# CONTROLLING STUFF, BEATING STRESS, AND FINDING WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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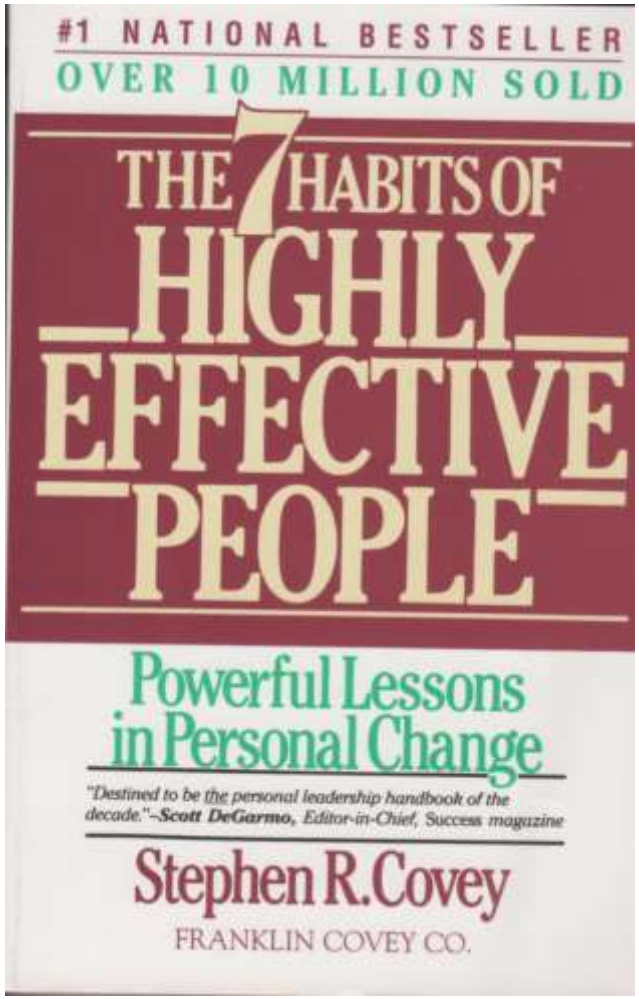
# Why are you here?

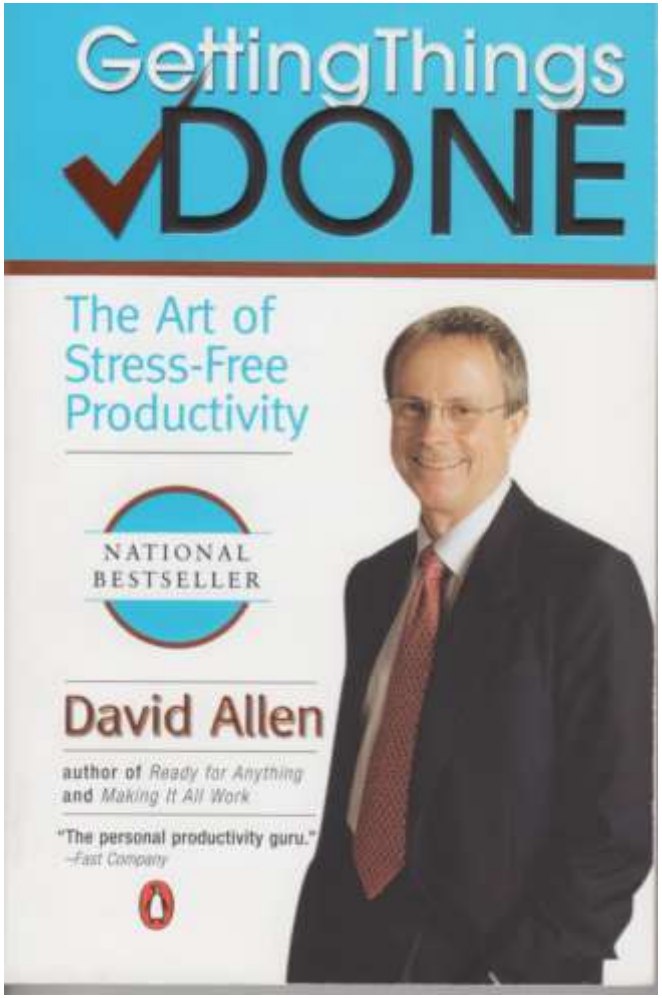
# REFERENCES (FIRST)

Breaking the Rules

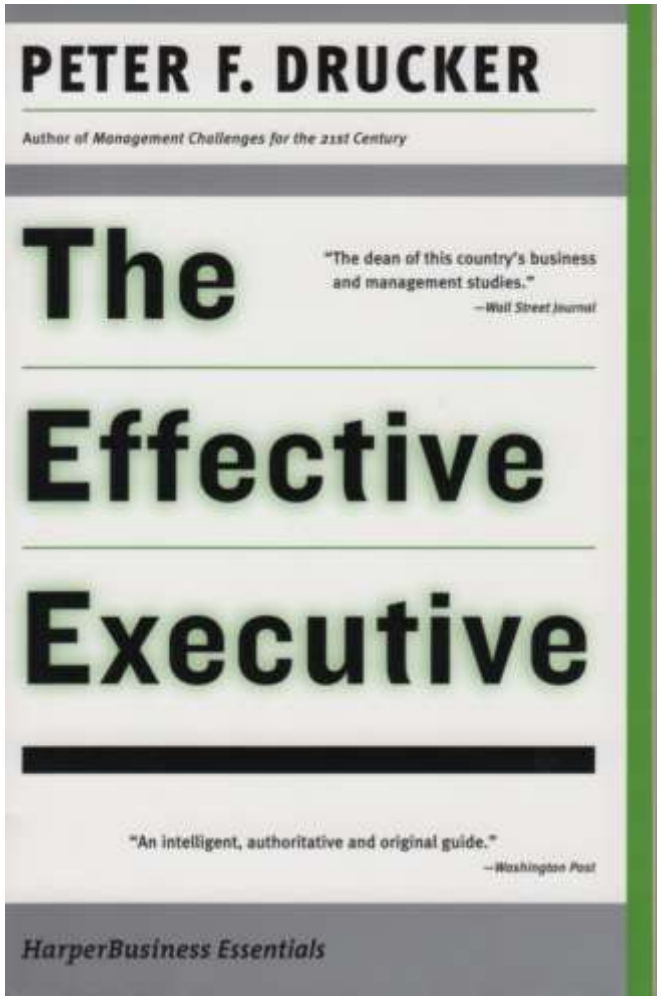
- “THE seven habits”



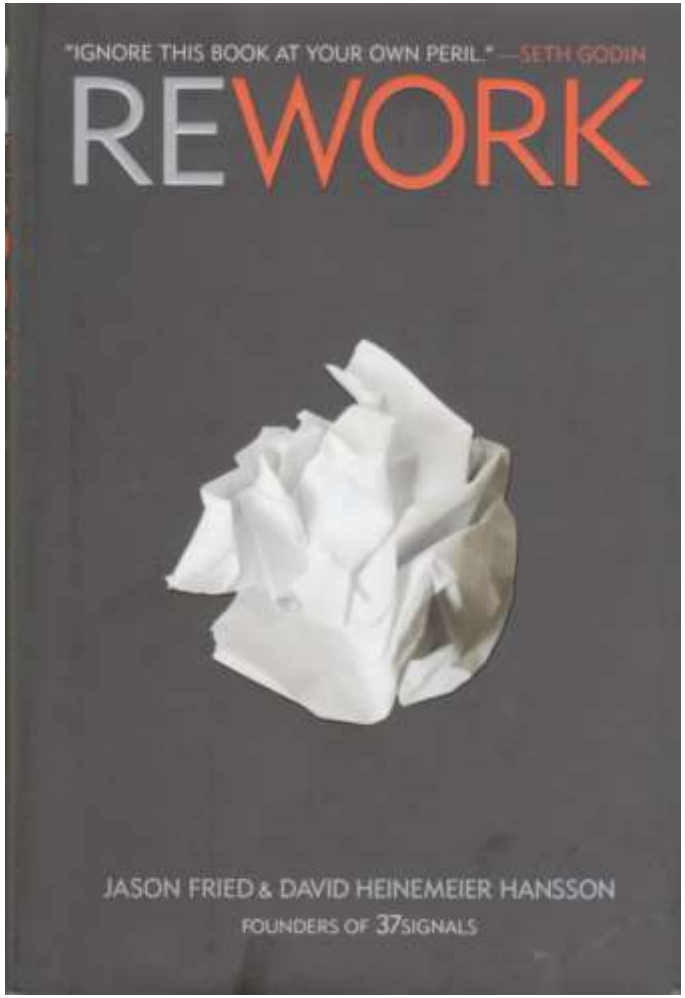
- “the art of stress-free productivity”



- “knowledge worker”



- “what to do if you/your company is terrible at being awesome”



- “be indispensable”
- “love your work and get everyone to love working with you”

# Why are you here?

Why you came:

- “Stress”
- “Stuff”
- “Work-Life Balance”

Why you are really here:

- “Control”
- “Commitments”
- “Culture”

# Work-Life Balance

# LIFE Balance

- Working too many hours?
- Information overload?
- Taking work home?
- Stress spilling over?
- Not fully present for non-work activities?
- “On call” 24-7?
- Constant email and/or phone?

# LIFE Balance

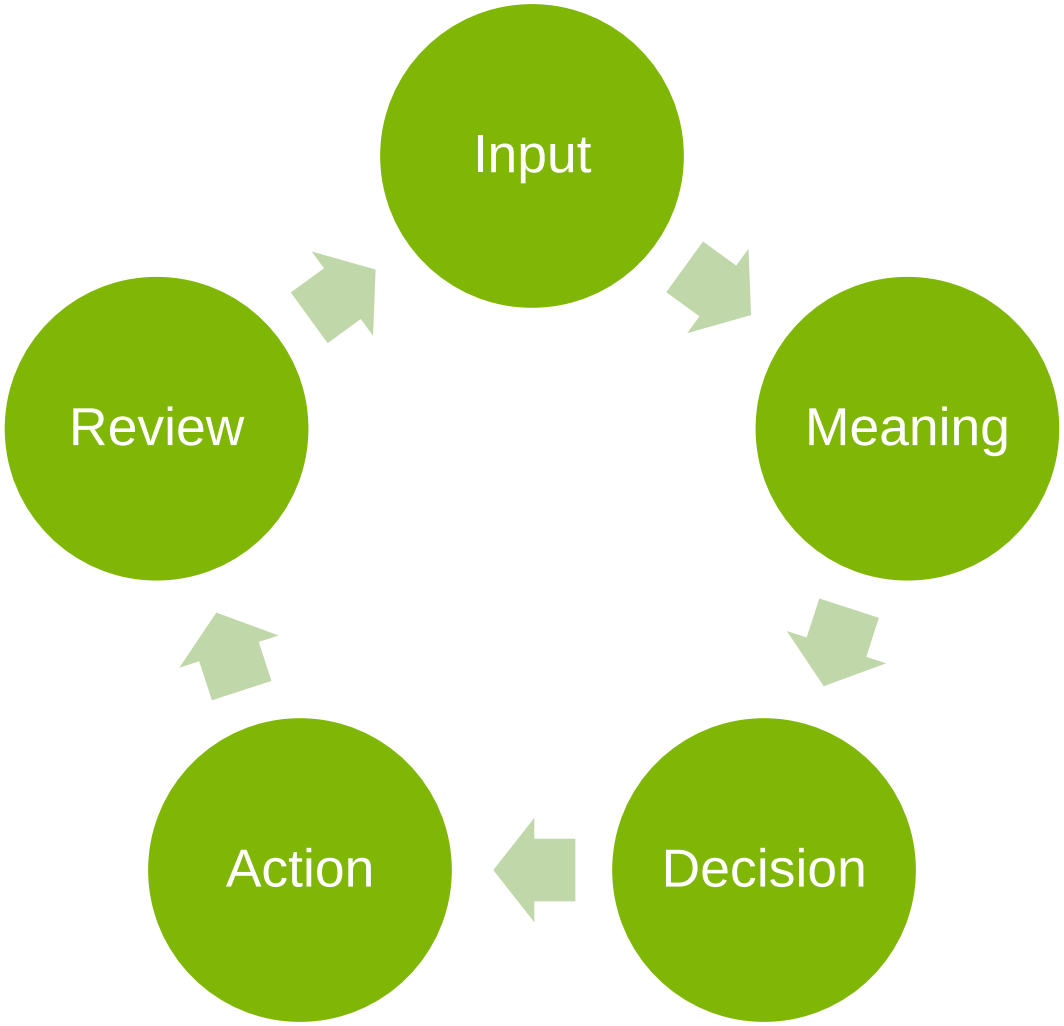
- Working too many hours?
- Information overload?
- Taking work home?
- Stress spilling over?
- Not fully present for non-work activities?
- “On call” 24-7?
- Constant email and/or phone?
- ALL OF THE ABOVE?

- Stress ← Lack of *CONTROL?*

# CONTROL

First Essential Element

# How to get control?



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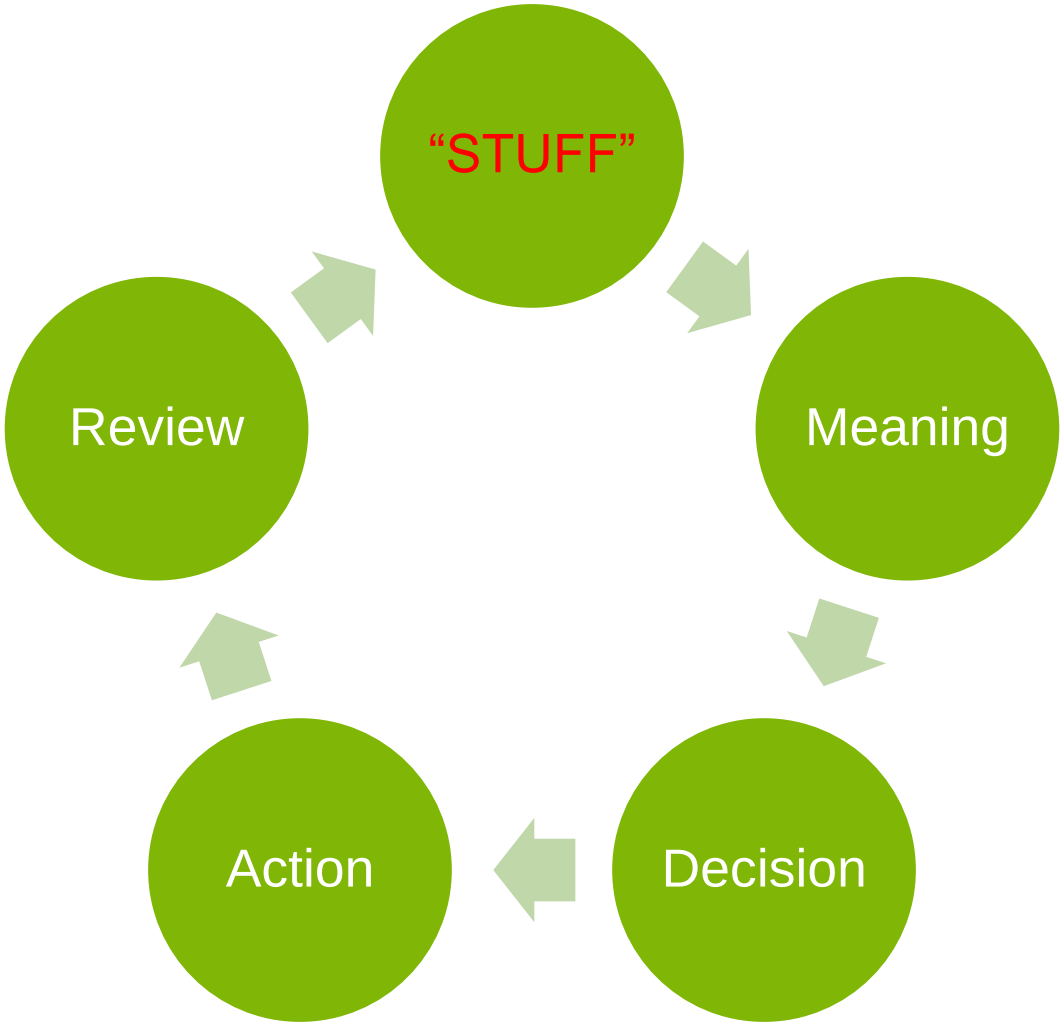


# “Stuff” is lurking…

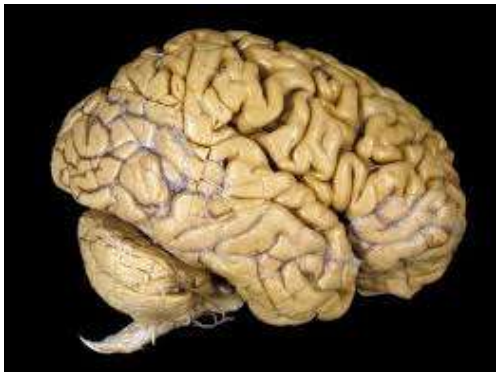
- In your head
- On your desk
- In all the “junk drawers” in your world

# Why let it lurk?

- Not sure what to do with it?
- Don’t want to forget about it?
- Guilty Pile Syndrome?

# Your Brain is Not for Storage

- Brain is a powerful CPU but has very limited "cache" capacity



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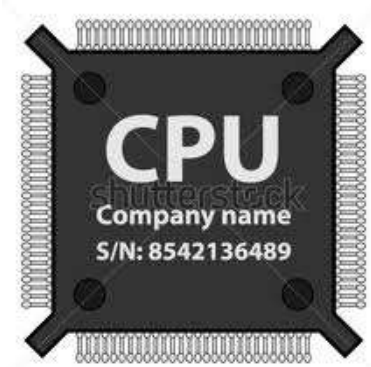


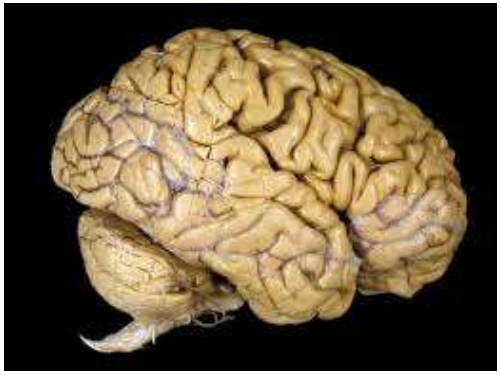

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# Gather your Stuff

- Physical / material stuff
- Mental
- “Brainstorming”
- Don’t evaluate (yet)

# Sort your Stuff

- Evaluate each item:

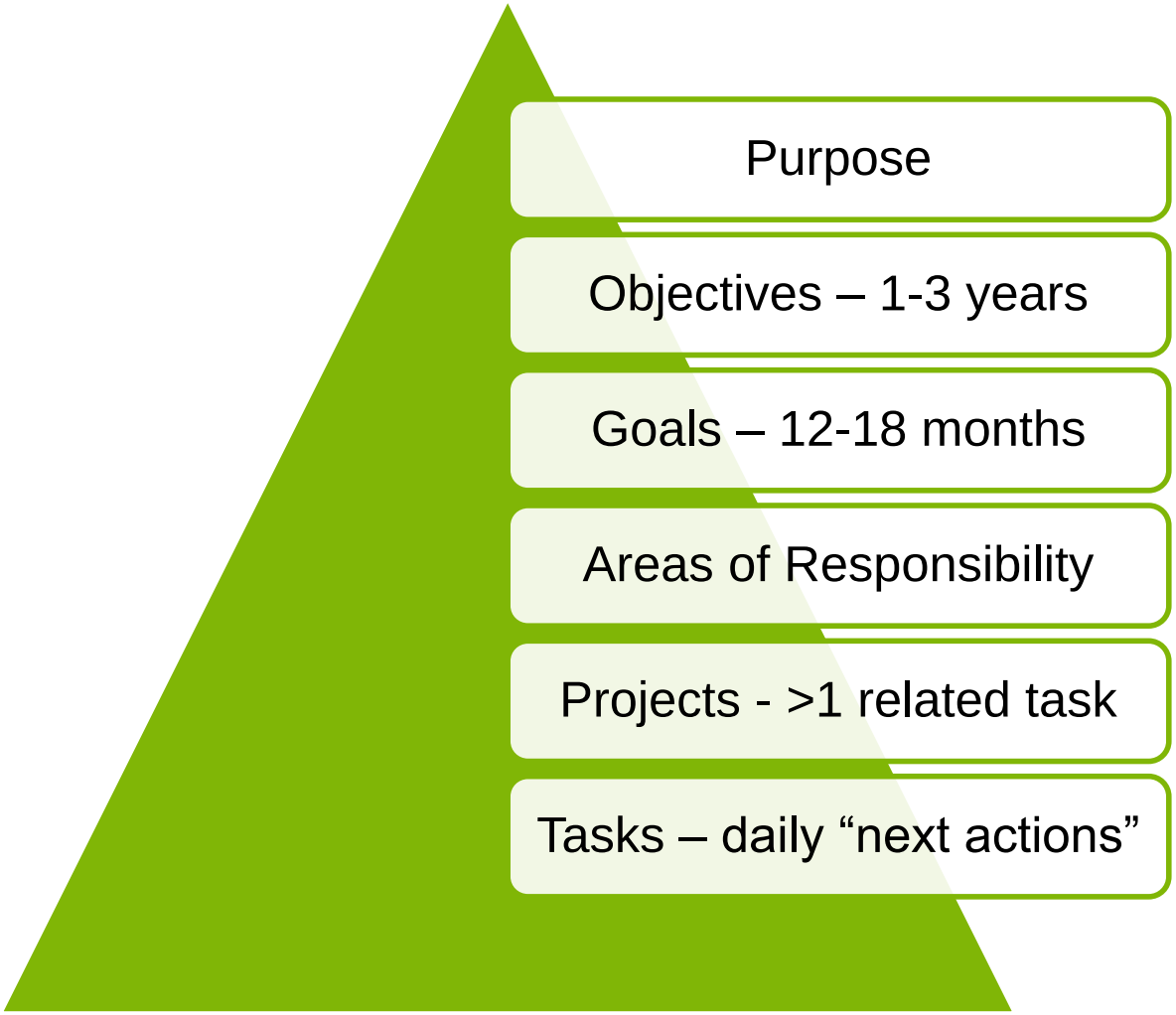
  What does it MEAN?

  What is it FOR?

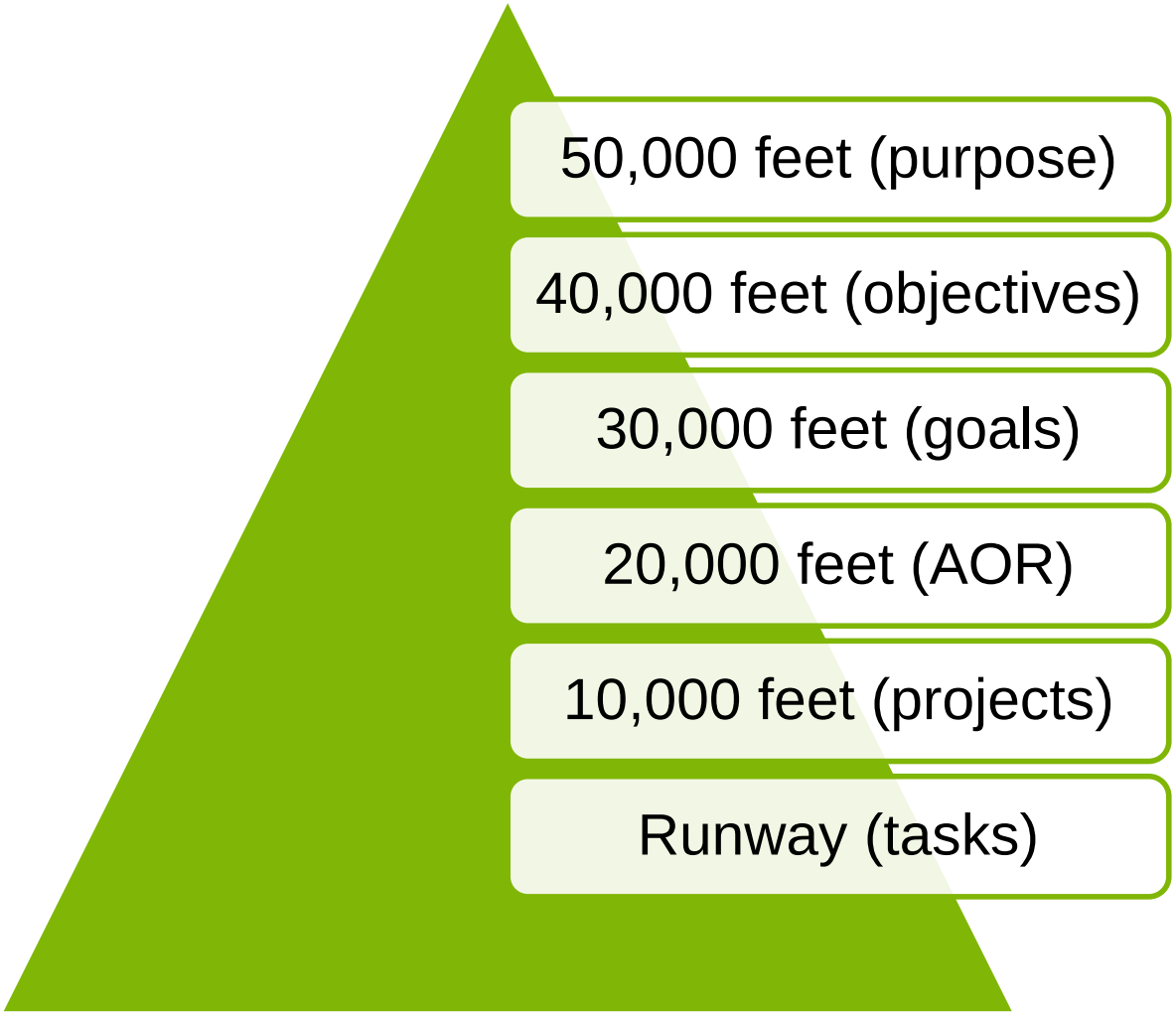
  What do I need to DO with it?

“But I’ve already tried to ‘get organized’, why didn’t it work?”

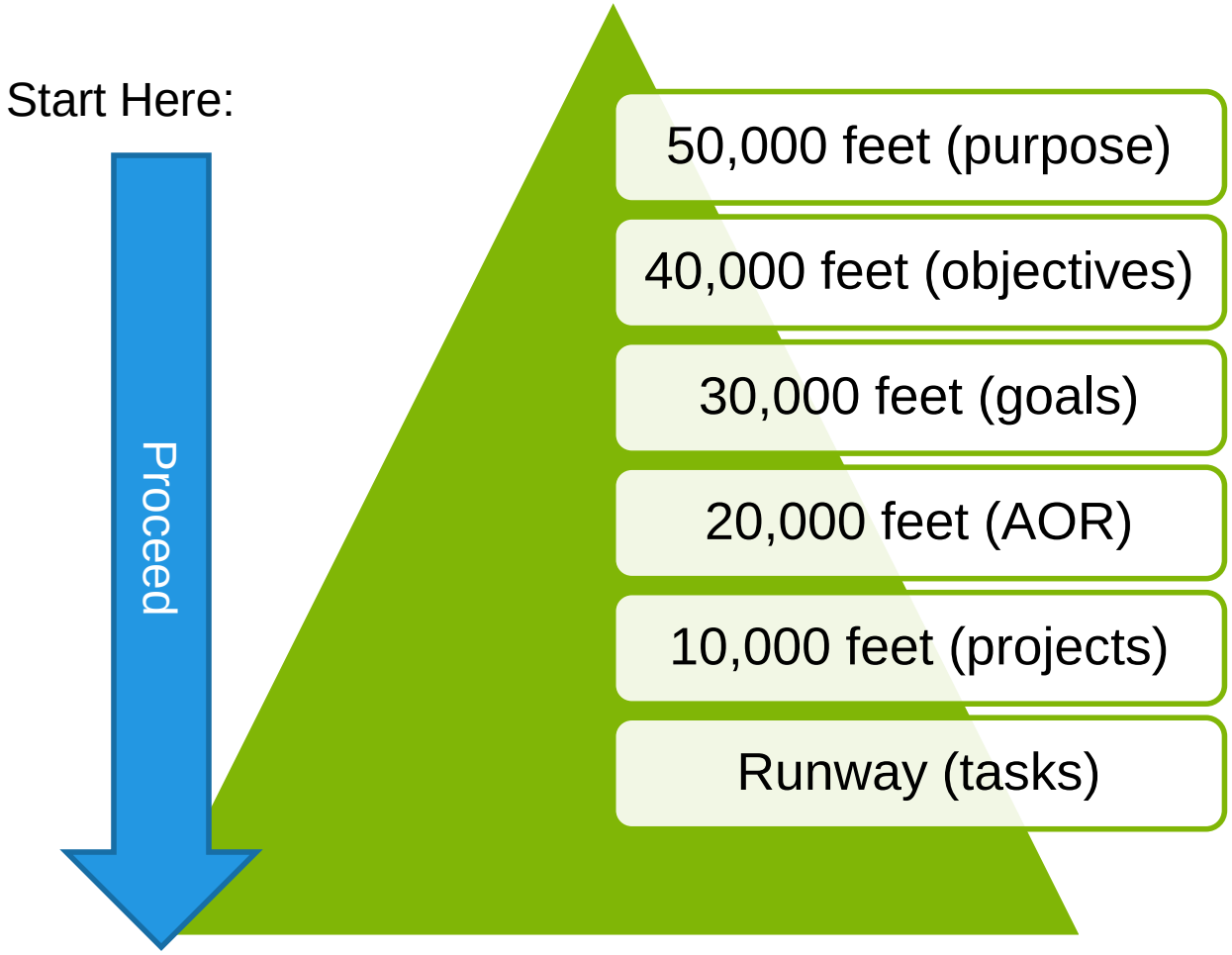
# Basic Model: Allen's Concepts



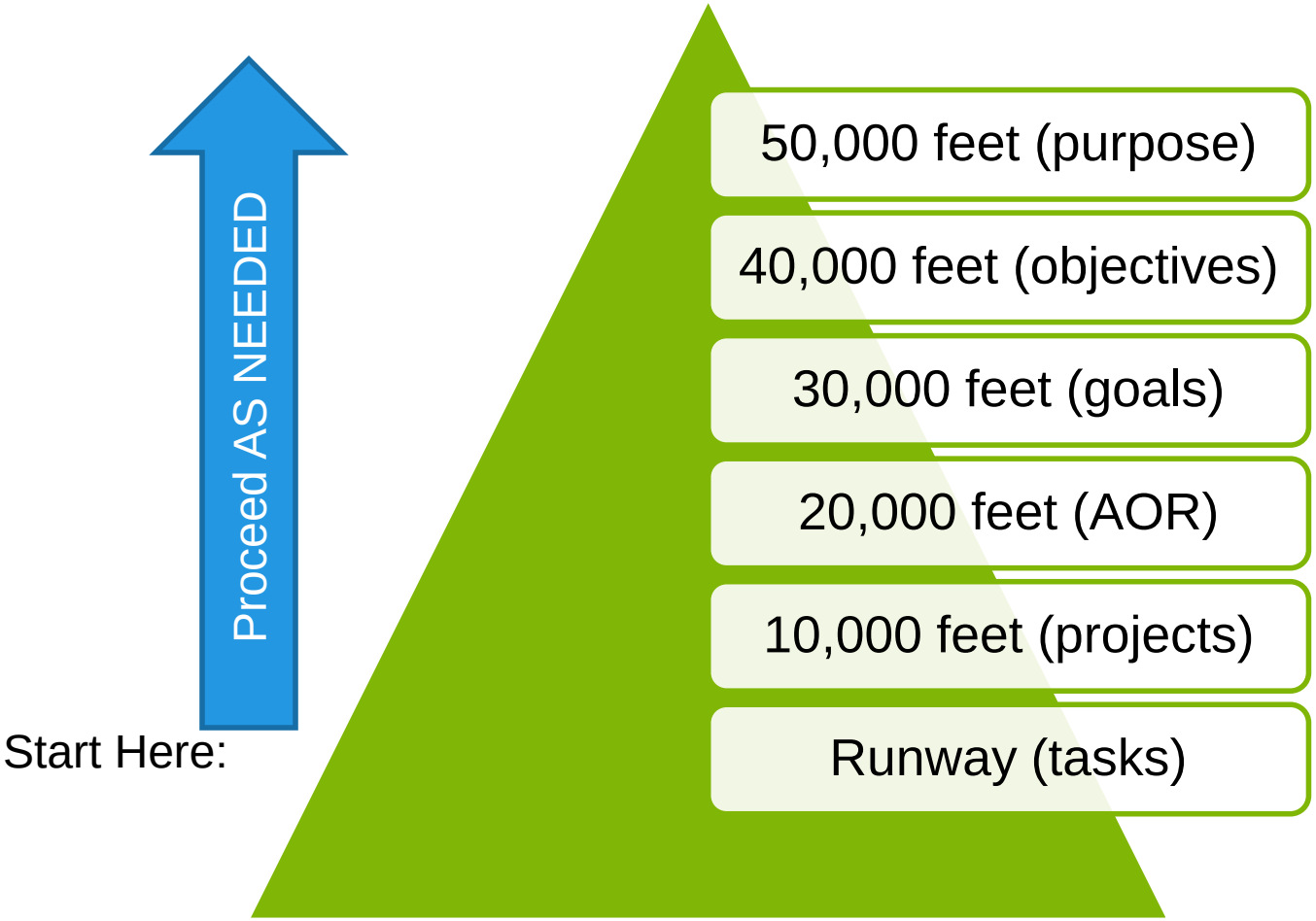
# Allen's Metaphor:  Aviation



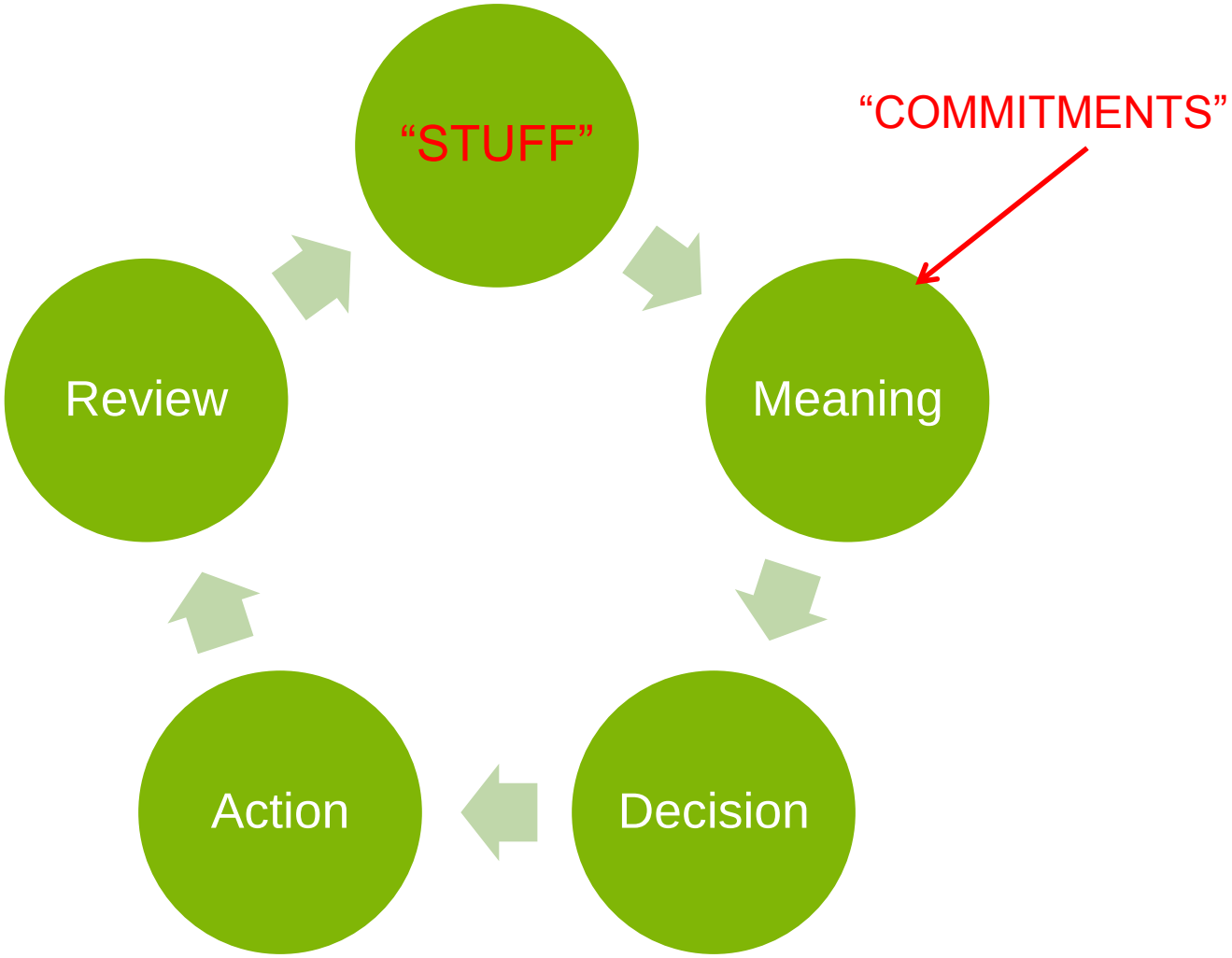
# Traditional “Wrong” Approach



# “Better” Approach



# How to get control?



# COMMITMENTS

Second Essential Element

# Start where you are

- Catalog “next actions”
- What project does each belong to?
- Why are you doing each thing?
- What larger commitment does each fulfill?

- Move up to more abstract levels to prioritize, “fill in the blanks”

- Convert excuses into next steps

# Time is your most precious resource

- Keep ONE calendar
  - There is only one you
- Things you do take time
  - Budget on the calendar
- Keep a list of things you “could do” if you have unstructured time
  - The only good “to-do list” is a calendar “annex”
  - Organize “next actions” by “context”

Does your (email, browser history, etc.) reflect your priorities?  Your commitments?

Covey:  “Put first things first.”

What gets scheduled, gets done.  (Try it!)

# Conversations about commitments

- What is the next step?
- What do I need to finish?
- What do I need to maintain?
- What am I trying to accomplish?
- Why am I trying to accomplish it?
- What is my purpose here?

# You are an “executive”

- AKA “knowledge worker”

- You define your job activities
- You can’t quickly and simply explain your job
- You add value to information

# Homework

- Establish a “trusted system” to:
  - Budget time in your calendar
  - Keep possible “next actions” handy when opportunity arises
  - Organize “stuff” so you can find it when you need it and won’t forget about it if it’s important

  - Regularly **review**

# So far…

- *Work-life balance* requires CONTROL
- Lack of CONTROL creates *stress*
- Unclear *stuff* contributes to *stress*
- CONTROL of *stuff* requires clarity about COMMITMENTS

- If you clarify your COMMITMENTS and take CONTROL, you will be on your way!

# You: “Great, but what about…”

- Unrealistic work requirements?
- Colleagues who interrupt you or flood you with email?
- Circumstances that are beyond your control?

KEEP
CALM
& BLAME
EVERYONE
ELSE

IT WASN'T
ME!

# The Culture Paradox

- If everyone else is “bad” you can still improve the culture by being “good.”
- You have to work within the culture of your workplace.

# CULTURE

Third Essential Element

# Could you say this at your job?

- “I will only check email twice a day, at 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM.”
- “I will not attend any (non-emergency) meeting unless the agenda is sent at least one day in advance.”
- “I will perform only tasks that require my unique/specific skills and delegate everything else.”

# CULTURE = Rules of Engagement

- Set of standing COMMITMENTS among a group (family, coworkers, society)
- Defines what is expected of you
- (To some extent, what you can get away with)

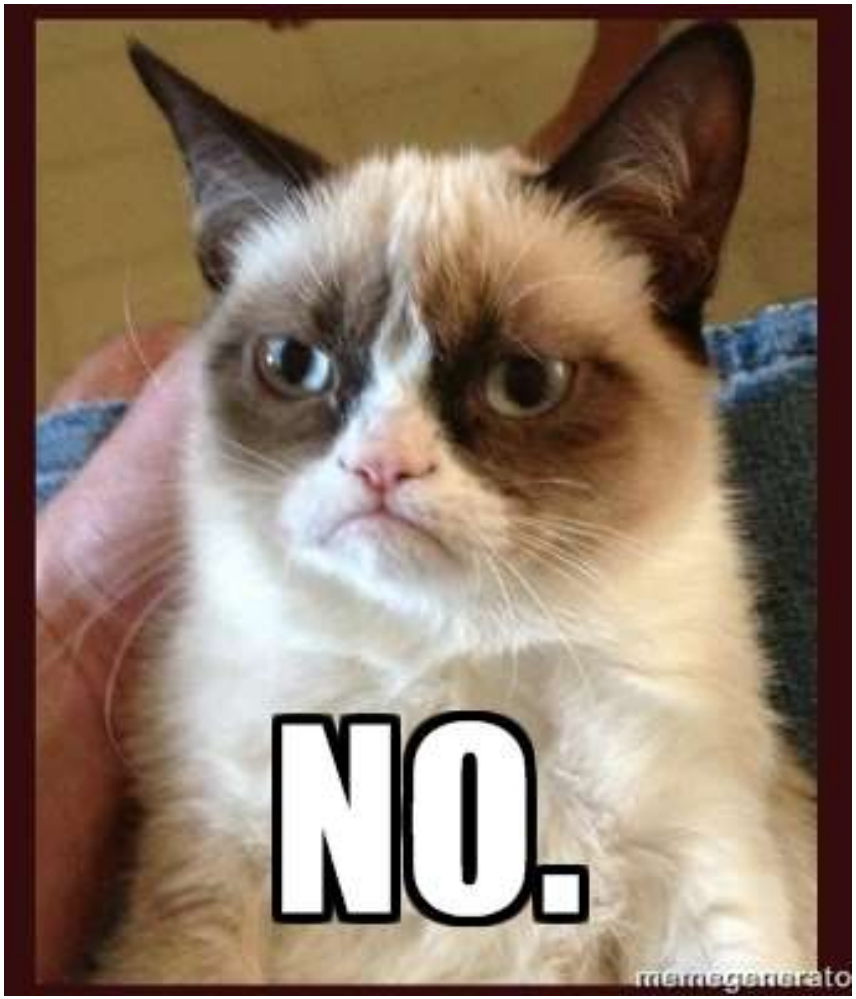
# The Golden Rule

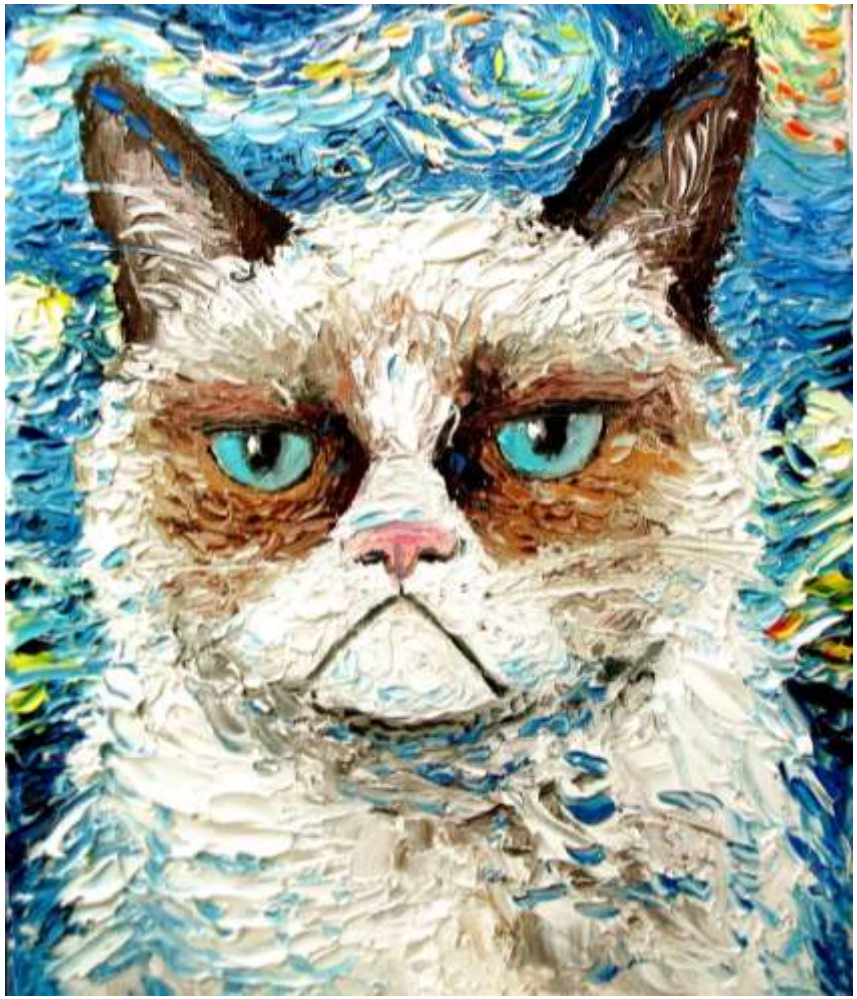
- Do unto others…
- If you're lucky, they may start to emulate you
- Proactively respect their time and attention they way you wish they would respect yours
- Occasionally, ask for the respect in return.
- *Teach*

# Awareness

- Where can you take control?
- Can you use your time more productively?
- Can you positively influence your cultures?
- Can you state your priorities and allocate your time and attention to them?

# Learn to say it…artfully



# CONTROL
# COMMITMENTS
# CULTURE

Remember…

# Why are you here?