

Make Time Your Business Ally

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"I have no time. There is too much to do. I don't even know where to start." Sound familiar? You are not alone. Many people in business start their day with this lament. What's going on?

It seems that time is speeding up. It feels like you started your day an hour ago and now it's already over and so many things are left undone. Technological advances such as fast transportation, the Internet and mobile phones have not only made doing business faster and easier, they also have increased expectations regarding productivity and availability.

So, here you are in the morning already stressed. Let's go back to where to start.

Before you start, STOP! Take the time first thing in the morning to think about your priorities for the day. What is worth your attention? What is urgent AND important today? Write these tasks down and rank them. You might say, "I don't have time for this," but you might be surprised at how much more you accomplish.

Priorities also keep you from getting lost in the "There is too much to do!" mentality. Once you have established your focus for the day, you can leave unimportant tasks to others or postpone them until all important tasks are cleared.

I find it most helpful to put my priorities in my day planner or on sticky notes around my workspace. They anchor you when outside demands threaten to take over. Remind yourself throughout the day of what is most important and urgent. Depending on your business, leave at least a couple of hours unplanned for dealing with emergencies and unavoidable interruptions. Overloading the day with too many appointments and tasks only reduces your productivity and is deeply frustrating.

The entrepreneurial spirit

So, why do we, as entrepreneurs and independent professionals, so easily get stuck in the "There is too much to do!" mentality? There is, of course, the obvious: we are responsible for all or most of our operations, a daunting task under the best of circumstances.

And then, there is the fear that if we aren't stressed, we are not working hard enough to make our business flourish. Sometimes people equate being busy and stressed with being productive. The truth, however, is that we are most productive and clear thinking when we aren't stressed. Try to do one simple thing every day to de-stress and increase your productivity. Have you had lunch in the park

lately? Or gone for a quick walk to get some fresh air and sunshine? I highly recommend it.

Do you still feel you have no time? If prioritizing and de-stressing isn't doing the trick for you, then there are still some time thieves around. Clutter in your environment or mind can be one. A good first step is to clean up your workspace and have an effective sorting and filing system in place that works for you.

Setting boundaries

Another time thief is lack of good boundaries. Do people feel free to interrupt you with unimportant matters while you are concentrating on something important? Or do you find yourself eagerly giving in to somebody's requests when you really need to focus on your other responsibilities? Establishing sound and flexible boundaries is key to running a successful business. Try setting some meaningful boundaries right now. Start with simple things that have an immediate impact on your day.

Time is a limited resource. Honor and respect it and it will be your ally and source of success.

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