



Tyme Management™

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Time to Concentrate

To improve your ability to concentrate on important tasks:

- ◆ *Plan specific times for concentrated work.* Examine your schedule to find out when you're interrupted the least. Discipline yourself to work on tasks that require concentration during these times.
- ◆ *Get rid of distractions.* Keep your workspace in order, and organize materials and supplies so they're easily accessible. If your eye tends to wander to the window, close the blinds.
- ◆ *Do basic preparations in advance.* Gather background information and acquaint yourself with your objectives beforehand. You'll then be able to get straight to work.
- ◆ *Experiment with your environment.* Try working in different locations to find where you concentrate best. You may do better in a familiar place, or it may help to associate different tasks with different work areas.
- ◆ *Ask for others' cooperation.* Let people know when you don't want to be disturbed. Give them a copy of your schedule, or post a sign on your door or at your desk.

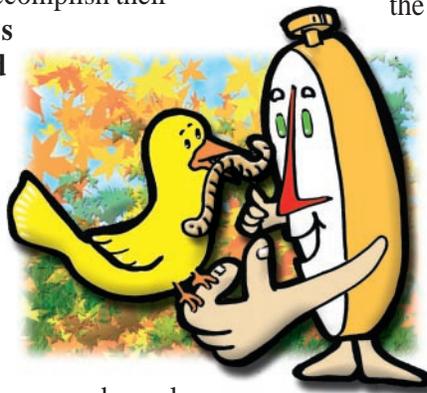
Accomplish More with Initiative

It's the early bird that catches the worm, but it's the person with initiative that gets the job done. People with initiative don't waste their time expecting things to get done on their own. They take responsibility for the results and actively look for the next step they can take to move things along. As a result, they make their time work for them and accomplish their goals more quickly. **Here's how to take initiative and be more productive:**

- ▲ Clarify the next step in each situation. When working on a project or doing business with others, find out what you can do next to keep the ball rolling. Communicate exactly what you need people to do on their end as well, and repeat your request several times during the course of the conversation.
- ▲ Keep the "ball" in the other person's court. Reply promptly to others after they take action and are waiting for you to respond. Ask what method of communication they prefer, and fire back your response with an appropriate fax, E-mail, or letter as soon as possible.
- ▲ Ask action questions. When people promise to do something, ask them the precise time you can expect to receive the results from them. If a potential

customer sounds interested in striking a deal, suggest what the person can do to begin the process, such as approving the proposal or sending a check.

- ▲ Schedule future appointments. Before ending a meeting or telephone call, decide on a time to contact the person again to follow up on the matters discussed. If meeting in person is unfeasible or unnecessary, set a date and time for a telephone appointment.



- ▲ Prevent procrastination. Keep yourself motivated to complete the tasks

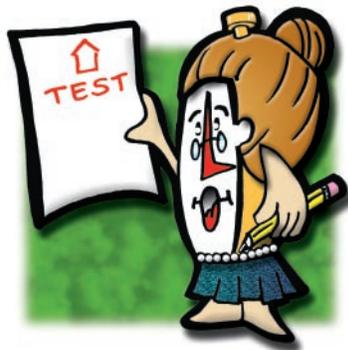
before you. Set a target deadline for yourself, and break the project down into manageable steps. List the benefits of accomplishing your goal, and remind yourself and others of these benefits until you succeed.

- ▲ Avoid becoming too task oriented. In your zeal to get things accomplished, you may run people over or be too harsh or demanding. Aim to build relationships with the people you work with. Be realistic in your expectations when planning projects, and accept setbacks in stride.

Test Your Home Management IQ

Running a home well requires intelligence. Whatever your “home management IQ,” you can learn some simple techniques to save time and make your home run more smoothly. **Take the following quiz to test your time-management know-how at home:**

- T F** 1. You should do grocery shopping on the weekends when things aren’t as hectic.
- T F** 2. Dinner time is the best time to gather together with your family on a daily basis.
- T F** 3. Making a “to do” list for weekend chores helps expedite them.
- T F** 4. Posting a family calendar can help keep everyone on top of social events.
- T F** 5. Most home maintenance tasks can generally be done when you remember to do them.
- T F** 6. Family clothes shopping can be consolidated into two annual trips.
- T F** 7. “Do it yourself” is the name of the game for saving both time and money.
- T F** 8. Even toddlers can learn to begin picking up after themselves.



Answers:

- 1 False.** By shopping earlier in the week during off-hours, you can avoid the crowds and long lines that result. Try shopping after dinner, for example, when the after-work crowd is gone. An added bonus is that a full stomach will discourage impulse buys.
- 2 False.** Depending on your family’s schedule, dinner time may or may not be the same for your family members. If you can’t set a dinner time that works for everybody, try getting together for breakfast instead. Just be sure to start early enough to have time

for quality conversation.

- 3 True.** By compiling a list of errands and tasks ahead of time, you can tackle them early, leaving the rest of your weekend for you to enjoy guilt-free. Estimate how long each task will take, and plan to knock out as many as possible Saturday morning.
- 4 True.** Write in the birthdays, anniversaries, parties, and events your family will be involved in each month, and make a list of the presents you’ll need to buy and wrap for the month. This allows you to plan ahead and make necessary arrangements in advance.
- 5 False.** For regular maintenance chores, create a checklist or card file system that notes each of the weekly, monthly, and yearly tasks to be done. Otherwise, you may be in for an unpleasant surprise when accidents or repairs come knocking at your door.
- 6 True.** Plan to make most clothes purchases in a spring/summer shopping trip and a fall/winter one. Not only will this cut the amount of time you spend shopping, but it will also enable you to better coordinate your wardrobe and stick to a budget.

7 False. Whether it’s repairs or housecleaning, sometimes doing the work yourself isn’t the best value. Find out how much it would cost for someone else to do the job for you, and compare this rate to your hourly wage. Decide whether doing these tasks yourself is really worth your time.

- 8 True.** You can tape pictures of what belongs in drawers to the outside, so little ones can begin picking up after themselves. Realize, however, that you will have to relax your standards if you expect your kids to help with the housework.

Pat Answers

Dear Pat: I’ve witnessed a co-worker taking home office supplies. A pen or pencil is bad enough but now it’s reams of copy paper and a spare keyboard. I’ve joked with him that I’d tell on him. He just laughs and says I should take stuff, too. I’m tired of watching company money (which could be used to give me a raise) walk out the door. If I tell anyone, he’ll know I was the one to report him and that would make things awkward. do you have any suggestions on what I should do?

Pat Answers: Just one suggestion: Stop joking with him and tell him you’re serious. Tell him what you’ve told me: That you resent his taking money out of your paycheck. Let him know that you will not sit idly by and watch him continue this illegal behavior. And if you witness his stealing again, you will have no choice but to report him to your supervisor. Believe me, if things become awkward, it will be for him, not you.



Are co-workers driving you crazy? Is your boss out of touch? Complex personnel problems demand Pat Answers! Send questions to: pat@patgrigadean.com.

Pat Grigadean is a professional mediator, trainer, and employee-relations specialist. She writes Pat Answers in consultation with Haven Street-Allen, SPHR. © 2007 Pat Grigadean.

Rational Blocks

Sometimes your emotions can hinder your ability to process things objectively. **To suspend blocks to rational thinking:**

- Name your prejudices and fears and how they affect your judgement. Resolve to discard them.
- Write all ideas down before you analyze, criticize, or dismiss them.
- To boost your confidence, remember your past successes at problem solving.

Encourage Timeliness

When an employee is habitually late or absent, it's the manager's responsibility to correct the problem before it gets out of hand. Having clear guidelines for these situations can help you to handle them reasonably and professionally. **The following are suggestions for addressing employee absenteeism:**

- ▲ Inform employees of the absence policy. Provide a written copy of the company's statement on what constitutes unacceptable absences and how the company will deal with them. Sit down and go over the policy with employees to make sure that they fully understand it.
- ▲ Be aware of employee attendance. Note when people come in late, leave early, or are absent, and ask for the reasons why. If this pattern is habitual, begin recording the exact times the person comes and goes each day, absences and the reasons for being so.
- ▲ Meet in private with the person to discuss your concerns. Share what you've observed of the person's behavior, and reiterate the standard expected for employee attendance. Ask if there's an underlying reason for the behavior, such as a work-related conflict or a problem at home.
- ▲ Reprimand if necessary. If the problem persists, meet one-on-one a second time. Explain that the behavior is unacceptable, and look for ways to correct the problem. If no change is made, take further corrective steps including a verbal and written warning, suspension, and as a last resort, termination.



Review Your Work Each Week

To enhance productivity in your organization, ask employees to conduct a weekly review of their work. **Set aside 20 minutes at the end of each week for them to:**

- Examine how successful they were at accomplishing their goals during the past week.
- Identify key time wasters and causes of delay.
- Brainstorm ways to improve routine processes.
- Consider activities to make better use of downtime.
- Plan action steps to implement these ideas next week.

Utilize Interns Effectively

Internships can be a win-win situation for everyone involved. Students enjoy the challenge and opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the "real world," and businesses gain the help of bright, competent and low-cost employees. **When hiring an intern for your company:**

- Advertise the position at local schools and job fairs and in the newspaper. Highlight the skills and experience that students will gain from the particular jobs they will do. To attract a wide pool of qualified applicants, avoid limiting the job to students with a certain major, classification, or grade point average.
- Establish a reasonable wage and work schedule. Most students will want to work no more than eight to 12 hours a week due to their course load. Hourly wages will vary depending on the work and shouldn't take unfair advantage of the student.
- Determine the specific jobs or projects you want the intern to do. In general, these jobs will need to have a fluid timeline that will accommodate the student's class schedule. Create a clear list of goals for the position to help both of you keep track of job performance.
- Arrange for the intern's equipment and training needs. Make sure your new employee will have a decent work area, as well as a telephone, computer and other necessary equipment. Have someone available to train and supervise the intern as needed.
- Schedule regular performance reviews. Plan meeting times for the intern to voice concerns and ask questions. Use this time to offer advice, suggest improvements and praise progress. You can refer to your notes from these meetings to draft your final evaluation at the end of the student's internship.



"Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned."

— Peter Marshall

Meaningful Dialogue in Meetings

To foster an environment that stimulates growth and new ideas, aim to make meetings a place for encouraging dialogue among people.

▲ **Dialogue** – to take part in an exchange of ideas and opinions.

Dialogue involves a free exchange of ideas without criticism or an attempt to convince others. This differs from the nature of discussion, which entails arguing and proving a particular position.

▲ **Discuss** – to investigate by reasoning or argument.

When employees feel free from the threat of rejection and ridicule, they'll be more likely to contribute valuable ideas that can greatly benefit your organization.

Save the Small Talk

When making phone calls, discuss the purpose of your call at the beginning of the conversation. This helps ensure that you'll obtain the information you need before the other person gets interrupted. Leave "small talk" for the close of your conversation to end the call on a friendly, upbeat note.

"Can Do" Service

Nothing can be more frustrating to angry customers than to be told that they must contact a different department. Customer service is an *attitude*, not just a department. **Train employees to say the following when handling phone calls:**

- "Let me find out for you."
- "I'll take care of that for you."
- "That's no problem."
- "I'll follow up on that myself."

Always aim to connect people to the help they need.

Communicate to Get Results

Glitches in the production process are often the result of poor communication. When a job isn't done according to your specifications, stop and consider whether or not you communicated clearly. Often, what you *think* you're saying and what others *hear* you saying are two entirely different things. **To improve your results when giving instructions to others:**

- **Ensure that people are qualified for the tasks you delegate to them.** You may find that people don't fulfill the tasks you assign them because they're not qualified to do them. They may have tried to tell you this indirectly by suggesting all of the obstacles they see in doing the project.
- **Give the compelling reason behind deadlines.** People are more likely to give you excuses for why they didn't deliver to you on time if they don't understand the importance of the due date. Always back up the deadline

you designate with an explanation for why it must be met.

- **Request a recap after giving an assignment.** Many times when people say they understand, what they really mean is that they understand their way of looking at it. To ensure that people truly grasp your instructions, ask them to summarize what you just

said in their own words.

- **Put it in writing.** It never hurts to reiterate what you said in written form. Written instructions are especially

helpful when the task is complicated or verbal instructions are lengthy. Aim to make your written message as short, simple and specific as possible.

"Reality is only one door – a narrow one – but it leads to life."

– Paul Fromer



Avoid Overload by Saying "No"



When appropriate, being able to say "no" is an important skill that every successful person needs. However, many underlying motivations can make people hesitant to say "no," even when they're in over their heads. **Reasons why overloaded people are unable to say "no" include:**

- Wanting to please people
- Desiring others' acceptance and approval
- Not being prepared with a reason or excuse
- Not wanting to turn down the chance of a new project
- Being unable to refuse a boss or superior
- Not knowing how to negotiate with others
- Being afraid of offending someone
- Feeling guilty for refusing.

Working Together in Harmony

Staying productive can be even more difficult when you share an office with someone else. Without meaning to, you and your officemate can distract one another from getting your work done. **Here are some suggestions on how to work in harmony with your officemate:**

- ▲ *Talk it over.* The most important key to getting along is communication. Listen to what each other's office needs are, and then work together to accommodate them.
- ▲ *Pick your battles.* Avoid nagging at your officemate about everything that bothers you. If you only bring up the major things, he or she will be more willing to take your requests seriously and change.
- ▲ *Create dividers.* Not seeing your partner can aid concentration and reduce chitchat. Arrange your desks so that your backs face each other, or place plants, file cabinets, or portable room dividers between you.
- ▲ *Adjust your schedule.* Come in early or go to lunch at a different time to have some time in the office alone. Reserve this time for the tasks that require the most concentration.
- ▲ *Wear headphones.* Headphones can communicate that you don't want to



be disturbed. For your officemate's sake, avoid singing out loud to the music. Listen to instrumental music instead.

- ▲ *Make a noise agreement.* You may decide to not allow meetings in your office, to ban stereo playing, or to only make personal phone calls when alone or from an outside phone.
- ▲ *Find quiet phone alternatives.* Use E-mail whenever possible. Avoid using speakerphone or intercom features when they're not necessary. Headset phones are more sensitive to sound and don't require as loud a voice.
- ▲ *Keep your desk organized.* Leave only what you need for work on your desk. The less clutter you have around you, the more likely you'll be to stay focused on what you're doing.

Maintain Order in Your Office

It's one thing to organize your office, but it's quite another to actually keep it that way. **Here are some hints on keeping your office tidy:**

- ❖ *Begin each day with a clean slate.* Clear your desk before you leave each day.
- ❖ *Be choosy.* Save only the files, paperwork, publications and resources that you really need.
- ❖ *Do it right the first time.* Take notes in the place where they belong, not on scraps of paper that cause clutter and get lost.
- ❖ *Decide where paperwork belongs immediately.* Avoid letting it pile up until later.
- ❖ *Put files away when you're done with them.* Do so before you begin your next task.



Stay in Good Form

The following are ways you can help keep your spine and joints in good shape at work:

- ◆ Make sure your chair fits. When seated, there should be two inches between the back of your legs and the front edge of the seat.
- ◆ Sit in your chair correctly. Sit with your knees at a 90-degree angle and your feet flat on the floor. Use an angled or elevated foot rest if you're unable to sit this way.
- ◆ Hold telephone receivers with your hand. Avoid squeezing the receiver between your ear and shoulder, since this can lock up spinal joints in your neck and upper back and cause pain.
- ◆ Take stretch breaks. Grip your hands into a fist, and then move them into a praying position for 10 seconds. Place the backs of your hands together, pointing them downward for 10 seconds. Spread your fingers apart, and draw them back together one at a time.

Find the Real Problem

When a staff member has a bad attitude or shows lack of motivation, what do you do? Often, managers try to solve these issues without realizing the real source of the problem.

Many of these "people problems" are really the result of insufficient organization. When a company's structure and procedures are inefficient, ineffective, or discriminatory, employees can become discouraged and disgruntled. In such cases, ask employees for their input on the organizational problems affecting them and how they would recommend changing these problems.

Become a Mentor to Others

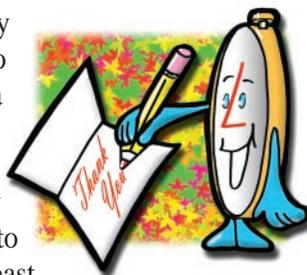
Being a mentor can be one of the most satisfying parts of your career. Not only is sharing what you've learned rewarding in itself, but being a mentor also creates a lasting contribution that lives on even after you retire. By taking an active interest in helping someone else succeed professionally, you can in turn discover your own personal success. **Here's how you can be a mentor to the people in your organization:**



- ◆ Assess potential. Find out the goals, interests and abilities of the people you mentor. Be on the lookout for the information and opportunities that would benefit them.
- ◆ Improve rapport. Mentoring is a personal as well as professional relationship. Informal chitchat during breaks or over lunch can help encourage a natural, open relationship.
- ◆ Share your experience. Show what you do both on and off the job. Tell stories of your successes and failures, and provide practical advice for living as well as technical instruction.
- ◆ Stay in contact. Check up with the people you mentor each day to see how they're doing and to answer any questions they have. Demonstrate that you're approachable and available.
- ◆ Give feedback. Provide constructive criticism that will help improve their performance. End on a positive note by including praise and by noting the improvements you see.
- ◆ Listen carefully. Be empathetic and understanding. Give your moral support and encouragement as well as your advice and instruction.
- ◆ Network. Introduce them to new contacts that will help them professionally. Connect them with other potential mentors who can bring an added dimension to their training.
- ◆ Seek out someone to mentor you. The more that you continue to grow yourself, the richer you'll be as a person, and the more that you'll have to give to others.

Express Your Thanks this Holiday

This Thanksgiving, consider starting a new holiday tradition. Think back to the people in your life who have given you something significant, whether it be a teacher who gave you knowledge, a mentor who gave you confidence, or a friend who gave you acceptance. Think especially of the people who never really knew what they meant to you or the ones you never got to thank. After making a list of these people, write at least one of them each Thanksgiving. Tell them why you're thankful for them. Explain the meaningful and lasting difference they made in your life. These letters of appreciation don't have to be long to make an impact. And they may be just the treat that fills someone's heart with a Thanksgiving feast!



Knowing When to Move On

Persistence is necessary for success. You must hold fast to your convictions and be patient until your goals are finally realized. But did you know that you must also recognize when to give up as well? When you know when to drop things that aren't worth the effort, you save yourself much time and energy from unprofitable pursuits.

The trick is being able to identify which things to stick with and which ones to drop, whether it be an idea, a business venture, or a sales prospect.

The following are hints for knowing when to move on:

- ▲ Count the cost of continuing. Consider how much time, energy and money you've already invested, and estimate how much more it will take to continue.
- ▲ Calculate the potential payoff. It's natural to want to keep on going after putting so much into something. But if the payoff isn't tremendous, it may not be worth more lost time.
- ▲ Evaluate your resources. Some ideas may take more time than you have the resources for before you'll see any results. In such cases, seek a partnership with someone who has a greater reserve of resources.
- ▲ Identify obstacles. Some projects or competitions may be unfeasible. Or, a fundamental difference of opinion may make a partnership unworkable. In such cases, move on to where success is possible.
- ▲ Acquire more information. Ask for outside perspectives from trusted colleagues, technicians, or consultants. They may be able to see the situation more clearly than you can.

Clear Out Mental Clutter

Would you like to make an attitude adjustment with high pay-off – a clearer mind and reduced stress? Whether you're overwhelmed by unfocused mental activity, have become sidetracked by emotional concerns, or simply want to improve your intellectual performance, **the following tips will help you think, work, and feel better:**

- ◆ Plan worry time. When you catch your mind wandering into worry, postpone the thoughts until later. Schedule yourself a time to think about that worry. Jot it down if you must with titles like: "What to do about..." Sort your worries into those that are real and those that may never happen. For those that may never happen, promise to worry about them only when and if they happen. To lessen the anxiety during waiting time, use the old principle: "What's the worst thing that can happen to me?" "Will I survive?" "How will I cope?" For real worries, outline steps to prevent the situation, correct the problem, or minimize the impact. Then take action toward a resolution.
- ◆ Resolve ongoing conflicts with others. When you find yourself in conflict with another person, you have four choices: accommodate (give in to the other person); compromise (give up some of your goals or wants); overpower (insist on your way, even if it angers the other person); or resolve the issue (develop new alternatives so that both of you still reach your goals and feel good about the situation). On occasion, any of these actions or reactions are appropriate. Choose the best action or reaction. Then let go of the situation.
- ◆ Refuse to overcommit yourself. If you're tempted to take on more than you can realistically handle, ask yourself these two questions: "Does this activity fit my goals and values?" and "Why am I being asked to do this task – because no one else has the expertise or because no one else will say 'yes'?" If you don't like the answers to these questions, pass up the "opportunity."
- ◆ Avoid inviting interruptions. You may be unintentionally inviting interruptions that break your concentration. Even an amused facial expression will lure people to your desk to strike up a conversation. Do you have "toys" and gadgets on your desk that people feel compelled to touch as they pass by? Do you keep several projects within sight on your desk so that you're tempted to go from one to the other

randomly? Do you stop to take calls while you're trying to do creative work? Contrary to what many people claim, you can't do two things at once as well as you can concentrate on one task until it's completed.

- ◆ Create a mental oasis for creative work. Albert Einstein once said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." However, you can't write the next blockbuster movie, your annual progress report, or a \$10 million client proposal without thinking space. For your creative projects, find a nonroutine environment. Go to a cabin or resort in the mountains, or rent a hotel room. Even closer, less exotic places will do: your backyard patio, the conference room



down the hall, a friend's office, the neighborhood park, or the library. The idea is to see different scenery so that routine tasks and paperwork can't nag at you from the corner of your eye.

- ◆ Move from left-brain to right-brain activities. Left-brain activities include tasks like fact gathering, reading technical information and writing reports. Right-brain activities include creating visuals to use in a presentation, giving constructive feedback to a boss and planning a marketing strategy to win over a prospective client. Most of us have a preference for one side of the brain or the other. Striking a balance between both kinds of activities can produce creative results, satisfying emotions, and increased energy and motivation.
- ◆ Think rationally. Are the goals, pace and schedule you've set for yourself reasonable? Are they even possible? Make an accurate assessment of what you can do, and postpone the rest. Keeping incomplete duties dangling in front of you will ensure that you never feel the satisfaction of accomplishment and always feel the frustration of being overwhelmed.

Ridding yourself of emotional, irrational and even legitimate distractions will help you bypass mental roadblocks to achieve maximum productivity.



By Dianna Booher, author, speaker, and CEO of Booher Consultants, a Dallas-based communications training firm. Her programs include communication and life balance/productivity. She has published more than 40 books, including *Communicate with Confidence*®, *Speak with Confidence*®, and *Your Signature Work*®. Call (817) 868-1200 or visit www.booher.com.

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TIMESAVERS

Computer Shopping

Here are several things to consider when buying a computer for your job:

- ◆ Your primary work location. If you do most of your work at the office, a desktop computer should suffice. However, if you want the option of working in several different locations, a laptop computer may be a better choice.
- ◆ The software necessary to do your job. Make sure that the computer you choose can accommodate this software. It should have enough memory and speed to allow you to work efficiently.
- ◆ Networking. If you need to exchange information with the other people you work with, your computers will need to be networked. Or, you could transfer data via computer disks instead.

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with success unexpected in common hours.”

– Henry David Thoreau

Use Caution with Passwords

Electronic transactions may be convenient for you, but they’re also convenient opportunities for potential thieves. These people can take your money and even your “identity” by accessing private information with your password. **When making an electronic password, remember to do the following things:**

- ▲ Avoid using the first thing that comes to mind. Passwords like these include your name, your spouse’s or children’s names, your maiden name, your pet’s name, or your street address.
- ▲ Pick a name that’s not found in the dictionary. Some programs will try every word in the dictionary to find your code. Instead of a normal word, use a mix of numbers and uppercase and lowercase letters.
- ▲ Devise a system for remembering multiple passwords. Hide written reminders at home or work, and never post them on notes on your computer monitor.
- ▲ Avoid using computer features that remind you of your password. This aid can also be used by anyone else who uses your computer.
- ▲ Change your password periodically. It may be a hassle, but you’d have an even greater one if someone accessed your information.
- ▲ Limit the number of people who know your password. The fewer people who know it, the lesser your chance that it could be used against you.
- ▲ Set up a different computer for others. In the very least, establish a separate account for temporary workers or other unauthorized users who use your company’s computers.



Source: The National Crime Prevention Council, www.ncpc.org