

Organization Tips That Add More Hours To Your Day

By Diane Hughes

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One of the most common complaints that small business owners have is lack of time. What most don't realize, however is that their lack of time stems from a lack of organization. But with a few simple tips - that you can implement immediately - you can literally add hours to your day.

--- Putting Things In Their Place

First and foremost, you should live by the motto, "A place for everything and everything in its place". When you are finished with a piece of paper, a brochure or any other physical document - file it. What usually happens is that you finish using a piece of paper, "temporarily" put it in a stack and then have to spend two hours cleaning up after yourself once a week. Or, you may leave it in a stack and spend two hours a day digging through the mess to find what you need.

Create a filing system that works for you personally and then use it! Perhaps you'd like a filing cabinet? There are also expandable folders and numerous other filing systems. Choose the one you like, create a folder for it and put it where you can find it again if need be.

--- I'll Be Right There

How many times a day do you say (or think) that? Especially if you work from home, you probably have plenty of interruptions that take valuable time out of your day. If you're a work-at-home parent with young children, it may be a bit more difficult to end interruptions all together, but these tips will help.

1. Set "office hours". As much as possible, let your family know that between 8am and 11am, you'll be working. Then again from 1pm until 6pm you'll be "in your office".

(Or whatever hours work best for you.)

2. Ignore your email. Well, partially, anyway. Unless you're expecting some urgent message, don't stop what you're going to run check your messages each time you hear the "bell" ring. Decide on the time frame that works best for you and then check your email at certain times during the day. (Perhaps every three hours or so.) During the rest of your work time, turn your email software off so you can resist the temptation to check each message as it arrives.
3. Screen your calls. These days most people have voice mail or an answering machine. Unless you're expecting a call, let the machine get it. Just as with your email schedule, you can set aside time during the day to return calls. This is a great way to avoid telemarketers, too!

--- Automate and Delegate

When those routine tasks start taking up valuable money making time in your schedule, it's time to either automate or delegate.

It's all a matter of how you use your time - make money or waste money. You can earn money each hour by performing work or you can waste money by doing every little thing yourself. There are several options you can look into in this area.

Software - There is software available today that will do practically everything! GoldMine or ACT can automate almost all of your contact information, e-mailings, prospect follow-ups, appointments and much, MUCH more. Outlook is an exceptional 'Day Timer' type tool that can help with scheduling as well as email. SystemWorks can automatically maintain your computer's "inner workings" and automatically update your virus protection. There's a program to do practically anything you need.

Assistance - I know the first thing most small business owners scream is "I can't afford an assistant"! Maybe not one that comes to your home and spends eight hours a day with you, but you CAN afford a virtual assistant, a college or a high school student.

A virtual assistant is someone who handles projects or duties for you "virtually" from their computer. Perhaps you need to have a report proofread. Just email it to him/her and, once it's done, they'll email it back to you. Virtual Assistants can also schedule appointments, follow up with clients, return routine email inquiries and perform numerous other tasks.

You can also check with the career development or job placement offices of local high schools and colleges. They often have students who are willing to work in exchange for a small fee or for the experience itself.

Whatever you do - make the most of your time. Being unorganized not only wastes hours of your day that you could be making money, but it also is a tremendous stress producer. Getting your office, your schedule and your day in order can make for a much more fulfilling and profitable business.

Diane Hughes is an accomplished internet entrepreneur and editor of the popular ProBizTips Newsletter. You can learn more about Diane and her success in helping many start a home business and make money from home by clicking below:

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