From Deadlines to Livelines!

Deadline! The word strikes fear deep into the heart of anyone who has ever owned a watch or calendar. Think about the affect of the word. Say it over and over again: deadline, *deadline*, **DEADLINE!**

How often have you engaged in a monumental physical, emotional and intellectual struggle to meet or beat a deadline? The stress, anxiety, insomnia and general malaise that arise from focussing on this single word are almost beyond belief.

It strikes me as peculiar that so much attention is paid to a word that doesn't seem to have any particularly positive connotations. The dictionary defines deadline as *a time limit* and as *the latest possible time to do something* or as *a line or boundary that must not be crossed.* And its root, the word dead, has definitions that include *no longer living; that has died; without life; inanimate; like death; not active or productive; dull, stagnant, quiet; without force, power, spirit or feeling; no longer having significance, power or effect; no longer in use; obsolete; no longer functioning or producing; out of play; not in the game* and *not connected to a source of powe*r.

Personally, I have a hard time getting passionate about meeting a deadline, given these definitions. And when you stop to think about it, what is "dead" about a deadline, anyhow? Most of the deadlines I have to meet signal the *beginning* of something, not the *end.* Everything that came prior to the deadline was simply preparation for a more desirable beginning.

I propose we eliminate the use of the word *deadline* and replace it with the word *liveline.* To me, this word conveys a much more positive intention. It's something I'm drawn to. It reduces the stress surrounding the other word. It has flexibility built into it, and the time boundary is now related to something I <u>want to have happen</u> rather than to something I want to <u>avoid missing</u>. The "live" part establishes a connection to something that is generative, dynamic, and desirable. It takes change into account. The "D" word often implies "do it or else", and "no excuses allowed". That word also denies an ever-changing environment that demands active responses that are *appropriate* and on time, not simply on time. How often have you gone full tilt to meet a deadline only to find out that circumstances relating to it have changed? A little more attention to what needs to "live" might keep your efforts more widely focussed on an evolving environment rather than strictly on a looming, narrowly focussed deadline.

"Down with deadlines", I say – and long live the Livelines!