

Dear NBOA colleague:

This won't be as organized or crisp as some of the replies you will receive to your good question. Here are some of the things that work for me in trying to "keep my sanity" in the day-day tumult of the school world.

1. Know thyself. What parts of the job do you enjoy the most? Make sure you get to some of these from time to time. What sets you off? Don't take on too many of these consecutively.
2. Get out of the office. Drop in on other people around the school to see how they are doing.
3. Keep in touch with the educational side of the school. Sit in on (or guest lecture) a class from time to time. Warm up a lacrosse goalie.
4. Avoid the last-minute "crashing" on major projects that seems to be a way of life in some other offices. Keep chipping away at the projects which have a deadline which is two to three weeks away.
5. At least once a day, pick off a dozen of the "little" projects that have landed on your desk. It is remarkable how quickly they can pile up and become oppressive if not attended to regularly.
6. Answer your phone messages and emails promptly. In this way they can't worry you, and many people will be pleasantly surprised when you get back to them within a couple of hours.
7. A caveat to #6. If a phone message or email raises your blood pressure, you are probably best served by stepping back, doing something else, and thinking through your response before you reply. Take a walk. Go for a run. Maybe draft a reply in the evening and review it in the morning before hitting the "send" button.
8. A further caveat to #6. Don't email back on sensitive/emotional topics. Go visit the person you wish to communicate with. A phone call is an option, but not as useful as a visit. It is very hard to carry on a meaningful discussion by email – as the message sent in writing is often misunderstood at the other end.
9. Buy doughnuts for the plant and grounds crew. They will watch your back for you.
10. Use email to introduce a proposal to a group. Maybe half of the meetings you would otherwise call can be averted because everyone is in agreement or feels informed. When you need a meeting, it can be briefer because information has been previewed.

11. Blow off steam on the NBOA Forum from time to time with your colleagues.
They understand what you are going through.
12. Take satisfaction from helping others to get on with their work. This is one of the reasons why “our own work” doesn’t get done until everyone else goes home.
13. Avoid doing others’ work.
14. Revel in the sheer variety of the business manager’s job.
15. Ask stupid questions.
16. Improve the appearance of something on your campus.
17. Take comfort in the fact that no one else at your school wants (or understands) your job. If this isn’t job security, what is?

Regards, Jim Pugh