

THE SALES UPDATE

FOR TODAY'S SALES PROFESSIONAL AND ENTREPRENEUR

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Time is a Finite Resource—Treat it Preciously TIME MANAGEMENT PART 2

Last month we began our work on time management by stressing that time is our greatest resource. If you ask every business person for a self-assessment, almost all of them would reply: *I need to manage my time better.* This month we will become more specific by adding pointers that may help you conserve your most precious resource.

Start Dealing With Priorities. Stephen Covey in his *Seven Habits Series* has indicated that our problem is not managing time, it is managing ourselves. We must first decide to deal with matters of importance to us in order to accomplish our mission in life. This means that we may have to stop dealing with urgent matters that may mean more to other actors in our life. Therefore, we must learn to say no when it is appropriate.

Take the time to analyze how much time you spent doing what in a particular week. Write it down. How much time did you spend accomplishing tasks that you consider essential to your success? The next time you make a list of items to accomplish the next day, prioritize them. Try to accomplish the list in accordance with your own priorities instead of acting on the wishes of others. Start one day at a time, moving in this direction for the entire week.

Identify your goals. Before you can prioritize, you must recognize what is important in your life. Spend some time determining what you would like to accomplish next year and in the long run. Goals should be personal and professional. They must be specific. If you would like to retire: *When? Where? With how much income?* It is hard to prioritize if you do not determine what is important to you. Most of us move through life without a clear definition of what is important and what is not.

Start the day with a plan. Never leave your house without a plan of action.

Each day formulate a checklist of items to accomplish. Sunday is a good time to plan for the week. After you have finished writing, analyze your list. Is it realistic? Can you eliminate items of lesser importance?

At the end of each day, re-analyze your list. Did you accomplish what you had hoped? If not, why not? Are you going to start the next day with the same set of priorities, or did you learn something through today's experience?

Interrupt the interruptions. Many times we cannot work on priorities because we allow others to intervene with their priorities. Sometimes we must learn to say no if the interruption prevents us from accomplishing our objectives. Many feel they are letting others down by putting them off. In reality, if we make them understand the importance of our present task, they will respect our choices. As

Covey says, *First Things First.*

Work on one task at a time. If you are trying to accomplish too many tasks at once, you are likely to get nothing accomplished. Take a good look at your desk or work area. File everything away except for your next priority. Do not stop working on that project until it is finished and filed away. This may mean holding phone calls and putting a halt to the fires you may get called upon to douse. Let someone else keep the office from burning.

Organize—Now! Stop spending your time looking for everything. Organize your office and your life. Put everything in its place and file every day for a few minutes rather than dedicating a whole week to the task at the end of the year. Do not handle papers or email twice—act on



them at once. Every time you put a piece of paper in a file, remove and trash another piece of paper in the same file. Barbara Hemphill, in her *Taming the Paper Tiger Series* indicates that the trash can is a major organizational tool. Now the file will not grow bigger than your office. Do not make copies of memos that are in the memory of the computer. Remember, the goal of a paperless office is why we became automated in the first place.

Hire Someone. If you would like to make a six figure income, then don't spend your time stuffing envelopes and handing out fliers. No matter what it says in the back of magazines, no one ever became rich stuffing envelopes. Hire someone for menial tasks that take your time. Spend your time on the priorities such as marketing and selling.

Don't begin tomorrow with yesterday's task. It is too easy to put off tomorrow what you should have accomplished today. Bad habits are hard to break. Remember, you pared your list to include only priorities. If it was important, get it done. If your list was too ambitious, adjust it for tomorrow. However, tonight you are working late.

If we have more time, we can make more money—with less stress! Certainly that is not a bad goal!... ▣

"Learn as if you were to live forever; live as if you were to die tomorrow"
...John Wooden

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