
Secrets To Better Time Management For Entrepreneurs

by KRISTIE TAMSEVICIUS

Why is it that the Bill Gateses of this world are rich and famous? What secret do they know that the rest of us don't? If you study their lives closely, you'll discover the rich and famous have certain habits that contribute to their success. Successful people are very careful about how they spend their time. No matter how you slice it, we all have 24 hours in a day, so the key lies in learning to use our time wisely. Below are some ways you can dramatically increase your productivity through more effective use of your time.

Monitor how you currently use your time — If it seems like your day slips by all too quickly, try creating a log of your daily activities. Once you see where you are spending your time, you can identify and focus on the activities that provide the greatest returns for you personally and financially. Start your log by writing down what time you wake up, get ready and begin work. Calculate how much time you spend on individual activities such as e-mail, phone calls and client work.

Calculate how much your time is worth — Time

is money. Knowing how much your time is actually worth can help you make better decisions as to whether you should perform a task or outsource it. For instance, if your time is worth \$200 an hour, you are far better off paying someone \$30 an hour to edit your newsletter. You can “bank” the other \$170 per hour by spending your time on profit-making activities. Also take the time to determine how much time a day you need to spend on billable activities to make your desired profit. I try to spend 1.5 hours a day on money-making projects.

Create a daily schedule — Don't start your day without a “to do” list. Make a list of tasks and categorize them into business building activities, client activities and personal items. Then break bigger unmanageable projects into smaller “doable” chunks so they're less intimidating and easier to accomplish.

Prioritize — Have more to do than there are hours in the day? By prioritizing your tasks, you'll make sure you are tackling the items that matter most. Create a system that works for you. One standard way of prioritizing is to mark items with A, B and C.

Ask yourself these key questions:

- What items **must** be done today?
- Which items can be rescheduled?
- What can be delegated?
- Which tasks most closely match my priorities and goals?
- Which items can be eliminated?

Learn to say no — Are you adding one more item

If it seems like your day slips by all too quickly, try creating a log of your daily activities.

to your never-ending to-do list? You are in control of your time. Be strong and uphold your personal boundaries. When you are well rested and treat yourself and your family to the time off you deserve, you'll feel happier and more productive when it's time to go back to work.

Before you say yes, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you really have the time or energy to do that extra task?
- Do I like this customer? Are they good for me?
- Will it be profitable?
- Does it invade your personal time?
- Does it involve doing something you enjoy?
- Does it fit in with your list of priorities and goals?

Remove distractions and "time sucks" — "Time sucks" are lurking everywhere like viruses. Think about which activities are eating up your time. For me personally, these items include e-mail, social calls and telemarketers. I "conquer" the e-mail demon by shutting down my Outlook when I am working.

When a family member calls during work time, I politely ask if I can call them back during the afternoon and remind them of my work hours. Caller ID valiantly saves me from the "would be" telemarketer time thieves. With one glance, I can quickly differentiate telemarketers from important client calls.

Stick to the plan — Try not to get sidetracked from your plan. One of my friends has a motto, "A lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on mine." It's a smart one to live by. Unless it's a true emergency, or you are being paid "rush" time, you probably don't need to squeeze a last-minute request in today. Also, by assigning yourself project deadlines, you can keep on top of projects and avoid those dreaded last-minute emergencies.

Choose an inspiring place and time — We are all built differently. Do the tasks which take your most brain power when you are at your prime. Are you a morning person or do you work best burning the midnight oil? Create an ultimate work haven that is clean, distraction-free and inspiring. My office overlooks my flower garden and is right in the heart of family activity.

Bundle like tasks together — As you work through your daily list, try to chunk your tasks into like activities. By creating a separate "chunk" of time for answering e-mail, invoicing and making return phone calls, you'll save time and mental energy.

Avoid interruptions — Trying to do the same thing over and over again with interruptions can be mad-

dening. Once you start a task, try to finish it to the end. If something comes up that you need to remember or do, unless it's urgent, simply add it to your list and continue with your current project.

Be organized — When things are tidy, it saves you time and frees you to focus on the task at hand. Follow your own organizational style.

Phone lists: For instance, I arrange my phone lists into groups according to how I use them: friends, family, doctors, etc. I also list people in my phone book that I talk to on a first-name basis by their first name alphabetically.

E-mails: Another time-saving idea is to color code your e-mails. In my personal color scheme I use one color for clients, one for newsletters, and another for my co-workers. You can also group your e-mails using categories and folders.

One calendar meets all: Keeping track of work appointments, and committee meetings can be very difficult. My secret to keeping on top of family and work appointments is to schedule them all on one calendar.

Daytimer special section: Create a special section of your Daytimer just for special interests, hobbies, etc.

In summary, why wait for success when you can literally schedule it! By mastering your time, you can accomplish much more with less effort. Be choosy about how you spend your time. Focus on activities which most closely match your goals. By taking time to monitor, measure and manage your time, you will enjoy an abundance of success and happiness. □

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Kristie Tamsevicius is an author, web branding consultant and president of Branding on the Net and WebMomz.com. Tamsevicius has been working from home since 1995, designing small-business web sites while writing her book I Love My Life: A Mom's Guide to Working from Home.

