

Personal Tips: Reclaiming your time



Do you feel that there aren't enough hours in the day, or overwhelmed at the tasks facing you? Don't say you don't have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson and Albert Einstein!

Clarify your goals and strategy. Be clear about your aims and ambitions, both short and long term. Write them down. Once you know what you really want to achieve (and why) it's easier to make decisions about what needs doing, and to plan accordingly.

Focus on your top priorities. You'll be more productive and profitable if you identify and focus on the areas most important to your business. Work on the fundamentals first. The Latin word 'fundamentum' means foundation -so take action, build strong foundations and the rest should follow.

Schedule time. Literally write an appointment in your work planner to set aside a realistic block of time for your priority actions. This reduces anxiety over not having enough time and keeps you focused.

Say no! Learn how to say no. Always check your schedule before committing to anything new. Don't allow others to distract you from your objectives.

Create supportive systems. This includes systems for filing, management information and communication.

Take a reality check. Will your current activity have a positive outcome, or are you doing it to avoid something else? Will doing it take you towards your goal? As the management guru, Peter Drucker observed, 'There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.'

Delegate! It's tempting to do something yourself when you think you can do it faster and better. But consider the long term -delegation now will save time in the future, and if done appropriately can motivate your team, boost their confidence and help them develop their skills.

Repeat your success. Remember the last time you went away on holiday. How did you get everything done before you left? What strategies and techniques did you employ that made you so effective and focused? Can you repeat them? Or, imagine you are going away tomorrow and work through today accordingly.

Balance your life. Formally schedule personal activities too, so you make time for family, friends, your health and fun because having a balanced life reduces stress and increases energy levels. Time management is really about life management!

End the day. At the end of the working day, tidy your desk, make notes about what needs doing tomorrow and prioritise those tasks. You'll worry less that evening and be prepared and focused the next morning.