

DEALING WITH TIME WASTERS

“Those that make the best use of their time have none to spare.” - Thomas Fuller

Managing time is something that most people struggle with every day. There never seems to be enough time to do the things that matter most. Why is that? Most people are reactive rather than being proactive. This is a most common problem in the effective management of time – most people react to situations outside their control instead of actively doing what is inside their control. There needs to be a shift in focus to succeed at managing time. The aim should be to concentrate on results, not on being busy. This shift of focus in attitude moves from “I don’t have enough time” to “Am I using my time effectively?”

Dealing with time wasters is an issue that most people believe is outside their control. However, the opposite is true. This is the biggest area that most people can actively change. By identifying and overcoming barriers to effective time management issues you will be able to function more effectively and gain more control over YOUR time.

Time wasters may erode your time and energy to the point that you are unproductive. The choice is yours if you allow them to waste your time. To free up your time you need to identify those time wasters, decide what you want to do about them and then take some positive action. Becoming aware will allow you to improve your time use. Below are some of the main time wasters. There are many others however we have concentrated on time wasters that are basically your own doing. This way you have more say into changing your habits.

1. Procrastination

Putting things off is a waste of not only your time but also your energy, thoughts and attitudes. When you delay doing things you waste your time worrying about what you need to do and then give yourself a hard time for not doing it. There is no substitute for doing. Avoiding doing things doesn’t mean they go away. So, why avoid what needs to be done? Next time you are in a situation where you are procrastinating, stop and ask yourself “What am I trying to avoid?” See what the answer is.

2. Inability to say “NO”

Everyone has faced the situation where the demands on your time exceed your ability to handle them with the available time and resources. Learning to say “no” is an important skill everyone needs to master. Taking on too much leads to frustration and dissatisfaction. Learning to say “no” will be one of the most important skills you will ever learn. The more practice you have saying “no” the better you become at it. When confronted with situations where you need to say “no” but you struggle to do so, try to work out why. Do you not want to let the person down; you want to be a good friend? The inability to say “no” has nothing to do with the other person and all to do with you. Next time you are in a situation be prepared and have a statement that you can constantly repeat which doesn’t make the situation confrontational or emotional. For example, say something like “Please respect my decision”, or “I am unable to help you at the moment”. Remember you don’t need to give a reason why. We don’t offer an explanation when we say yes.

3. Interruptions

No one disputes the fact that interruptions occur and there is nothing you can do about it. Whether it is the telephone or people dropping by your desk, your children wanting your attention, interruptions always end up stopping you from what you were doing and take your focus away to something else. Most interruptions are a useless waste of your time and need to be kept to a minimum. Do not give away your time just because colleagues ask/demand for it. Assess whether it is necessary and be willing to say “no” to that person at that particular time. Especially with children, but not limiting it to children, by saying “no” when it is appropriate is teaching them the art of patience, giving them the opportunity to learn respect for others and encouraging them to be able to do the same when it is not right for them.

For example, if your role involves a lot of interruptions but most of the time they are of people who just want to say hello and chat then you need to do something about it. In this situation, it is best to ask the person how you can help them? If they don’t need your help then politely send them away with something like, “I’m in the middle of finishing a report/email/letter, I’ll come back to you for that chat a little later”.

4. Lack of delegation

It is a complete waste of time for you to do something, which someone else can do better. You are not always the best person to complete a particular task. The old saying, "If you want a job done well you better do it yourself" is just that, old. Always ask yourself, "Is this the best use of my time?" If it is, do it. If not, delegate it. Focus on your strengths and abilities and allow others the opportunity to grow by been given extra responsibilities and roles.

5. Bad Attitude

Attitude goes a long way in making your day productive or unproductive. If you have a poor attitude you will dwell on the negatives and not focus on the solutions. Having a positive attitude will allow you to concentrate more effectively and find a solution to an issue. You choose your attitude whether you are aware of it or not. When you consciously decide to be positive, your results will reflect this. Next time you feel yourself being negative make an effort to change this and see what happens.

©2006-2007 Debra Woods & Anna Cairo

For more information contact Debra Woods of
Life Fulfillment Coaching at: admin@lfc.net.au