

## ELEVEN TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

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Do you feel the need to be more organised and/or more productive? Do you spend your day in a frenzy of activity and then wonder why you haven't accomplished much?

Time management skills are especially important for small business people, who often find themselves performing many different jobs during the course of a single day. These time management tips will help you increase your productivity and stay cool and collected.

### **1) Realise that time management is a myth.**

No matter how organised we are, there are always only 24 hours in a day. Time doesn't change. All we can actually manage is ourselves and what we do with the time that we have.

### **2) Find out where you're wasting time.**

Many of us are prey to time-wasters that steal time we could be using much more productively. What are your time-bandits? Do you spend too much time 'Net surfing, reading email, or making personal calls? Learn how to track your daily activities so you can form an accurate picture of what you actually do, the first step to effective time management.

### **3) Create time management goals.**

Remember, the focus of time management is actually changing your behaviours, not changing time. A good place to start is by eliminating your personal time-wasters. For one week, for example, set a goal that you're not going to take personal phone calls while you're working.

### **4) Implement a time management plan.**

Think of this as an extension of time management tip # 3. The objective is to change your behaviours over time to achieve whatever general goal you've set for yourself, such as increasing your productivity or decreasing your stress. So you need to not only set your specific goals, but track them over time to see whether or not you're accomplishing them.

### **5) Use time management tools.**

Whether it's a Day-Timer or a software program, the first step to physically managing your time is to know where it's going now and planning how you're going to spend your time in the future. A software program such as Outlook, for instance, lets you schedule events easily and can be set to remind you of events in advance, making your time management easier.

### **6) Prioritise ruthlessly.**

You should start each day with a time management session prioritising the tasks for that day and setting your performance benchmark. If you have 20 tasks for a given day, how many of them do you truly need to accomplish?

### **7) Learn to delegate and/or outsource.**

No matter how small your business is, there's no need for you to be a one-person show. For effective time management, you need to let other people carry some of the load.

**8) Establish routines and stick to them as much as possible.**

While crises will arise, you'll be much more productive if you can follow routines most of the time.

**9) Get in the habit of setting time limits for tasks.**

For instance, reading and answering email can consume your whole day if you let it. Instead, set a limit of one hour a day for this task and stick to it.

**10) Be sure your systems are organised.**

Are you wasting a lot of time looking for files on your computer? Take the time to organise a file management system. Is your filing system slowing you down? Redo it, so it's organised to the point that you can quickly lay your hands on what you need.

**11) 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, a cheque book that needs to be balanced, 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 cell phone will help you stay connected.

You **can** be in control and accomplish what you want to accomplish - once you've come to grips with the time management myth and taken control of your time.

*<http://sbinfocanada.about.com/cs/timemanagement/a/timemngtips.htm>*

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