



## The Vital Few

In Six Sigma, the Vital Few represents the (20%) independent variables (X's) which contribute to maximum (80%) of the total variation. While this would be a perfectly good subject to write a quick tip about, I am not going to go there today. Instead, I want to take the concept of a vital few and apply it to projects and time management.

Historically, I have been guilty of taking way too much on without any real idea how I was going to get it all done. I would just say yes and hope I could check off enough tasks to satisfy my manager. What did I need to work on first? What would have the most profound impact on the organization? What are my vital few obligations at the moment? I got lucky a time or two, but I also took my lumps along the way.

Then, I developed my project grading matrix. The grading matrix helped me to prioritize and focus on just my vital few projects. And what a difference it has made.

An example of the grading matrix is shown below.

**Grading Matrix**

Project	Stakeholders	Threats	Difficulty	Impact	Score

**Difficulty 1-5. 5 being the easiest to Implement**  
**Impact 1-5. 5 having the highest impact.**

As each task is added, I score it for both level of difficulty and organizational impact. The higher the score, the higher it goes on my list. If the highest score for any item currently on my list is a five, and another project pops up that scores an eight, the project with the rating of eight will receive the majority of my attention.

The grading matrix is a very simple tool we can use to organize our projects or department initiatives. There will sometimes be more variables involved than just difficulty and impact, but these are a great place to start. You say you don't like lists or paper? An electronic version of this could be built on your departments SharePoint site.

This tool is taught as part of LLD's Strategic Planning and Ideation class. [Click here for more information.](#)

-Scot