



Newsletter 5

Time Management

Do you always seem strapped for time?

Do feel that you can never fit everything you want to do in a day?

Does your confidence take a battering because you feel overwhelmed?

If so, then this newsletter is for you!

Having more time is one of the most precious and sought after resources we have.

When you feel in control over your time you have more confidence.

Everyone has the same amount of time. However, some have more than others!

When you think about it – what is time? In it's basic form it is that part of existence which is measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years.

Everyone has the same amount of time to do their "stuff".

Yet the real winners in life are those that know what they have to do and when and they also don't get stressed out about those things that happen that have an affect on the amount of time we have between tasks, yet we have no control over.

So, how can you get more time!

The Approach

The first thing that you should do is to perform a self assessment of how you are currently spending your time.

Complete a diary for 1 typical week.

Write down how you are spending your time.

It could look a little like this:

Nb This is an actual clients results.

Time	Task
08:00	Got out of bed
08:30	Left for work no breakfast
09:00	Got to work, had coffee – chatted to colleagues
09:30	Started reading emails
10:30	Meeting
11:45	Emails
13:00	Lunch
14:00	Meeting
15:30	Coffee break – chat
16:00	General Admin
17:00	Left for home
17:30	Arrived home – changed, coffee, put dinner on – watched tv
18:30	Dinner
19:00	Watched TV
23:00	Went to bed

This could be a typical day.

You may feel as though there were not enough hours in the day and also feel uncomfortable being under pressure with time.

After a weeks worth (5 working days) of time data, collate all of the hours spent on the various tasks and put them into one master table under specific headings.

An example of the output is below:

Activity	Hours spent
Sleep	47 hours
Travelling to work	3 hours
Arrive at work/coffee/chat	2 hours
Emails	14 hours
Meetings	9 hours
Lunch	4 hours
Afternoon break/chats	2.5 hours
Admin	3 hours
Travelling home	4 hours
Prepare dinner/chilling out	6 hours
Dinner	2 hours
Watching TV	23.5 hours

In this example there was feeling that there was not enough time in this person's working day to complete all of his work yet he was spending 18 hours a week on just sending and answering emails and having coffees and chats!

Now I don't say that he couldn't spend time chatting etc because that would not be realistic or the right thing to do.

But I set the client a goal to cut down on the amount of emails/coffee/chatting time to 12 hours per week instead of 18.

Hence, he would be gaining an extra days worth of work!

Also, the client was waking up and rushing to work each morning often getting stuck in traffic of what was a 10 minute journey normally.

However, leave for work at 08:30 especially when the kids are at school and you're asking for trouble!

Then having arrived at work all hot and bothered the client would take 30 minutes to chill out, get a coffee and have a chat to prepare himself for the day.

By the time this was completed it was 9:30!

I asked the client to wake up just 30 minutes earlier than normal, take a leisurely breakfast and a coffee and then set off to work all relaxed and ready.

That way he could ACTUALLY start work at 9:00!

Also, the difference in traveling time with regards to leaving at say 08:15 and leaving at 08:30 would decrease the amount of traveling time by 15 minutes each day and would account for another hour or so each week.

I also posed the question about the amount of TV the client watched!

A staggering 23.5 hours over a 5 day period!

No wonder he didn't have a lot of time!

I asked him whether he was enjoying watching the TV or whether he had nothing better to do.

"I just put it on and watch whatever is on" the client replied.

Now I am not one to say that you shouldn't watch TV, far from it.

What I am saying however is that unless you are getting something out of it, like enjoyment or knowledge from a documentary etc you are literally wasting your time by passing your time by watching TV.

I asked my client to make a list of the alternative things he could do with the time, included a sensible amount of time for the TV programmes he just had to watch!

Alternative Activity	Why? Benefit?
Gym/Workout	Lose weight, have more energy
Read more – newspapers/books	Gain knowledge/keep up to date
Work an 30 mins at work	Miss out on 5:00pm rush, cut travelling time by 15 mins, get more work done
Go out in the week	Get out of the habit of staying in during work days. Enjoyment etc
Computer	Buy a computer, learn about internet etc
Night School	Get that qualification in first aid I've always wanted
Start a part time business	Earn extra money!

So from being a couch potato, all of a sudden my client was writing down all of the things that he wanted to do with his time and was getting juiced up and excited about them as well.

And all this from saying he didn't have enough time!

The next step was to ask the client to put an action plan together of what he was going to do and when.

Time is just a feeling really. It is a feeling of pressure that you cannot fit something in.

By analysing his time, he found out that he was wasting a great deal of it and that he could be doing some more productive tasks.

Also, by the way he was managing his time and rushing to work and then having a coffee because he was stressed out because of the rush – it all had a knock on effect to make him feel under pressure and hence "I haven't got enough time!"

The subject of time management could take up a whole series of manuals to fully explain.

I also described some of the most important elements of time management and some of the techniques that would enable him to organise, schedule and help him to get the most out of his time.

What I would like you to do is to look at some of the vital factors that you must consider when allocating your time.

There are 4 of these factors in total - lets have a look at them.

The first thing that you have to do is to identify **how** you are spending your time at the present - both at home and at work.

What I would like you to do is write out the tasks or activities that you must do in order for you to achieve the objectives of your job or at home.

These could include work tasks such as meetings, appraisals, E-mails, documentation and the like. Home activities could include cleaning, cooking, shopping, time with the children, watching television. Write all of them down.

After you have identified what you have to do, the next step is to schedule your work and activities.

In order for you to schedule your work there is a need to know two things.

Firstly - You will need to know how long you will want to spend on a particular task - this is determined by how important the task is.

Secondly - you will have to know how soon you have to get the task completed - this is determined by how urgent the task is.

Now, important and urgent are not the same. An urgent task is not necessarily important. It may be urgent but trivial.

A good rule of thumb is to remember that the tasks and activities that you have written will nearly always be important ones.

The unimportant tasks are usually known as reactive tasks.

These are the everyday running problems that have to be dealt with to keep things ticking over - for example, answering the telephone and responding to E-mails.

For successful time management, you must have in your possession a diary. Once you have worked out the tasks that you have to do and their relative importance - the next step that you have to do is to schedule these activities into your diary.

In your diary, block out time for certain tasks. Also allow time for reactive tasks and regular duties - let people know when you are available, also allow time for reviewing and planning at the end of each day.

Scheduling out time for planning is essential on a daily basis. This should be done at the end of the working day or at night for your home duties.

Within this time for planning you should draw up your schedule and also a **TO DO** list for the next day using the techniques that I have already mentioned.

Using a diary with a day to view facility has advantages.

Firstly, you will have more space to write, so that you will be able to schedule your activities in greater detail.

The day is also broken down more comprehensively into 15 minute blocks of time, giving you better control.

Also, more often than not, on day to view pages, there is usually space for you to write your to-do list next to the actual schedule planner.

Cross out each activity as you complete them and make sure that you complete them all.

I actually use and find that visual work planners are an excellent tool to use.

They illustrate, at a glance, the days that you are off, and any events that you have got planned on particular dates - I would strongly recommend that you purchase one.

The last area that we can look at are time saving techniques.

These are the things that you can do to give yourself more time.

Firstly, by doing less, you can increase more of your available time.

I see so many people who are snowed under with their workload and agenda, these people never seem to have a minute to spare and just take on more and more work.

Let's have a look at some of the things that you can do. The first and most important question you can ask yourself is this:

Can I delegate certain activities?

You can reduce your workload by getting other people to do it for you.

You can also discourage unnecessary meetings, don't take work home, don't take responsibility for other peoples problems and don't become bogged down with detail.

These are some of the things that you can do to free up some of your time, but one of the most important things that you can do is just by saying NO to certain requirements and requests that are asked of you.

It is such an easy word to say in theory, but too many people don't use it in practice.

Secondly, another excellent time saving technique is by working faster, and by reducing the time for particular tasks.

Ensure deadlines are set and adhered to, keep your communications concise, take the most important tasks when you are alert - it is more time efficient and productive. Learn how to conclude meetings and conversations, ensure meetings are run promptly and on time - there are many others.

Another technique to reduce time is by working more effectively. Make sure that you plan your work, establish clear objectives, set priorities, be realistic, draw up **TO DO** lists daily and weekly, make efficient use of a diary, plan meetings and plan agendas.

The time management techniques that I have just described will start you off in your quest to control every aspect of your life and, once you have control over your time, you will perform more effectively and have greater enjoyment in your life.