



Aaron Wallis

Career Success Masterclass

Day Twelve - Improve Your Time Management

Free Interview Preparation Advice – The easy way to prepare and ‘WOW’ at interviews

**Day Twelve – Improve your Time Management for Sales Success,
Time Management Techniques, help, advice and hints.**

Introduction

TIME and the lack of it is the biggest barrier between you and your success. As a sales professional it is imperative that you get the most out of your day to achieve your targets and your personal goals.

Imagine your life as a giant hourglass with golden grains of sand, the top-half running empty and inside the bottom-half, we are being drowned by so much work, restraints, appointments, responsibilities and commitments. In our daily struggle towards our goals, time and the lack of it becomes our enemy.

Here we detail some simple and effective methods to enable you to get more done within the most precious of resources, TIME!

Time Management

Time Management is an important skill and in practical terms, we must recognize the importance of every moment and to be aware not to waste it. Here are the necessary pre-requisites to help you manage your time effectively:

1. Think of goals and aims as *necessary* achievements – you simply have to achieve them. Work towards personal and business goals and use these to be your driving force to develop good time management habits.
2. Think of the time frame in achieving goals and aims. And the impact of disturbances between now and your goal.
3. Be realistic and expect changes. Be flexible and open minded to change. Nothing in life is certain and being totally rigid will probably mean you'll be playing 'catch up' at some point along your path. Build in contingencies because as John Lennon once said, 'Life is what happens to you whilst you're busy making other plans'
4. Know your work style and preferences
5. Know your environment (home and work) and the impact it can have upon working to time deadlines.
6. Make Plans and task lists.
7. Avoid 'Time Robbers'

What's the Most Important? Create a habit today: Task Lists

Let's face it. 24 hours in a day is not enough time for many people to do everything they need to do. It is therefore imperative that people perform their activities in the order of priority by making a task list. Ideally the list would be done the evening or night before. If not, first thing in the morning. Then simply number the tasks with one of the five major task groups:

1. **'A' - Important and Urgent – Must complete today.**
2. **'B' - Not Important but Urgent – Should do today**
3. **'C' - Not Urgent but Important – Could do today if I complete the 'A's and 'B's**
4. **'D' – Delegate to someone else**
5. **'E' - Not Important and Not Urgent – Eliminate**

Do this task in Excel or another spreadsheet, insert the task in column 'B' and assign the number of priority in column 'A' you can then easily 'sort' them into a list of priority. This simple task will enable you to focus on the important things. Prioritise by asking yourself of the consequences if you don't do the task. First thing in the morning get out the **BANJO NOW! – Bang A Nasty Job Out NOW!**

Do the 'worst first' –get them out of the way and out of your head. That will then give you the focus to rip through the remainder of your list. Don't be steered from your tasks by time robbers!



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Time Robbers

Almost everyone (if not everyone) is guilty of giving in or becoming victim to these time thieves one way or another. In fact, most of these time robbers have become normal parts of people's daily lives.

1. TV - If you really want to save time, turn off the Telly! Be strict in limiting your watching time. Be disciplined to watch only the programs you really want to watch. Don't channel flick. Better still, don't watch at all!

2. Phone - The phone can actually be a time-saver if you know how to use it properly. Instead of emailing someone, engaging in a phone call can allow you to get the answers right away. "Saying it" is definitely faster than "writing it."

2. Queuing and Commuting - Nothing could test your patience more than waiting for your turn in long queues. Pick a schedule where you least expect many people to show up. For example, go to the supermarket on weekdays or do an internet shop. Ask yourself is my time worth more than, less than or equal to the £5 delivery charge. If its worth more then get the supermarket to do your shopping and get it delivered at the time that fits in best with your schedule! Avoid trying to find a bargain by shopping around by browsing shops. Research online beforehand and then enter the shopping centre like a targeted hunter honing in on his prey – straight to the shop you need, pick up the reserved item and pay – even better – buy it online! In case you really have no choice but to wait in line in the queue, then don't waste your time complaining. Do something productive like listening to a book on your MP3 player, listening to educational MP3s, or writing your future plans on your little notebook. Similarly when commuting, use your time wisely – its an ideal time to plan your day, check against your goals or listen to educational MP3s.

3. Taking on too much - Don't present too many choices. People will be confused if you sell them products with too many combinations, varieties, or options. Lots of time will be consumed in deciding which one is really the best. Pause a while every time you are going to do an activity. Always ask yourself, "What can I do along with this task to save more time in the future?" For instance, you are going to buy a birthday card for your friend. By asking the question, you might come up with the decision to buy more birthday cards instead of just one, to give to those who will be having their birthdays later in the year; so you don't have to go to the shop every time there is a birthday.

4. Emails - Many people check their emails many times during the day, therefore hampering their productivity. In recent research if you are 'in the zone' for selling and you pause to read an email that you've just received it will take between three and four minutes for you to regain your focus. As email is the biggest waster of time in the modern workplace here are some hints to help:

4.1 Check your emails a maximum of twice a day – first thing in the morning and mid afternoon (to catch up with last-minute concerns).

4.2 Set up templates Set up templates of standard answers so you can just copy and paste them (or set them up as 'Signatures' on Outlook).

4.3 Reply briefly. Answer your emails clearly and to the point. Don't overcomplicate the explanation. Never reply to spam messages or junk mails – emailing them to ask them not to contact you again seems to get you on more and more unwanted mail lists!

4.4 Use the Phone - Several minutes spent in replying to emails can be shortened tremendously by just calling the person, particularly if it is a list of points or a technical question. You'll get faster responses, quicker decisions and you'll end up saving lots of time. And of course, the personal touch is priceless.

4.5 Joke emails – Tell your friends that your company policy has changed and they are now coming down strong on joke emails. Ask them to send only the really funny ones to your personal email account

5. Chatting with colleagues - particularly if it's regarding the latest gossip. Remember 'mud thrown is ground lost'!

6. Internet - Surfing the Internet for personal reasons, particularly shopping or social networking can eat into hours before you even realize.



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7. Jumping to every request – Whether it be your boss or your key account don't drop everything. Don't throw the task list out of the window unless what is required is more important than what's left on your task list. Successful field sales professionals always plan their region to enable them to get as much 'face time' with their clients as possible and less time on the A34!

8. Turn off the car stereo and turn on books or educational CD's. How many hours do you spend each week in your car in between visits. It would probably tally to several hundred hours per year – certainly the equivalent hours needed to undertake a University Degree every three years! The Open University and other distance learning organizations now place great emphasis on the material being available on CDs and MP3's. Who knows you could be 'The Three Degrees' within a decade!

Getting Life Back into your Work-Life Balance!

There are much better ways of exceeding the expectations of the boss rather than sacrificing your health and personal life. Quite simply stop kidding yourself and **Work Quality Hours**. Many of us fall into a trap where you think that whatever you have not finished within the normal working hours, you can accomplish after normal finishing time. You then tend to work slower and without focus. You have the inclination to do other things during office hours like chatting, surfing the Internet, emailing friends, updating your facebook account, etc.

If you want to maintain a balanced life, then leave your office on time, or even better early. The magic word here is **focus**. Tell yourself (and your boss, if necessary) that you are leaving early by hook or by crook. By doing this, you are imposing a strict deadline on yourself. When you make up your mind to go home early from work with full determination, your subconscious will help you in achieving such a feat.

12 Ways to be More Efficient and Productive

- Do not accept more than you can handle.
- Organize your files and office supplies well. Have a clutter free working space.
- Take frequent breaks to stretch your legs and revitalize yourself.
- If in field sales plan your region. Where are you going to be at what times and slot in client visits accordingly. Increase your 'face time' and decrease your 'car time'
- Qualify every visit and call at the beginning of each day to confirm.
- Get enough sleep.
- Network to gain new leads. Always ask for referrals and testimonials. Do everything possible to get new leads coming to you.
- Eat a light lunch and drink lots of water to fuel your brain.
- Delegate.
- Eliminate unnecessary tasks – if it's not going to help a client, your business or help you achieve your personal goals then drop it.
- Remember Pareto's law – you get 80% of your business from 20% of your clients. Make sure that you look after them effectively to achieve your sales targets.
- Avoid time robbers!

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The Art of Delegation

What are possibly the things you can delegate to others?

1. Customer support
2. Quotes & Tenders
3. Cleaning the house
4. Mailshots and data cleansing
5. Supermarket shopping
6. Tele-appointing
7. Walking the dog
8. Jazzing up presentation slides
9. Cooking
10. Fixing broken tools and equipment
11. Mowing the lawn
12. Producing sales brochures and other marketing collateral
13. Wedding arrangements
14. Gift-wrapping
15. Catering

So many sales professionals have sales admin, marketing support and PA's yet don't use them (and then complain when management makes them redundant!). They feel that Sales Admin couldn't put together that presentation or tender together as well as themselves. And that probably is true. At the moment! Give them the tasks to undertake with a deadline a day or two before its required. Oversee it and sign it off and gradually they'll be able to do it better than you.

Write down the more enjoyable or more satisfying things that you can do, as a result of not engaging in tasks you don't enjoy. You will live a more fulfilling life by shedding out a few pounds in exchange for some valuable free time.

Money can be replaced anytime, but lost time can never be reclaimed!

Getting the Most Out of Every Day – Planning.

1. The use of a calendar should be maximized (be it the one in your kitchen at home or the outlook calendar)
2. Use a diary – ideally a small pocket one that combines your business and personal life.
3. Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) can give you more comfort and efficiency in managing your schedule. Set up reminders.
4. Make a list of Tasks everyday and number them accordingly.
5. Prioritise and don't be afraid to delegate and eliminate tasks



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How Effective are You Today?

Create a task list and a time agenda for the day estimating how long each task will take and place a deadline on the task.

Keep an activity log in which all your activities, either major or minor, can be written down and later on, be analysed by you. Who robbed you of your time; what were the disturbances and how long did it take to get you back on track; when did you switch off and why; when could you have been more focused and committed. This log will also help you become more aware of your strengths and your weaknesses (particularly when it comes to motivation and goal setting)

You may also compare your work efficiency to others. But this should not frustrate you if you see that others leave you behind. Contrary to this, you should be motivated to excel or to improve your condition if you see that you are not working as fast or as efficiently as they are.

Get Your 'Space' Right

- **Avoid clutter.**
- **Do it now** - follow an "On the fly" philosophy: Close an open drawer when you pass by it, write a thank you nowt to the client the second you get back to the office after your meeting, file papers as they come in.
- **Get your goals on the wall.** I know it sounds very American and very 1980's but buying a model of the car of your goals and putting it n your bookshelf does keep your subconscious working to help you attain it.
- **Make it Colourful** – Brighten up the grey or magnolia with bright colours. Photos of the family, a list of your goals, etc.
- **Make the temperature just right**
- **Use modern gadgets and equipment**

Conclusion

Time management, like any other skill, is not hard to develop. It simply takes discipline. Analysing how you work, being aware of disturbances, getting your working space right, setting task lists and planning will enable you to get more out of your day. Working quality hours and focusing on your task list to get the job done will enable you to get the balance of work and life right.

There's a time for love and romance, for jubilation, and for sorrow. There's a time to relax, and a time to catch up with the running moments. But what is important is to be in control of time, no matter how pressured or tight any situation might be.

We hope that this will help you manage your time more effectively. Good luck with your sales interviews!

Tomorrow we shall look at Improving Creative Thinking for Sales Success