

Time is a Fleeting Thing

By Kathleen J. Wheelihan

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Part 1

You've heard it before—time favors no one; time is one of the great equalizers; and all the other truisms that describe this fleeting commodity that we all share. The truth is that although we can't control the passage of time, we can make better use of the time we have. We're sharing some tips and tools from our "I Hate Time Management" seminar to help you find ways to better manage the use of your time. In this issue, we'll talk about Focus and the Swiss Cheese Technique.

Focus.

While this may sound simple, focus is one of the most powerful tools we can use in making the best of our time, achieving goals, or creating greater balance in our lives. What methods or systems have you put in place to create focus on the things that are important to you? Writing down your goals, creating a personal mission statement and values, a planner, to do lists, computer software, bulletin boards, sticky notes? All these methods can help you create the focus you need. The key is to know what works for you and what derails you from focusing on what's important. Remember, we achieve those things on which we focus!

Swiss Cheese Technique.

By "poking holes" in a large task, you can accomplish an activity by using little bits of time instead of waiting for one large block of time. Whether writing a report, planning a vacation, or completing a home improvement project, breaking the job down into smaller pieces not only helps organize the project and proactively prepare for the different phases, it also allows for completion in smaller segments. This technique reminds us of the value of any amount of time, no matter how small.

Part 2

This article is part two of our series, in which we're sharing tips and tools from our "I Hate Time Management" seminar. In this issue, we'll address procrastination, which many of our seminar participants identify as their greatest time management challenge.

You know what needs to be done; you just don't do it! Miraculously, you'd rather clean the house, wash the car, take out the garbage, or walk the dog—anything to avoid tackling that "other" task that's waiting for you. It's a common tale, but too often procrastination leaves us running to catch up, working under pressure, and stalled from accomplishing the results we want.

We've asked seminar participants to share some of their own techniques to fight procrastination. Take a look at this list to see which strategies may work for you:

* Just do it!

- * Do the worst tasks first.
- * Tackle the task in small segments.
- * Delegate the task.
- * Decide to decide—handle e-mails, voice mails, snail mail, and inquiries decisively rather than setting them aside for later.
- * Create a priority action list (daily-weekly-monthly; A-B-C; 1-2-3, must do-should do-nice to do, etc.).
- * Refer to long-range plans to stay focused.
- * Keep priorities visible.
- * Anticipate and plan time for interruptions in your day.
- * Turn difficult tasks into a game or competition.
- * Select the best time of day for the work required.
- * Commit to a deadline and hold yourself accountable.
- * Ask for help.
- * Build in rewards or incentives for accomplishment.
- * Question priorities and be willing to change them if appropriate.
- * Identify potential obstacles and how you will overcome them.
- * Celebrate your progress and successes.
- * Share your goal or project with someone that will encourage you and help you * stay on track.
- * Keep this list handy to refer to when you find yourself procrastinating.

Kathleen J. Wheelihan is a professional speaker and consultant for AchieveMax®, Inc., a firm specializing in custom-designed keynote presentations, seminars, and consulting services. Kathleen has made presentations ranging from creativity to customer service and leadership to teambuilding for a number of industries, including credit union, education, government, health care, manufacturing, and real estate. She can be reached at 800-886-2MAX or by visiting <http://www.AchieveMax.com> .

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