

8 Steps to Mastering Time Management

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April 1, 2013 “If you don’t have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?” is a quote attributed to legendary basketball coach John Wooden. I wonder if he was speaking to a group of entrepreneurs at the time.

Ask business owners today why they aren’t using social media as a tool to grow their companies, and the majority of them will respond, “I just don’t have the time.” These owners will give the same response when asked about a variety of topics. Are they really that pressed for time, or is it a fallacy?

If you believe time is the only currency that matters, how is it possible to “find” more time in the day to achieve your goals and grow your business? Here are eight steps you can take today that will open

more time tomorrow to achieve your goals.

1. Start the Night Before. Sun Tzu is quoted as saying, “Every battle is won before it is fought.” He strongly believed having a plan in place, along with options, was critical to success. We can apply his logic to your workday. Your success tomorrow starts with proper planning tonight. Create an action plan on how you want the day to go. What are the major objectives/goals you want to accomplish? When will you do them during the day? The key is to be proactive, not reactive.

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2. Move Out Smartly. It goes without saying that the earlier you rise, the more time you have to accomplish all your goals for the day. Have a proper breakfast to fuel your body and kickstart your day. When you get to work, start with the biggest goals or the toughest assignments first. They will require the most effort, which you can give when you have the most energy. If necessary, break the projects into smaller, more manageable pieces. Leave the easier, less stressful things to do until the end of the day. When you’re pressed for time, the things you hate to do are typically the first items to fall through the cracks—sending invoices, doing expenses and dealing with tough clients. Don’t let this happen.

3. Plan for the Unexpected. At some point during the day, you’ll get a call from a vendor, disgruntled customer or one of your employees. The call will threaten to derail your entire day. Without a plan, this can easily happen. Assess your situation and prioritize. Can you delegate part of your work? Can you move something to the next day? Rehearse these conversations so when they do occur, you’ve already gone through the options and know what to do. Things never go according to the original plan. Having a “plan B” in place can limit the downtime for your business.

4. Watch for Time Robbers. Whether it’s a 45-minute phone call with an old friend in the middle of the day or playing games online to avoid dealing with the work on your desk, it’s imperative to address time robbers in your day. If time is money, then wasted hours are costing your business in a big way. Be diligent in getting rid of them!

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5. Take a Break. Every 45 to 60 minutes, stop what you’re doing to recharge your batteries and clear your mind. Go for a walk, stretch or do something that gets you away from your work. Also, leave your phone behind. There is no medal for working 12 hours a day without taking a break. Make sure you drink water and eat, but don’t overeat. These tips are designed to help your body and mind operate at optimum levels. If taking a break doesn’t come naturally to you, for 30 days, set a timer on your phone for breaks during day.

6. Know When to End Your Day. “Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof” is a quote unknown to most business owners. There will always be one more phone call to make, one more email to send and one more proposal to write. Set a time to end your business day. Leave 30 minutes to clean off your desk and create your list for tomorrow. The better your plan, the better chance you have for success.

7. Work on the Clouds vs. Weeds. Most small-business owners work “in” their business (the weeds) as opposed to working “on” their business (the clouds). The weeds allow you to tackle the problems that arise, but you can rarely see much beyond five feet in front of you. In other words, you can’t see the root source of your problems, nor can you see bigger issues or opportunities further down the road.

Plan a regularly scheduled meeting, at least once a month, with key people in your business (e.g., employees, advisors, vendors and partners) and take a 20,000-foot view of your landscape. Address recurring and potential problems, opportunities, trends and anything else you cannot see while on the ground. Let everyone know the agenda in advance so they can bring the necessary information to your meeting. These meetings are vitally important as they can address the persistent problems draining precious time out of your company.

8. Assess Your System. Review each day/week. How would you rate your time management?

As the founder and CEO of Brian Moran & Associates, Brian is dedicated to helping entrepreneurs to run better businesses. Brian is leveraging his 20+ years of experience in publishing magazines for business owners to assist entrepreneurs with everything from social media to accessing growth capital to expanding into the global marketplace.

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