

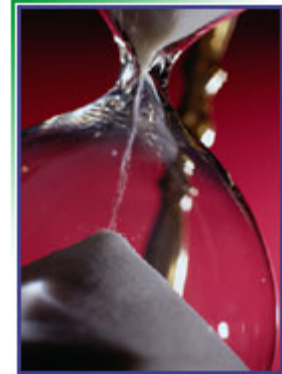
Tips and Tricks for Better Time Management

By Steve McClatchy

Learn to Observe Yourself and Others

The first step in becoming a good time manager is to observe the ways you currently spend your time. If you do it, write it down. Take notice of where your time goes, and where and with whom you spend it. Once you are aware of where your time goes, it's much easier to make different choices.

The second step is to make better choices. It takes a lot of character to try something new, but if you don't change what you're doing, then you'll keep getting what you're getting.



Learn to Say No

Saying no for some people is a very hard thing to do, but it has tremendous rewards. Ask yourself, "Is this the wisest and best use of my time right now?" If you cannot respond positively to that question, say no to the opportunity.

Undercommit and Overdeliver

This is one of the greatest productivity secrets of all time, and so often we tend to do the opposite. This one skill alone can reduce tremendous amounts of stress in your life and significantly strengthen your relationships.

Use One Time-Management System

There is no greater cause of stress than not delivering on a commitment. Whether its your mortgage or rent or a commitment you make to a customer or a fellow employee, not following through or underdelivering causes a great deal of stress. Have a system that schedules your commitments without all the worry. Floating pieces of paper represent commitments. Get them all in one system.

Find a Mentor or Coach

Even Michael Jordan needed a coach. Each of us needs a raving fan who roots us on and teaches us the skills we need to be successful. Find someone who can mentor you and coach you along the path to reaching your goals. If you can't find an all-round coach, it's ok to have more than one. Have a coach for each area you would like to improve.

Get Organized

Documentation is one thing. Documentation retrieval is another. Establish a place for everything, and then put everything in its place. You lose, on average, an hour a day looking for things. If you want more time, spend less of it looking for what you need. (Start by buying a label maker, file cabinet and computer. Create a retrieval system using these tools, and you will never regret the time and money you invest.)

Get Motivated

Everyone is motivated differently. Find what motivates you and use it. When you're in a

positive mood you can get more done, so use positive material to help you get there. They say that more than 85% of what you hear each day is negative. If this is true, you had better have a way of reducing its effect. Make sure you are getting what you need to stay positive and motivated. I highly recommend purchasing positive tapes and CDs to listen to in the car.

Turn To Do's into Appointments

What is higher in priority than a task prioritized as an "A" on a To Do list? The answer is an appointment on your calendar. To Do's are discretionary tasks that are time flexible. Appointments are time specific. We defend appointments, but we tend to forget about tasks. To take your time-management skills to the next level, take your A's off your To Do list and put them on your appointment schedule.

Plan 15 Minutes Every Day

The best way to leverage time is to plan and prioritize. When we plan and prioritize, we control events instead of falling prey to events that control us. When we get to events before they get to us, we reduce the amount of time they take, improve the quality of the results they produce and reduce the stress in our lives.

Become Computer Efficient

More and more of our time each day is spent on the computer. Our ability to navigate the computer absolutely affects our ability to be productive. Improving your typing skills and learning keyboard shortcuts can save you time every day. Make time for computer development skills by scheduling time with someone who has the know-how, taking a computer class or just purchasing literature to help you.