

SAVING TIME AT WORK

DISCLAIMER

The Mission of the Business Enterprise Centre is to foster, develop and support small business by providing relevant, accurate and professional information and assistance to those intending to start a small business or those existing small businesses that need support. This information and assistance is offered free of charge on the explicit understanding that:

- ◆ The information supplied is intended to provide general guidance and direction on all aspects of small business.
- ◆ The Centre is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, financial or other professional advice.
- ◆ The information is not intended to replace professional advice and at all times the Centre, its officers and employees recommend that if legal, accounting or other expert advice is required, clients seek professional advice before committing funds to any business venture.
- ◆ The Centre its officers or employees are not responsible for the results of any action or action taken on the basis of information supplied or omitted.

A SUMMARY OF IDEAS AND OTHER EASY-TO-USE TECHNIQUES

1. Set your priorities first thing in the morning before any work gets underway.
2. Have a priority-setting meeting early in the day.
3. Use your high productivity hours for your top priority projects. (Are you a morning or afternoon person?)
4. Tackle time-consuming projects in stages. (Break them into manageable "chunks" or tasks).
5. Delegate to your staff the items that they are capable of doing.
6. Teach your staff how to perform certain tasks so that you can delegate in the future.
7. Concentrate on one item at a time.
8. Institute a quiet period in your office, preferably in the morning.
9. When a days work is emotionally demanding, get out of the office at lunchtime. Have lunch with a friend or do something recreational.
10. Have a light lunch without alcohol at lunchtime. This prevents the usually "sleepy" period in the early afternoon.
11. Use your low productivity hour(s) for easy-to-do projects and casual reading.
12. Work on the appointment system as much as possible.
13. Have the secretary screen phone calls and inform him or her when you do not wish to be disturbed.
14. Have your secretary situated between you and visitors.
15. Close the door when you don't want to be disturbed, and have your staff respect it. Use a high movable partition around you if you don't have a private office.
16. Meet visitors outside your office and talk with them standing if you wish the consultation to be brief.
17. Time limit visits. When someone calls for an appointment, discuss how long the consultation will be.
18. Dictate letters and reports. Use the dictaphone.
19. Keep letters brief. Only address the issue. Do not say more than is required.
20. Have a place for everything.
21. Keep your desk free of papers you are not working on that day. This prevents papers being mixed up or lost.
22. Set reasonable deadlines for yourself and others.
23. Make decisions immediately where possible. If further information is not likely to change the course of the decision, then don't wait any longer.
24. Mark what you read with pencil. When you have to refer to that document later you will not have to read it all again.
25. If something isn't clear ask for clarification. Do not assume. You might find you have to do it all over again.

26. Use 10 minutes of staff meetings once a month to exchange time-saving ideas.
27. Put meetings and consultations to the afternoon, preferably 1 1/2 hours before quitting time. Put meetings in the morning only if they demand maximum concentration from all the members.
28. Use the agenda system for meetings.
29. Keep meetings to an hour or less.
30. Form an ad hoc committee in meetings for items that need more investigation. Do not take up people's time talking about an item that nobody can adequately address.
31. Have short meetings in a room with no chairs. Keep standing.
32. Close your office, or part of it, for one day to have a time management workshop where all levels participate.
33. Where you work closely with another person, collect items and talk with him or her at certain times. Do not make contact every time you have an item. Encourage others to do the same.

SOURCES OF WASTED TIME

1. Telephone interruptions.
2. Drop in visitors.
3. Meetings (scheduled and unscheduled).
4. Crisis Management.
5. Lack of objectives.
6. Cluttered desk and personal disorganisation.
7. Ineffective delegation of responsibilities and too much involvement in routines and details.
8. Too much work attempted at once and unrealistic time estimates.
9. Lack of or unclear communication or instructions.
10. Inadequate, inaccurate or delayed information.
11. Indecision and procrastination.
12. Confused responsibility and authority.
13. Inability to say NO.
14. Tasks left unfinished.