

Stever Robbins

MEMBER
NSA
NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION

Stever is represented by:

The Ictus Initiative

phone 617.840.4689 • email Paige@IctusInitiative.com

Mastering Power, Influence, and Overwhelm.



About Stever Robbins

Stever Robbins is an executive coach and professional speaker who engages audiences with his sharp wit and explicit understanding of power, influence, and persuasion. He is the creator of the Pull Leadership concept and author of *It Takes a Lot More than Attitude...To Lead a Stellar Organization*.

A veteran of eight start-ups and several IPOs, Stever co-founded early internet success story FTP Software, served as COO of Building Blocks Interactive, and led the development of Intuit's Quicken VISA Card. He is currently President of Leadership Decisionworks, a consulting and coaching firm.

Stever has an MBA from the Harvard Business School and a BS in Computer Sciences from MIT. He is a Certified Master Trainer Elite of Neuro-Linguistic Programming and a Certified Executive Coach.

Stever writes a monthly leadership column for Harvard Business School's *Working Knowledge*, and has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Investor's Business Daily*, and on *CNNfn*.

Mastering Overwhelm: *Get Results - Get a Life*

Wasn't the 21st century supposed to bring a life of leisure?

As if! Technology heaven is here, and we're more overloaded than ever. Believe it or not, the problem all starts with the very things that were supposed to make our lives easier.

When you're flooded with things to do, it's easy to get swept away. This workshop will help you develop the skills to recognize overwhelm in the moment and channel the feelings to regain your equilibrium and save yourself from drowning.

This compelling workshop gives you the tools you need to combat overwhelm, free up space, and breathe more easily. It addresses the many forms of overwhelm that bombard us: information overwhelm, communications overwhelm, and task overwhelm. Come join Stever Robbins for this session on how to stay sane, stay calm, and keep the small stuff from making you sweat!

You'll walk away knowing how to:

- Stop overwhelm when it starts
- Calm yourself quickly and avoid panic reactions
- Re-orient and center your body
- Exercise the courage to say "No" when needed
- Build a life around what's important by delegating and dropping
- Get less e-mail by handling it in new, creative ways... ;-)
- Identify new choices where you thought there were none

Often, the biggest barriers to coping with overwhelm are our own attitudes, beliefs, and feelings. This workshop will allow you to examine your mind sets and align your thoughts and feelings with the balance in life you want. You'll learn how to live happier by setting goals that reflect realistic achievement and how to control the never-ending demands draining your energy and time.

Call 1-617-840-4689

to request a copy of Stever's media kit.

www.SteverRobbins.com

What Audiences Say About Stever Robbins

“Stever is a great presenter. He presents with energy, enthusiasm and displays a mastery of the material that makes it fun and accessible to the whole audience.”

— *Ken Blanchard, co-author of
The One Minute Manager*

“Stever’s history with start-ups, the Harvard Business School’s ‘Leadership and Learning’ curriculum overhaul and his educational background leave him uniquely qualified to speak to a broad and diverse group of business audiences. Combine his experience base with an ability to touch all of us with an engaging and thought provoking style and you have the makings of a great session/workshop. If we all followed Stever’s advice the business world would be in much better shape!”

— *Len Schlesinger, Vice-Chairman and COO,
Limited Brands*

“Stever’s presentation at the ICF Conference exceeded our expectations — he demonstrated command of his material, delivered it with humor, and reached the entire audience. He is a dynamic, entertaining speaker whom I would highly recommend.”

— *Susan Klein, Program Chairperson,
International Coach Federation Conference, 2002*

“You hit a home run for our audience. People learned a great deal and left understanding how their business works, what drives profitability, and what options they have for creating long-term business value.”

— *James Lavoie, CEO,
Middlesex Savings Bank*

“Stever’s vast knowledge is embedded into stories of great amusement and fun. We found Stever Robbins’ teachings so valuable that we have included his digital recording of a workshop in our ‘Master Package for Trainers and Communicators’.”

— *Chris Muzler, CEO,
PMA Change Management, Berlin, Germany*

“Stever’s depth of knowledge on all things entrepreneurial is extraordinary, and his ability to listen and shape a discussion to the needs of an audience is unparalleled. I recommend him to anyone seeking an engaging, intellectually rigorous and highly worthwhile learning experience.”

— *Michelle Toth, CEO,
The Inner Workout, Inc.*

Other Speaking Programs

Leading With Integrity:

Wielding Power Ethically and Wisely

Manipulation 101:

Advancing Your Agenda When Logic Fails

The Politics Of Achievement:

Getting Ahead by Getting Behind

Schedule Stever Robbins
to speak at your next event!

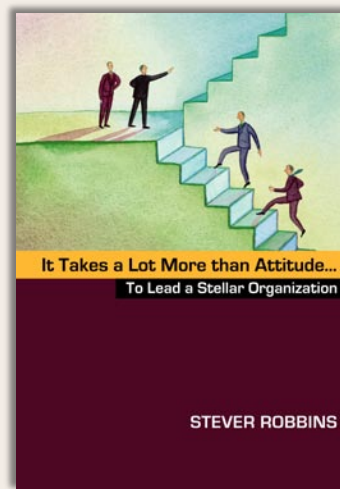
Stever is represented by:

The Ictus Initiative

phone (617) 840-4689

email Paige@IctusInitiative.com

Stever’s New Book



It Takes a Lot More than Attitude . . . To Lead a Stellar Organization is the ultimate road map to building, growing, and leading a successful organization. Other leadership books focus entirely on the leader, but Stever’s book examines how and why people follow, why they sometimes don’t, and what to do about it. Be prepared to discover a whole new philosophy of leadership – one that’s based on becoming the kind of leader others want to follow.

Available at www.SteverRobbins.com

Defeating Overwhelm

by *Steve Robbins*



My name is Steve Robbins, and I'm here to confess: I'm an overwhelm wimp.

Give me more than three things to handle at once and pop, my head explodes. It's not just me—everyone seems to be suffering from daily overwhelm. At best, we flounder. At worst, we shut down entirely. You can't be effective running ragged, living surgically connected to your cell phone, and cutting short every meeting because you're way too on-the-run. If being the center of attention makes you feel important, go for it. Personally, I'd rather be sane.

I'll warn you in advance: this article is about what's good for you, not what's good for business. How can you take care of yourself amidst the chaos?

Surviving in the moment

When overwhelm crashes down, your emergency rip cord is to physically take a break. Grab something to eat, walk around the block, and get away! Breathe deeply, with a long, slow exhale. And lean forward. I don't know why, but leaning into overwhelm makes it less overwhelming.

Once you've calmed a bit, consider taking longer-term steps to recover your life. Overwhelm comes from too much, too fast. The solution is learning to say "no," keeping firm boundaries, and going easy on yourself when you are not superman or woman.

If you choose sanity, step one is changing your thinking. Rather than worshipping productivity and efficiency, remember that there's more to life than living it efficiently. There's family, quality of life, joy, love, spirituality, and community, for starters.

Some of the following anti-overwhelm suggestions will be heretical. They'll actually suggest that you reduce your productivity. After all, do you want to be highly productive, or do you want to have a life? You can't do both.

Remind yourself on a regular basis that while a Blackberry tempts you with "efficient" e-mail handling, resist! It slowly infiltrates your life, demanding you to respond to e-mail at any time of day or night. Take it on faith that labor-saving devices demand that you labor more.

"But," you cry, "I can multitask, getting more done quickly!" Multitasking is a myth. At least, quality multitasking is a myth. If you have several simple, brainless tasks, maybe you can do a couple at once. But if you need reflection or depth, forget it. Attention Deficit Disorder is a problem for people precisely because much of modern life really does demand more than ten seconds of sustained attention. Multitasking is a chance to accomplish many things poorly, all at once. It takes nine months to make a baby, and it takes focused concentration to make great breakthroughs.

In the people realm, multitasking can be deadly. Consider this: Effective leaders connect with their followers. When someone comes to you for direction and motivation, talking while checking your e-mail won't inspire loyalty and commitment. If you're not committed enough to give someone your full attention, why should they be committed to you?

The emergency solution

Our whole economy seems "just-in-time," with lag times and delays removed. Here is one illustration. Recent banking deregulation allows checks to clear instantly, eliminating the "float" that provided many businesses with a few additional days of wiggle room to finance cash flow. Now, everyone must be that much more vigilant about their cash.

Just-in-time brings its own problems, too. Problems can happen, just-in-time. When one piece of our tightly coupled, precision system falters, the entire thing can come tumbling down. We risk utter collapse if we stop if even for a minute. Not exactly a recipe for sanity. So make use of it: Become emergency driven.

Overwhelm comes from too much, too fast. The solution is learning to say "no," keeping firm boundaries, and going easy on yourself when you are not superman or woman.

If the overwhelm is too great, rather than trying to avoid emergencies, orient your life around them. Ignore your inbox. Choose what you'll let go, and then let go of it utterly and completely. What's important will resurface as emergencies. Trust me, there will be some Type-A person in the next cubicle who will raise the alarm when a discarded initiative becomes critical. Then you can step in, do the work, and be a hero for saving the day. Sure, you can get promoted by doing it right the first time (assuming you work where such things are noticed), but you just may save your personal life by not doing it until it's important. It's always possible that you have enough time to do everything, but just aren't organized. I've spent four decades searching for the perfect

Continued on next page..... ➤

organization system. The closest I've found is David Allen's *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. He lays out a system that empties your inbox daily, turning items into "To-Do's" and ensuring things get done. Of course, he doesn't have much to say about what you do when you commit to too much that it takes a full workday just to process your inbox.

That's because, as with technology, better organization will often result in temporary savings followed by increased expectations. This, you can control. Get yourself organized—but don't

Remind yourself on a regular basis that while a Blackberry tempts you with "efficient" e-mail handling, resist! It slowly infiltrates your life, demanding you to respond to e-mail at any time of day or night.

tell anyone. Scatter books around your office and season the scene with old folders with papers spilling out of them. Then empty your real inbox (hidden in the corner behind the potted palm) daily, and enjoy an organized life.

Just enough

You'll probably notice that many of my suggestions can result in slower career growth, less productivity, decreased efficiency. That's right. In fact, here is the most powerful strategy of all: Settle for just enough. Unless you're living in a really different world from me, you can't have it all. You have limited time and attention. You can't spend it all trying for "the most" in every category. Figure out what "enough" is and make that your target.

Just enough applies to money, too. If you're driven by money, decide in advance when you can ease up. A real estate investor I know never set an "enough" goal for herself. The last time I saw her, she had been a millionaire for twenty years, and worth over \$50 million. Was she enjoying life? Hardly. By not deciding what was enough, she was pushing herself as hard as if she were still working on her first million. Just enough applies to title and status, as well.

An executive vice president of a several-hundred-person company decided that she hated her job. So she decided to downshift to a director-level position that gave her just enough status. It worked like a charm. She later downshifted again, spending a year climbing Mount Kilimanjaro and leading safaris in Africa. "Just enough" gave her the freedom to create a much richer life.

Just enough information

This is big. In our Brave New Economy, information is plentiful, cheap, and usually irrelevant. Lots of information is useless; the right



information is invaluable. In preparation for a client meeting, someone will often circulate a dozen pages of client "data dump" the night before. Overwhelming, certainly. But is it worth reading? Who knows?

Don't just accept information. Start by choosing some good questions, ask them, and collect just enough information to get a good enough answer. You're not shooting for a perfect decision every time; you want just enough good decisions so you still reach your goal.

Your intuition may be helpful in defining this elusive "enough." The COO of a company may find she can begin to make the right decision most of the time with just 30 percent of the information she normally would collect.

Scheduled maintenance

One thing you should have "just enough" of is work itself! In the book *The Power of Full Engagement*, author Tony Schwartz points

out that regulating your energy is key to being productive. That means taking frequent work breaks to rest, relax, and recover. The same holds true writ large; schedule vacations throughout the year, and make sure you take them. When on vacation, leave your Internet connection and cell phone at home. Never, ever call into the office.

The last way to reduce overwhelm is to make frequent use of "no." Say it when someone tries to obligate you for something you don't have time for. Say "no" when your boss sets targets that can't be reached without burnout. Say "no" when someone wants your feedback for the tenth time on the same memo—tell them, "it's GOOD ENOUGH."

"No" is hard for most of us to say. We like to feel appreciated and useful to others. But far better to say "no" many times and concentrate on a few great wins than to say "yes" after "yes" after "yes" and deliver poor results.

If saying "no" doesn't work, take a drastic course: Let go. Stop caring. If your environment is demanding too much of you, let go of it. (And if you're a leader, don't put your people in the position of having to make this choice!) In a choice between sanity and emotional buy-in, choose sanity.

Detaching doesn't have to mean that you do less work. In fact, if you detach in just the right way, you can start delegating out work you previously guarded with your life. Find someone who can do the work better, then let them go at it. The key to delegation, however, is striking the balance between sharing the burden and caring enough to make sure things get done.

At the end of the day, it's not like there's much choice. You will reduce your overwhelm. Either you'll do it voluntarily and deliberately, or you'll do it when you collapse with a nervous breakdown. You owe it to yourself to take control of your own life and make the hard choices now, when they're uncomfortable, but doable. Something's got to give. Don't let it be you.

Steve Robbins is the author of *It Takes a Lot More than Attitude . . . to Lead a Stellar Organization*. To purchase your copy, please go to www.SteveRobbins.com.