

Time Management in a Time Challenged World (時間がない世界での時間管理術)

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Introduction

Time management is a decades old concept that has been taught in many different flavors by many different experts. It is also a topic taught by hundreds of organizations to their employees. Yet this continues to be one of the most challenged areas in people's lives. How can something so well taught and so common be so misapplied? Many business professionals have significant challenges managing their time in an extremely busy and distraction filled world. Not only do they manage a work calendar, they often have family calendars as well. Family obligations may often occur during business hours or business obligations may occur during evening, non-traditional work hours. Finding a system that works for you is essential to managing your schedule and ensuring all priorities, both professional and personal, are addressed.

Case Study ? me

I decided recently to take my own life as a case study into how challenging it can be to implement a time management system. I am hoping my challenges and lessons learned can be applied by others in shortening the learning curve to successful time management.

I am a married man with 3 children. I am also an IT professional who travels often for my job. In fact, every billable hour I have works for 2 years has been worked in the road. I have taken almost every time management course throughout my 20 + year professional career. From Covey to off shoots to company tailored training, I have taken almost a dozen variations on Time Management techniques. I began using the Covey system ? complete with the heavy, leather binder and the daily 2 page systems about 15 years ago.

I practiced the prioritized task lists, copying each list forward daily, and even mapping the tasks to my value statements. I always wound up 'falling off the wagon' though. The effort required to follow the disciplined Franklin Covey system was just too much for me to follow on a daily basis.

I am also a technical IT consultant ? residing in a technical, mobile world.

The techniques of 15 years ago don ' t work well today.

The purpose of this article is to convey some of the challenges and some of the lessons learned

I have discovered through my journey.

Initial State

Thus, I found time management a significant challenge. In general, the challenges I felt were:

- I lack an effective Time Management technical solution

I have tried to apply a non-technology solution to a technology based life ?

it is doesn ' t work too well.

Mobile office ? All billable work my company requires extensive travel.

Significant and varying time demands with family

Move to smaller, more ' cluttered ' home in California

I no longer have the desk area and file area to help support an organized time management solution.

Problems with Initial State

Thus, there are several common themes that are challenges for me. These challenges include:

Maintaining a valid and disciplined task list has been a challenge

Having a space where I can maintain an office has been a challenge

Carrying a Franklin Covey Planner has been prohibitive ? due to travel.

Lack of a predictable routine. (schedule changes with travel to different time zones)

Simple, yet Effective Changes

There are several changes I have made in my life to make the application of a time management solution

easier and more effective. These changes include:

Get into a routine.

Stick to a routine that includes 30 minutes at the start of the day to plan the day.

Review calendar the night before

Being in a different time zone, meetings are often scheduled before 8 AM or over

the typical lunch time.

Active maintenance of Task List in MS Outlook

Multi-tasking is bad!

Comparison between my mom and my wife.

I was raised to be a multi-tasker. I was taught the human mind can handle many simultaneous tasks and can accomplish them with equal quality. Experience has taught me the folly of this theory.

I am now much more of a linear thinker and doer.

If I manage my task list one task at a time, I feel I am much more productive and much less stressed.

Tools I have used in my life

The changes described above carry with them some implicit tools that have also helped in my journey.

The tools I have found most useful include:

Implement a time management plan.

Establish routines and stick to them as much as possible.

Use time management tools.

Be sure your systems are organized.

I used to be a “messy desk is a sign of a hard worker” person.

I now subscribe to the organized desk is a productive desk person.

Find out where you're wasting time.

This activity was a challenge. I did find that I was wasting time when I would try to multi-task ?

as I was having to ‘shift gears’ more often.

I do my best thinking during linear events.

When I am able to focus on one activity and devote my entire energy towards that activity.

Get in the habit of setting time limits for tasks.

This was also a challenge to implement.

It requires you to give more thought to each task on your to do list ? as you need to understand the anticipated effort to complete a task.

Changes I still need to implement

While I have applied many changes in my life, there are some changes that I still need to make.

These changes include:

- When I am billable, blocking out my calendar to reflect my lack of availability.

Better organizing my systems

I need to better implement a time management/task management system and properly apply the discipline of interacting with the system to help my time management.

- Getting things done by putting them off till tomorrow

This is an effective email management system that involves organizing your emails into

a couple of different batches. Respond to today and respond to tomorrow.

I have found that making too many changes to quickly only makes the likelihood for success lower.

Small changes, properly and effectively applied help much more than drastic changes.

Benefits

There are many obvious benefits to using a disciplined, effective time management system.

Some of these benefits include:

- Peace of mind
- Less stress
- Better productivity
- Appearance of competence ? the more organized you are, the better (more affective) you look.

Conclusion

Time management is a must.

Finding the right combination of tools and methods is key to keeping time management a reality in your professional and personal life.

Article Source:

<http://www.articlesbase.com/time-management-articles/time-management-in-a-time-challenged-world-458976.html>

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