

ACHIEVE MORE IN LESS TIME!

Use of Time - Tip Sheet for Sales People

The demands on your time are great – what are you doing in terms of your personal time management to stay in control? If you are not in control of your time then consider the consequences - talented people can now fail in a sales environment if they don't manage their time effectively!

- **Have a diary (electronic or paper) – JUST ONE - and use it for both your business life and personal life.** Carry it with you at all times. Make no commitments, book appointments, agree to or set deadlines for others until you have consulted it. Don't be tempted to run an electronic diary and written diary in combination with different activities in each, other than if you are summarising activities in an electronic 'team diary' for access purposes – it will only be a matter of time before you will miss deadlines, appointments, don't make a conference call etc.
- **Take control and book time for yourself first (your business and personal Big Rocks) and then others – if you don't fill your diary then others will – this is guaranteed in business today.** Know your Big Rocks! (The things that are the most important that impact most the achievement of your goals.) Always be asking...is what I am about to do going to help me achieve my goals? If it won't why are you doing it? Keep your goals / objectives / immediate key actions to hand / visible to stay on track...**one of those BIG ROCKS WILL BE LEAD GENERATION!**
- **Leave time in your schedule to accommodate emergencies**
- **Use your diary in front of colleagues and customers alike** – think about the message that this transmits.
- **Set aside time in your diary to plan your time** – book time in your diary when you feel most creative - do this at least twice a week, every day if you can. Try and understand how much planned time and unplanned time you have available – this will help you understand just what you can achieve.
- **Prioritise everything you do** – you will have more to do than time allows so not everything can have the same status...try the following (from Stephen Covey – 7 Habits of Highly Effective People)
 - Start with the important and urgent
 - Then the important but not urgent
 - Followed by the urgent but not important (try and delegate if you can)
 - And finally the non urgent and non important (don't do!)

Aim to work only on the important things – if you plan your time effectively you will minimise tasks ever reaching the urgent stage – this reduces stress and leaves you far more in control of events.

- **Use a prioritised (as above) to do list** – otherwise how else will you keep track of everything you have to do? And remember – 95% of deadlines are negotiable- even those from your manager!
- **If you ever say to yourself or anyone else “I don't have time” this is not true, you have just chosen to do something else with that time. What you are really saying is this is not a priority compared to what else I will be doing.**

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- **Finish tasks when you start them** – restarting a task at a later time / date is inefficient as you never start from the point you finished. If you have a key task to complete then don't allow yourself to be interrupted. Lock yourself away if you have to! Break big tasks down and schedule accordingly.
- **If people interrupt you, immediately get out your diary and book a time to see them** – as soon as you allow people to interrupt you they are stealing your time and resetting your priorities.
- **Only attend meetings if there is an agenda and clear start / stop times and at least an 80% chance that you will contribute.** Leave at the scheduled stop time for your next appointment. Make sure all resulting actions from the meetings you attend are timed and singularly assigned i.e. each action should have just one name against it. You should start all follow on meetings with a review of the actions captured at the previous meeting. If actions are not being completed on time reschedule the actions and postpone the meeting – little point continuing with a further meeting otherwise.
- **Email is one of the greatest time stealers / time thief of them all.** Approximately 80% of the email most of us receive is of low value yet we spend hours reading it. Some people in an organisation are serial copiers – i.e. they copy information of doubtful value to everyone just because it is so easy to do so – know who they are and set up your email rules to put this into a separate folder. Set up an email filter. If the email is from your manager, the manager of your manager, someone in your team or a customer then separate and deal with. Set the rest aside and read on a plane or train journey for example. Use folders to file information – it is just an electronic filing cabinet
- **Only send and receive Email no more than 3 times per day – understand why!** If people are communicating with you by Email ask yourself just how important and urgent is it? If something is really important and urgent they will call you. Agree an Email code of practice across your team. Remember what Email is great for – transmitting facts and information – useless and inefficient for transmitting thoughts, feelings and opinions. If you feel an Email will generate further Emails that a phone call wouldn't then make the call. You talk at about 100 words a minute in your native language – what speed do you type at?
- **Keep important information close to hand, make notes in a hard backed book.** Religiously complete the database/ SFA / CRM tool you use – be disciplined with all the peripheral activities.
- **Do you keep having to do the same tasks, respond to the same questions, fix the same issues?** If you have the time to keep doing so then perhaps you have the time to educate and help others (colleagues & customers) so that you no longer have to do all the above on such a regular and routine basis. Help others to help themselves – you will save a great deal of time long term. At least prepare standard responses/procedure to reduce the time you have to spend dealing with these points.
- **Measure your activity level on key functions of your job** – for any selling role understand how many leads you need in at the top of the funnel to get one deal out of the bottom of the funnel – measure visits / telephone call rate – don't know where to start...try 4 leads in to 1 deal out! Always be asking how you can improve your conversion rates through the sales process stages down the funnel?