

How to Get More Done in Less Time

TED Teachers Convention

July 24, 2014



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Making the Best Use of the Time

- **Ephesians 5:15-17 (ESV):**

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ **making the best use of the time**, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Getting Started on the Right Foot

- Among the aimless you often hear about **'killing time.'** People who are constantly killing their own chances in life. Those who are destined to become successful are those who make time and use it wisely.”
-Arthur Brisbane
- I wish I could stand on a busy street corner, hat in hand, and beg people to throw me all their wasted hours.
-Bernard Berenson

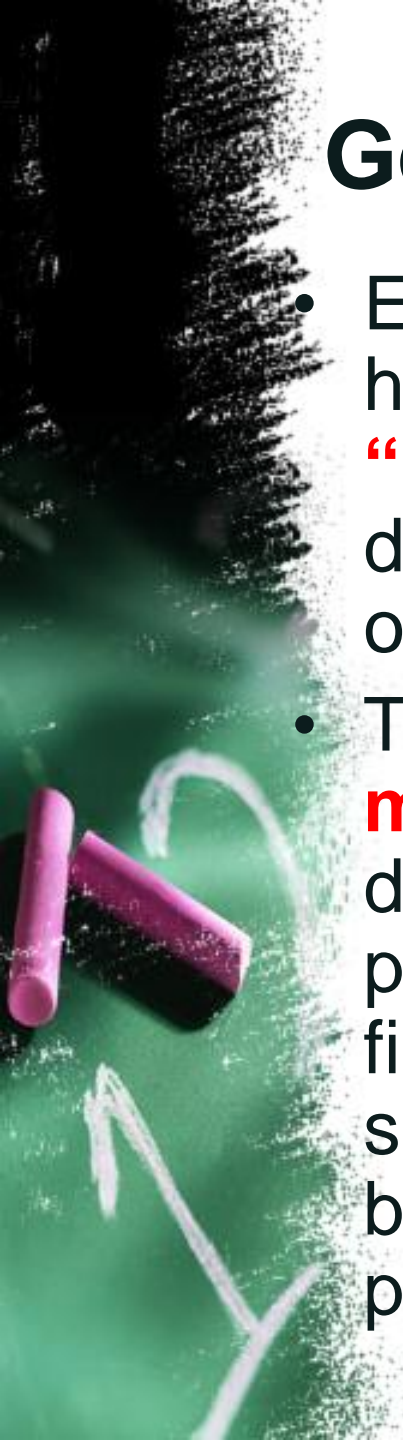


Getting Started on the Right Foot

- “Nothing is so fatiguing as the eternal hanging on of an uncompleted task.” William James
- It always helps to **know where your time is going**. So, keep track of how you spend your time for two weeks. Or at least for two days. Surprise! Most of your log will show you are investing your time in people or things not really important to you or to your goals.
- Focus, focus, **focus on starting tasks** and finishing them. The greatest challenge is taking the first step and getting started. (Ah, yes – doesn’t that feel good?)

Getting Started on the Right Foot

- Every day something unexpected is going to happen. Count on it. So, **set aside some “Oops time!”** Don't let these emergencies disrupt the rest of the day. Plan for them, act on them and then get back to work.
- Think on paper. **Writing things down minimizes confusion and stress.** Write down your goals, to-do lists, and even the problems that you are working on. You will find that putting things on paper clarifies the situation. Committing things to memory can be waste of brain power, not to mention a poor storage device as well.



Getting Started on the Right Foot

- **Categorize your To Do list into A, B, and C priorities.** “A” priorities are the activities that are critical for your success. “B” priorities are important but not critical. “C” priorities would be nice to do if you get the time. Begin with your “A” priorities and work your way to the “nice to do” items.
- Here is a suggestion that will help everyone: **create a “talk” file** for your boss, subordinates, peers and even your customers. Unless it is a real emergency, wait until you have at least two items in the file before calling that person with your questions

Getting Started on the Right Foot

- Get a spiral-bound notebook, date it, and keep all your notes in the book for future reference. **Quit writing on loose papers or sticky notes** that tend to get lost.
- Try something new. **Read (really) the instruction manual** that came with your electronic organizer. Let the organizer do the work so you can spend less time organizing yourself.
- **Use only one time management system.** Whether you choose an electronic or paper system, one consistent system will eliminate much wasted time spent searching for information.



Getting Started on the Right Foot

- **The key to the paper management – KEEP IT MOVING!** Move your paper to your out basket, your file, your “to read” folder or to your trash. Don’t let paper just sit.
- Wait! **Do these three things before you leave the office: (1) clear your desk, (2) plan tomorrow’s activities, (3) enter your next day’s to-do list in your organizer.** Then go home. Planning the next day before you leave reduces stress and allows you to enjoy your time away from the office.

Getting Started on the Right Foot

- **Create a “quiet time” for planning.** Let everyone know that your closed door means “do not disturb” unless there is an emergency or someone in your family calls.
- **Throw things away!** Ask yourself, “What is the worse thing that could happen if I throw this away?”
- If you get heartburn from throwing paper away, create a drawer or file to **store your stuff for 90 days.**
- **Archive the files** and get them out of your way. Most of filed materials over a year are never needed again. If possible, handle paper only one time.

Your Work Space

- “What’s man’s best friend (besides the dog)? The waste basket!” –Business Week
- **Clear your desk up!** Despite what some people believe, cluttered desk does not indicate genius. Au contraire! It signals confusion and creates stress! Keep your desk clear except your project du jour and some minimum decorations – family picture.
- **Find a gigantic waste basket and fill it.** Get rid of that paper!
- Files should not be an obstacle course. **Put your most often reviewed files at the front of the cabinet.** If you can find something within two minutes, your filing system works.



Your Work Space

- Never clear up your desk by randomly throwing things in a drawer. You will eventually have to go through that drawer. In stead, **create a logical system for storing** these items on your desk.
- Organize the top of your desk. **If you are right handed, make sure the phone is located on the left side of your desk, the calculator on the right.** You want to keep the right side free to take notes, the opposite for lefties.
- **Avoid glass tops.** They glare and are hard to keep clean. You don't need to spend valuable time to wipe your fingerprints.



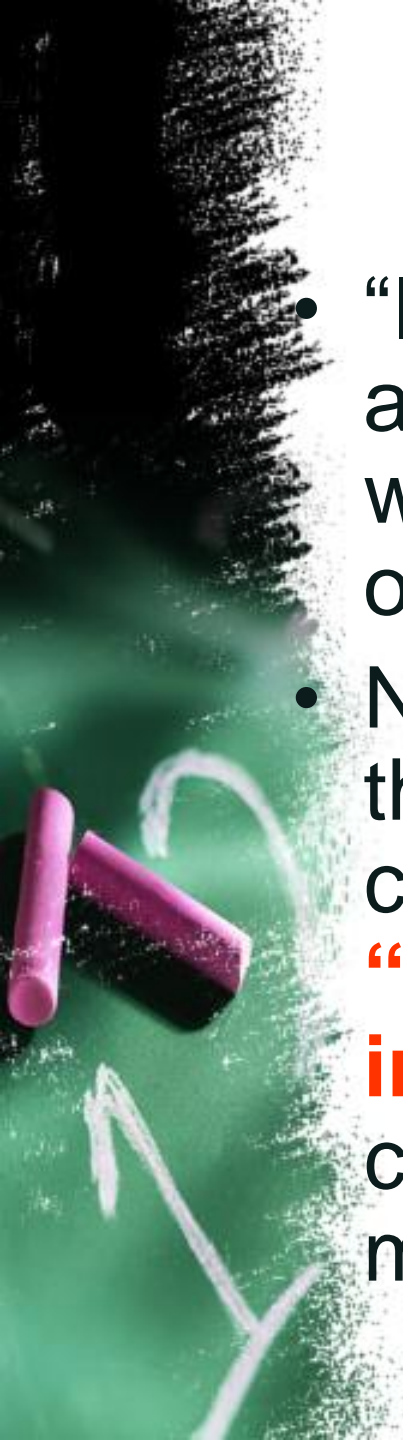
Your Work Space

- If you want to make an easy job seem mighty hard, just keep putting off doing it.



Your Work Environment

- “It is better to strike a straight blow with a crooked stick than spending my whole life trying to straighten the stick out.” –Ken Blanchard
- Never say “yes” without considering the time investment you are committing. **Have the courage to say “no” to requests that are inappropriate or unnecessary.** This could be your most effective time management tool.



Your Work Environment

- “Perfection Paralysis” is expensive. Sometimes it is not worth the effort to make things “perfect.” Take a look at time costs involved and weigh these against the benefit of perfection.
- When writing a memo or sending an e-mail, only distribute/copy to people who really need to know the information.
- Want to get your written point across fast? Limit your sentences to 15 words.

Your Work Environment

- Listen, clarify, and make sure you understand the task before going forward. It is a good time investment for both parties.
- Is it your job to pick up every ball that someone drops? Avoid this label at any cost.
- Don't try to solve other people's problems. You may be empathetic to their situation, but if you spend time solving their problems, their next problem will be yours too. The best thing you can do is to help people learn how to solve their own problems.

Interruptions... the Office Plague

“‘Got a minute?’ never means just one minute. Before you answer, always ask, ‘What is this about?’”-Alec Mackenzie

- If you cannot eliminate the interruption, **make the interruption as short as possible.**
- **When people arrive to interrupt, meet them at the door and talk outside your office.** Letting them in may add minutes to the interruption.
- Stand up when someone shows up unannounced and **keep on standing until you decide if you want the conversation to continue.**

Interruptions... the Office Plague

- Ideally, arrange your office so that **your desk does not face the door.**
- **Keep track of the origin of your interruptions.**
- Want to **make a positive difference** in the time investment of your employing organization? Ask your peers and subordinates, “What do I do that wastes your time and hinders your performance.”
- **Henry Ford** was always dropping into the offices of his executives. When asked why he didn't have them come to him, he replied, “Well I will tell you. I've found that I can **leave other fellow's office a lot quicker** than I can get him to leave mine.”

Meetings: Making the Most of Them

- Do not allow time in meetings to solve a one/hundred dollar problem when you are spending hundreds/thousands of dollars on the meeting. **Focus on what is important.**
- **Never leave** a meeting **wondering** why you invested your time in the meeting. If the objectives were not accomplished, figure out what can be done differently to ensure that the next meeting does not end the same way.
- **Control dominating participants** by reinforcing that you understand their position and ask the dominating participants to listen to the other participants point of view so we can create a course of action.
- **Make every meeting unique.** Do something different for each meeting like changing the location, time or room layout. Sometimes small changes will add energy to the group.
- Meetings without specific objectives tend to achieve nothing specific.

The Phone, Voice Mail, E-Mail...

The Invisible Invaders

- “Time flies. It is up to you to be the navigator.” –
Robert Orben
- “I’ve suffered a great many catastrophes in my life. Most of them never happened.” –Mark Twain
- “If you’ve ever dropped loose change into a piggy bank, you were probably astonished to find how quickly those coins added up to ‘real money.’ Think of time the same way. Each of us has ‘small coins’ we spend waiting each day: for the elevator, at the doctor’s office, in the bank line. You will be amazed how much free time you can buy with this small change of time (Organized Executive)”. –Stephanie Winston
- Tempted to **constantly check your e-mail, avoid it.** Once or twice daily is usually enough. Check your e-mail, respond and get back on task.

The Phone, Voice Mail, E-Mail...

The Invisible Invaders

- **Check your voice mail twice daily ONLY!** Write down the message in your organizer. Return all of the calls before you check your messages again.
- **Return phone calls at a specified time during the day.** Don't wait until the end of the day (unless you really do not want to speak to the person). It is good to return your calls during your least productive time of the day.
- **It is good to stand up while on the phone.** The brain's information processing speed increases 5-20% while standing. Thomas Jefferson, Ernest Hemingway, and Winston Churchill worked while standing up.

The Phone, Voice Mail, E-Mail...

The Invisible Invaders

- When you are leaving a phone number on voice mail for someone to return your call, **state your number slowly and say it twice.**
- Want to end a conversation? If the person tends to chatter on and on, politely say, **“Before we hang up I need to cover one last point...”** and then cover your point and get off the phone.
- Answer three questions when you reach the voice mail of the person you are calling – **why you called, what you need, and when you are available for call backs.**
- Unless you are talking with a friend or co-worker, **never talk about the weather.**

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- Unless you are talking with a friend or co-worker, **never talk about the weather on the phone.** You are assured a long answer when you ask about the weather.

Meetings: Making the Most of Them

- “Sometimes I get the feeling that the two biggest problems in America today are making ends meet and making the meetings end” –Robert Orben
- **Routine meetings are not good investment of time.** Every meeting should have a published agenda answering the most obvious questions: Why am I investing time in this meeting? How long will it last? Who is attending? What are the expectations?
- Start the meeting **on time and keep it short** and to the point.
- Always have a few **extra handouts** available for your participants.
- Most of the time **early morning meetings are best.** People are fresher, the challenges of the day have not surfaced yet and the odds if everyone coming on time improve.

Meetings: Making the Most of Them

- **Do not recap what has been said for people who are late.** Ignore them when they arrive and keep on going. If you recap what has been covered, you reward the tardy person and punish the “on time” folks.
- **Take care of the most important item** on the agenda first.
- **Set limits on the time allowed per item** and move forward. A huge time waster are people who continue to fight losing battles.
- **Do not serve food and meet at the same time.** Serve food half hour before or after the meeting. If meeting starts at 9:00 a.m., serve breakfast at 8:30.

Meetings: Making the Most of Them

- If meeting over lunch, cover general items that do not require focus. It is more productive to **take a 30-minute lunch break** than to keep everyone's attention while serving/eating food. If one of your objectives is to set the scene for social bonding, allocate your meal time to that objective.
- **Complete all of the agenda items** before moving to unrelated topics.
- Want to abbreviate meetings? **Have a stand up session.** You can be assured that everyone will stay awake and will want to get to the point quickly.
- Before leaving the meeting, don't assume anything! You really think everyone knows what they are supposed to do next? **Recap so everyone knows who's responsible for next steps,** when action should take place and how results will be communicated.
- End the meeting on time or **END EARLY!** The minute you go past the stated time, stress levels rise and attention levels fall. Everyone enjoys the pleasant surprise of getting out early.
- Get organized! Call each participant the day or few days before and **confirm attendance** even though this may not appear to be good use of your time because it should be their responsibility...

On the Road...Making Time

- The airport, airplane, taxi and hotel become your temporary offices. Make sure you get your job done while you are there.
- **Create two check lists for travel** – one for the office and one for home. Laminate the lists and keep one in your desk and one in your travel bag. The basic trip requirements are the same and this will help you double check that you have everything you need.
- Take **only carry on bags** whenever possible. This saves an average of an extra 20 minutes per flight.
- Laptops, presentation slides, and any other **tools required for meetings should be carried on the plane.**
- Carry an **extra laptop battery** so you can work even when the unexpected delays occur.
- **Get an isle seat** as close as to the front of the plane as possible. The passengers in the first five rows of a full airplane are sometimes off the plane ten minutes before the back row passengers.
- If possible, request an isle seat with your writing arm on the isle side.
- Always carry some **emergency cash.**

Organize Yourself...First things First

- **Work smarter, not harder.** Doing inefficient things “harder” does not do anything but wear you out faster. Figure out ways to shorten tasks by eliminating steps, combining parts, and getting more done by working easier.
- Manage your to-do list. Start with the most important task and **work down**. Avoid the temptation to tackle fun or easy tasks first just because you like shorter lists.
- **Never throw business cards into a drawer.** This is a good way to frustrate yourself and waste some time trying to retrieve it. Enter the info into a database then throw out the card.
- Frequently ask yourself the number one time management question of all time: What is the **best use of my time... RIGHT NOW?**
- Want to attack procrastination? **Write down your goals twice a day.** You will become more focused on getting the important things done.
- **DO EVERYTHING FASTER!** Walk a step faster, write e-mails faster, and get off the phone faster. Search for times where you can gain a few seconds that will add up to a few minutes a day.

Organize Yourself...First things First

- **Send yourself a voice/e-mail** while the idea is fresh on your mind. You will save time trying to remember the brilliant idea that slipped away.
- According to Pareto Principle, **80% of your results will come from 20% of your activities**. Want to be more efficient? Figure out the 20% that are your most important activities and spend your time mastering those activities.
- Use your energy according your personal peak times. Take on the **creative projects when you are the sharpest** and do the mundane stuff when you are least creative. Not everybody is a morning person.
- Check yourself and discover how you are spending your time. **Focus your energy on doing the right things right first time around**.
- **A place for everything and everything in its place**. It still works! Searching for your stapler, calculator, smart phone, iPad, note pad or pen is a time-waster, creating stress or frustration. Throw away those dead batteries.
- **Create an e-mail address book and distribution list** for those with whom you frequently communicate.
- General rule: if it takes less than five minutes, **get it done now**.

Organize Yourself...First things First

- **Set specific goals** for two weeks and write the goals down. Then focus your attention on activities that lead to achieving those goals. You will be surprised how much you can accomplish if you put your goals on paper.
- **'Group' similar tasks together.** Fewer transitions between tasks improve your productivity.
- Never open e-mail from people whose names you do not recognize or subjects are not important to you. **There is too much "spam" and too many viruses** floating around out there.
- Rip and read. Quickly scan the magazines that show up on your desk, evaluate which articles you want to read, tear them out and save for the right time for you to read them.
- **Attack procrastination.** Do it now! Putting things off seldom improves the quality of your work.
- **Reward yourself** when you complete tasks you wanted to delay.
- **"Learn how to separate the majors from the minors.** A lot of people do not do well because they major in minor things." –
Jim Rohn
- You can never get much of anything done unless you go ahead and **do it before you are ready.**

Time for Yourself and What is Important

- Get your rest! The more rested you are, the more you can accomplish in a shorter period. If you are tired, you are usually slower, rework more and end up even more exhausted. **Take care of yourself.**
- Become a champion at minimizing the work you take home for the weekend. **Leave enough time to recharge** your battery.
- When travelling and eating in restaurants, **go to lunch at 11:00 a.m. or at 1:00 p.m.** to save time both in the line and the time that it takes to get your food.
- Start your morning the night before. **Lay out your clothes the night before**, including knowing where you left your shoes. Put the items needed for work next day in your car the night before.
- **Fill up your car** on the way home from work. Don't waste your prime morning time at the pump.
- Pay your bills electronically. You can **save at least half the time** when paying monthly bills and save money on postage.
- If you enjoy watching television, **tape your favorite TV shows** and watch the videotape at your convenience, forwarding the commercials.

Time for Yourself and What is Important

- “Time is natural resource – like fuel. When it is abundant, we take it for granted; when it becomes scarce, we search for that extra gallon, regardless of cost. Wouldn’t you give anything for another gallon of time with some of your friends who are gone? Time is a precious gift – every second, every minute, every day – use it wisely. You cannot pay the cost of losing time.” –Sonny Gann
- The better you become at managing your time, the more time you will have to enjoy each other.
- “Unlike other resources, time cannot be bought or sold, borrowed or stolen, stocked up or saved, manufactured, reproduced, or modified. All we can do is make use of it. And whether we use it or not, it nevertheless slips away.” –Jean-Louis Servain-Schreiber.
- **Ephesians 5:15, 16 (ESV):** ¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ **making the best use of the time...**

**Thanks for Your Attention.
Let's Make a Wise Use of
our Time.**

