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www.reginaclark.net

Regina M. Clark, CSP

[TEN TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR 2010]

Ten Time Management Tips for 2010

Getting a handle on time management isn't that complicated once you make up your mind to just do it! There are 24 hours in every day, no more and no less which adds up to 168 hours in every week. Every person has the same amount of time, no more and no less. Every day you wake up and decide how to use your time. Some people are extreme planners, they schedule everything! When to shop, when to exercise, when to eat, when to socialize, and who to spend their time with, they like to know what they are going to do every minute of the day and they get annoyed when others 'waste' their time. These people have a hard time with being spontaneous. Other people are at the other extreme, they don't plan at all, they just let the hours, days and months slip by without noticing what they do with their time. There is no right or wrong way to use your time, after all it's your time. The challenge arises when you are at work, have certain responsibilities and are expected to accomplish certain tasks. Employers expect you to use your work time (usually 40-50 hours/week) wisely and efficiently. We often hear that today's workforce is expected to do more with fewer resources. One way to accomplish more with fewer resources is to improve your time management practices. Here are a few tips to get you started.



Tip 1 Establish goals

Establish both short term and long term goals and objectives for your personal and professional life. You can keep personal goals separate from professional goals or combine them, whatever works best for you. When you develop a goal, make sure that it is a **SMART** goal. **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ctionable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime bound. If you are married or have a significant other person in your life, you might want to collaborate on your personal goals and objectives. If your goal is to save for college and your spouse's goal is to buy a new boat, you can imagine the conflict that might occur during conversations about managing money. If you both agree that saving for college is a priority, then the conversation about buying the boat becomes easier.

Examples of short term goals:

- Personal - Learn how to ski by 2/1/2010.
- Professional – Identify three new clients in my target market by 4/1/2010.

Examples of long term goals:

- Personal – Save enough money to pay college tuition for three children.
- Professional – Open my own business within five years.

Tip 2 Identify action items

Establishing goals is a good place to start. When you are sure that your goals are the ones that you want, the next step is to develop action items (things that you will do) to reach your goals.

Examples of action items to support goals:

- Personal goal - Learn how to ski by 2/1/2010.
Action item – Look online for ski instructors at Hunter Mountain and contact at least three by 1/15/10. Schedule a day off from work in January for a ski lesson.
- Professional – Identify three new clients in my target market by 4/1/2010.
Action item: Call 30 current clients by 1/15/10 and ask for a referral to a new client.

If you don't establish action items and actually do something, you will never reach your goals! They will be dreams, not goals.

Tip 3 Make a daily to do list

Write down your action items on a daily to do list. The to do list can be on paper, on a Black Berry or on a PC, whatever works for you. Don't let the tool overwhelm you, just pick a tool to use and be consistent. If there are items that are on your to do list and you don't get to them, carry the items over to the next day. If you carry an item over for more than a week, ask yourself if the item is really that important. Make sure your daily to do list has action items that are tied to your long term and short term goals. If you don't make the connection, you will find yourself busy but not necessarily moving in the direction that you want to go. If a crisis occurs at work or at home, don't worry about your daily to do list. Just take care of the crisis. When the crisis is over, and it will eventually be over, just get back on track.

Tip 4 Prioritize your to do list!

This step is critical. There will be items on your list that are high value items and other items that are low value items. By low value, I mean items that are not tied to your goals and objectives. For example, picking up dry cleaning is not a high value item but it might be something that needs to be done. You will also have favorite tasks on your to do list. We tend to do what we like first. Some of the tasks might seem overwhelming so we skip them. Don't skip them, chunk them!

Tip 5 Chunk big tasks

When a task is enormous, break it down into manageable chunks. When we believe tasks are manageable, we tend to tackle them. For example, if I write *Update address book* on my to do list, it sounds enormous to me. If I write *Update address book (A-C)*, it becomes more manageable. The next day, I write *Update address book (D-G)* and so on until the task is complete. It's like going to night school. Taking one class at night is manageable. Thinking about getting a Master's Degree is overwhelming. When you break big tasks down into smaller pieces, eventually the big task gets done.

Tip 6 Create a weekly time log

It's hard to improve your time management habits until you become aware of what your time management habits really are. There are 168 hours in a week, every week. Write down how you spend your hours during a normal week. Make sure you account for sleep time, commuting time, exercise time, TV time, family time, eating time, shopping time, face book time, work time, church/worship time, social time, study time and any other ways that you spend your time. If you can't do this in one day, track your time for a week and write down all that you do. It's amazing to see how we really spend our time. Some of us spend way too much time in front of the TV and not enough time exercising! By the way, it is possible to exercise and watch TV. It's called multi-tasking and many people do it well. If you want to improve your effectiveness at work, create a detailed log of work time. If you work in a corporate office environment, you will find that you probably spend too much time in meetings, checking email and dealing with interruptions.

Tip 7 Identify time wasters

Once you have your weekly time log filled in, go through it and identify your time wasters or time robbers. Do you make trips to the grocery store every day? Do you have a lot of wait time in your day? Waiting to see a doctor, waiting in line, waiting for a child's music lesson to end, waiting at the airport? You can do a lot with wait time when you plan ahead. I love to read and I usually don't get the chance to sit and read a good book. Whenever I travel, I bring at least one book and a stack of magazines. My wait time becomes my reading time. Once you have identified the time wasters, commit to a plan to get rid of the time wasters. A friend of mine has one TV in her house. It is in her bedroom and she lets her kids watch it for one hour during the weekend. I can't even imagine living with one TV but I do know that I waste a lot of time in front of the TV. How about you?

Tip 8 Keep one calendar

I learned a long time ago, that one calendar is the way to go. If you work with others, they can check your calendar for conflicts. If you have family responsibilities to coordinate, they need to go on your one calendar. Every working parent will tell you that if the parent/teacher conference isn't on their "work" calendar, they will probably forget about it until it is a crisis situation. When you get the school calendar at the beginning of the year, put the important dates on your primary calendar. Also include birthdays, anniversaries, graduation and other important personal days.

Tip 9 Improve your processes

Edward Deming once said, "If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, then you don't know what you are doing." It's one of my favorite quotes. Everything that you do at work is a process, when you improve a process, you make the process more efficient which ultimately saves you and/or others time! Every process has a beginning and an ending with inputs and outputs. The first step to improving a process is to identify the beginning of the process and then write down or map the process. Once you have a process map, you will be able to take a look at the map and identify places for improvement. If you don't know anything about process improvement, one of your short term professional goals should

be to learn! There are so many resources available online. A good place to start would be www.isixsigma.com website.

Tip 10 Organize your space

You will never be able to improve your time management if your work space/home space is a mess. If you spend ten minutes trying to find a stapler, your work space is a mess! Every tool should have a designated place and every person that uses that tool should know where the tool belongs. We have four drivers and four cars in my family. When we moved into a new house ten years ago one of the first things my husband did was to put up hooks in the garage for car keys. If the hooks were not there, I would waste lots of time looking for car keys. Even with the hooks, I waste time looking for car keys. Why? Because not all of the drivers remember to put the keys on the hooks when they walk in the door. If organizing your work space sounds like an overwhelming task, start with something small. Organize the left side of your desk, then move on to the right side, then tackle the files A-L, then the files m-Z, and so on and so on and so on....

Managing your time takes practice, patience and commitment. Eventually you will get the hang of time management, improve your efficiency, and reach your goals!



*Regina Clark, CSP is a business owner, international speaker, author and founder of Left Brain Leverage, a management development consulting firm in Goshen, NY. Her newest book is **Are We Having Fun Yet? 75 Ways to Create a Motivating Work Environment.** Regina coaches business executives on how to be more effective communicators and leaders. She delivers programs on Leadership, Communication, Process Improvement and Improving Customer Service. For more information, contact 845-294-7089 or email regina@reginaclark.net*