



## ***Managing Up Using the CARD Method***

*From Jones Loflin-The Speaker With TWO Last Names*

---

There is a question that regularly surfaces in a training program or discussion related to time management. People quickly embrace the need to be more accountable for how they use their time. They appreciate the idea that they can not get it all done and must prioritize and plan appropriately to get their most important things done. The question, then, is “How do I deal with a \_\_\_\_\_ (boss, supervisor, coworker, spouse, etc.) who thinks I should be able to get it all done – at any cost?” Sometimes it may not be a supervisor or manager, but a prevailing culture within the organization that drives the attitude and behavior of everyone. Addressing the issue can be a touchy situation because to seem less than willing to tackle all of one’s tasks and projects could be taken as a sign of poor performance or lack of commitment.

If you find yourself in a similar situation and sense that someone you report to (or work or live with) has less than realistic expectations of you and how you can spend your time, try using the CARD method to bring their expectations in line with reality and your capacity. Here’s how it works:

**C Communicate current workload.** Think about the person making the request of you. What percentage of your daily routine or current workload do they fully understand? Seventy percent? Fifty percent? How about thirty percent? If the number is anything less than 100, they may see no issue in adding one more thing to your schedule. Take the opportunity to educate them on what is on your plate at the moment. Use phrases like, “Let me share with you...” or “Here’s what things look like for me right now...” Dr. Richard Swenson, author of *Margin*, has a powerful quote that sums up this thought: *When working with other people it is important to remember that there is absence of malice but presence of callous. People are simply not sensitive to your situation.*

**A Ask for help.** In many cases, the person making the request of you is actually paid by the organization to make sure that you are engaged in the tasks that are most important to the organization. Ask questions like, “What do you see as the most critical use of my resources right now?” Number them if necessary. Use positive phrases like, “Help me understand” or “Give me your perspective.” Once you have the support and cooperation of your boss, they may be more supportive when you can’t get to task number 45 this week.

**R Request resources.** If they want the task done in a week, ask for ten days. If they need it by 3 PM, see if it can be postponed until 5 PM. Ask if someone else can help you with the task or take a portion of it so the assignment doesn’t wreck your schedule or other priorities. Resources like these may be limited, but you will never know what’s possible until you ask.

**D Determine the level of completion.** In an ideal world, every task would be completed with an “A+” effort, but the reality is that some tasks don’t require such a level of excellence. They just need to be completed as soon as possible. If you have too much to do, ask your supervisor which tasks need an “A” effort and which ones would suffice with a “C” level of completion.