

## F is for Frustration

What *are* the things that bother you most at work? Are they the missed deadlines, the demands of customers or clients, the attitudes of staff, the relationships with colleagues, the red tape and bureaucracy? Or something else entirely?

Too often the things that bother us most at work are things we have little or no control over. When that's the case, the familiar Serenity Prayer can be useful:

*God grant me the Serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change  
The Courage to change the things I can,  
And the Wisdom to know the difference.*

The key, of course, is in the last line—that we need to have the wisdom to know the difference between what we can control, and what we cannot.

So the first thing to do is to make a list of all those things that frustrate you at work. Start out small, with a list of 10-12 items. Next, separate them into two columns. One column for things you can change, and another for those you can't change. Then, assign some sort of priority to the items. Which of your items are most troubling? Which are of lesser importance?

Once you've done that, you can put your items into a double axis chart, like this:

	<b>Can Change</b>	<b>Can't Change</b>
<b>Important</b>	Negative conversations Messy desk Late to meetings	Taxes are due soon Meetings are irrelevant
<b>Not Important</b>	Cafeteria lunch is bad	No window in office

Putting your workplace frustrations into a graphic like this can help you determine some action steps to take—you may even be able to eliminate some of them! If the negative conversations sap your energy, you can stop spending time at the coffee machine. You might decide that the problems your messy desk generates are no longer tolerable, and take some time to organize your workspace. Who knows? That might even get you to meetings on time!

Every once in a while you'll want to review your list. Sometimes these items take on a life

of their own, especially if you've determined they no longer have a place in your life. Sometimes the simple act of writing them down helps them move from one quadrant into another. Although we cannot change the fact that our taxes are due, we *can* take measures to deal with that fact—gather all the paperwork and computer files we'll need to file our tax return, hire a competent professional for assistance, move money into an account strictly for tax purposes, etc. We always have choices, even when we don't recognize them at first.

We cannot change the past, and we cannot change the weather, but we may be able to set up better systems and procedures to deal with both of them—so we are responsible for the outcome, and not at the mercy of something we have no influence over!