



Tyme Management™

Work Smarter

Here are things you can do to work more efficiently:

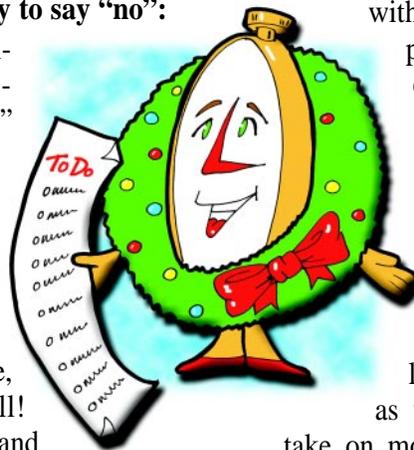
- ◆ Check your E-mail at regular intervals. Avoid reading and responding to each message as you receive it. Stay focused on what you're working on.
- ◆ Sort your inbox daily. Avoid putting items back in your tray. File them, pass them on, or throw them away.
- ◆ Stop playing phone tag. When leaving a message, give the times that you can be reached or the time you'll try calling back. Or, intercept the person's path a different way by sending a fax or E-mail instead.
- ◆ Keep your answering machine clear. Write down your messages each day and delete them, so you won't have to go through old messages to listen to your new ones.
- ◆ Apply the two-minute rule. If something requires only two minutes or less to do, go ahead and do it. It'll be one less thing to follow up on later.
- ◆ Allow maintenance time. Reserve some time at the end of the week to tie up loose ends, file paperwork, revise your "to do" list and plan for upcoming events.

Trimming Your To-Do List

Although it's a simple word, "no" is often one of the most difficult words for people to say. Many people are afraid to say "no," and some feel that they can't. But without this necessary word, you will always have more things to do than you have time to accomplish.

The following are suggestions for improving your ability to say "no":

- ▲ Identify your priorities. People sometimes fail to say "no" because they lack clear direction on what they should be spending their time doing. As long as you don't know what to do with your time, somebody else will! List your priorities and why they're important to you. When you know what to focus your time on, you'll know when to say "no."
- ▲ Examine your feelings. Feelings can make you say "yes" when you shouldn't. Some people feel a false sense of obligation to do whatever people tell them to do and feel guilty if they don't. Others are eager to please people and will do so at all costs to prove themselves and secure approval. Still others fear anger or rejection if they say "no."
- ▲ Refuse with a reason. When approached with a request, consider your priorities.



If it's something you know you should refuse, say "I'm sorry, but no," and give the reason why. Many times, simply saying that you're busy will suffice. Other times, you may need to explain the important things you must do.

- ▲ Suggest alternatives. You can say "no" without being offensive or impolite. Giving a suggestion communicates your good intentions when you're unable to help yourself. Try saying something like, "I'm sorry that I can't, but let me offer you this suggestion..."
- ▲ Be realistic. You must learn to say "no" to yourself as well. When you want to take on more than you can handle, remind yourself to concentrate on your priorities. You can't be productive or help others when you're doing too much. Spreading yourself too thin will only jeopardize your own health and peace of mind.
- ▲ Stand your ground. You may have to say "no" several times before the person will get the message. Sometimes other people assume that you'll say "yes" to whatever they ask because you've never said "no" to them. Be willing to assert yourself and your right to say "no."

When Good Plans Go Wrong

Sometimes no matter how well you plan, your plan may fail to accomplish its objectives. **A plan may fail for the following reasons:**

- ◆ It required time or resources that the company couldn't provide.
- ◆ It depended on others who weren't willing or able to help.
- ◆ It attempted to plan too far ahead.
- ◆ It was based on faulty assumptions or misinformation.
- ◆ Its goals conflicted with the other goals of the organization.
- ◆ It didn't recognize how different parts of the company work together.
- ◆ It didn't foresee unexpected events that altered the circumstances.

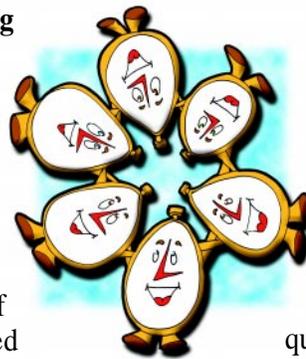
To modify a failed action plan:

- ◆ Make a "Plan B." Meet together with your decision-making team to examine new options for accomplishing the goal, and devise a new plan. You may find that the goal itself will have to be adjusted or postponed for now.
- ◆ Involve the group at large in the planning process. To ensure that the goals and plans of one department don't hinder those of another, include other departments in your planning meetings. Set goals that will be mutually beneficial.
- ◆ Develop a contingency plan. Although you won't always be able to foresee potential problems, make a habit of examining the critical factors of the plan and how they might go wrong. Come up with an alternate plan just in case.
- ◆ Create a system of checks and balances. Develop a method for monitoring the progress of your plan. The sooner you can detect potential problems, the sooner you can correct them or adjust the plan before it's too late.

Developing Your Team

Molding a group from a collection of individuals into an integrated unit is hard work. Although it demands an investment of time and energy, it's well worth the results. When the people you manage work together as a team, their efforts are multiplied far beyond what they could accomplish on their own. **Here are some suggestions for developing your team:**

- ▲ Evaluate the current strengths and weaknesses of the group. Do the strengths of various team members counterbalance the weaknesses of the others? Is one skill or area of expertise overemphasized while other areas remain lacking? What skills or roles are needed to help the group function better?
- ▲ Recruit resourceful and versatile members. When hiring new employees, look for people who will enhance the variety of knowledge and experience represented by your team. As a whole, the group should be comprised of a broad range of skills and subject areas that will be useful.
- ▲ Provide learning opportunities with delegation. Give assignments not nec-



essarily to the person best qualified for the job, but to someone who will learn new skills from doing it. To foster group interaction, ask knowledgeable team members to assist this person in doing the job.

- ▲ Encourage togetherness. Assign team members offices that are in close proximity to one another, and hold regular team meetings to discuss current and upcoming projects. Take the group to conferences, and celebrate group accomplishments with social events.
- ▲ Present opportunities to work together. Require team members to share authority and responsibility with one another, and ask them to come up with group answers to questions and problems presented. Working together under pressure can help to strengthen team loyalty.
- ▲ Entrust the group with greater responsibility. Give the group authority in the planning and decision-making process, and ask for their input regularly. Hand over major projects to the group, so you can devote your time to work that only you can do.

Reduce Unnecessary Interruptions

As a manager, interruptions may be a way of life. With people constantly approaching you for help and input on their work, there may be little time left over to finish your own work. However, with a simple schedule shift, you can minimize interruptions without neglecting the people you manage. **Here's how:**

- Ask people to consider first whether the item they want to discuss can wait. If it can wait, ask them to write it down on a list for the next time you meet.
- Schedule a regular time for meeting with people. You may want to meet once or twice a day, such as first thing in the morning and after lunch.
- Explain that this arrangement will benefit everyone. Not only will you have more time to concentrate on your work, but you'll also be able to offer your undivided attention when you do meet.



User Friendly Websites

Your website is often the first impression that people get of your company. Your site needs substance to make people stick, but it also requires good design to ensure that they'll stay around long enough to check it out. **To make your website more user friendly:**

- ◆ Organize content into visually distinct chunks. Help viewers find information easily by dividing text into subheadings and using bulleted sections and descriptive headings and titles.
- ◆ Make it easy to locate information. Viewers shouldn't have to click more than three times to find the order form and other essential information.
- ◆ Post contact information on the bottom of each page. Include the company name, physical address, phone number, website and E-mail address on each page for easy reference.
- ◆ Simplify hyperlinks by using one or two words. Leave hyperlinks in standard format (blue when not selected and purple once selected), so they're easy to recognize.
- ◆ Avoid large graphic files or other files that cause pages to load slowly. Choose distinctive images that will load quickly without detracting from the page's overall presentation.
- ◆ Aim for mass compatibility. Pick a resolution that will accommodate the greatest number of potential viewers.
- ◆ Select colors that will be easy on the eyes. Use red and yellow only in limited quantities since these colors can strain eyes, making your page tiring to look at.

Keeping Technology in Balance

In an era of electronic timesaving gadgets, people seem to have less time than ever. With the constant interruption of ringing cell phones, beeping pagers and incoming E-mails, people's time has become splintered into a thousand unproductive pieces. What's more, instant accessibility blurs the distinction between work time and rest time, leaving people even more frazzled and ultimately less productive than before.

To counteract this trend, technology users must learn to rely on common sense rather than computerized devices. **To maintain a healthy balance when using technology:**

- Change yourself first. The most sophisticated equipment in the world won't help you to work more effectively unless you have good work habits to begin with. Put your time-management knowledge into practice to prioritize your time, organize your workspace and conquer procrastination.
- Preserve a streamlined strategy. Adopt the "less is more" approach. Choose a few high-tech items that will significantly enhance your work, and forget the rest. Before buying the latest electronic device, consider whether it will eat up more of your time to use and maintain it.
- Look for low-tech alternatives. Consider ways you can reduce stress and improve efficiency without electronic devices. You may want to rearrange your filing system or purchase a headset or shoulder rest that will allow you to move around freely when talking on the phone.
- Avoid buying on impulse. Before you buy new software or other high-tech tools, pinpoint exactly what you'll need, and shop around first. Talk to people who have the item you're looking for, and do some background research at the library and on the Internet before you purchase it.
- Use what you already own to its fullest advantage. Many times people learn only a fraction of the capabilities available on the equipment they have. Read the instruction manual on the software and other devices you own, or take a class to learn more about how to use it.
- Give yourself off time. Establish healthy boundaries between work time and non-work time. That may mean not answering your cell phone after you come home from work or turning your pager off on weekends.



Computer Maintenance Tips

To keep your computer in tip-top condition: • Scan and defragment the hard drive regularly. • Save backup files of important information, and store it off-site. • Make an emergency boot disk to use in the event of a system failure. • Buy a surge protector or uninterruptible power supply (UPS) to guard against power surges. • Install antivirus software, and have it updated frequently. • Position your computer away from windows and heat sources. • Keep all equipment free of dust and moisture.



To Finish the Race, Stay on the Track

Opportunity is all around you. What matters is where you put your focus. Ask yourself this question every day: “Where should my focus be?” Where you focus your attention, you create strength and momentum.

These are the characteristics of momentum: (1) it is single-minded; (2) it is unwavering in the pursuit of a goal; (3) it has passion which knows no limits; (4) it demands a concentrated intensity and a definite sense of destiny; and most of all, (5) it has a boundless vision and commitment to excellence.

Concentration is the key that opens the door to accomplishment. William Mathews said, “The first law of success... is concentration – to bend all the energies to one point, and to go directly to that point, looking neither to the right nor to the left.”

The most successful people have always been those of concentration, who have struck their blows in one place until they have accomplished their purpose. They are of one specific idea, one steady aim, and a single and concen-



trated purpose. Become an authority on something.

There is a great distance between most people’s dreams and the results they achieve. It’s due to the difference in their commitment to bring together all the options of their ability and to focus them upon one point.

There are two quick ways to disaster: taking nobody’s advice and taking everybody’s advice. Learn to say “no” to the good, so you can say “yes” to the best. A.P. Goethe said that to succeed, you must know: “(1) what to eliminate; (2) what to preserve; (3) when to say ‘no,’ for developing the power to say ‘no’ gives us the capacity to say ‘yes.’”

We accomplish things by directing our desires, not by ignoring them. What an immense power you will have over your life when you possess distinct aims. Your words, your tone of voice, your dress, and your motions change and improve when you begin to live for a reason and a purpose.

Don’t be a person who is uncertain about the future and hazy about the present. Stay in the groove without making it a rut. Make something your specialty. You can’t find until you define. To finish the race, stay on the track.

I’m astonished at the aimlessness of most people’s lives. As a result of lack of focus, they delegate the direction of their lives to others. Don’t live your life like that. Instead, “Learn to define yourself, to content yourself with some specific thing and some definite work; dare to be what you really are and to learn to accept with good grace all that you are not.” (Anonymous)

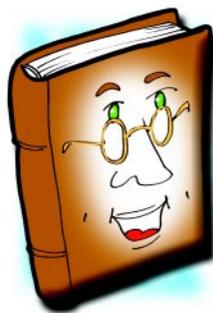
John Mason, author and speaker, is the founder and president of Insight International. For more information, contact him at: John Mason, Insight International, P.O. Box 54996, Tulsa, OK 74155.

Be a Lifetime Learner

Remember when you had to do your homework? In the same way that a student prepares to master a subject by studying, so the aspiring professional prepares to develop his or her potential further by investing time in reading and research.

You may think that there’s just too much work to do to spend any time researching. After all, when you’re so busy, taking time out to read trade publications or journals may seem like you’re not “doing” anything. However, storing up knowledge can be the very thing that will give you the edge you need to continue to succeed. By expanding your knowledge base and increasing your level of expertise consistently, you’ll ensure ongoing growth and improvement for the future. At the same time, you’ll be developing self-discipline that will enhance the other areas of your life as well.

Examine your current schedule. When could you reserve time to read and research regularly? Make yourself an appointment to hit the books, and you’ll “ace” the opportunities that the future brings your way.



Mind Exercises

To keep your brain in shape:

- ◆ Draw a picture using your opposite hand.
- ◆ Do a crossword puzzle.
- ◆ Play a musical instrument.
- ◆ Get to know people who are different than you.
- ◆ Do the math in your head instead of with a calculator.
- ◆ Try playing a sport with your weaker side.
- ◆ Learn a new vocabulary word or language.
- ◆ Play a game that requires strategy to win.

Stay Connected on the Road

For those whose work demands that they travel frequently, staying connected with family can be quite a challenge. **To let your family know that you're thinking of them on your next business trip:**

- ❖ Explain what you'll be doing. Post an itinerary on the refrigerator that outlines where you'll be each day. Allow your kids to help you pack while you talk to them about your trip.
- ❖ Leave reminders of your presence around the house. Place pictures of you and your family on the vanity, dresser, or nightstand. Hide little notes or presents throughout the house for them to find while you're away.
- ❖ Make a countdown calendar. Create a calendar with the days you'll be gone marked on it, so your family can check off each day until you come home. Plan a fun outing to look forward to once you return.
- ❖ Touch base with technology. Send E-mails or faxes each day with an update on how you're doing. Also in-



clude jokes, stories, or cartoons for a daily dose of laughter.

- ❖ Keep a journal. Have you and your loved ones agree to write down the thoughts, feelings and activities that they experience each day. Then call each other every day to go over your list together.
- ❖ Share a story time. Keep two copies of your children's favorite books, and read them over the phone together. Or, tape yourself on cassette or video saying goodnight and telling a familiar bedtime story.

Is Your Time Being Robbed?

It's the little things that add up. And when it comes to doing things around the house, these nonessential tasks may be robbing you of precious time that could be better spent with your family. **The following are some simple ways you can prevent time theft:**

- Use an answering machine or caller ID box to screen your telephone calls.
- Limit television watching to a few worthwhile programs each week.
- Keep a running list of the items you need from the store.
- Do several errands in one trip rather than in separate ones.
- Shop around for items by calling on the phone first.
- Choose clothes, furniture and appliances that require minimal maintenance.
- Relax your standard for housecleaning and yard upkeep.
- Double recipes, and freeze half for another meal.
- Exercise while you spend time with a loved one.
- Initiate meaningful conversations with your family when driving or doing chores.



Time-Efficient Bill Paying

Paying bills eats up more of your time than you probably like. To cut the time and hassle involved with bill paying, **organize and simplify your routine with these steps:**

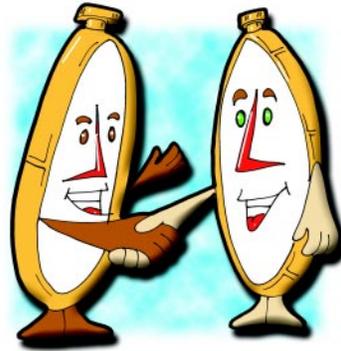
- ◆ Place incoming bills in a special tray or folder. When sorting through your mail each day, file bills into a separate stack, and keep them in a particular location until you're ready to pay them.
- ◆ Create a bill center. Gather all of the various supplies you'll need to pay your bills, such as envelopes, stamps, labels, pens and a calculator. Keep them in one place. Or, opt to pay your bills online for speediness.
- ◆ Do the dirty work ahead of time. For the bills you must pay on a regular basis, fill out the envelopes for an entire year, so you'll have one less thing to do before you can mail them.
- ◆ Schedule specific times for paying bills. Instead of paying each bill as it comes, wait until a designated date or day of the week. Plan a time that will allow you to pay several bills at once and still get them in on time.
- ◆ Record and file at once. Before you forget, make note of the transaction in your register, and write down the date, amount and check number on each receipt or invoice. File your receipts by category for easy reference.
- ◆ Look for shortcuts. To cut down on the number of bills you have to deal with each month, limit the number of credit cards you carry. Consider buying accounting software that can help speed up the paying process.

Working Well with Your Boss

Learning to communicate with your boss is essential to a productive working relationship. Clear communication allows you to stay on top of tasks and prevents misunderstandings that waste time. By communicating clearly, you can assert your time needs to your boss so that you won't be overburdened with too much work.

To foster a good working relationship with your boss:

- ▲ *Be timely and respect your boss' time.* Share important news and information with your boss as soon as you receive it. Be as brief as possible in all your written and spoken communication.
- ▲ *Work toward your boss' best interest.* Do what you can to help your boss advance toward his or her goals and priorities. Simplify every procedure as much as you can.
- ▲ *Notify your boss of potential delays.* Warn your boss as soon as you foresee that a task will take longer than planned. Instead of making excuses, commit to a new deadline.
- ▲ *Never cover up problems.* Let your boss know about serious problems as they come up. Informing your boss up front is better than having him or her find out from someone else.
- ▲ *Remain accessible during working hours.* Leave a number where you can be reached any time you leave the office during work.
- ▲ *Clarify priorities when assigned new tasks.* When your boss assigns you more work, ask which tasks should take priority of the ones you're currently working on. Are there any that you can set aside for a while?
- ▲ *Postpone or pass on assignments you can't handle.* Explain that taking on additional work won't enable you to do a good job on the important tasks you're in charge of. Ask if you could get to it sometime later.
- ▲ *When you can't help out, offer alternatives.* When you must decline a project, suggest someone you know who could do a good job on it.



Recycle What You Write

Here's how to "recycle" the reports you write:

- Write in modules. Divide the report into sections that can stand on their own. Use transition paragraphs to connect these sections together and then delete these paragraphs later when you reuse the material.
- Separate confidential information. Organize confidential material into sections of the report that can be removed later without changing the main idea.
- Duplicate visuals. Save copies of the graphs and charts you use in your reports. By

hanging the captions, you can use them in other reports and presentations.

- Take advantage of summaries. The executive summary in longer reports can provide valuable highlights. Consider distributing this information to a wider audience.
- Brainstorm additional uses. Think of ways to use the content of your reports for creating a general bulletin or memo, advertising copy, or public relations material.



Keep on Track in Your Meetings

To keep on track during your meetings, create a group notebook for recording items that aren't on the agenda. When a topic comes up that could divert the discussion, write it down in the notebook, so you can discuss it at another time. This will help focus the group's energy on tackling the agenda and curb the tendency toward the never-ending meeting that eats up everyone's time.

Avoid Misplacing Important Files

When passing a document around for people to sign, use a file folder in a bright color. Placing the document in a brightly colored folder will make it less likely to become buried under a stack of papers on someone's desk.

Color Code Your Training Efforts

To help new employees learn how to process various pieces of paperwork, institute a color code system using different colored highlighters or adhesive dots. For example, use red to indicate urgent tasks, green for items to be filed, or yellow for documents to copy and distribute. This will save people time trying to figure out what to do with each piece of paper, so they can focus on doing the task itself.

To Talk or E-mail?

Before you hit reply to the next E-mail you receive, pause to consider whether picking up the phone may be faster. You can communicate the same amount of information in two minutes of spoken conversation that it takes in 10 or more rounds of E-mail.

Is Clutter Crowding Out What's Important?

The way you approach your workspace and workload has as much to do with how much you get done in a day as does the number and size of the tasks you perform. Whether your specialty is law, medicine, finance, or advertising, handling paperwork is a necessary challenge for every professional. Handle it well, and you use paperwork to facilitate your workload. Handle it poorly, and you get buried in a mountain of memos, reports and forms.

To have more time and energy to complete what's most important, follow these steps for streamlining your work habits and methods:

- ◆ Build white space into your calendar. To schedule work most effectively, don't schedule tasks to consume every working and waking moment. Plan for about 80 percent capacity. That means for a 40-hour work week, schedule about 30 hours of work, knowing that another 10 hours of "stuff" will appear unexpectedly.
- ◆ Avoid "work and wait" patterns. Waiting for information, equipment, or resources is a major time waster. **Here are some tactics to minimize, if not prevent, slowdowns:**
 - Get other people's thoughts on due dates before scheduling tasks.
 - Offer to help people do the work or collect the information you need.
 - Let people know they don't have to have the information in formal or final form.
 - Remind everyone involved that you need the information as soon as it's available.
- ◆ Be wary of high-tech timesaving devices. High-tech may mean high-time. Before buying any "timesaving" gadget, consider the hidden investment of time in its use: time to select and purchase the item, time to learn how to operate, set up and secure it, time to refurbish or repair it, and time to insure and replace it. It's important to recognize that low-tech items like the pen, ruler, paperclip and broom can be real timesavers themselves.
- ◆ Clutter your to-do list, not your mind. Your mind can only hold about seven chunks of information at once, so why push your luck? If you have flashes of brilliance when

you're in the shower, out for a walk, or driving on the freeway, write them down immediately rather than trying to juggle them in your mind. Those who make lists stay on target. Those who don't make lists are at the mercy of events, memory and mediocrity.

- ◆ Create systems and routines for daily duties. Systems and routines make things faster, cheaper and better. If you collect the same information over and over, why not compile a form to hand to your patients, partners, or staff? If you give out the same answers to the same questions, prepare a flyer for the inquiry. If you give the same instructions for operating the same equipment, post the procedure near the equipment. If you respond to patients about the same issues, create letters and handouts to address their concerns.
 - ◆ Work in marathons. Marathons serve two purposes: to catch up or to get ahead. When you feel you're slipping further and further behind, do a work marathon to catch up. Arrive early. Work late. Don't allow interruptions, and don't rework anything. Work fast, and don't look up between tasks. Put in three or four days like that, and you'll feel caught up enough to face the world again. On other occasions, you may have monumental tasks before you and want to get a jump start on them. Schedule a marathon, and make it a big deal. The exhilaration from what you accomplish will more than reduce the fatigue from the actual work.
 - ◆ Complete things. Bonuses come upon the completion of projects. Signed contracts come at the end of negotiations. Points go on the scoreboard only when the runner crosses the goal line. One thing completed is worth 10 things on hold. Incomplete tasks can make you feel depressed and wasted, but you will feel energized after completing them.
- When you get things done quickly, efficiently and on schedule, you will not only impress your co-workers, friends and family, but you will also create a sense of accomplishment that will satisfy yourself as well.



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.

Tyme Management® is published by Rutherford Communications, P.O. Box 8853, Waco, Texas 76710, 1-800-815-2323, www.rutherfordcommunications.com. Copyright © 2014 Rutherford Communications. All rights reserved. Material may not be reproduced in whole or part in any form without the written permission of the publisher. Printed subscription price (12 issues), \$49.95 per year in U.S. Electronic subscription price (12 issues), \$24.95 per year in U.S.

Publisher: Ronnie Marroquin

Managing Editor: Kimberly Denman

Illustrations by RMS Graphics

ISSN 1074-3006

TIMESAVERS

Surprise Meetings

Sometimes you may find yourself in a meeting that wasn't scheduled to happen. **Here's how to handle an unexpected meeting:**

- ◆ Identify the urgency of the issue. If the meeting isn't mandatory, but is an informal request to discuss something that can wait, ask if you can postpone it until later.
- ◆ Determine whether the meeting can accomplish anything. If the people and resources needed to sufficiently discuss and decide something aren't present, reschedule the meeting.
- ◆ Set a time limit. As soon as possible, define the agenda or purpose of the meeting. Establish a clear time limit to how long the meeting will last.
- ◆ Stay focused. If the discussion is digressing, make a point that brings it back to the issue. Complete the original agenda before moving on to any new topics.
- ◆ Realize that you can't control everything. When an unexpected situation occurs, turn it into an opportunity. You might as well enjoy it and not waste your energy by getting angry.

Check Out Your Library's Resources

With so much information out there, how do you even begin a research project? **Here are tips for finding the information you need at the library:**

- ▲ Identify what you're looking for. Define the results that you want from the information. For example, when doing marketing research for a new product, you may want information that will help the company decide which age group to target.
- ▲ Outline the specific data you want. From the goals you've defined, write down a list of the kinds of facts and figures that will help provide this information. The marketing research, for example, may require industry sales figures for similar products according to age group.
- ▲ Get to know your librarian. Librarians are one of the greatest resources at your library. They can show you

the many resources available to you.

- ▲ Examine traditional print directories. Directories list groups, such as organizations, agencies, businesses and people, that have a common interest. First, find a basic directory that lists the names of specific directories.
- ▲ Look at book, periodical and newspaper indexes. Indexes are available that can show you the names and dates of publications in which your subject has appeared. You can then go straight to these sources.
 - ▲ Refer to indexes of government publications. These can show you the publications of various federal and state agencies and of international organizations like the United Nations.
- ▲ Try directories for computer and online databases. Databases can be a quick and easy way to access information. By consulting a directory of databases, you can determine which ones will be the most beneficial.

