

Four of My Secrets to Coolness

Question:

Sam, I really feel like my job is out of control. It seems like I am bouncing back and forth between different projects and different activities and different meetings. I have a hard time keeping things straight any more. How do you stay so cool and calm with all of the chaos around you?

Eduardo

Answer:

Eduardo,

Let me make a preliminary observation that will take care of much of your problem. I can tell that you probably drink too much coffee. When a person has the sensation of bouncing off walls, I think they are getting a little jittery from all caffeine. I can also tell that you are a small man. If you were big like me the coffee would not affect you so much. I think you must be small like a girl.

So my first advice is to cut back on the coffee little man.

You asked how I stay so cool and calm. This is why I have spent many years performing at an excellent level and sharing my advice with unfortunate project managers like you. Let me recap some of my special techniques some of which I have explained before.

- Underpromise. You Americans have a saying of “don’t bite off more than you can chew”. In my country we have a better saying “only eat half a mouthful at a time”. You see what I mean. Always make sure that your work seems larger than it is. It is better to be successful with half a job than unsuccessful with a full job.
- Under communicate. Your managers don’t want there to be problems on your project. Let me say that differently – they don’t want to hear about problems on your project. Keep the problems to yourself and bury them as long as possible. Sometimes they just go away. For example – last month we were two months behind on my project. Then my sponsor was fired. The new sponsor naturally wanted a number of changes, which of course takes a lot more time. I added the two months we were behind to the estimate for new work and before you know if we are on schedule again. I did not even break a sweat – not like you little man.
- Blame the spirits. This actually has two meanings. First it implies that we drink too much in our country and this affects all projects. It is accepted. It also means that when people leave your team you can blame them for all manners of problems. In other words, they may be gone but their spirit is still here for a few months to take blame.
- Balance your life with your life. You need to make sure that you are not too tied down with your job. I try to work a full five hours a day like everyone else. I have enough conflict facing my wife each night. I don’t need conflict at work too. So make sure that you balance each hour of work with 3-4 hours at home. My wife might kill me but my work never will.

I have other secrets but that is probably all the time you have. In one hour you probably will get my advice mixed up with some other discussions. I may not be able to help you little man, but maybe some others will profit from my wise advice.