
FOUNDATION STUDIO

Marketing and Promotions

TIME MANAGEMENT AT ITS FINEST

Business owners across North America shared their tips and tricks on **Scheduling Daily Tasks**, **Balancing Time between Business and Family** and what **Gadgets and Software** they use throughout their day! So grab a cup of Joe, a pen and a pad of paper and get ready to manage your time!

Effectively Scheduling Daily Tasks:

Avoid the Avoidance

Do the 'dreaded' task first. We frequently put off a task simply because we don't want to do it. The longer we put it off, the bigger it grows. As it grows, it also increases our stress level reducing our effectiveness in what we are doing. By doing the 'dreaded' task first, we reduce our stress level, improve our outlook on the rest of our day and often find that the task wasn't so terrible after all!

Alice Price CPO-CD®, Organize Long Island Inc - www.organizelongisland.com

Specific Days for Specific Tasks

Set up Day Files (Monday, Tuesday etc) and place action items in these files for the days they need to be addressed. It helps the paper flow and keeps your desk tidy.

Check your email up to 4 times a day (but not every 10 minutes!). Choose first thing in the morning, before you eat lunch, mid afternoon and then later in the evening. Don't be a slave to your inbox.

Get a PO Box and only check it twice a week, only allow all business mail to go to that addresses so you are only handling correspondence twice a week.

Neen James CSP, MBA, International Productivity Expert - www.neenjames.com

Pre-Plan Your Goals

If you write out your goals for the day the night before, you'll start the morning feeling organized. I use a template that outlines my projects for the day, in the left hand column it allows space for "to do" and "follow up" items pertaining to my list

Thomasina Tafur - <http://www.thomasinatafur.com>

Show Up to Work

Forget about multi- tasking, practice being present. Being **fully present** will make you more productive, more likely you won't miss opportunities, and less likely to get lost in mundane activity.

Alicia Marie Fruin, PCC - www.profitconsultingco.com

Be Selective & Decisive

Watch out for subscribing to too much: magazines, newspapers, blogs, e-zines, newsletters, e-courses... and then there's social media: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Plaxo, LinkedIn, MySpace and the list goes on and on. You could spend your whole day involved in all of these, but you need to budget your time. **Be selective.** Choose only those pieces of information which will serve you the most in growing you or your business – those things which could impact your bottom line the most – and unsubscribe to the rest. Limit your time to any one or a combination of these and if time permits after a few weeks or months, you can gradually add more into your schedule if there is value and time permits.

Leslie Shreve, Founder / Productivity Expert, Focus Consulting - www.productiveday.com

Track Time Spent

I recommend tracking the amount of time you spend on each task throughout the day, to get an overall picture of where your time is going. This is often an eye opening exercise for folks. Many people feel overwhelmed with their level of busyness - but when you break down where their time is actually going, you often see a lot of it being spent on non-essential items. For example, breaks to surf the internet can really add up throughout the day - not to mention the cost of switching focus!

Brett Owens, Co-Founder and CEO, Chrometa, LLC - www.chrometa.com

Leave Empty Handed

At the end of each work day, leave with an empty email inbox. Yes, that sounds crazy and nearly impossible for people who get hundreds of electronic messages, but once you start doing it, you will find that it relieves so much stress. It is completely possible if you make it a priority. You will find that having a clean email slate every day is liberating and results in better organization, faster response times and a little bit more sanity overall.

Trazanna Moreno, Associate Superintendent for Community Relations, Klein ISD - www.kleinisd.net

One Calendar Should Suffice

The important thing is that you only use **one** calendar to schedule all components of your life, including your vacations. That allows you to have everything in one place.

Billy Arcement MEd, The Leadership Strategist - <http://www.searchingforsuccess.com>

Decipher Between Tasks & Projects

It is important to distinguish between "tasks" and "projects". Tasks are items that involve a single action such as returning a phone call, or attending a meeting. Projects are more complex; they require more than one action. Examples of projects for small business owners are things like: Develop a marketing plan for new product; Hire an administrative assistant, research networking opportunities. When tasks and projects are mixed together on the same list, the small business owner becomes overwhelmed, and spends too much time trying to decide what to do. Instead, projects should be on a separate list and reviewed regularly (at least once a week.) The way to move a project forward is to ask "what is the next thing I need to do on this project?" and put that on the task list.

Joanne Boyd Irving, PhD., The Chrysalis Group - <http://www.the-chrysalis-group.com>

Make Your Mornings a Priority

I do the creative, forward thinking work first thing in the morning, before answering all the emails. Once the fire drills start for the day, it is impossible to free up enough time and focus to work on long-term goals. And I have good energy first thing in the morning.

Proper Communication is Key

Always think about how best to communicate with someone based on their style, the message content, and goal for the interaction. So instead of sending one more email trying to explain a complex subject, pick up the phone. Instead of calling the person who always wants to talk for an hour, send an email. If you stop for a split second and think about it, you can often save yourself minutes or hours of time and frustration.

Steven D. Davies, President - PerfectJob Software Inc. - www.PerfectJobSoftware.com

Big Batch of Tasks

I'm a big believer in batching tasks and tackling a bunch of similar things at once, rather than getting distracted by a bunch of fragmented items. I've found that categorizing into daily / weekly / monthly and quarterly tasks helps me minimize the time I spend on them and keeps my mind fresh for the important work at hand.

I handle weekly tasks on a specified day of the week: Review goal and planning, follow-up calls to prospective clients, write blog post, etc.

Monthly tasks, for example, each Tuesday I block out 1 hour to do recurring tasks:

- 1st Tuesday - Update quickbooks / pay taxes.
- 2nd Tuesday - Pay bills
- 3rd Tuesday - Write thank-you notes to clients.
- 4th Tuesday - Write newsletter / press releases.

Ben Thompson, Creative Director, Studiofluid, Inc. - <http://studiofluid.com>

Balancing Time between Business & Family

Family First

I make sure to ask if my family has any needs that are to be met. I always ask my wife "is there anything you need me to do for you today and is there anything that you have planned for us so that I won't schedule anything in that time slot?" Keep family first and your business will be unstoppable.

Derrick Hayes, Encouragement Speaker - <http://www.DerrickHayes.com>

Be Clear on Your Values

Build your business around your values and the lifestyle you desire for yourself and your family, rather than allowing your career/business to dictate and overtake your life. This requires you to first be clear on what values are most important to you. For example, if quality-time with your family is a non-negotiable value for you, then literally "close your office" by dinnertime and show your kids how important they are by being fully present with them – minus the disruption of phone calls and e-mail messages.

Lynn Ely, MomEvolve - www.momevolve.com

Time It

Set a Timer with Kids. Tell them that when the timer goes off, you can play or talk with them, but when it goes off again, you have to go back to work. This gives them the anticipation of spending time with you and it allows you to spend time with your child without feeling stressed or guilty.

Holly Uverity, Certified Professional Organizer®, Office Organizers – The Entrepreneur's Organizer - <http://www.officeorganizers.com>

Schedule It In

My best tip for balancing work and personal time is to SCHEDULE time in for family, health, education, etc. and keep it just like an important appointment because it is! Whenever someone tries to impinge on your personal time simply tell them that you have "another appointment" and magically they'll either find another time that's more convenient to you or they'll handle it themselves.

If it weren't for this trick I'd never get to the gym, go for a hike or take a needed nap!

Michael Soon Lee, MBA, CSP, President, EthnoConnect - www.EthnoConnect.com

Family Forecast

Plan meals ahead of time – it will make dinner and shopping go faster. Schedule leftovers for nights that will be "tight" due to a day of meetings or needing to be at a sports game or trash nights.

Make a family day or night – like a trip to the zoo, bowling, water-park, skating, etc. to keep family time. Try to keep evenings open, not working, or at least until children go to bed, if you have projects that run into the evening.

Eileen Roth, Your Organizing Tour Guide, Speaker and Author of Organizing For Dummies(R) - www.EverythingInItsPlace.net

Take A Break

Schedule mini-vacations. My family and I recently spent a Thursday-Sunday out of town. It was just the right amount of time to be away from home and still be able to catch up on work when I came back. If you can't get away from work for longer than a week, take a three-day or a four-day vacation with your family.

Find an exercise partner (friend or family member) and share a daily walk or take a bike ride. When you partner with someone else you're more likely to exercise regularly, stay in shape and enjoy a nice break from work.

Lisa Kanarek, Home Office Expert, Author and Founder - www.workingnaked.net

Keep Your Eye on the Little Things

Get a cleaner (pay or barter) – this cleaning service will allow you to focus on working and not be distracted by the cleanliness of your home/office environment.

Invest one hour in creating a visual board of all the things you want to achieve in your business and enjoy as a result of your business success. Keep it somewhere you can see it constantly and remind yourself when you get distracted of why you have your own small business.

Identify two time wasters that are distracting you and choose to eliminate them for the next 10 days.

Neen James CSP, MBA, International Productivity Expert - www.neenjames.com

Time Saving Gadgetry & Software

Where Did the Time Go?

If your intention is to do 10 minutes of online research but end up killing an hour surfing the web, a timer can help bring you back to the task at hand. A great online timer is

www.e.ggtimer.com

Alice Price CPO-CD®, Organize Long Island Inc. - www.organizelongisland.com

Ping It

Social media is becoming a huge marketing and developmental tool. Utilizing online programs such as www.ping.fm to eliminate the need for individual site posts is an excellent time management technique.

Dale Little, Business Strategist - <http://www.dalelittle.com>

Put Recurring Tasks on Auto-Pilot

I highly recommend using [OmniFocus](http://www.omnifocus.com) on the Mac (or a similar software like [Nozbe](http://www.nozbe.com) if you're stuck on a PC) to help keep recurring tasks documented so you can forget about them until it's time to accomplish them.

Ben Thompson, Creative Director, Studiofluid, Inc. - <http://studiofluid.com>

Other Time Saving Gems

Keep the Supply Cabinet Stocked

One way to save time that is simple but requires discipline is to stay stocked up on necessary supplies. My wife Beverly who handles my business always has spare printer ink refills, stationary, stamps, etc. You can also save money by stocking up on supplies when they are on sale.

Pablo Solomon, Artist & Designer - <http://www.pablosolomon.com>

Do Some Planting

My big tip for home workers is this: just plant your feet under the desk and go to work. When people ask me where I get the discipline, I say "the mortgage is all the discipline I need."

Linda West Eckhardt, James Beard award winning cookbook author and food writer - <http://www.thesilverclouddiet.com>

Impress the Boss

The single best tip I know for small business time management is this. When you're your own boss, your boss is watching you all the time. So act according. Work just as diligently and responsibly as you would if you were right under the nose of the best boss you ever had: the one you really wanted to please; the one you really wanted to impress.

Barry Maher, Barry Maher & Associates - www.barrymaher.com