

Time Management

If you could save time in a bottle...

Time is much more precious than money. The singer Jim Croce hints at it with his line, *If I could save time in a bottle...* Sadly there is no process that would allow us to save time this way. Just imagine what a person could accomplish if there was such a process. Life gives us a finite number of days to spend on this earth, money on the other hand is something you can usually get more of with a little planning and effort.

Many business owners and entrepreneurs manage their time as if they really could store it in a bottle or pick some up on the next Costco run. People list reasons like choosing their own hours, spending more time with their family, or being their own boss as reasons for starting a business. But, somewhere along the road the lines become blurred and the only goals that seem to matter are business related.

No one can manage your time for you – only you can choose to spend your time wisely and take ownership of your own schedule.

Getting more done in less time

It's not realistic to assume that each of the 2,080* working hours in a year are going to be productive. Various studies have put actual productivity at anywhere between one and four hours per day. That's a lot of room available for improvement!

When you start thinking about time management, the goal is to get more done in less time, and thus increase your efficiency and be able to focus on other aspects of your life that also deserve your attention.

Three, time management tips you can use starting today!

TIP 1: Prioritize your tasks

You are not superman, so you need to decide where to invest your time to get the most benefit.

Make a list of all your tasks. Decide what needs to be completed now, what can be completed later, and what can be delegated to someone else.

Train yourself to focus on your top three priorities at any one time. Constantly update your list so that the highest priority items are always at the top, and the lowest priority items are at the bottom.

TIP 2: Mindfully manage your day

Log your hours for 2 – 3 weeks and determine which hours of the day you are most productive. Set those hours aside for high priority tasks. Complete those in an environment that allows you to dig in and focus. Schedule times of the day for when you cannot be interrupted and times of the day for

collaborative work, meetings and phone calls. Remember to include personal and work time into your schedule. Create a timetable with headings like closed-door work, work planning, email and phone responses, internal and external meetings, "me time", family and exercise. Allocate specific hours each week for each of these activities. Remember to stick with it, eventually everyone close to you will learn your schedule.

TIP 3: Focus your skills

If you have a good understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses, you can use this to your advantage. An effective way to manage your time is to only do the things that you know you are good at, or that require your attention. All other tasks should be delegated or outsourced. This tip may take some practise.

Making good choices about time management

Effective time management is about making choices and setting up a structure that enables you to succeed. Try a few different strategies and structures to see what works best for you.

Remember that time management is a personal thing. It will look different for everyone. Some people can work in the middle of a loud, crowded room, and others need absolute silence to function at a high level. Learn and use the methods that best meet your own needs.