



How to Manage Your Time

It is easy to get sucked into spending a great deal of time on small problems while larger issues are ignored. It is just as easy to get drawn into dealing with major problems while you leave daily tasks undone.

Proper time management will keep your business running smoothly and will relieve you of day to day stress.

You know you have a time management problem when:

- You are often late or forget meetings and appointments.
- You are consistently behind in your responsibilities.
- You don't have enough time to eat, sleep and spend time with your family.
- You are always working, but still not meeting deadlines.
- You are mentally and physically tired.
- You are permanently stressed.

Identify your time management issues:

- **Indecision:** constantly changing your mind or over thinking simple decisions.
- **Telephone calls:** personal calls, cold calling, not getting to the point.
- **Visitors:** unscheduled meetings, friends dropping by unannounced.
- **Too much work:** forgetting to delegate, over loading your schedule.
- **Ineffective meetings:** Unplanned meetings, lack of order, being unprepared.

A good practice when running your business is to find out exactly what you spend your time doing. To determine this, develop a time-log. List what you do every hour of everyday for one week. Simply recording this will give you a better idea of what is taking a lot of time, and what tasks you should be spending more time on. Doing this will reveal whether you are trying to do too much or you are procrastinating.

Typical timewasters:

- Spending too much time on administration or other tasks that don't bring in business.
- Doing things that could be done by somebody more junior or outsourced.
- Micro-managing employees.

The solution: “To-do” lists

Developing “To Do” lists is a simple and organized way of managing your time. These lists should be practical, precise and, above all, achievable.

You don't want to try and do a week's work in a day or a week's work in a month. For this reason it is a good idea to have different “To Do” lists for different time periods. Not only will this better prepare you for each day, but it will also prepare you for any major changes in your schedule. Just having an idea of what you have to do each day, will grant you extra peace of mind. Planning ahead also prepares you for any surprises that may come.

Types of “To-do” lists:

- Daily – for daily tasks
- Weekly – for weekly tasks
- Monthly – for monthly tasks
- Annual – for annual goals

Develop daily “To Do” lists:

Use whatever works for you – paper, computer or on-line system –and prioritise your daily tasks. Customise your “To Do” list to your own needs. Here are a couple of examples.

Plan Your Week

A weekly plan will help you focus on the most important tasks in your business. It is important to:

- Plan your week in advance.
- Set aside time to do things that will help you grow your business.
- Ensure that all your employees develop weekly to-do lists.

Example

1. Sales I plan to make this week -
2. Marketing I plan to do this week -
3. Number of new contacts I plan to add to my database -
4. Business financial and accounting goals I plan to achieve -
5. Other Issues - Things I need assistance with -
6. My big personal goal for the week –

Online tools to consider

- <http://www.centraledesktop.com/>
- <http://todoist.com/>
- <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/todo-for-ipad/id371787147?mt=8>