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## **Introduction**

Most people seem to believe there aren't enough hours in the day. They spend hours and hours at what they believe is work, but more than likely the majority of their day was spent in meaningless tasks that make them look busy without really accomplishing much.

Maybe you think you are pretty efficient at work, but I bet if you take the time to think about what you do in a day, or even log your time, you will notice times when you are spending your precious time on tasks that aren't really crucial or even important.

For example, how many times per day do you check email? How many times do you visit a forum or YouTube while you're working? How many times do you stop to chat with a coworker about something that isn't work related, even for five minutes? Most people would be shocked if they logged their time carefully each day.

Studies have shown that in an eight hour day, most people get only 2-4 hours or true productivity in. If you could increase that to six or seven, imagine how much more you could get done?

We're going to look at five quick and simple things you can do to manage your time better and get more done. I'm only going to go over the easiest techniques I know of to implement so you can get started right away.

I've found that most people have trouble implementing various tactics if they aren't quick and easy. Once you've implemented a few and you start seeing results, you'll be more motivated to stick to a great time management plan so you can keep seeing these results.

## **Technique #1 - Getting Organized**

One of the most important things you can do is get organized. You don't have to have a spotless office. Some people actually do seem to work better in a little clutter. They get used to it, and they have a system.

If you have a system that WORKS for you, don't change it if you don't want to! You don't have to live by someone else's rules for what organization should be.

The only time you should change your organizational habits is when it causes you to lose significant time. Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you often lose things and have to spend time searching for them?
- Do you spend more than 15 minutes per day or an hour per week searching for things?
- Do you ever get angry or upset because you can't find something?
- Are you embarrassed by the clutter or your lack of organization?

If you answered yes to even one of these questions, you might want to take the time to get a little more organized. It may make a big difference in your life.

Remember, you don't have to be perfectly organized, you just have to make sure things are where you can find them quickly. Your office could look messy to outsiders, but as long as you have a system that keeps everything where you can find it easily, you're organized well enough.

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You should use whichever method of organization works best for you. If you're happy with all of your papers in various stacks around the room, do that.

If you'd rather be more rigid and keep your stuff organized in a file cabinet in color-coordinated file folders, you should use that method. Do what feels comfortable.

## **Technique #2 – Tracking Goals**

It's very important to set goals for yourself. You should have short term and long terms goals, and they should be easily quantifiable so you can measure your success.

If you set a goal to "get rich", how will you know when you've reached your goal? You have to define what "rich" means to you, as well as when you'd like to attain that goal.

For example, you might say, "I would like to have \$400,000 in the bank by January 2, 2011."

That is a goal that can easily be quantified. It has an end date. You can easily tell whether you are nearing your goal and whether you've reached it by your target date.

Short-term goals are also important. You might decide you want to finish writing ten articles by Friday, or that you want to organize your desk drawers by 4 PM today.

You need to keep a system for tracking your goals. There are numerous pieces of software you can use for this, or you can simply use a whiteboard or notebook. Make sure you separate your goals into short term and long-term goals, and make sure they are easily quantifiable.

Also, make sure your goals are attainable. You shouldn't set goals that are too easy to reach, because then you cheat yourself. Likewise, you shouldn't set goals that are too lofty. This sets you up for failure and can kill your motivation.

Set goals that you believe are just slightly above what you think you can do. Ambitious goals help motivate you, and even if you don't reach them you shouldn't fall too far from the mark and risk hurting your motivation.

## **Technique #3 – Making Lists**

Lists are a very important part of life. Most of the world's biggest successes are compulsive list-makers. There's a very important reason for that.

Lists help you easily see your progress. Seeing your progress helps you accomplish two things. First, you can see what you have to do at a glance. Second, you know how much you've gotten done, which can be very motivating.

Lists are also important because they can help you organize your schedule. If you have a list of tasks to do, called a task list or a to-do list, you can cross off items that have been completed. You can also organize your list by order of importance.

I suggest using a software program for this rather than paper, simply because it's so easy to move tasks around, reorder them, and mark their importance. When you make your lists on paper, you may find it rather difficult to organize the tasks or note their importance.

If you make your lists on paper, be sure to cross them out completely when you complete them. If you simply put a checkmark or other mark beside them, it won't be as easy to see how much you've done. When you cross them out completely, it's very easy to see what has been completed at a glance.

You might want to color code your task lists. Many computer programs make this easy to do, but if you do it on paper you might want to use colorful labels, stickers, or highlighter pens. You can set certain priorities to certain colors to make it quick to see what needs to be done first.

## **Technique #4 – Setting Priorities**

Priorities are extremely important in both goal setting and making task lists. You must learn to prioritize well if you ever want to make the most efficient use of your time.

Let's say you have a list of ten tasks you need to complete in a day. For argument's sake, let's say each task will take you 20 minutes, for a total of 200 minutes that day, or a little over 3 hours.

You should make sure you get the most critical items on your list done early in the day. Imagine you needed to pay your electric bill before 5 PM or your electricity would be shut off, subjecting you to a \$200 reconnection fee.

What if you decided to put that off until later in the day and then you forgot? Or what if a family member had an emergency and you had to leave immediately?

By getting critical tasks done early, you can avoid these types of issues and make sure they are done. Additionally, you will also feel a great weight lifted off of your shoulders for the rest of the day.

Sometimes you may run into days when it seems like every item on your to-do list is equally important. In fact, that may happen quite often, especially if you have trouble prioritizing.

In this situation, try to think of the worst-case scenario. If you absolutely could not finish a task by the end of the day, what would happen?

Select the items that would have disastrous results and put them at top priority. Items that would have terrible results if they were not completed, but you could recover from get next priority.

Any items that would have bad results that would be relatively easy to recover from come last.

Always think of the results of NOT completing an item before you assign it priority. This is the best way to make sure you're making the right choices.

## **Technique #5 – Avoiding Procrastination**

Procrastination is a major part of the human psyche. People tend to put off tasks they find boring, annoying, or difficult.

In fact, some people will procrastinate to the point of complete disaster.

Additionally, a lot of people will procrastinate on certain items on their task list, putting them off as long as possible. What this does is drag down on their spirits all day, and it makes it harder to accomplish anything.

If you get those tasks that you really hate out of the way early, you will probably feel so good that they're over and done with that you'll actually get a lot more done during the day than you would otherwise.

If you have a task that you find particularly bothersome, it might be a good idea to delegate the task to someone else. Ask a co-worker, employee, friend, or family member to help you. Outsource the task if necessary.

If it's something that is really weighing on you, it's much better to pay someone to do it for you than to keep beating yourself up because you can't seem to get around to doing it.

If it's something only you can do, it's best to get it out of the way as quickly as possible. If you find it's particularly disheartening, give yourself permission to put it off for one hour and no more. Tell yourself that you will do it at a certain time, no matter what. This way you can prepare yourself for the difficult task, while still making sure you get it done.

Procrastination can be the kiss of death to a business if you let it. You have to make sure that you always get those tasks that will

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be most tempting to avoid done early so they aren't weighing you down and making it difficult to complete other tasks later.

All the best

Alan c/-Amadavit

## **Time Management Strategies**

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