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Top Tips to Time Management

Published on Friday, December 18, 2009, 8:37 AM Last Update: 8 day(s) ago by [Rich Levin](#)

It's a strange thing, but when you are dreading something, and would give anything to slow down time, it has a disobliging habit of speeding up.

~J.K. Rowling, "The Hungarian Horntail," Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, 2000

Does this ring true for you? Real Estate Agents are challenged in dealing with time. Prospecting, Marketing, Service, E-mails, Phone Calls, Appointments, Paperwork, the list go on and on. Here are top tips to help you manage your time better.

1. Schedule chunks instead of activities. Schedule a chunk of time each day to make and return calls, a chunk of time one day a week to do all of your web update work.

Chunk your service, your ad writing, and your marketing. Here is the rule. If you spend a total of more than thirty minutes per week on an activity, schedule a chunk of time on specific days every week for that activity.

2. Priority Days. For one hour at the beginning of each day focus on the following priorities. In our Daily Coaching Program Mondays and Tuesdays are prospecting days. Wednesdays are marketing, web, print, mail etc. Thursdays are for service to listed Sellers and pending Clients. Fridays are for planning, what we call a leadership day. This structure manages your time, organizes your activities and leverages the opportunity to take big chunks of time or full days off on the weekend with more peace of mind and confidence.

3. Emotional Fitness. We all have a pre-work dance. That is, activities that we love to do right before we are going to get to work. Get coffee. Check e-mails, Twitter, Active Rain, etc. Play solitaire. Clear your desk. So, become conscious of your pre-work dance and work to break the cycle of unproductive time. Just as you are about to “dance,” pause. Sit up straight or stand up. Smile, even laugh at yourself because you know what you would normally do. But this time, picture how your day is going to go. Picture what you want to accomplish and how you are going to accomplish it immediately. And get back into action. No one thing can make you more productive than interrupting your pre-work dance and getting back into action more quickly.

4. Prioritize your activities and phone calls. Always, do the toughest ones first. Do the one thing that you have been procrastinating over, first. That thing often holds you back, slows you down, damages your motivation, your focus, even your confidence. Make the tough phone calls first. Tackle the tough job first. They are often not as tough as anticipated. But they get tougher as you delay them, don't they?

5. Action motivates. If you're feeling a little bit lazy but you know you have things to accomplish, action motivates. Get yourself off the couch, off the chair, take the first step, make the first call, respond to that tough e-mail, or get in the car. Take the first action. Action motivates.

6. Use the 4 D method for prioritizing paperwork.

Do it immediately if it can be done in 20 seconds or less.

Delegate it if you can hand it off to somebody else.

Delay it if you are not going to do it right now. Schedule a time in your calendar to get back to it. It may be delayed to one of the time chunks mentioned above.

Dump it. It is best to do this one more than the others.

7. Cluster your activities. Cluster all the things needed to be done at your office. Cluster your travel. Take a few minutes, literally, just 2 or 3 minutes at the beginning of the day and before you walk out the door to look at your calendar. Perhaps you will have to make a phone call or two to rearrange your schedule. Maybe you will ask someone else to be available sooner or later. Do that. So that your use of time makes more sense. As you commit to this it becomes habitual. In addition to saving a tremendous amount of time clustering your activities can relieve a lot of pressure, provide a wonderful sense of self-control, and give you the freedom and the opportunity for greater success.

8. Just say no. Oooh, this one is very hard for some people. If it is hard for you then simply learn to apologize profusely... and then say no. Try these scripts. “Wow, I really want to do that for you. And I really would. Only it is killing me to put other people’s requests above my priorities. So, I am really, really sorry... but, no.”

9. Schedule time off. Give yourself permission to do nothing or do something you love to do. Even just sit in front of the TV. Read a book. Lay in the sun. Go for a walk. Exercise. Spend time with family. Sleep in late. Give yourself permission to do nothing. You need that time. You need that energy. Giving yourself this permission sends a strong message to your subconscious that you are in control of your time. This adds power to all of the other ideas above. Cross off one day each week, a half day, an evening, when you schedule absolutely nothing or something you love to do and make that personal time a must, an absolute priority. If necessary, arrange to have someone handle calls for you or check your emails. This time will truly make you more effective

when you are working.

There are tons of systems, tools, and philosophies for managing time. These are the foundation, a few of the best ideas for addressing an Agent's biggest complaint.

Time is what we want most, but... what we use worst.

~William Penn