

Time Management & Productivity Techniques for Small Business Owners

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Introduction

As a self-employed small business owner you have a huge dilemma: it seems that there are just not enough hours in the day. You are busy, busy, busy, and work very hard but you never seem to have enough time to get everything done. You are finding it harder and harder to get ahead or feel that you've got things under control with the business. Something has to change, but you are unsure what to do about it.

In this book we're going to cover the best ways for you to save time and get more done. You'll discover:

- What time management really is.
- How to identify the things that are stealing precious time.

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- How to be more effective each day.
- How to change your habits and routines that are not productive.
- Ways to eliminate distractions and interruptions.
- Why you should invest your time and not just spend it.

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My Story

Not long ago I was in your same position. I was always stressed, worried, and downright unhappy because my business kept demanding more and more of my time. The harder I worked, the more work needed to be done.

I made a decision to get control of my time; to stop being so *busy* and *get the things that really mattered done*. I also wanted to put the business in its place *and make it work for me for a change*.

It wasn't overnight change or success. A little forward motion became momentum, which led to renewed energy and excitement about the business. This resulted in leveraging that excitement and energy into making sound decisions and seizing opportunities that were all around me. The company grew and was quite successful.

After many years I sold the business and focused my attention on helping small businesses with their marketing and daily operations as a consultant.

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Each day I use the experiences and expertise that I gained by owning and operating a business to help others succeed.

In working with small business owners, I always ask a lot of questions to determine what their biggest challenges in their business are. The overwhelmingly number one response is usually *time management and productivity*. They want to make better use of their time and get more accomplished each day.

So I decided to write this book to help the many small businesses, entrepreneurs that all need a little help in this critical area. In addition, I have written a more in-depth 30-day plan that I will discuss later in this book. While the concepts and ideas here can be used by anyone, it was written to help people like yourself that are working very hard to do it all themselves.

I have seen the techniques that you're about to learn work wonders for business owners that felt

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stuck. Owners that just needed to tweak or change a few things to get the little bits of time back and begin to work on the business from the outside.

One of the benefits that I've noticed is that these same owners that were feeling a little *burned out* get a renewed energy and excitement about their business again - something that had lessened over the years of doing the same thing over and over again.

I've seen many people - no smarter than you are - transform their businesses through using these strategies. I also know that you can change, and that is essential that you start right away. With a little understanding, some new skills and habits and plan for the future, you'll be on your way toward better time management.

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1. Gathering Information

There are a couple of fundamental reasons why you feel that you need more time: Either you actually have too much to do each day, or you allow yourself to be distracted and don't get the things done that you know that you should.

First, you will need to write down where your time goes each day. Some people would call this a *time audit* and it can be effective at bringing your unique distractions into the light so you can deal with them. (There are even apps for smartphones to help keep track of your time for you, which I find just a little ironic.)

Observe what you are doing during your work day and pay attention to the routine, rituals, habits and activities that are harming your business and effectiveness. Write them down.

Identify interruptions and distractions that you cannot directly control that could be lessened, avoided, or eliminated by being more proactive. Write them

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down, too. You want to handle these things before they become emergencies.

Here are a few examples to get you started:

Situations: Traffic or road conditions, weather, job cancellations, crises, emergencies, rework, repairs.

Tasks & Functions: Paperwork, administrative functions, bookkeeping or accounting, jobs you hate to do, tasks you're not good at.

Habits: Excuses, rationalizing, procrastination, wrong priorities, piling on too much work, unreasonable expectations, getting distracted, lack of focus, disorganization, self-discipline, accountability, mindset, self-defeating beliefs and actions, self-sabotage.

Distractions: Some phone calls, phone notifications, some email, web surfing, personal errands.

Interruptions: Unexpected and unimportant calls and texts, long phone calls, chit-chat, phone notifications.

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States of mind: Stress, frustration, worry, fear, indecision, anger, guilt.

Did you notice that the majority of the examples above are habits? As much as you'd probably like to blame other things, the majority of your time issues may be related to your own habits and discipline. This is where you should start, although it may seem hard.

So I think you would agree that time management is really about *self-management*. The habits and rituals that you have, plus the way you manage situations and make decisions all lead to a feeling that *you could have done more*, or that *you need to do more*.

So how do you develop the discipline and self-management needed to be more effective or get more accomplished in less time?

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You'll need to:

- Recognize that there is a problem, and that it is probably you.
- Stop blaming circumstances or situations as the cause of your problems.
- Make a conscious choice to make the changes needed to get it handled.
- Make a plan and real effort to follow it.
- Check yourself often and recognize your progress. Make adjustments if needed.

You have already made a positive move toward fixing this critical area of your business and personal life by taking action and getting this book. I commend you on your effort to change and encourage you to stick with it. But in addition to the above you will need to do some serious *observation* and *introspection*.

When you look at your situation, you should try to remove the *emotions* and *feelings* that you asso-

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ciate to each of your challenges. You may feel guilty about procrastinating. You may feel unhappiness or shame for not doing more or being able to figure it all out. You don't do anything about it because it causes you *pain* or *discomfort*.

The key - when looking at your current situation - is to be detached and unemotional about these habits and actions you're currently engaged in. Be objective and practical in your approach and analysis. And deal with them appropriately.

Where you do want to apply the strong emotions and feelings is in your personal motives for making the changes. Think about the way you will feel when this area or situation is handled. Imagine the happiness you'll experience when you have more time to spend with friends and family. Also, think of times you have made fundamental changes in habits and routines to accomplish something before this. This will help to get you started.

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You will also need some real motivation to keep you going. Without the big reason why you need to change your habits, it probably won't happen for you. Without the who you're doing it all for - those most important to you - it will be all too easy to fall back to the comfortable old ways of doing things. *It just seems too hard to change.* Again, by applying deep emotions and feelings to your reasons, you will have a greater chance to make the changes.

Find what truly motivates you and use that to get things done. Chances are that it's *pain, pleasure, or pain avoidance* that gets you to take action. So use that knowledge to help you get your time management under control, and use it to your own advantage.

The fear of the unknown or fear of change is a very big thing for many people. It's necessary to *shake things up and get out of your comfort zone* as much as possible to experience real growth and change. I tell my clients that if it feels uncomfortable

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then it's probably worth looking at a little closer. If there is positive outcome and low-risk, then they should probably do it. The point being that if you always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always got.

I am not suggesting that you make risky or crazy moves in your life or business, but to sit in one place and not change, or grow, or learn new or even try is a sure recipe for disaster and could lead to stagnation and unhappiness. To talk yourself out of things before they have even happened is a real shame. What you're doing isn't working, and a break in the routine is probably what you need to set you back on your heels a bit and make you aware of what does and doesn't work.

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2. Starting New Habits and Routines

There is a school of thought that says it takes four to six weeks to set a new habit to where it is automatic. There are others that say it only takes a minute. All I know is that it only takes a minute to make the decision to make a change. Then the hardest part is to get started each time it needs to be done.

For example, the hardest thing about getting out of bed in the morning is to put your feet to the ground and start moving. Once you do, you go through the processes and steps it takes to take a shower, get ready, make coffee or breakfast, start the car, and so on.

Why can't a new, positive habit or routine be any less automatic than say, taking a shower? There are specific steps that need to be completed in a certain order to accomplish it. You've done it so many times that you don't even think of the steps

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