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## **TIME MANAGEMENT**

Are you a procrastinator?? Do you have difficulty in maximising the time in your business? Are you less than effective in getting all tasks done each day?

If you answered YES to any of the above, you are probably in the top 80% of the business population!!! In other words, the majority of us!!

I think it is fair to say that we all have very good intentions each day of ensuring we manage our time effectively and efficiently but sadly that doesn't always occur.

Some tips that may help you are: -

### **1. Track your daily time**

Although that can be a pain to do it is a very good way to see where you spend your time each day. The majority of accountants and lawyers do it this way as they have to track their time in 6-minute intervals so that they can charge their time accordingly. I am not suggesting that you go to that extent (unless you want to) but perhaps in blocks of 30-minutes might be helpful.

### **2. Keep your eye on the game**

We all lose focus so we need to bring ourselves back on target if we begin to "drift"! All of a sudden "useless" tasks become "good fun" and drain our productive time. Don't be a "slacker" as it will drain your competitive edge. If perfectionism is holding you back, then recognise that "good enough" is a kind of excellence in its own right and is a step towards improving your performance.

### **3. Daily Action Plan**

Have a daily Action Plan. A "To-Do List" or a "Timetable" as that will help you develop good time management techniques. Prepare it first thing in the morning or indeed, the night before.

Sadly, you HAVE TO develop the discipline necessary to do it but it can be most rewarding when you do. Naturally, once having established an Action Plan, it is critical that you follow it. Set time limits for each task so that you stay on track. A good idea is to have a large wall clock in front of your work desk so that you can monitor how you are going.

Maximise the use of electronic means to ensure you are always up to date. With the myriad of smartphones and similar there is just no reason why appointments, tasks and to-do lists cannot be in your hands at all times.

Try and clear your emails as a first task in the morning. If there are some matters that need to be addressed promptly then do so as part of your Action Plan. Once cleared, turn the email programme off until you have finished the initial task(s) in the Action Plan, then turn the programme back on (say) on the hour to download the next lot of messages! Then repeat the process of dealing with them.

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#### 4. **Discipline**

I cannot over emphasise the absolute necessity to be disciplined in your approach to your business activities. Take your eye off the ball and you will fall in a heap. If you see yourself slipping into a procrastination mode, stop and give yourself a mental kick in the rear end! Always set daily goals as to how much of your Action Plan you can get rid of in that day.

#### 5. **Know Your Deadlines**

Make sure you have a good grasp on any deadlines that apply to any task. Ensure your calendar or organiser clearly sets out the deadline dates and times. If there is a deadline it always looks completely professional if you can meet that timeline. Obviously, some circumstances occur where that may not happen and if that does eventuate, you must keep your client fully in the picture.

I always endeavour (once having been given a deadline) to try and finish the task **prior** to that deadline date as that looks most efficient in the eyes of your client and augurs well for repeat business!

#### 6. **Learn to Say “NO”!!**

Somebody once told me that the “world’s best contraceptive was.....NO!!”

I have had to apply that to my business operations as well. There have been occasions in the past where I had to (in spite of it not being in my nature!) to turn work away as I was just unable to meet the client’s requirements. If I do have to say no, I always tend to refer the enquirer to another of my colleagues rather than just slamming the door in his/her face!

There is just no point in taking on work when you are under pressure as that will lead to an increased stress level and we can all do without that!

#### 7. **Focus your Attention**

We all tend to be easily distracted and very quickly! Close off any Internet browsers that you don’t really need to have open. Keep your mind in gear and on the job. Is your phone ringing a distraction? Turn it off! (Make sure you have a Voicemail service though!) SMS messages continually beeping? Turn it off? Skype or similar interrupting you? Turn it off! Does Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn take away your focus? Turn them off!

#### 8. **Reward Yourself**

Managing your time also means scheduling some downtime to relax and recharge. Plan rewards as soon as you complete a task. Shout yourself a cup of coffee (outside of the office!) when you have achieved one of your mini goals for the day. It is also a great idea to get out of your chair every 30 minutes or so and stretch the legs and to get a breath of fresh air. It’s amazing how that invigorates.