



Manage Your Time- *Don't Let it Manage You!*



Happy New Year!

I hope 2018 is a great year for you and whether you have made new year resolutions or not, managing your time and keeping a life-work balance that makes you feel whole and centered is a challenge for most of us.

I'll tell you a secret – it's always been one of my

"organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it's not all mixed up."



a.a. milne
Winnie the Pooh

biggest challenges, which is why I started studying everything I could get my hands on about time management and delivering seminars on the topic. Every seminar I delivered helped to either keep me on track or get me back on track.



So today I want to share some of the tips I found most helpful along the way.

You need three things to make it work smoothly, which is also what will allow you to accomplish goals and get the progress started.

1. **A Planning List** – This is not a to-do list, but rather long-term goals for the month, year or multiple years ahead. What is your personal vision? Once you have your goals, break them down into doable chunks to put on your to-do list. If it's not broken down into a chunk you can do in 90 minutes or less, it will just get pushed aside when you see it on the list. The smaller the chunk, the better the chance you can find space in your schedule to do it.
2. **A To-Do List** – Whether it's on paper, on your phone, or your laptop matters not, what matters is that you write down what you need to do. Just keeping everything in your head is exhausting and it's hard to prioritize anything when you can't look at it.
3. **A Written Schedule** – This is a guide to organize your prioritized to-do list. I found that without at least a plan of what I want to accomplish each day (preferably for the week), I lose focus, get side-tracked with all

Is clutter a challenge?

Remember the mantra, "A place for everything and everything in its place". It takes some investment of time up front to get things organized, but it saves huge amounts of time on the other end, by not hunting for things, and not feeling overwhelmed by all that's piled in front of you.

Take it in chunks. Find one spot of clutter and work with it to organize it. Then move on to another at another time. Select the right type of containers, decorative if you want it to sit in view, the right type of labels if appropriate and the right space in your house or office. If it is frequently used, put it where it is easily accessible and just as easy to put away – or the organization won't last.

Tackle the mountain of paper. Ask yourself two questions; 1. Do I need it – if not pitch it. If you might need it, file it. If

the things constantly crossing my path by the end of the day, I've forgotten what I intended to get done that day. I am at least 5 times as efficient with a schedule. I do mine about once a week. But here's the thing – remember this – “Plans are useless, planning is invaluable”. What that means is that the planning process is what gets you to where you want to be ultimately, but there will always be things that change and things you couldn't plan for and the plans will inevitably change. So use your schedule as a guide and don't freak out when it doesn't work as you planned. Just keep working at it and use it as a guide and make adjustments as you go along.

Why? I know, you're already saying this sounds like too much work, but indulge me for one more minute. Years ago, I heard a story of an executive who hired a time management consultant to follow him around for a couple weeks and create a time-management plan for him. After the two weeks, he showed up with nothing in hand. The executive was confused, but the consultant told him the plan, for which, by the way, 30+ years ago, this executive is said to have paid \$25,000. Are you ready, the advice was:

DO THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FIRST!

Well, you can't do that if you don't have a list and haven't prioritized it and don't know what's most important.

it has sentimental value, put it away somewhere or take a picture of it and then get rid of it. 2. If I need it in the future, can I get another copy? If you can get your hands on it again, which nowadays isn't that hard with the internet, then pitch it. Also, consider scanning it and just keeping an electronic version of it.

Does your plan for the day get derailed with interruptions? If so, let me ask you, do you have a written plan for the day? Without a written plan, it is easy to get sidetracked after the interruption. I don't care if it's written on the back of your Dunkin' Donuts napkin on the way to work, but with a written plan, you go immediately back to your plan and see what you're supposed to be doing next. It also helps if you can keep on your desk in front of you, just the item you're supposed to be working on. I know it's hard, but if you only have that item in front of you, it is right there after the interruption and it's easy to stay focused on it. Also, consider a time not to take calls and discipline yourself not

So here are some specific tips:

To prioritize, you can rank items with 4 letters:

- A. It's important and urgent – the deadline is looming
- B. It's important, but not urgent – the deadline is further out
- C. Urgent but not important - the laundry (but if all you do are the chores that are always there, you'll never get to the important stuff)
- D. Neither urgent nor important - These are often the things that you choose to do when you're procrastinating!

Don't be a list crosser-offer. Ok, confess – have you ever written something on your to-do list that you've already done just so you could have the satisfaction of crossing it off! What I mean by not being a crosser-offer is, don't do something because you can have the temporary satisfaction of crossing something off your list. And I do mean temporary. When you procrastinate or do a whole bunch of things so you feel like you had a productive day and can cross a lot off – the deadline on that really important item is fast approaching. That's why you do the most important thing first. Fill in your available 5 minutes here and 5 minutes there with those small items and use your big blocks of time for the important projects. **That's how you stay sane by not being up against deadlines!**

When you put your schedule together:

- Break down tasks as small as possible – in doable chunks

to check your phone every 5 seconds.

Take breaks! Research says that the maximum amount of time you can spend on a task without losing efficiency is 90 minutes. After that, your productivity starts to wane. So schedule breaks and something you can enjoy for a few minutes before getting back at it.

If you want it, schedule it! If you want to have family time, yoga time, sleep time, TV relaxing time, date night, time to walk the dog for fun – not just because Rover has to poop, then schedule it!! If you don't schedule what you want to do and have in your life, then there are plenty of to-do's, people, commitments and interruptions to take over your life. It's your choice. Take control of your schedule or someone else will for sure.



- Do like tasks together – errands, calls, reading, writing, emails
- Fit 5-minute tasks in 5-minute time slots – like when you're waiting for something or you only have 5 minutes left before a meeting or a phone call starts
- Work backwards from deadlines
- Include both home and work to-do's
- Work from your to-do list and your goals list
- Build in flexibility and cushion – don't schedule every minute
- Remember time for your exercise, family time, alone time – all the things you need to stay balanced
- Say no and don't over-commit

Getting Organized

- Have a place for everything and put everything in its place
- Don't set things down until they are in their designated place
- Categorize, categorize, categorize
- Clean it up, put it away or file it before you leave it

Managing your time is something that takes work and constant focus to have time available for the really important things and maintain a positive work-life balance. If a couple of short-term coaching calls can help you, contact me and I'll be glad to help you design better habits and strategies. Also, if you'd like to have a time-management seminar in your organization, just let me know. Learn techniques together and you can help reinforce each other!

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Here's to achieving your goals,



Make 2018 the most efficient year yet!

Contact me and let's get started.



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