

## The Fallacy of Time Management

There have been numerous books and articles written on the subject of time management. The problem is ... you cannot manage time. Time is the great equalizer. We are all given the exact same amount of time in every day, week, month and year. In fact, we all get 525,600 minutes per year. That sounds like a lot, doesn't it? So, why is it that we all complain about the lack of time we have?

The problem is not the amount of time we have - but what we do with it. The fallacy of time management is that we can somehow 'manage' or control time. Time will keep moving forward whether you are productive or not. The hands on the clock continue to move regardless of what you do. Instead, you need to think about priority management. You can manage how you use your time and what the priorities are that you focus on.

In addition, think about 'time' in terms of the return you get on what you do with it. When we talk about time, we usually use the consumption term of 'spend.' What you should be thinking about is 'investing' your time so you end up getting something back for your effort. When you think of time in terms of an investment, you begin to look at your list of things to do differently.

I am going to share with you five things you need to do in order to take control of your most precious resource – time. Start working on these areas today.

1. Plan your day in advance. Don't arrive at work without a plan for what you will be focusing on that day to move your business forward. It happens to all of us – whether you work in your home or drive to an office each day – we get ready to start working and the phone rings, or an interesting email shows up, or something else distracts us. The next thing we know we are working on things that someone else thinks is important or that we like doing but isn't necessarily what we should be doing. Before you know it, the day is over and you did not accomplish what you started out to do.

Things come up each day that you simply did not expect and that is just a reality. If you go into the day with no plan then you will be at the whim of whatever comes up. Your day will bounce from one place to the next with no planned progression. The things that are important to you will get pushed aside.

To avoid this problem, take a few minutes at the end of each day to plan what will be your top priorities and your plan for the next day. What do you need to focus on to move the business forward? This is not just a list of tasks you need to do. It must be a list of the priorities to work on your business, not just in it. When you have a plan, you attack your day differently. You are on the offensive to get the right things done for the business – not the defensive, dealing with issues as they land on your desk or in your email. This leads us to the next critical point.

2. Create your **two**-do list every day. Notice I did not say 'to-do' list, which is usually just a list of the tasks you are going to do that day. Instead, decide the two things that, if you got them done today, it would improve your business and make money. Decide what your most important items are for that day and then do them before you do anything else. Do not give yourself permission to go home until you have dealt with those two items.

If you deal with large projects then one of your items might be a portion of the project, not the whole project. Break the project down into bite size chunks then tackle a chunk at a time. You will complete the project more quickly and more effectively this way.

When you work on a priority list like this it will keep you much more focused and effective. Make sure the two items you choose each day will move you closer to your success goal. If they don't then why would you call them a priority?

3. Practice Selective Neglect. We all have more than enough to do every day. It is almost impossible to get everything you need completed every single day. The practice of selective neglect makes you focus on the priorities that mean the most to your future, not the day-to-day small issues that come up all the time.

An example of this I see all the time is a business owner that has a small team of employees that work for them. The team does not do as much as they should and their knowledge about the business is limited. The owner will tell me that they simply don't have time to train and then delegate to their team. They are simply too busy running the business, making all the decisions and working on problems. The principal of selective neglect says that you need to push some of the less pressing items off until another time and train your team. The long-term benefit is you will have a team that can handle the issues you are handling now. You will then focus on the profitable areas of your business, not the daily issues.

This is true for many things, not just training your team. If you must make sales calls and handling marketing because you are a solo-preneur, then you cannot let un-important issues get in the way. Put off the daily issues while you work on the areas to grow your business. Those small items will still be there when you are ready to tackle them. Set a specific time on your calendar each week when you will deal with the little issues and then get them done and out of your way.

Selective neglect is a critical component to investing your time versus spending it. You must control time and not let it control you.

4. Eliminate the distractions from your day. Statistics tell us that it takes the average person about 17 minutes to re-engage in a previous activity after being interrupted. Continual distractions during the day will hinder your productivity and ability to get things done faster than anything else. Find ways to keep yourself focused on what you are working on and get it done with limited distractions.

Some ideas are 1) set a time each day when you close your office door and don't take calls or let anyone in unless the building is on fire 2) Turn off the chime on your email program so it doesn't go off every time a new email arrives 3) If what you are working on does not require your computer then turn off your computer monitor so you will not get the visual distraction of what pops up on the screen or be tempted to deal with that new message that just came in 4) Create a default calendar that sets aside specific time each week for the critical tasks you must do for your business. During that time, you don't work on anything other than what is scheduled for that time slot. The other things will wait for you!

There are many other ways to do this. This important thing is for you to take control of it and deal with it accordingly. Make the choice to be in control and not let the distractions destroy your plan for the day. You will not get the time wasted by distractions back – it is gone forever.

5. Determine your value and outsource accordingly. Decide what your time is worth and only invest your time on those items. If something can be done better by someone else, then delegate it or outsource it. As the owner/manager, your time should be invested on accomplishing the growth and profit goals of your business. If you need to pay someone else to do a task, figure out what it will cost you and what you would have to do with your time to make enough money to pay for it. You will be surprised at how little you would probably have to do in order to cover the cost.

If it is something you should delegate, determine who in your organization is the best person to do it. If they don't know how, then use selective neglect to get them trained and ready to take it over so you can focus on those things you should be working on. Remember, profit is king.

Also, keep in mind that you determine what profit means. It may mean more money in your account but it also might mean less time spent at work and more free time to do what you want. Since time is such a precious asset, it is literally priceless. Time gives you freedom to enjoy the fruits of your labor or re-invest in your business to create more profits. The great news is – you get to choose.

We get to choose how we invest, or spend, our time each day. Make solid choices to stay focused on what is most important to you and don't let the news of the day or the negativity of others get in your way. Any time you waste today is gone forever – investing your time wisely is the best investment you can make. Focus on these five areas to take control of your priorities and you will get more done every day. You will jump start your results and become more productive and happy.