

# Managing Your Time: Working Smarter

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Everywhere I turn in the corporate and legal worlds of my recruiting practice, I see professionals responding to increased global competition and rising billable-hour quotas by spending more time in the office. These professionals are not exactly taking it easy; most of them are already working 10- to 12-hour days and more. While most are wearing their fatigue as a badge of honor, I am not sure this trend should be something we want to brag about.

I am reminded of an attorney who became one of the most successful CEOs I have ever met, who is usually still in bed at 8:00 a.m., who never misses his daily workout, and who has not been in the office on a weekend in the last 10 years. This is the same CEO who has built a very successful pharmaceutical empire worth hundreds of millions of dollars, not by working harder, but by working smarter and more in concert with his abilities and goals.

I think most of us agree that we could use a bit more time for ourselves while remaining successful in our professional lives. Perhaps we could learn from our CEO friends and manage ourselves in accordance with our abilities and goals rather than according to time and tasks.

### **Prioritizing Your Time**

It is very easy to equate responsiveness with effectiveness, but is it an accurate analysis? Most of us respond to requests without measuring or counting. Somebody calls or emails; we spend 10 minutes on a response. Somebody asks to see us or drops by; we spend an hour of our day. Somebody else needs

a memo or a report, and we are on the computer during an evening or a weekend. At the end of the day or the week, we feel as though we have been very busy and worked hard; and we have.

But the real question should be: Have we accomplished anything? The true mark of effectiveness is one's ability to add value, which should lead us to ask whether that latest batch of emails or calls added value to the company. If not, what could we have done instead?

### **Prioritizing Your Tasks**

Many of us have moved from responding to every demand and task as it comes to using lists to organize our tasks and priorities. This is an improvement; a list allows you to decide when and to what you need to respond.

The problem as I've experienced it first hand is that most of us have so many requests for our time at work, not to mention at home and with other personal commitments, that the list can stretch as far as the eye can see. Most of us struggle to get as far as one third down the list before the day is over, and by then it's probably increased well beyond that dent of accomplishment.

The solution? Your daily to-do list should have no more than three top priorities--any more, and you really have not prioritized your important tasks. More than three, and you will always end your day feeling swamped and unable to have achieved what you were meant to do.

### **Achieving Your Goals**

The most challenging element of effective management is to organize oneself in accordance to the company's overall goal or mission. Simply put, a

company's mission is achieved over long periods of time with no immediate pay-off. Making sure that your days are organized in accordance with your company's overall goal and understanding how each hour and task serves that goal will create success. Allowing yourself to more effectively manage your time will allow you to become successful without having to work longer hours.

So before you leave in the morning to go to the office, ask yourself how you are managing time, prioritizing tasks, and achieving your company's goals. The answers may surprise you, but the results are sure to take away the wariness that you've been carrying and replace it with a success that does not come at such a high personal cost.