

TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

Unless you are the most organized person on the planet, chances are you are always looking to improve your time management skills. Managing your time well will combat a demanding schedule, overbooked days, and struggles with work/life balance. It's especially important if you are in a senior position—you must create structured planning.

Here are some time management tips one should learn and continue to learn :

1) It's OK to Say No 📌 My usual speech for how to run your own business goes something like this: “Do everything all the time in order to get ahead.” While I still think this is true, you'll eventually learn where your limits are, and sometimes the hard way. By committing to too many projects, the quality of your work can suffer, which might be the same as not doing it at all. Prioritize – and do any analytics you can – to decide what tasks and commitments are the best and most profitable use of your time.

As business in our company is getting busier and busier, I'm realizing that I am going to have to turn down some opportunities so I have more time with our employees. By putting in the time to train them now, they will hopefully master the basics of running the gallery so that I can once again step away for travel and other business opportunities. The better you delegate, the more you can eventually accomplish.

2) Schedule Appointments with Yourself 📌 Do you keep appointments with others but never have time for planning, brainstorming, or other creative projects? Schedule time for yourself as you would any other appointment: block out the time on your phone, set up reminders, and don't stand yourself up—actually keep these appointments! When you finally settle down to your appointment with yourself, avoid phone and email. Yes—the great thing about technology is that information can reach you in real time. The bad thing about technology is the same—you'll never be productive during your self-appointments if you allow phone calls and email to distract you. For your entire appointment, turn off your devices – all of them – so that you are truly unreachable.

What started as sporadic “me time” to check in with my schedule and prepare for upcoming projects and trips has become a mandatory meeting I have with myself every morning. Before I do anything else (well, after breakfast anyway), I oversee our inventory, employee tasks, my own task list for the week, what I accomplished yesterday, and what I have left to do. I'm also seeing an additional need for brainstorming time for various committees I'm on—time to schedule a weekly appointment with myself!

3) Overestimate & Prepare for Interruptions 📌 Ever feel like if you just had another hour, another day, or another week that you could finish everything you need to do? I do— “A day late and a dollar short” should be my motto. If time always seems to slip away to who knows where, try to overestimate how long your tasks will take until completion. If interruptions break your concentration and steal away your time, try to schedule them in advance. That person who comes over every week to shoot the breeze? That weekly meeting or phone call that turns into a marathon mega-conference? You know they're going to happen, so anticipate how these will slow you down.

When I finally settle down into a task, I give it my full attention. It's the settling down part that seems to be the hardest. I have started to plan my days around the interruptions I know will come: when the mail arrives, when friends and colleagues are active on social media, days I know that lunches or dinners (even if they're business-related) will eat up most of the day.

Your time is one of your most precious resources—train yourself to guard it and protect it. The better you are at managing it, the more productive you will become.

Time Management Elaborated

This article matches me largely

So it's been a rude awakening for me this year when I've found myself dropping some balls — or barely catching, as when a to-do pops in your mind like a last minute save. It seems I finally reached overload status between a demanding and varied work schedule, recurring travel, and a busy family — and my well-honed systems started breaking down. For the first time in my life, I started thinking I needed a systematic approach to time management.

I've coached my clients around time management for years, so luckily I had a well of advice to draw from and put into practice. In our overstuffed days, it's a typical professional lament to just have a few more hours in a day. We don't want much really, just to produce more, and better. Never mind that we're asked to do more than our predecessors were ever asked to do, and by the way, to do it around the clock.

For all of you out there who want to get better at time management, I wish I had a magic bullet for you. All I can offer are my best tips. They've worked for me, and perhaps they will for you as well.

1. Start with a daily plan

Peter Bregman, author of the bestselling time management book *18 Minutes*, advises to make a plan as the first thing to do when you begin your day. In article, he discusses the power of setting priorities up front — *before* even checking email. How often do we get to our computer, power up email, and get lost in minutia? I've had clients so governed by email, that they go through their inbox at midnight to get a jump start before the morning. Email rules way too many of our waking hours.

By taking a strategic step back, you can set priorities for your day and determine what will make your precious time most rewarding. Part of this list-making is also attitude. Rather than feeling stressed by a list, try to feel empowered. Bregman puts it this way, decide what will make this day highly successful. What can you realistically accomplish that will further your goals and allow you to leave at the end of the day feeling like you've been productive and successful?"

2. Be ruthless

We're bombarded with requests, and saying no can be difficult. Especially when you want to do everything! For me, this is a by-product of doing work that I love. But the reality is that you can only do a limited amount of things well. As a friend says, the work is infinite but our time is finite.

As author Karen Burns advises in this list of time management advice, what's important is not always urgent. And vice versa. She suggests being ruthless about what you take on, and then prioritizing from there. By finishing the most important tasks first, you'll find yourself feeling less stressed and better able to focus on all the other items on your list.

3. Put it all in the calendar

I can still remember the first time I put a fitness class on my Outlook calendar. It felt like I was cheating work in some way. Fast forward, and now everything goes on one calendar — from work, to workouts, to my kids' activities. I'm one person, so I need one schedule. This is a strategy I swear by. Bregman believes that what gets scheduled gets done. He says that making a list isn't enough. You need to put those items on your calendar.

He cites studies where certain percentages of groups gave precise times and locations for accomplishing goals, while others did not. The results are striking: those who defined a where and a when had a far higher success rate than those who did not. For Bregman, it's simple: "If you want to get something done, decide when and where you're going to do it. Otherwise, take it off your list."

4. Go off the grid and embrace waiting time

Email and office interruptions are enemies of time management. You set out to accomplish a goal and a sudden barrage of messages makes you veer off that path, leaving you with even more things to do.

This is also why one should learn to embrace waiting time. I used to hate being stuck in a doctor's office, or waiting for a lunch meeting, or for a conference call to start. Now I'm mindful of any work that requires thoughtful time, such as editing blogs, reviewing a proposal, or designing a program. When I'm away from the office, I stick work in my bag so I can use any downtime effectively. As a plus, the location change can spur creativity.

5. Take breaks

Written about this before, and it sounds contradictory — after all, you've got that big list of things to do. But studies show that taking short breaks can help many people clear their minds and get motivated. Your quick break could be anything from going out for lunch, to doing five minutes of calming exercises, to surfing the Internet. Steady work punctuated by a little bit of downtime may be the key to managing your energy and concentration, and thus productivity.

6. Let go of perfection

I'll admit that this one is hard. But the reality is that with so many demands on our time, we're occasionally going to slip up, even with the best systems. We'll have to say no to work we'd love to do, but can't manage. One of the kindest things we can do is to forgive ourselves, then move on and try to learn from it.

When we have a system in place, we'll catch 90% of what we need to do, and even more of the big stuff. After that, time management goes into the bucket of trying our best. I've found that when we do slip up, others are often more forgiving than we are to ourselves. After all, we're all on the same roller coaster.