

THERE IS ENOUGH TIME

Each of us has a fixed amount of time granted us at birth ... and each of us will use up that entire allotment before we die.

While we can't create any more time, WE CAN IMPROVE OUR USE OF THE TIME ALLOTTED TO US, which ACTS LIKE WE MADE MORE TIME.

Your time belongs to YOU, AND YOU ALONE and the key to your managing your time better is only a matter of your Personal Attitude and the application of some of these techniques.

BUT YOU must control your time ... and YOU MUST NOT PERMIT others to control it.

This doesn't mean you can't respond to the needs of others who need your time. Quite the contrary ... Good Time Management lets you better serve both yourself ... and others.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO BETTER MANAGE YOUR TIME

1. Know Your Obligations - Get a Handle on the Pending Tasks

A lot of unnecessary stress and inefficiency results from your not "having a handle" on what your time commitments are.

1.1 When you don't know what your time constraints are, you may have:

1.1.1 a desperate feeling that there are so many things to do that you can't remember them all;

1.1.2 a feeling that you are "Under the Gun" to perform;

1.1.3 a feeling that there "just isn't enough time to do everything" (at least not on schedule and not well enough)

all of which occurs before you've stopped to assess the situation.

After all, part of that desperate feeling is, that you feel like you just can't even afford the "luxury" of stopping to "take stock".

Nonsense! Things won't EVER improve UNTIL YOU TAKE PERSONAL CONTROL of your time. How can you do your work if you don't have an accurate understanding of what you have to do?

1.2 Reconcile yourself to the fact it will take some of your time every day to get, and stay, organized.

There is no human or computer driven system that can take you completely off this "hook".

YOU must do it! And the time you spend managing your time will be the Most Productive Time you'll EVER spend.

2. Organize your Work Space

Clear your desk for action and keep it clear! Your mind will begin to clear in the process.

2.1 Secretaries should keep the frequently used forms, pen refills and other supplies and tools handy ... ALL the time.

2.2 Use "In" and "Out" baskets: Your secretary takes everything from the "Out" basket, and you take it from the "In" basket.

Your mutual objective is to keep the baskets nearly empty and to keep sending work to the other person.

2.3 Start each day with, and maintain, a physically neat and organized office and an organized paper handling system.

There should be a place for everything and everything should be kept in its place.

3. Organize your Files

3.1 “File” unnecessary stuff in the wastebasket! Clear out the “dead wood”.

3.2 Organize your files and materials in a simple, coherent fashion.

3.2.1 Put all files together by TYPE. And Don’t mix file types.

3.2.2 If the files are complex and not just a place to store a bunch of papers, have a system of organization within each file and stick to the system.

YOU CAN’T USE, WHAT YOU CAN’T FIND.

3.3 The alphabet works lousy for filing! Use the Dewey Decimal System ... No one can file alphabetically with any degree of accuracy ... and remember that a file which is “just a little bit out of the proper alphabetical sequence” is just as “lost” as if it were on Mars.

3.4 Make a Rule that files belong ONLY in your hand or on your desk; in your secretary’s hand or on her desk, in your briefcase, or in their proper filing cabinet.

NEVER permit anyone to put a file in a desk drawer and INSTANTLY FIRE the person that does so.

There is NEVER AN EXCUSE FOR A LOST FILE!

Make sure you and your secretary both understand your systems.

4. Use Tickler Systems and Use Calendars

Use a tickler system.

Use your calendar.

5. Use Systems and Procedures

Don't Reinvent the Wheel. Use systems and procedures. If you have none, take the time to develop and write them the next time you do a task where written directions and forms would shorten that task in the future.

You are simply not capable of remembering every detail in a procedure, no matter what you think.

It is shortsighted ... and stupid ... to think there isn't time for training or that your staff will maximize its potential by some sort of "magical osmosis".

6. Make Notes and Write Lists of Things to Do

6.1 Keep a note pad on your desk, another in your pocket and another one in your car. Also on your bedside table. Keep one by every telephone.

Waking up to make a written reminder is a heavy weight removed from your mind and improves your sleep, remarkably.

A task which seems impossible while lying awake at night in bed will be simpler when seen on a list in the cool light of morning.

6.2 Write or dictate ideas and reminders, as they occur. You can never remember later what you should have done at the time you thought of it.

Update your lists ... AT LEAST DAILY.

7. Get a Dictating Machine and Talk to It

Use machine dictation ... or talk to your Voice Recognition Program on your computer. Shorthand wastes the stenographer's time and isn't faster.

Learn to dictate effectively. (See How to Get Better Letters)

8. Plan Solitary Work Periods - These Are Essential

Schedule solitary work periods and refuse to permit interruptions. This means NO PHONE CALLS and NO DROP IN VISITORS ... Not even office colleagues. If they try to interrupt, tell them that they can talk to you later. They usually can.

You can't perform promptly unless you stubbornly retain enough time to do the tasks.

Pay Attention to your own body rhythm ... some people are "Night People" ... some are "Morning People".

9. Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan

Method is like packing things in a box;

a good packer will get in half as much more, as a bad one.

Cecil

10. Plan for Surprises

Always schedule time for the "unexpected" and a little additional time for the "unexpected, unexpected".

11. Stop Daily and Re-Assess Where You Are Time-Wise

11.1 Review your files regularly. Nothing beats physically touching and looking at them!

11.2 Meet with your secretary daily to review your work progress on her work progress progress ... and review the plan for the work to be done that day ... work by her ... and work by you.

11.3 Don't EVER leave the office for the day without reorganizing your desk, auditing your time for the day and reviewing tomorrow's agenda.

12. Learn When and How to Say “No” to Projects

Don't be “the gal that can't say No.” Learn to express appreciation along with a tactful “no” when necessary.

There are too many worthy causes ... and you can't give time to them all. Don't even try. Limit yourself to a “Manageable Few” rather than do a mediocre job with many.

13. Don't Procrastinate

Get started *now!* Use the 80/20 rule. You can do the great bulk of your work while others are still worrying about starting theirs.

Don't be paralyzed by the fear that your action may be “imperfect”.

It is important to maintain high standards and important to do a good job the first time ...

but if you don't have the time to do it “right” the first time, how will you ever find the time to do it, again?

Perfection is “far too high” a standard ... even if it were to be attainable, its emotional and financial costs are far too dear.

14. Persevere

Once you start a task, finish it. Interruptions cause more inefficiency than any other thing because the time spent “Starting Up or Getting Into” the project is considerable, but it yields little or no forward progress.

Delay is the Deadliest form of Denial.

C. Northcote Parkinson

The tasks to do immediately are the Minor Ones ... otherwise, you'll forget them.

The Major Ones are often better to defer.

They usually need more time for reflection. Besides, if you forget them, they'll remind you.

Charles Wolf, Jr.
Rand Corporation

15. Keep Up with Your Work Load

Don't EVER fall behind. Be Ready to “bear down” immediately when demands mount up. And do it that very night or weekend.

You're at a disadvantage and will remain at that disadvantage until you dig out with extra effort.

Apply that extra effort right away before the hole gets deeper and the task demands more to get out, than you have to give.

16. Telephone Communicating with Others

Schedule regular periods (try 2 a day) for returning phone calls. People who call when you're not accepting calls should be told when you'll return the call. Keep your Promise.

16.1 Use the conference call feature on your telephone. It's wasteful to make several calls when one will do, and conference calls do it better.

16.2 Your secretary can handle much routine telephone support ... For example, arranging all manner of support projects and obtaining straightforward information.

17. Eliminate Squeaky Wheel Detours

Don't EVER succumb to the Squeaky Wheel. Proper planning will prevent squeaky wheels. And if one squeaks anyway, it can usually wait until you complete what you are doing.

Remember its the "Start Up and Re-Start Up" time investment in picking up "where you left off" after an interruption that uses up so much time without any immediate progress to the goal of completion ... **so attending to a Squeaky Wheel is the Very Worst of All Worlds.**

18. Be Wary of Stopping Everything for Drop-in Visitors

You aren't "obligated" to see Drop In visitors in any way, if it conflicts with already scheduled time.

Don't let Drop Ins steal from the amount of your time you committed to a task. Visitors are interested in their own problems and they just don't care if you're working on something else. YOUR problems are the problems that require your attention ... not the problems of chatting visitors.

19. Delegate to Others

Your goal isn't to work harder. It's to spend your valuable time doing the things WHICH YOU DO BETTER than your staff ... the tasks that demand YOUR special skills ... and to delegate **ALL** the other things that others less expensive than you, can do just as well as you can.

Delegate effectively by arranging for each task to be done at the cheapest level person competent to perform it.

The decision to delegate has nothing to do with “fairness” ... if the job is unpleasant and can be done by staff cheaper than you, delegate it. anyway ... this is not a Democracy ... it is a Benevolent Autocracy.

Delegation also means delegating the appropriate authority to act and spending the time necessary to clearly instruct and train the delegee.

And it also means that whenever that Delegee errs, you must accept their error and plainly understand that 100% of the fault was in your own inability to effectively instruct them as to what you want done.

20. Make Wise Use of Meetings, but Especially Watch Out for Big Group Meetings

Those responsible for calling a meeting are mainly responsible for its Success or Failure.

20.1 Big Group meetings are the BIGGEST time wasters.

20.2 Don't ever have a meeting if there is a more efficient alternative. How about a conference call or written poll?

20.3 Never have a meeting without a predetermined purpose in a clearly stated, delivered ahead of time, written agenda.

20.4 Don't have a meeting until there has been enough “spade work” to allow the participants to act decisively. Distribute reports and other data sufficiently in advance to allow participants to “get to the point” when they arrive.

20.5 Never schedule meetings in your private office. You can't leave.

20.6 Try scheduling meetings during only half the day so the other half can be scheduled for other work.

20.7 Consider scheduling meetings near the end of the day when participants will be motivated to finish the job in order to leave.

20.8 Allow enough time for each conference and then forcefully but tactfully end it when continued talk won't accomplish anything further. Getting up and walking to the door helps end things, politely.

20.9 Start and finish On Time. Participants will comport themselves to the leader's habits. If the leader rarely starts on time, they will habitually come late, and this always makes the meetings longer since it can't be conducted effectively without most of the participants.

20.10 State the purposes of the meeting at the beginning of the meeting and set a time limit. Remind the group of the purposes when they wander afield.

20.11 Don't waste the participants time. Be informed, Be There On Time, Stick To The Issues, Do Your Business and Leave.

20.12 Follow the cardinal parliamentary precept that there can be no discussion unless and until there is a specific "Motion on the Floor."

20.13 Employ full parliamentary procedure to handle controversial matters or intractable groups.

20.14 Learn to excuse yourself for another appointment, tactfully.

20.15 Dictate minutes immediately after meeting's end while everything is still fresh.

20.16 Leave time between meetings to do the necessary administration (e.g., opening the files, planning, recording, delegating, calling, etc.)

rj

Authors Note

This article is the result of the authors entire life work of independent planning, organizing, time conservation effort and the implementation of all of these time conservation techniques beginning in the 1960s ... but this article also contains heavily edited, and in some cases, completely controverted portions of a subsequent article on the same topic entitled There is Enough Time by Ted E. Deaner published in Legal Economics in 1984, from which the title of this text was "stolen." I did it, FIRST. rj