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The smallest things can change your plan

By BETTYJO BOUCHEY

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I've spent the last decade of my life in the technology world, living and dying by spreadsheets, flow charts, project plans and Microsoft in general.

Why, then, would the birth of my first child be any different? Why not take all I have learned in my career and systematically go about having a baby? Having a baby couldn't be more SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely), could it?

The day we decided to have a baby, I started "The Plan." I was pregnant in three weeks. I created a birthing plan almost immediately and began tracking the major milestones of my pregnancy.

In parallel with the pregnancy, all the things that needed to happen in our lives were also on the plan: 1. get a baby-safe car, 2. finish nursery, 3. buy clothes — the list goes on.

Downloaded to my Palm, I could take this handy plan anywhere. You never know when you could check something off while sitting in a lobby or on your commute home.

Toward the middle of the pregnancy, I was delighted to check off "Find out sex of baby" with a pink check mark. A week later, I checked off "Name" with Chloe Ann Bouchee. Just the sound of it sent tingles up my spine.

In addition to the plan, I did a few other things differently in light of my business career. A sampling:

I worked at a company that didn't have a maternity leave policy so I created a proposal, just like I would to justify a new product.

I laid out all my accomplishments to date, created a work coverage plan, provided the schedule and how I would eventually transition back into work. I designed a framework around my accessibility while I was out and what risk was inherent in my plan. I wanted to equip my manager with all the information he would need to make decisions.

Needless to say, he was delighted I had provided this level of detail and our negotiations were swift and mutually beneficial.

I wrote a will that included what provisions should be made for my child if needed. I also filled out a living will and placed them both in my hospital bag.

Two weeks before the birth, I started updating my team and my manager on my progress. I made sure that any work that would extend past two weeks had a backup plan.

I finished up the last of my baby books by skipping all the "boy" chapters.

One week before the birth, I had my last appointment with fingers crossed. Indeed, my OB said those perfect words: "Check in to the hospital at 6 tonight, and 'we'll have a baby by morning.'" I had four hours to finish all the tasks labeled "One week prior." I went back to the office, clicked "Out of Office Assistant," delegated the RFP on my desk and drove home.

I checked off my final task at 5:30 p.m.: "Wash hair." No one likes a greasy first-time mom.

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By 9:20 the next morning, we had our little bundle of joy. According to the plan, the details of this pregnancy went swimmingly. I was thinking about all those women who told me that planning a baby's delivery was futile. I laughed in the face of those naysayers, envisioning my task list 100 percent complete.

However, I stopped scoffing when I heard: "It's a boy!" What? Apparently, Task No. 86 should have been checked off in blue.

What a lesson to learn. The best-laid plans are just that: plans. While having a plan helped me to be prepared, relaxed and knowledgeable about my pregnancy, it should have had enough flexibility to deal with surprise.

And a very wonderful surprise he was — he is the light of my life. Gavin Walker Bouchey is almost 14 months old now and continues to grow and develop under a more flexible project plan designed by his Type A mother, living in a world that plans every detail of their lives on their Palm.

NextGen Workbytes is written locally by and for Gen Xers learning the realities of the workplace. Bettyjo H. Bouchey is the dean of ITT Technical Institute in Colonie and is involved with a local young professionals' group. The views expressed in this article are her own and not those of ITT Technical Institute or any of its subsidiaries.

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