

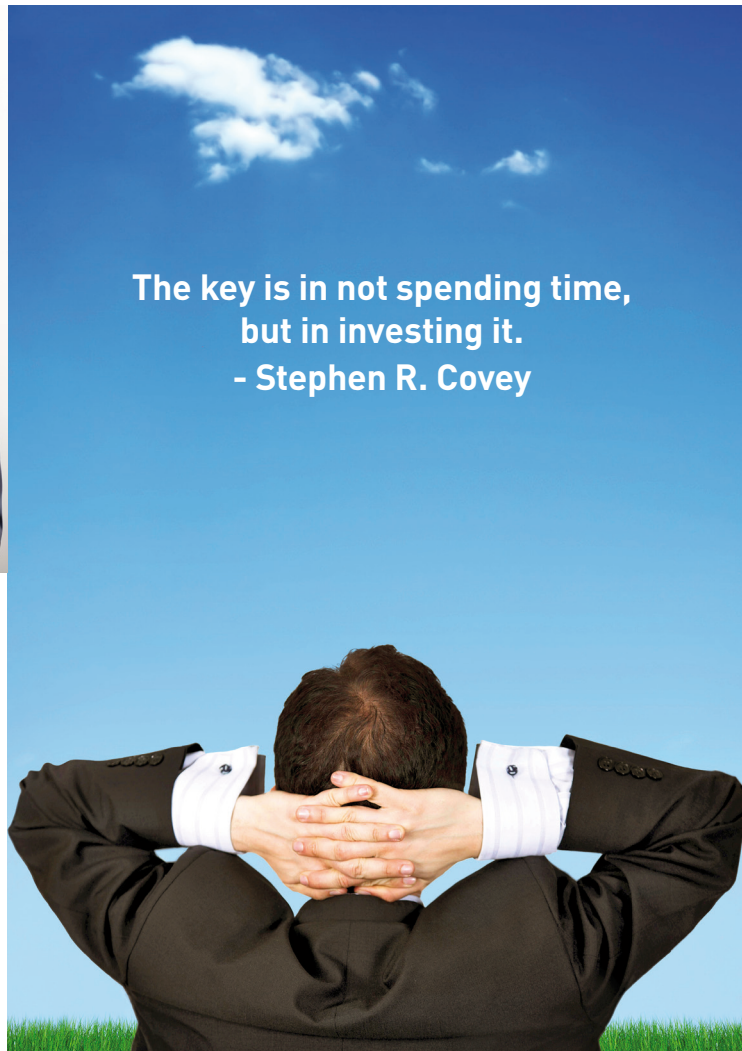


Testimonials

"This briefing has shown me that I actually spend most of my time doing things that are not going to have the desired impact on my business!" - Office Supplies Co

"Fantastic briefing, I can see how putting this into practice will really benefit our business." - Electrical Contractor

"I am going on holiday for the first time in months! Its the first time in a long time I feel relaxed and confident enough to leave the office for a week and its all thanks to Pro-actions!" - MD - Windows and Doors Company



The key is in not spending time,
but in investing it.
- Stephen R. Covey



More Time Management Tips

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Time management is really about managing yourself. It's about making a commitment to be more organised, maintain your focus and use your time to your best advantage. Here are some tips to help you use and manage your time proactively.

Prioritise ruthlessly

Prioritisation is the cornerstone of good time management. It ensures that the time available to you is being spent on the most essential activities. The mistake that is most commonly made is failing to differentiate between important and urgent tasks. To determine the urgency of a task, ask yourself: 'What would be the impact of not doing this today/tomorrow/this week?' If all else fails and you feel confronted with and overwhelmed by a colossal workload, ask yourself, 'What is the best use of my time right now?' This question cuts through confusion and is a terrific antidote to the inertia that can set in when you have so much to do that you're not sure what to do next. When it comes to managing our time, it's crucial to put first things first; those things in our life that matter most.

Create a 'TO DO' list

It is simple and takes little time. Keep your daily to do list small and manageable, five items or less. A massive to do list will only serve to overwhelm you. Put the most important tasks on the list and then set out to do them. Check off items as you go, keep track of your daily success. Checking things off your list will keep you motivated to finish the day. It is gratifying and energising to see what you have achieved during the day. Review your to do list every day, days change and so should their tasks. What was important the day before may not be so important today.

Set and respect deadlines

Be realistic about setting deadlines and strive to meet them. It's true that any task takes the exact amount of time allotted to it. Have you ever noticed how quickly you can blitz through paperwork, delegate assignments and make decisions on the last day before you go on holiday? Although we tend to get a lot done when we're under pressure, it is a lot less stressful and considerably more professional to establish and stick to, an action plan.

Minimising Distractions

Practice not answering the phone just because it's ringing and e-mails just because they show up. Disconnect instant messaging and block out other distractions like Facebook and other forms of social media, unless you use these tools to generate business. The demands of all of this combined technology force us into reacting to their incessant clamour.

Respond, don't react

Don't instantly give people your attention unless it's absolutely crucial in your business to offer an immediate human response. Just because someone can contact you immediately does not mean that you have

to respond to them immediately. People want a predictable response, not an immediate response. So as long as people know how long to expect an answer to take and they know how to reach you in an emergency, you can plan your day and schedule time to respond effectively to the communication you receive from others.

Allocate your time

Include an estimated time frame for each action point and the date by which the task must be completed. If the order in which you perform the tasks doesn't matter, you might be able to accomplish something during unexpected pockets of free time. Keep a firm yet flexible schedule, things happen. Schedule in some flex time, for example schedule only 45 minutes of an hour, leaving 15 minutes of flex time. This will account for unexpected events, crises or emergencies. Plan ahead, plan extra time, and save yourself a lot of stress and heartache later on.

Use your time wisely

Consider accessing your e-mail only at certain times of the day and let your voice mail pick up your calls to give you an uninterrupted hour or two. If possible, never touch the same piece of paper or e-mail twice. Do not open your mail unless you have time to read it and take action on it; that is, reply to it, delegate it, file it or discard it.

Get organised

Organise your desk, your hard-copy and computer files and your e-mail folders so you can find things easily. Far too much time is wasted searching for lost information. Benjamin Franklin said it best: "A place for everything, everything in its place."

Dare to be slow

Know when to take your time with a task; rushing through a project or task can actually cost you time in the long run. Know when you need to slow down and make sure you consider all the relevant aspects of what you're doing; get it right the first time.

Make it easy to get started

We don't have problems finishing projects, we have problems starting them. Break large projects into smaller chunks so that you are not overwhelmed by the volume of activity or work needed. By breaking it down, tasks seems less daunting and you increase the chances of starting and finishing more things, which reinforces your achievements and successes.

Stay on task

Have you ever returned from a meeting to find extra files, letters and documents all over your desk? Have a clearly designated "in" basket so people do not put things on your desk randomly. Stay focused. Let others know that you are working and cannot be disturbed. Keep your task list and materials organised so that you do not get distracted by other tasks that are staring at you from your desk.

Avoid disruptions

If you have a door, close it occasionally. Having an "open-door policy" for your staff is self-defeating if you don't have the time to really listen to their questions and concerns. If a member of staff comes to your desk when

you're too busy to chat, ask to set an alternate time to meet. They will both respect and appreciate you dedicating your time to focus on them and give them the support they need.

Don't waste time waiting

From client meetings to dentist appointments, it's impossible to avoid waiting for someone or something. But you don't need to just sit there and twiddle your thumbs. Always take something to do with you, such as a report you need to read, performance criteria to review, or just a blank pad of paper that you can use to plan your next marketing campaign. Technology makes it easy to work wherever you are; your PDA and/or mobile phone will help you stay connected.

Work in Short Bursts

Many people make the mistake of trying to work for long hours at a stretch. Inevitably, they run out of energy quickly - or end up working inefficiently. It's much easier to concentrate when you're working for a short time period, which is why students are normally advised to study for 20-45 minute bursts, taking frequent breaks. If you're struggling to concentrate on work, set a timer for twenty minutes, and see how much you can get done in that time.

Twenty minutes of concentrated work can be more productive than two hours of fiddling around.

Know when you work best

Each person has a best time; some people are morning people, some afternoon and some evening. You can discover yours by monitoring your productivity over a period of time. If you work best at a certain time of the day, then you need to manage your schedule to keep your best time free for your most important work

Know your limits

Know when you just need to shut it off for the day. When your mind is spent and your body is tired, it's time to take off for the day. Work done when you are exhausted will most often have to be redone later.

Reward yourself

Time management is not entirely about work; it also involves scheduling some downtime to relax and recharge your batteries. Plan rewards once your tasks are completed. This could mean taking a coffee break as soon as you've finished reading the engineering specifications report or planning a holiday once the new product has been launched. Take time to reinforce success, this will keep you going when the going gets tough.

Seize the opportunity to improve results and grow your business now!

If you want to find out more about how effective time management can make a difference to you, your lifestyle, your business results and profitability; call 03333 440517 and book **your free, no obligation** consultation with a Business Improvement Specialist.

It may be your one chance to work **ON**, not **IN** your business

