

Winning Ways

A publication of

Winning Ways

Developing Goals, Focus and Leaders

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Investing Your Time to Fit Your Goals

If you are like the rest of us, you feel like there is never enough time during the day to accomplish everything you need to do, professionally and personally. Well, the amount of time you have in a day, a week, a month, a year is a constant. You can't change it, increase it or stretch it. You can't really manage it. Rather, you need to manage yourself in the time you have, by making choices on how to best invest your time.

"Time is your most precious resource. It is the most valuable thing you have," says Brian Tracy, in his article *Managing Your Time*. "It can only be reallocated from activities of lower value to activities of higher value."

www.time management tools.com

Activities of higher value should be the ones that are helping you reach your personal and professional goals. Are you a professional mom, overwhelmed by work, yet who is passionate about family time? Then your choice to attend your children's soccer games and school programs would be a higher priority choice for you than a company function that will have little or no impact on your responsibilities or career. Your choices in how you invest your time is essential to reaching your goals.

In your professional life, you need to make choices about what you must do personally and what you can delegate or simply say "no" to. By wisely investing your time through these choices, you will be more productive, be happier about your life, and achieve goals you are passionate about.

Priorities and Posteriorities

Tracy states that you should make a list of personal goals and professional goals, then prioritize the list. And your prioritizing must be clear. "This brings us to the difference between priorities and posteriorities," says Tracy. "You must decide on the most important things that you can be doing to give yourself the same amount of happiness, satisfaction, and joy in life. But at the same time, you need to establish posteriorities as well. Just as priorities are things that you must do more of and sooner, posteriorities are things that you do less of and later."

Tracy outlines three key questions you must answer in order to make appropriate choices:

- "What is really important to me?"
- "What are my highest value activities?"
- "What is the most valuable use of my time right now?"

Answer these questions and you'll be on the road to wisely investing your time.

Procrastination: The Time Thief

A little boy, a second grader, has the same homework every Monday: Use ten of his spelling words in sentences. And every Monday, his mom hears the same story: “Mommy! It’s going to take soooo loong!” He spends 40 minutes whining about how long its going to take, when in fact, the actual doing of the sentences will take less than 20 minutes. For this boy, the thought of doing the homework is bigger than the homework itself.

We big kids, we business professionals, haven’t learned much since we were in second grade. We don’t whine about what we have to do; rather, we just put it off. We procrastinate. And procrastination is a “thief of time” that creates the problems and pressure that make us feel like we don’t have enough time to get everything done.

You’re Putting Yourself Under Pressure

The pressure we put on ourselves by procrastinating is artificial. In other words, it doesn’t need to be there. If you are trying to let yourself off the hook by putting off that errand, that meeting, that action point, you are actually making it harder to complete. Even routine tasks are harder to complete because of the backlog you create by procrastinating.

According to Resources Associates Corporation’s *Management*, “It is possible to spend more energy figuring out ways to escape a task rather than to accomplish it in the first place.”

When you are faced with deadlines and pressure, you can more easily make ill considered decisions and judgments as well as out right mistakes. And then you may have to repeat your work, putting even more pressure on yourself. Or, you can seriously damage your reputation or credibility.

Time Management, 1822

Hugh Blair offered this sage advice in his *On The Importance of Order in Conduct*,

“If you delay till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day, you overcharge the morrow with a burden which belongs not to it . . . He who every morning plans the transactions of the day, and follows out the plan, carries on a thread which will guide him through the labyrinth of the most busy life.”

Learn to Manage Yourself

We can’t manage time, because time is always the same. We must manage ourselves by resisting the urge to put things off. Everyone has difficult or dreaded tasks. But those tasks need to be on your daily plan along with the pleasant tasks. When you realize the unpleasant tasks will not go away no matter what, you will be ready to accept them and do them when you are supposed to. You should actually do them first, so you can complete the jobs or task you like without that black cloud hanging over your head. Why not allot 15 minutes to an hour each day specifically for the “dreaded things.” Try to tackle them first thing in the morning.

Rationalization to Procrastination

Don’t let yourself rationalize to ignore your tasks. If you find yourself saying, “I should do this now, but it will only take me ten minutes to answer my e mail,” or “Well, I’ll go to the post office first so I can get that out of the way, then I can do this” you are rationalizing. And procrastinating. DON’T DO IT! You’ll find yourself back in the vicious cycle of putting off and putting off until you are under mounds of pressure again.

Managing Your Time is a Skill

When you set your goals for your personal and professional life, you should have set your priorities. Each task, liked or not, that you choose to do, should fit in with your priorities. As you work toward eliminating procrastination which you will need to do constantly you will realize you are developing a new skill. The more you practice “getting things done now,” you will be honing your time investment skills and learning when you can say “no” to a task or delete it.

You Are at the Helm

When you accept that you are the master of your time and not vice versa, you will become a well organized manager. Then you will be making strides toward achieving your goals. How you invest your time is in your power, not in the clock’s. Your success is on your own shoulders, and your commitment to managing your time appropriately will be a key to getting you there.

Analyze Your Time and Develop Time-Use Tools

The Golden Rule of Success, in many areas, is Determine Your Goals and Write Them Down. Writing a daily plan for managing your time is a natural extension of the rule. Once you have established your personal and professional goals, you need to invest your time in actions that help you achieve them. You need to prioritize your responsibilities.

Time Analysis Helps You Work Better

What are you doing now? How are you using your time? Are your current time commitments in line with your goals? You need to do an analysis of how you are currently investing your time and you'll find if you are investing wisely. It may seem like a daunting task. Will you find out that you are wasting time? Will you be faced with the unpleasant task of eliminating some activities that a group or individual may be relying on you for? By honestly analyzing your time commitments, you will find ways to best use your time so you can eliminate pressure on yourself, and get things done quicker and better.

Analyze Your Job Responsibilities

You should review the tasks and priorities set forth in your job description. By considering each point, you will be able to determine if the task is best completed by yourself, or if it can be delegated to a subordinate. For those responsibilities that rest squarely on your desk, you should decide which part of the day is best suited for the task. Meetings, for example, may be best suited for first thing in the morning,

and not late in the afternoon. If you are in a bi coastal or international company, perhaps the 4 pm hour is best for phone calls. Take a look at the pieces of the day, and decide what most appropriately fits in each block.

Delegate and Be Selective

Don't be afraid to delegate. It not only improves your time investment, but it gives your employees the chance to develop their skills. Plus, your organization will be stronger for it. Don't be afraid to say "no" to any request that doesn't fit in your life goals. It is not impolite or mean to refuse an invitation to chair a committee or spearhead a project if it is not a wise time investment for you. In fact, by "spreading yourself too thin," you are not only hurting yourself, but you may be hurting the project.

Write Your Daily Plan

When your plans are floating around in your head, they are nebulous. When things are written down, they become concrete. You are more apt to follow the concrete. You must out your daily plans in writing, and prioritize within those plans.

The Power of Choice

Are you making choices in your personal and professional life that you are passionate about? The passion you feel about the choices you make will drive you towards the results. If you aren't passionate about your choices, then you won't head toward the results you want with the energy you need to get results.

Your choices should be defined by your purpose in life. Defining that purpose is critical in achieving your goal. If your purpose is clear, then your business will be on track with your goals and your life will be on track with your goals.

When you are investing your time, you need to remember what you are passionate about, and how that activities fits in your life plan. Each of us has the power to choose stick close to your priorities. If you can't garner the energy to complete one of your commitments, it probably isn't a choice you should invest your time in.

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Delegate: You'll Be a Better Manager

One of the most difficult things a manager must do is trust employees enough to delegate the tasks for which he or she is responsible. After all, it's your credibility and reputation on the line. But, delegation is essential to keeping the company growing. And, your employees will feel that they are contributing to the company's success.

According to Bob Nelson, in his article *Benefits of Delegation*, "everybody wins with effective delegation, but delegation is especially important if you want to survive and grow in an organization." www.smartbiz.com

Benefits for You

Nelson says the key benefits are:

- allowing the manager to achieve more through greater productivity;
- allowing time for managerial activities that only the manager can do;
- improving the manager's promotion potential, since the manager who can delegate in essence is training his employees to handle responsibilities freeing the manager to leave for other areas of greater responsibility.

Make Yourself Replaceable

If you make yourself irreplaceable because you won't give your employees the chance to be responsible for their work areas, then how can you handle higher levels of responsibility? By not delegating, you are dooming yourself to a career stall. You need to let go of the hands on, day to day tasks that your employees can handle if you let them.

Benefits for Your Subordinates

When you delegate, according to Nelson, you will develop your subordinates' skills and ultimately their motivation. Those under you who feel stifled because you don't delegate may be more inclined to leave their jobs to find a company where they can find professional growth. Also, Nelson says, by training employees in a variety of responsibilities, you automatically create back ups when the prime employee is out sick, or a crisis develops.

"If both managers and team members benefit from delegation," says Nelson, "then it follows that the organization as a whole benefits."



Who We Are and What We Do

Joan Fletcher launched Winning Ways in 2001 to work with businesses and individuals focusing on effective sales and strategic business planning through implementing personal and professional business and life plans.

Joan serves as a facilitator to help managers organize their thoughts, respond creatively and think it through to implementing the best processes and results that result in improved sales and increased revenue.

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Developing Goals, Focus and Leaders

"Leadership should be born out of the understanding of the needs of those who would be affected by it."

— Marian Anderson



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