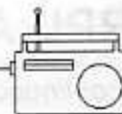


Make a List

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Quick! Give me a short list of the different types of people in the world!

Yes, it's a trick question. The correct answer (use the hints given in the question) is: 1) Those who make lists, and 2) Those who don't make lists

The next logical question is which type of person are you?

What does this have to do with broadcast engineering?

Let's Take a Look

Whenever you work on a project, you make a list. Maybe you don't write it down, but you make a list. In fact, you probably make quite a few lists. You make a list of the things you need for the project. Somewhere along the line you might make a list of the costs involved in the project, especially if you have to get the budget for it. You make a list, either written or mental, of the steps involved in completing the project. Depending on the type of project, you might make a list of the things you have to test in the completed project to make sure everything is working correctly. The larger the project, the longer the list. Also, larger projects may even require more lists.

There are other times when lists are important, too. Each day, when you go to work, do you make a list of the things you have to do. I used to say that this was quite silly, since you just do what you have to. But what happens when the work begins to pile up? Suddenly you can't deal with everything as it happens. If you do, you will never finish anything. Make a list of what you intend to do for the day before you start. After you make the list, put the items in the order of importance, with the items that are the most pressing at the top of the list. Sure, you may have some emergencies that may interrupt your work, but just add the emergencies to the list in their respective place.

A transmitter off the air immediately goes to the top of the list, but perhaps a flaky cart machine can be worked around for a while. If it can, or if you have another one you can plug in for the interim, do what you have to, and then get back to your list. Each time you complete an item on the list, mark it off, and include the amount of time it took you to complete. As you do this, you will find that at the end of the day you may actually have finished something. If you are lucky (or good) you will have completed your list. As you do this, and mark things off your list, you will begin to find that you feel like you are doing something productive. It may even make you want to go to work tomorrow and try to get a few more things off the list.

This type of daily list has another use as well. Keep the list. Mark the items that were added as emergencies. Then, when your boss asks you what you did all day, you can show him. You can even show him how long each item took you. In an extreme case this may even help save your job by showing that the company is getting its money's worth from you, and you're not just wasting your time at their expense.

There are other types of lists that can come in handy as well. An equipment inventory is a list. Is it useful? You bet! A current inventory is important if you ever have to make any sort of insurance claim, such as for fire or theft. A good inventory includes item description, manufacturer, model number, serial number, date of purchase, initial purchase cost, and other information. You may want to talk to your station's financial wiz before you put this together. You may want to make your inventory part of his financial records.

One of the most important parts of an inventory is to make sure you keep it current. If you have to scrap an item, add an item, or even just move it from one location to another, you may want to update the list. This type of list is often kept on a computer with some sort of spreadsheet or database program. If you keep your own list, make sure it is compatible with the financial one.

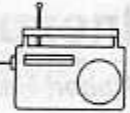
Budgets are another type of list. It is a list of things you need to buy and the costs of those items. When you put this one together, be sure to include all the "hidden" costs. This would include costs such as shipping, taxes, and some room for price increases. (Just because it costs a certain amount when you put the budget together is no guarantee that it will still be the same price when you get around to buying it.) Also, if it requires installation, be sure to include some room for outside contractors (if necessary), your own time (if applicable), and installation material (wire, connectors, etc.). Failure to include any of these items could get you in a real fix later.

Let's take a quick look at some of the mechanics of making lists. Of course, you can always jot them down on a piece of paper, but that may not be the best way. If you have to manipulate your list later, a written list will have to be copied. If you use a computer, you can probably copy the list quickly and incorporate it into whatever you need. Depending on the type of list you may have to add numbers or relate the list to other items. If so, you may want to consider a spreadsheet or relational database program.

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Budgets work very well on spreadsheets. Parts lists or inventories might be better on a relational database. If you have your inventory on a relational database, you can save yourself a lot of typing and help yourself in the future as well. A properly set up relational database will be able to connect the type of machine with others of the same type. You only have to type repeated information once and establish the correct links in the program. If you put your maintenance records in it as well, you can use it in the future to look up the symptoms, and find out what you did before, with another machine, to correct the situation. I have

thought of doing this for quite some time, but have not yet done it. If you have something like this, I would like to hear from you.

As you start using lists for more things, you will probably find even more uses for them. Making lists is a good habit to get into. Just don't be like a person I once knew. He was so wrapped up in making lists that he made a list of everything he did in his job. It took him three weeks to make a list of the steps to doing a 20 minute close-up. Great idea, but a bit out of proportion. Don't let your boss find you doing this, or you may end up like my friend, out of a job.