

It's Not about Time

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Ever find yourself saying that you need a good time management system? Well, I'm here to tell you that if you found the primo, A number one, amazing, one million testimonial time management system, it would have nothing to do with time.

No need to rewind, you heard me right, good time management systems have nothing to do with time. Time is a constant. Time treats everyone equally. We all get 24 hours in a day and 60 minutes in every hour.

Management is defined as to work upon or try to alter for a purpose or to make and keep compliant or to supervise.

Think about this for moment and it's laughable. Altering time is the fodder for science fiction movies, but as far as I know, no human has succeeded in doing so. You can't make time do anything and it is come pliant to the rules it operates within all by itself without any help from us.

The one that's really amusing to me is the idea of supervising time. I recall watching the clock when in grade school. I think we all did it. The meticulous watching of the hands as they crept toward 3pm. Watching, yes. Supervising it to move faster, uh, no.

So if it's not about time, what is it about?

YOU. Yes, you.

Time management is actually self-management. That's why quote time management unquote programs that are acclaimed may not work for you. The system of time blocking or task sorting or using PDA alerts may be wonderful, but you must use them consistently for them to be effective.

Many years ago I took a Steven Covey course on time management. In it they introduced a system that requires you prioritize your to do list and then letter items with an A, B or C to designate their importance. Some of you may be familiar with this. I honestly tried to employ this system, but it was time consuming to figure out whether doing the dishes or sorting laundry was a B or a C, and doing it for business items was even worse—it seemed like everything was an A except one of two things. I abandoned the system after two weeks and was pleased to gain back the hours.

In 2000, I was lured into using another system—a PDA. This time, I committed to using that system for a year. I told myself that it took time to get used to something new, and a year made sense, especially given the \$300 investment I had made into the PDA.

I used Outlook, so I set-up the device to synchronize with my computer daily. After a week, I had 3,500 contacts in my Outlook folder. For some strange reason, the computer wasn't recognizing that the contacts coming from the PDA were already in the folder, so it kept adding them. Everyone was listed 7

times. I cleared the PDA easily, but had to manually delete the extras from Outlook. Let's just say, this was not a fun or good use of time.

That was just the first of multiple synchronizing nightmares that occurred that year.

By December, my PDA was lucky to not be sitting at the bottom of the ocean or crushed to into a million pieces because I flung it out of the car on the highway. I had tried to manage time and it had definitely won.

I returned to my trusty Franklin planner that I used my way I might add and I swear my blood pressure decreased 10 points!

Instead of focusing on finding yet another time management system, I started looking at how I approached time.

I realized two things:

1) I was holding an unspoken belief that time would expand for me if I was running behind on a task or project.

2) I didn't always respect my time. I would often say I was going to do something at a certain time, like say my taxes, and then I would blow that off to go shopping.

Of course, at that time, I would complain that I had no time to do my taxes. Essentially, I would blame time for not managing me!

Newsflash...time won't manage you. Ultimately, even if you still work in an office with a boss, you manage you.

So how are some ways to do that effectively?

First, figure out how you currently interact with time, then ask yourself, is this my style or is this a bad habit I've created?

Many entrepreneurs, myself included, don't consider time when we're planning our next giant thing. We seem to think that if we can think it, there must be enough time and we have enough discipline to just make it happen. It's almost as if we believe that we can will things into existence. This is a bad habit—not a style.

A style is more like you prefer to focus on one task from start to finish, no matter how long it takes, and then start on the next task. That's not my style. I like to choose from my tasks and have an open schedule. I then pick and choose which items to do when based on my energy level at various times of the day.

Second, determine what system works best with your style and your commitments. I know a lot of speakers who love their electronic organizers and have upgraded to the handheld computers so they can answer e-mails while standing in line for coffee at Starbuck's. Of course, I tease them about their crackberries, I mean blackberries being like a child to them.

Finally, supervise yourself. Where are you goofing off in terms of time? Is solitaire a part of your afternoon affairs? Does watching the weather turn into watching the Late Show when you'd never intended to stay up so late doing nothing?

Self-management is a 16-hour a day job—I'm assuming that you're sleeping 8 hours of each day. Are you a good manager?

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