Things Done</i></b>
<b>Author</b>	David Allen
<b>Pillar of Excellence</b>	Leadership book – covers them all
<b>Publisher's Book Description</b>	<p>With first-chapter allusions to martial arts, "flow," "mind like water," and other concepts borrowed from the East (and usually mangled), you'd almost think this self-helper from David Allen should have been called <i>Zen and the Art of Schedule Maintenance</i>.</p> <p>Not quite. Yes, <i>Getting Things Done</i> offers a complete system for downloading all those free-floating gotta-do's clogging your brain into a sophisticated framework of files and action lists--all purportedly to free your mind to focus on whatever you're working on. However, it still operates from the decidedly Western notion that if we could just get really, really organized, we could turn ourselves into 24/7 productivity machines. (To wit, Allen, whom the New Economy bible <i>Fast Company</i> has dubbed "the personal productivity guru," suggests that instead of meditating on crouching tigers and hidden dragons while you wait for a plane, you should unsheath that high-tech saber known as the cell phone and attack that list of calls you need to return.)</p> <p>As whole-life-organizing systems go, Allen's is pretty good, even fun and therapeutic. It starts with the exhortation to take every unaccounted-for scrap of paper in your workstation that you can't junk. The next step is to write down every unaccounted-for gotta-do cramming your head onto its own scrap of paper. Finally, throw the whole stew into a giant "in-basket"</p> <p>That's where the processing and prioritizing begin; in Allen's system, it gets a little convoluted at times, rife as it is with fancy terms, subterms, and sub-subterms for even the simplest concepts. Thank goodness the spine of his system is captured on a straightforward, one-page flowchart that you can pin over your desk and repeatedly consult without having to refer back to the book. That alone is worth the purchase price. Also of value is Allen's ingenious Two-Minute Rule: if there's anything you absolutely must do that you can do right now in two minutes or less, then do it now, thus freeing up your time and mind tenfold over the long term. It's commonsense advice so obvious that most of us completely overlook it, much to our detriment; Allen excels at dispensing such wisdom in this useful, if somewhat belabored, self-improver aimed at everyone from CEOs to soccer moms (who we all know are more organized than most CEOs to start with).</p>
<b>LC Review</b>	The first organization and time management book I've read which was written since the advent of e-mail. Lots of very good tips that make real-world sense.
<b>Page</b>	<b><i>Lynne suggests that you pay special attention to some of these features in the book.</i></b>

5	For many of us, there are no edges to most of our projects.
12+	<p>Most of the stress people experience comes from inappropriately managed commitments they make or accept.</p> <p>The Basic Requirements of Managing Commitments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If it's on your mind, your mind isn't clear. Anything you consider unfinished in any way must be captured in a trusted system outside your mind, or what I call a collection bucket, that you know you'll come back to regularly and sort through.</li> <li>2. You must clarify exactly what your commitment is and decide what you have to do, if anything, to make progress toward fulfilling it.</li> <li>3. Once you've decided on all the actions you need to take, you must keep reminders of them organized in a system you review regularly.</li> </ol>
24+	<p>Five-Stage Method For Managing Workflow:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collect things that command our attention.</li> <li>2. Process what they mean and what to do about them.</li> <li>3. Organize the results, which we</li> <li>4. Review as options for what we choose to</li> <li>5. Do.</li> </ol>
54+	<p>Five-Phases Of Project Planning:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Defining purpose and principles</li> <li>2. Outcome visioning</li> <li>3. Brainstorming</li> <li>4. Organizing</li> <li>5. Identifying next actions</li> </ol>
122	<p>Processing Guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process the top item first.</li> <li>• Process one item at a time.</li> <li>• Never put anything back into "in".</li> </ul> <p>Emergency scanning is not processing – when you're in processing mode, you must get into the habit of starting at one end and just cranking through items one at a time, in order.</p>
125	<p>What if there is no action?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trash</li> <li>• Items to incubate</li> <li>• Reference material</li> </ul>

<p><b>131</b></p>	<p>Once you decide what the action step is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do it (if the action takes less than two minutes)</li> <li>2. Delegate it (if you're not the most appropriate person to do the action)</li> <li>3. Defer it into your organization system as an option for work to do later</li> </ol>
<p><b>181</b></p>	<p>The purpose of this whole method of workflow management is not to let your brain become lax, but rather to enable it to move toward more elegant and productive activity. In order to earn that freedom, however, your brain must engage on some consistent basis with all your commitments and activities. You must be assured that you're doing what you need to be doing, and that it's OK to be not doing what you're not doing. Reviewing your system on a regular basis and keeping it current and functional are prerequisites for that kind of control.</p>
<p><b>192</b></p>	<p>The Four-Criteria Model for Choosing Actions in the Moment</p> <p>You make your action choices based on the following four criteria, in order:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Context</li> <li>2. Time available</li> <li>3. Energy available</li> <li>4. Priority</li> </ol>
<p><b>196</b></p>	<p>The Threefold Model for Evaluating Daily Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing predefined work</li> <li>• Doing work as it shows up</li> <li>• Defining your work</li> </ul>
<p><b>200</b></p>	<p>The Six-Level Model for Reviewing Your Own Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50,000+ feet: Life</li> <li>• 40,000 feet: Three to five year visions</li> <li>• 30,000 feet: One to two year goals</li> <li>• 20,000 feet: Areas of responsibility</li> <li>• 10,000 feet: Current projects</li> <li>• Runway: Current actions</li> </ul>
<p><b>207</b></p>	<p>When you're not sure where you're going, you'll never know when enough is enough.</p>
<p><b>227</b></p>	<p>The sense of anxiety and guilt doesn't come from having too much to do; it's the automatic result of breaking agreements with yourself.</p> <p>How Do You Prevent Broken Agreements with Yourself?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't make the agreement.</li> <li>• Complete the agreement.</li> <li>• Renegotiate the agreement.</li> </ul>

<b>236</b>	Over the years I have noticed an extraordinary shift in energy and productivity whenever individuals and groups installed “What’s the next action?” as a fundamental and consistently asked question. As simple as the query seems, it is still somewhat rare to find it fully operational where it needs to be.	
<b>244+</b>	The Value of Next-Action Decision-Making Standard <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Productivity</li> <li>• Empowerment</li> </ul>	
<b>Overall rating</b>	Good	
<b>Publisher and Year Published</b>	Penguin Books	2001
<b>Price</b>	\$15	Discounted on Amazon
<b>Recommended by</b>	Studer Group Colleague Chris Comeaux	

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