City of Helena

MAKING LIFESTYLE CHANGES..... THAT CHANGE LIVES

Tyme Management™

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Stay Productive During the Day

Do you find your energy dwindling in the afternoon hours? **Try the following to boost your energy level in the afternoon:**

- Do the exciting parts of your job in the afternoon. Plan the less interesting tasks for morning when your energy level will get you through.
- Keep your desk clear. Those never-ending piles of paperwork will appear larger and larger as the day wears on. Organize your paperwork in the morning, and leave on your desk only what you'll need for your afternoon projects.
- Lighten up at lunch. If you eat too much for lunch, your body will concentrate more blood on your digestive processes than on your mental ones.
- Examine your environment. Create a comfortable environment for working in all day. Make sure the lighting, heating and cooling aren't hindering your performance.
- Get a check-up. Feelings of fatigue can be symptoms of minor physical problems, including insomnia, anemia, chronic fatigue, or eyestrain.

Reviewing Your Progress for Success

Even though you know it's essential to plan your day, that can some times be hard to believe at the end of the day, when your planner is a messy record of the additions and deletions to what you had planned to do. The good news is that these changes don't signal a failure in your planning ability. Rather, accommodating change and replanning are a normal part of the daily planning process.

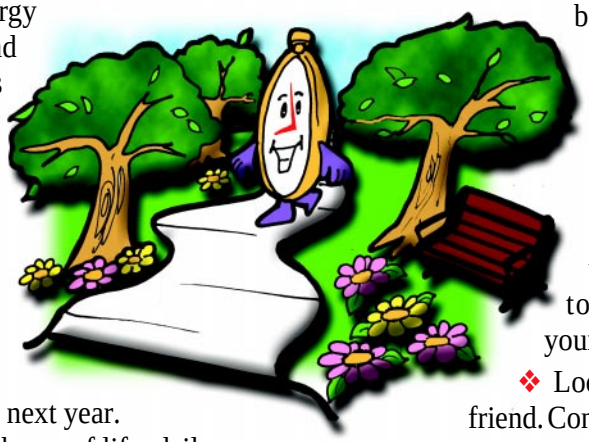
The following are steps to keep in mind when reviewing your planner at the end of each day:

- Allow for messiness. Scribbles in your planner represent the process of planning and replanning. Budgeting time on paper may be messy, but it does provide a more accurate picture of your time than planning in your head.
- Review and replan. Remind yourself of your priorities, and redirect your schedule accordingly. Plan what to do tomorrow and when to do the things that didn't get done today. This should take no longer than 15 minutes to do.
- Consider your progress. People generally only remember the things they haven't done and discourage themselves. Instead, use your planner as a visual encouragement by checking off tasks as you complete them.
- Avoid giving up. Assuming that life is too complicated to plan is a mistake. The more complicated your life becomes, the more necessary it is to organize and remember your commitments.
- Learn from your mistakes. Did you underestimate the amount of time a task required? Be sure to include the hidden components of a task, such as collecting your thoughts before writing or going to a meeting during rush hour. Were there jobs you avoided even though you planned for them? Determine why.
- Check whether you're too "overprotective" of your time. In your zeal to make your time-management system work, you may focus only on objectives and shut out people. If coworkers regularly comment that you're never available, try to be more flexible.
- Realize that days will come when hardly anything gets accomplished. The pressure won't go away by deciding not to plan anymore. At the very least, your planner gives you a list of what needs to be done, so you won't have to worry about forgetting something.

Hoist Yourself Up with a Good Attitude

You may wake up grumpy, but you don't have to stay that way. **Here are some steps you can take when you find yourself stuck in a bad mood:**

- Let it go. Bad moods aren't worth keeping. They just leave you miserable – not to mention those around you, too. It takes just as much effort and energy to stay in a bad mood as it does a good one.
- Put it in perspective. Ask yourself whether it will matter tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year. In the grand scheme of life, daily irritations lose their significance.
- Dance it off. Play songs that remind you of good times, and sing along. Turn the music up, and dance your heart out.
- Read a story to a child. Try acting the story out with gestures or silly voices. Or, tell a spontaneous story, taking turns between the two of you at different points in the story.
- Count your blessings. Make a list of the good things in your life. You'll most likely get distracted with thinking about everything you have to be happy about.
- Do something you haven't done since you were a kid. Jump in the swimming pool with your clothes on, climb a tree, or lick a lollypop.
- Exercise. Chemicals called endorphins create a sense of well-being in the body after exercise. If you don't have much time, try a deep-breathing exercise for three minutes to revitalize your mind.



- Look up an old friend. Contact someone you've lost touch with. Or, write a thank-you letter to an influential person from your past such as a coach, teacher, or counselor.
- Go out. Find some external stimulation to pull you out of excessive introspection. Go to a park, or look around a bookstore or museum. Pick a movie at the video store that you've always wanted to see, and watch it.
- Do something for someone else. Let someone go ahead of you at the store. Donate money to a worthy cause. Visit someone who needs a friend.

The "Write" Way to Good Health

According to recent research, writing in a journal may be a significant means to a healthy mind and body. Not only can it enhance your sense of well-being, but the psychological benefits may encourage physical ones as well. Researchers have noted that the immune cells of people who write in journals appear more active, and a study from the State University of New York suggests it may also alleviate symptoms of chronic illness.

In the New York study, participants were asked to write in a journal for 20 minutes three days in a row. Part of the group wrote about their most difficult life experience while the other part simply wrote down their daily plans. Four months later, nearly half of the people who wrote of stressful times showed noticeable improvement. People with asthma showed a 19 percent improvement in their lung functioning, and people with arthritis had a 28 percent decrease in the severity of their symptoms. Only one-fourth of the people who merely wrote of their plans for the day experienced benefits.

Are You Suffering from Information Overload?

In the "information age," there's a never-ending pile of reports and trade publications to read, data and current events to keep track of, and new skills to acquire. People often inundate themselves with *information*, but fail to translate it into *knowledge* that will benefit them. **The following are telltale signs that you may be suffering from information overload:**

- Reacting to information in a habitual manner, such as throwing it away without thinking.
- Ignoring an essential piece of information entirely.
- Failing to "think outside the box" by dismissing information into rigid, conventional categories.
- Occupying too much of your time with trivia and unnecessary details.
- Failing to identify important information until it's too late.

Managing Office Distractions

It's no wonder that people can't get more work done at the office when it's so full of distractions. Not only does the hustle and bustle heighten your stress level, but it also provides tempting diversions from your work.

Here's how you can minimize distractions in the workplace:

- Search for ways to quiet or silence anything that makes noise. Put copy machines in a separate room with the door closed, and place a cover on dot matrix printers or replace them with laser printers. Lower the volume on phones, and turn the ringer off on phones not in use. Reduce the volume on radios, and replace the ballasts in buzzing fluorescent lights.
- Evaluate your floor plan. People who need to interact frequently should be situated close to each other. This saves them the time spent in trips to visit one another, and it also spares everyone else around them from unnecessary interruptions.
- Reposition items that people tend to socialize around away from the work area. Such items may include food-related objects like coffee makers, vending machines, snack tables and water fountains as well as office equipment including printers, copiers and fax machines.
- Take advantage of sound-absorbing materials. Carpets or rugs can cover floors, and a variety of materials used in the recording industry can be put on walls to absorb additional noise.
- Try "white noise" in the background. White-noise machines produce sounds at wavelengths that disguise common office noises without most people even noticing the machine exists.
- Rearrange your furniture. A lot of unnecessary socializing can come from small talk with people who aren't even looking for you. People are more likely to stop and chat if they see your face, so reposition your desk so that you don't face the door or the traffic flow.

- Discipline yourself. Learn to ignore nearby conversations, and clear your desk of clutter. Position the blinds at an angle so that you can't stare out of them, or close them completely.
- Find little ways to block out noise. Try wearing ear plugs or headphones. Chew gum or suck on hard candy or lozenges.
- Stop procrastinating. Distraction is often internally motivated. If you're putting off your work, any interruption will be an excuse to continue avoiding it. The more you stay involved in what you're doing, the less you'll notice most distractions.
- Collaborate. Ask your staff to identify office distractions and brainstorm solutions. Brainstorming usually generates many ideas, some of which will probably be very effective.

Time-Saving Tips

- To make letters and memos clearer, include check-off boxes with possible answers after the questions you ask. This system helps the reader understand what you're communicating and encourages them to respond promptly in a simple and timesaving manner.
- To save time, call ahead to confirm appointments and meetings. A 30-second call can save you the time lost in an unnecessary trip to meet someone who cancelled or forgot.
- If you have a quiet hour when all calls are held, you may be sacrificing business for uninterrupted work time. If enforced too strictly, a quiet hour can damage relationships with major clients and customers who really need to speak with you. Give such people a code word so they can get through to you when necessary.
- Try writing each "to do" item on a separate piece of paper and staple the pieces together. You can arrange and rearrange the sheets in order of priority and re-staple as necessary. When the item on top is finished, you can then tear it off.

"He who every morning plans the transactions of the day, and follows out that plan, carries a thread that will guide him through the labyrinth of the most busy life. The orderly arrangement of his time is like a ray of light which darts itself through all his occupations. But where no plan is laid, where the disposal of time is surrendered merely to the chance of incidents, all things lie huddled together in one chaos, which admits of neither distribution nor review."

– Hugo

Seek Money For the Right Reasons

Riches are transformed into many things... *happiness, health and wealth*. Financial wealth enables you to live at the standard of living you desire. When you've acquired enough money for your personal use, you're then able to consider giving to institutions and those who are in need.

Money has been described as one of the means to acquire a more abundant life. Earning money is never an undesirable thing to do. It's the hoarding of money that's wrong. If money is a desirable object, then it's necessary that we understand how to approach the art of developing the capacity to earn more. Often people have a "*money-first*" attitude. They always seem to be just a little short. Those who have this attitude seem to miss the entire meaning of money consciousness. They fail to plant the seed of service and they expect a harvest without sufficient labor.

If you're to shake the money tree, you must understand that service comes first – interest in your neighbors. When you have an attitude of wanting to do the right thing first, the money matters automatically take care of themselves.

Many say, "*money is the root of all evil.*" There's no way this can be true, for money builds our schools and hospitals and pays our clergy, doctors, professors and scientists. Of course, like any of the great riches of life, money can be misappropriated and used for the wrong purposes. When you have the right attitude and boldly face up to the proper use of its power, you're learning to add value to your personal life and those with whom you're associated.

Be enthusiastic about your earning ability and your desire to develop a savings program. Solicit other members of your family to help you develop a realistic goals program that your entire family can participate in. Take a step forward today by starting a new savings, insurance, or investment program that will help you increase your financial assets. The rewards can and will be endless.

Getting Organized on the Weekends

- Weekend one: Clean out and organize your closets.
- Weekend two: Repair, or have repaired, everything that needs repairing in your home.
- Weekend three: Look at your bookshelves and rid yourself of seldom-read or outdated books and magazines.
- Weekend four: Gather together all receipts and other paperwork you save and store them in a safe place.
- Weekend five: Spend time completing projects you began in the past.
- Weekend six: Clean, repair, service and organize all your sporting equipment.
- Weekend seven: Clean up your car, inside and out.
- Weekend eight: Clean out the garage.

Pat Answers

Dear Pat: *Shirley's cooking the books! How do I let her or our supervisor know that I know without losing my job? Oh, did I mention she's the boss's niece?*

Pat Answers: In the current climate, I'd say anyone who has information about illegal financial dealings had better speak up! Staying silent about theft, fraud, etc., puts you in a very precarious position. By comparison, losing your job would be small change. But if you can protect yourself – and the company – without losing your job, so much the better. A lot depends on your relationship with your supervisor. If it's a good one and there is a foundation of trust, by all means, confide openly and directly with him/her. If the relationship is more tenuous – or if your supervisor is "Uncle Boss" – you might want to proceed more cautiously. Consider talking to an attorney. You need to protect yourself against any appearance of collusion. But one way to bring the problem to light is to play dumb. Go to your supervisor with an air of confusion. Tell him/her that you are having trouble understanding the financial statements, purchase orders, or whatever documentation has brought the matter to your attention. If you lay out the facts in all innocence, hopefully your supervisor will see what's going on and take it from there.

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.*

Reaching the Point of Happiness

There's too much worry in the world today. Too many people fidget and fret over the minute details of life. Happiness is just around the bend, though, if you'll only open your heart and mind to the possibilities of happiness. Those who are happy haven't found secret food additives or miracle drugs, they've realized that happiness is a state of mind and no outside source can bring it to you. **To help you reach the point of happiness, make the following tips part of your life:**

- Develop a close relationship with your spouse or closest loved one. Human beings seem pre-programmed to develop a close loving relationship with one person. Your happiness is directly influenced by that of your life partner. For the sake of everyone's happiness, do things that bring pleasure and happiness into your loving relationship.
- Gain control of your life. People whose lives are dictated by others tend toward unhealthy lifestyles and health problems. Choose to take the reigns of your life and lead yourself down the path to happiness. Plan and take risks to garner that control.
- Network with colleagues whose company you enjoy. Professional colleagues shouldn't all become close friends but, with a few, go out of your way to support them and then you can expect the same in return. Choosing at least one colleague at your worksite will bring more happiness into your workday by having someone close with whom you can share the joys and frustrations of the regular working day.

- Choose to befriend happy people. You can have many acquaintances but limit yourself to just a handful of close friends. These are the people with whom you completely open yourself up and who completely open themselves up to you. Decide who your "best" friends are and spend most of your available time with them. Squeeze in a little time with other friends as well.
- Rearrange your life so it closely resembles the lifestyle you want to pursue. Seek a harmonious balance between your work life, home life and social life. Reside in an area you enjoy living, work where you enjoy the toil, live at a pace you can manage, attend family and social affairs whenever possible, and learn to be happy both at and away from work.
- Learn flexibility. Plan your goals and objectives for your life, but open yourself to the unexpected opportunities that present themselves from time to time. Going through life in a rigid frame of mind where nothing interrupts your pursuit of goals isn't feasible. Accept that life may throw you a few curveballs and go with the pitch. Avoid letting life's little surprises anger or worry you.
- Set and achieve goals. Setting goals that are long-term won't help you with today. Remember to include medium- and short-range goals when you plan your day so you can enjoy the triumph of achieving goals. When setting goals, always err on the side of setting goals too easy so you'll achieve success often.

You Will Never Be Sorry...

- For thinking before acting.
- For hearing before judging.
- For forgiving your adversaries.
- For being candid and frank.
- For helping another person.
- For being honest in business.
- For thinking before speaking.
- For being loyal to family and friends.
- For standing by your principles.
- For closing your ears to gossip.
- For biting your slanderous tongue.
- For harboring clean thoughts.
- For sympathizing with the sick.
- For being courteous and kind.
- For having a clear conscience.

Take a Mini-Vacation

When you use time efficiently to advance your organization and your career, you sometimes want to use the saved time to pamper yourself. But, when you decide to use this "*free*" time, you can't think of anything to do. **Consider these tips:** • Take a dance class with a friend. • Locate and call up a long-lost friend. • Take a long bubble bath. • Cheer boisterously at a sporting event. • Read a top-selling novel. • Have a picnic with your family. • Write or answer a letter or email. • Go ice skating at an indoor rink. • Browse in an antique shop. • Exercise by walking a nature trail.

Concentrate on Being Successful

The most successful people are those who have acquired the habit of concentrating upon a single thing at a time instead of spreading their efforts over many fields.

If people who meet failure would concentrate on the search for its cause, facing facts honestly, they would insure against a repetition of the cause.

But, many people concentrate instead upon creating an alibi to escape responsibility for failure or trying to shift the blame to someone else.

This has precisely the same result as a hope for failure – because the subject is lying open to a return visit.

Concentration also will help you acquire another valuable asset: *a dependable memory*.

A well-known writer was assigned by a national magazine to write a story on an interview with Frank Lloyd Wright. The interview lasted for two hours as Wright painted a word picture for the reporter. But, the famed architect was annoyed that the reporter made no notes, and he angrily demanded why.

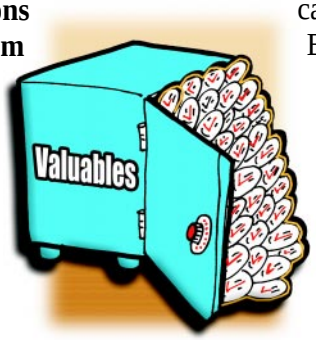
"*I'm making notes*," the reporter said, "*in a memory that has been trained to do without notebooks and pencils*."

The next day, Wright was handed an accurate transcript of almost every detail of his story. To his surprise, he couldn't change a word.

The habit of concentration helps one not only to listen well but also to remember what one hears and sees.

Value the Gift of Time

The problem: Everyone wants to get organized. But first, you have to recognize the value of time and then devise a time management plan. **Here are suggestions on how to do it from Hyrum Smith, author of *The 10 Natural Laws of Successful Time and Life Management*:**



- Identify events over which you have total control and make them part of your daily priority list.
- Create a prioritized daily task list and seek to achieve those goals.
- Be specific in your plan. Say the exact amount of time you will exercise, for example. When you have listed every item, assign a value to each. "A" represents tasks that absolutely must be done. "B" is for tasks that should be done. "C" is for tasks that can be done after all the As and Bs are finished.
- Review your appointments to see how much time is left for other tasks. Assign half of that to emergencies.
- Make a distinction between urgent and vital. Decide whether an "urgent" task is worth interrupting a vital one.
- Get rid of clutter. It's one of the biggest causes of procrastination.
- Maintain a master task list. If it's to be done three months from now, enter it in that month.

Putting Your Best Foot Forward

If you're looking to make a solid impression among business associates, try to do so from the moment you meet them. Experts advise people to exude confidence in every movement they make and every word they speak.

Remember that communication is 80 percent attitude and body language and only 20 percent verbal.

To put your best foot forward every time, take these tips to heart:

- Sit or stand with correct posture.
- Maintain eye contact as much as possible when speaking with others.
- Avoid folding your arms or legs.
- Nod your head occasionally and acknowledge your agreement with the other person by saying "*Yes*."
- Appear prominant by sitting at the head of the table at a meeting or standing while others are sitting during a discussion.

Ease Your Way into Safe Decisions

When in doubt as to whether something is good for you, take the "*safe test*" to help you decide what to do about the matter. The test is simple; just ask yourself the following: "*Will this tend to make a stronger person of me, so that I'll be in better condition to fight life's battles, or will this weaken me and tend to demoralize my purpose?*" No matter how unpleasant or disagreeable the matter may be, everything considered, if it will make you a stronger man or woman, do it.

Take Advantage of the Sounds of Silence

There's more to hearing than meets the ear...

In this age of noise, more noise and still more noise, perhaps the most confusing and misunderstood "sound" is the sound of silence. Amid the constant barrage of telephone calls, presentations, negotiations and daily chitchat, every once in a while there's a break in the frenzy.

The way you respond to these moments of silence can mean the difference between increased profits or decreased clientele, deep understanding or total chaos, or a job well done or a job to be redone.

To the effective communicator, silence is an opportunity to gain keener insight into your conversations and clearer understanding about the people with whom you're conversing. After all, there's a reason no one is talking, and if you find it, you'll know how to respond.

Silence doesn't mean communication is dead; it may have simply lost its direction. You can regain control of things by asking leading questions – those that penetrate the confusion and guide the conversation to a desired end. **Here's how:**

Lead others to be more specific. One of the most common reasons for silence is a lack of clarity in the words and phrases used. Generalities, clichés and unclear terms can disrupt the flow and content of your conversation. Mark Twain said it well, *"The difference between the right word and the nearly right word is the same as that between lightning and the lightning bug."*

Leading questions can help you nail down details and define terms. *"Does 'as soon as possible' mean you'll finish the report by the end of the week, by the end of the day, or by noon?" "You said our representative was discourteous. Did he yell? Act disinterested? Ignore your comments?"*

All individuals have their own peculiar communication styles and mannerisms. Learn to recognize yours and those of the people you know.

Lead others to the main point. Conversations can digress into detours, and detours can take you far off the beaten path. Leading questions can help steer you back on track.

"But your primary concern is that everyone gets their input to you before next week's meeting?" "Of all the proposals you've mentioned, which one do you think is the most feasible within our estimated budget?"

Know where you're going in a conversation, and you'll know when you get there. Keep a careful ear out for those things that distract rather than direct.

Lead others to clarify conflicting facts or statements. Like rush-hour traffic, conversations can result in traffic jams and sometimes accidents. While you and your partner may be traveling down the same communication highway, you may be in different lanes or heading in different directions. Leading questions can direct you through the congestion.

"Your colleague said you'd arrive at noon. I understood you to say 2 p.m. When will you be there?" "We seem to be leaning toward the Turney proposal. I thought we already ruled them out. Did we get new data that makes them a more attractive option?"

Effective lawyers, detectives and scientists poke and probe until they understand the facts completely. So should you.

Lead others to further feedback. The purpose of conversation is to exchange ideas and information in a give-and-take manner. Just as a tennis match is monotonous if only one contestant takes part, so it is with conversations.

Some people don't give any feedback; others give it, only insufficiently. Be alert, and use leading questions to elicit the answers you're seeking. *"What other comments do you have regarding our staffing shortage?" "In your opinion, which of the four issues should we concentrate on first?"*

Get feedback first, and avoid misunderstandings later.

Lead others to agreement. At times, nothing more is said because nothing more needs to be said. It's time to act – and ask. *"You probably want to hire another part-timer then, right?" "I'm assuming you can give me a 20-percent discount if I give you an answer today?" "Since you're so displeased with the current facility, do you want to consider another location?"*

There's a tendency to be gruff or pushy here. Avoid this. You simply want clear, specific and timely action.

Silence is simply another form of communication, but it can speak louder than the most adamant protests. If your goal is to maximize these quiet opportunities and have clear, concise and effective conversations, leading questions can get you there. What's the next silence you can turn into action?

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

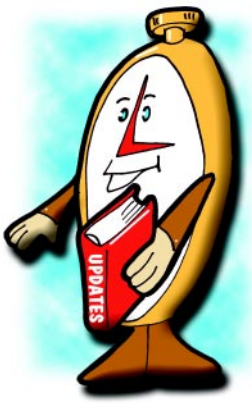
Tackling Your "To Read" Pile

Sometimes the stack of things to read in your office can seem never-ending. **Try these tips for tackling your reading material:**

- Realize you probably won't ever read everything you think you should. Unrealistic expectations will only cause you unnecessary anxiety.
- Read with a pen. Write the subjects and page numbers of noteworthy articles on the cover.
- Create a "to go" file. Look at the publication's table of contents, and tear out the parts you want to read. Put the stapled articles in your briefcase to read in a spare moment when you're out of the office.
- Make a personal library of articles you want to read. By setting aside articles in a separate filing system, you'll find what you need much faster than going through a stack.
- Delegate. Teach your support staff how to survey and highlight what you're looking for.

Updating Time-Management Skills

In an age of E-mails, faxes, websites and global markets, traditional time-management practices can be out of date. With the information overload and complex business networks of today, such maxims may not only be insufficient, but also detrimental to the life of your company. **Here are common time-management strategies:**



- *"To be productive, keep your door shut and a 'Do Not Disturb' sign on it."* If this advice was truly followed, no one would talk to anyone because it takes too much time. Communication and collaboration – not isolation – are essential to productive work. Collaborate with customers, suppliers, colleagues and even competitors to stay in tune with important developments going on around you.
- *"Handle a piece of paper only once."* The problem with this is that most people don't have enough time to completely finish one item at one time. The national average of uninterrupted time employees have to devote to an item is only 11 minutes. Instead, take a few minutes to scan paperwork, file it into a system of broad-based categories that keep your overall job in perspective, and then make a note to finish it later.
- *"Concentrate on your goals and their relevant information, and ignore the rest."* If you only focus on your limited area of work, you will be unaware of the needs and trends of the system as a whole and how they affect your job and the company. Missing one vital piece of information about your customer, competitor, or an emerging trend can put your company at serious risk. Clipping services, digests and tailored online searches are several ways to stay abreast of current information.
- *"Schedule every minute of your time in detail."* A Harvard study of general managers noted that successful managers have done the opposite, leaving parts of their day unplanned. By structuring objectives in a broad, long-term fashion, you allow yourself time for addressing unexpected opportunities or obstacles as they occur during the day.