

4 Tips for Maximizing Time, Your Most Valuable Resource

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Some CEOs and business leaders have an innate ability to manage their time efficiently. But many others have to learn new habits of time-management and work hard to reinforce these habits in their daily lives. If they don't do so, they lose irreplaceable quantities of time, their most valuable resource.

For example, look at how often someone brings a supposedly "urgent" matter to your attention, which then takes up valuable time better spent elsewhere. How much time do you spend on work that's truly strategic, as opposed to just putting out fires every day?

As we've noted before, "Taking steps to focus on what's genuinely important will prove to be most beneficial to your organization."

Here are some time management tips to consider adopting in your daily life:

1. Prioritize and plan ahead.

Deciding what's "important" as opposed to what *must* be done is—or should be—among a business leader's key traits. This principle applies both to individual tasks and to meetings and other face-to-face encounters that can pile up during a typical workday. In many cases, choosing between "high priority" and "low priority" can help you determine what responsibilities to address first.

Similarly, planning ahead for the next day can help you prioritize, too. Take a few minutes at the end of the day to arrange your immediate schedule for the following morning. Or take a brief time at the start of your day to compile your tasks as "high" or "low" priority.

2. Clarify when you're available to others (and when you're not).

Having an "open door" policy for your employees is a noble objective, but not always practical. Without any limits, this quickly becomes just another in a never-ending series of interruptions (phone calls, texts and email messages, etc.) that take up your time and leave little to show for it.

Yes, maintaining open lines of communications with employees is important. At the same time, "you'll maximize the limited time you have by shutting out all distractions during those periods when you *must* concentrate on the task at hand." Determine a specific time when your office door is closed. Don't take calls. Don't automatically respond to emails. Focus on what's needed to be done and deal with the rest at a later time.

3. Always be delegating.

It's a challenge that comes up again and again with CEOs and other business leaders—individuals who, by their nature, feel no job can be done satisfactorily unless they do it themselves. That is, in itself, a recipe for wasting time.

Here are quick tips for delegating lower-level tasks:

Write down everything you need to address today or this week, ranging from strategic planning to posting an all-staff email and/or approving a graphic redesign of your company website.

From that list, circle items that only *you* can do. Be ruthless in your assessment, and then see how few circles you see on the page.

With a second list, determine what tasks can be delegated to team members or even to a virtual assistant.

Choose items from this second list and delegate to others. Give team members a chance to show what they can do and reduce the time you take on these matters.

4. Hold yourself accountable for how you spend your time.

Your employees are accountable for the time they spend at work, but as the learning solutions firm KnowledgeCity notes, “avoid the assumption that ... no one should be able to hold you accountable for your performance as well.” The best approach here is looking into active participation in a peer-group organization like TAB, where others will help you make sure you stick to your own plans and that you devise the most effective time-management system possible.