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Book extract: Smart Work

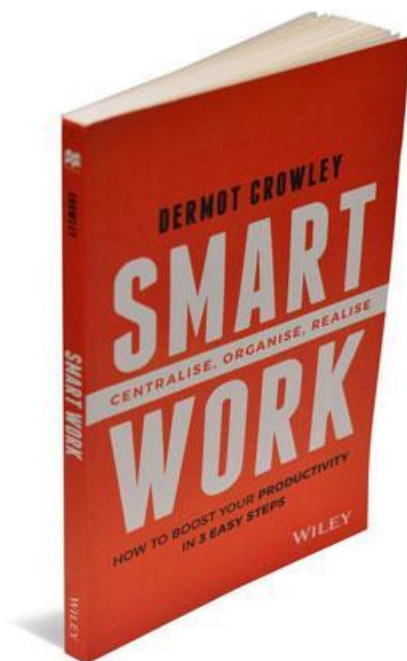
In his new book, *Smart Work—Centralise, Organise, Realise*, Crowley shows how technology can be used to work proactively in a volatile workplace



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Dermot Crowley



Smart Work—Centralise, Organise, Realise: By Dermot Crowley, Wiley, 152 pages, Rs299.

The workplace has changed over the years, so has the pace of work. We have way more things to do than we have time for. There's always a deluge of information and most tasks are marked "urgent". Add to this the number of meetings one has to attend and the emails to be answered. Productivity in this scenario plays a crucial role.

There are three ways to achieve true productivity—centralize your priorities in one place, organize your inbox and email actions and make time for the work that matters, says Australia-based productivity expert Dermot Crowley.

In his new book, *Smart Work—Centralise, Organise, Realise*, Crowley shows how technology can be used to work proactively in a volatile workplace.

Edited excerpts from a section on how to centralize work:

Your work reaches you in many different ways. You have externally driven work that comes in the form of emails, physical interruptions and meeting actions. This work can be reactive and is often operational in nature. You also have internally driven work that you should do to progress your objectives and projects. Whatever way the work arrives, centralising all of it in one place will help you to manage it effectively.

Consider-Capture-Commit

Capture all your tasks in one place. The best way to do this is to set aside the time to do a total scan of all actions and next steps that require your time and attention. There are three phases to this total scan.

Consider

Identify all of the ways that your tasks will currently be listed. These could be places where the tasks are currently sitting, such as your inbox or your written to-do list, or they could be contexts, such as different roles or projects. Identifying these will help you to brainstorm a more complete list of actions.

Here are some questions to assist you in creating your list: What tasks are in my inbox; what is currently on my to-do list; do I have any calls to make/return; is there paperwork on my desk reminding me to do something; what about those sticky notes on my computer screen; what else is stuck in my head; do I need to prepare for any upcoming meetings; are there personal things I need to do; what should I be doing within the context of my core roles.

Capture

Once you have considered your task locations, spend some time capturing absolutely every task you can see or think of that deserves your time and attention. This can be done using paper or electronically using a tool such as Excel or Word.

Don't stop to complete any of these actions (even though you may feel compelled to when you spot some of the more urgent ones).

Just spend the time brainstorming, collecting and capturing.

Commit

Once you have created your exhaustive set of lists, you need to think about when you are going to allocate time to the action. This is an extremely important factor that will make the difference between inaction and traction. You need to commit to *when*. When are you going to allocate time to the action? Without this there is a risk that you will make the lists but not actually do anything. Your tasks need time commitment to get traction.

Spend some time getting clarity by doing the Consider-Capture-Commit exercise. Do it low tech or do it high tech, just do it and get yourself set to really get organised.