



Tyme Management™

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Lighten Up

Here are some simple ways to lighten up your workday:

- ◆ Opt for a tranquil morning routine. Get ready for work without the chatter of the radio or TV. Try listening to calm, soothing music for a change.
- ◆ Talk to your employer about telecommuting options. Try to telecommute once or twice a week. You'll free up more time to work without the stress of your daily commute.
- ◆ Take a real lunch break from work. Get together with a friend or loved one for lunch.
- ◆ Streamline your "to do" list. Cross off at least two unimportant items. Eliminate them from your list completely without doing them.
- ◆ Take a one-minute vacation. Close your eyes and imagine a relaxing landscape.
- ◆ Avoid adding anything to today's "to do" list later in the day. Write it down for the next day instead.
- ◆ Leave work at your official closing time. Don't allow leaving late to become a habit.
- ◆ Do something you enjoy on your way home from work. Inject a simple pleasure into your usual routine.

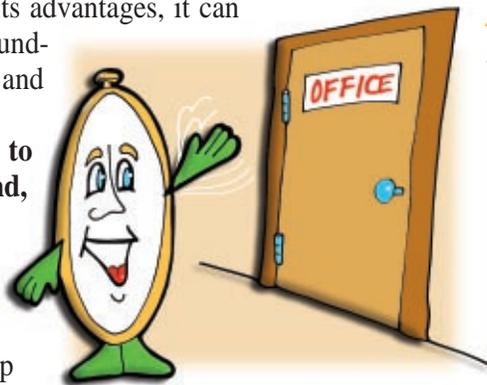
Leaving the Office Behind You

Now more than ever, making the distinction between work time and personal time can be downright difficult. Today, cell phones, laptop computers and the Internet make it possible to work anytime, anywhere. And while convenience may have its advantages, it can also blur healthy boundaries between work and non-work time.

When it's time to leave the office behind, try the following techniques:

- ▲ *Establish an end-of-the-workday ritual.* Wrap up work at the office by doing something each day to sign off. Straighten up your desk, turn your planner to tomorrow's page and write your "to do" list for the next day. Composing tomorrow's "to do" list will ensure that everything's accounted for, so you don't have to worry while you're at home.
- ▲ *Use commute time to make a mental transition.* Find a landmark on the way home to mark the point at which you'll leave all the stress of the day behind you. Shift your thoughts to the world outside work and to your family and evening activities. Try doing something different on the way home at least once a week such as taking a different route to enjoy the scenery.

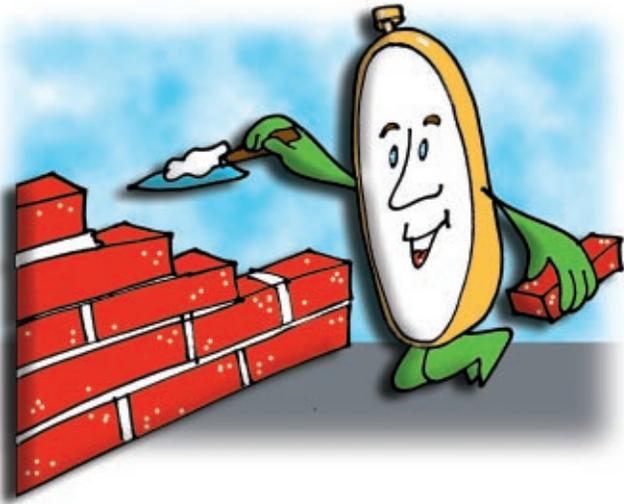
- ▲ *Allow yourself a 10-minute break before jumping into your evening routine.* Change into different clothes, and give yourself a few minutes to unwind and decompress. Ask your family to give you this break time.



- ▲ *Trade the work mentality for a more relaxed approach.* When you're at work, deadlines and agendas may rule, but at home, these time pressures are often unnecessary. Take your watch off on the weekends and enjoy a spontaneous

change of plans when spending time with family and friends. Consciously change your mind-set when you find yourself tensing up or becoming impatient.

- ▲ *Limit your workspace at home.* When you're starting a new business or working during the peak season of the year, you may have to make an exception to the rule and take work home with you. When you do work at home, do so in a designated area rather than spreading your paperwork all over the house. This will still allow you to leave your work behind you when you want to take a break.



Rebuilding from the Bottom Up

When a department is inefficient and unproductive, it can damage the success of the entire company. Sometimes as a leader, you may be called upon to come into an existing organization and give it a complete overhaul.

The following are stages involved in “rebuilding” an existing organization:

- *Diagnose the problem.* Take a look at how things have been operating first without making any changes. Examine whether people are qualified to do their jobs and note how well they’re currently doing them.
- *Try out people in new roles.* Select people with potential to work in positions of greater responsibility for a trial period. If they don’t perform well, you’ll have avoided wasting valuable time due to a bad promotion.
- *Enhance areas that are lacking.* Invest time in recruiting, hiring and training people to do their jobs well. Provide new knowledge, equipment and resources that will improve how the organization functions.
- *Blend the old with the new.* Change procedures and policies that hinder productivity. Clearly communicate the changes to be made and the reasons for them, and help existing employees to embrace these changes.

Memory Tip: Use Your Keys

Your keys might just be the key to your memory. The next time you want to remember to take something with you, place it next to your keys. That way, when you’re ready to go, you’ll be sure to grab it even if you’re in a hurry.

Categorize Your “To Do” List

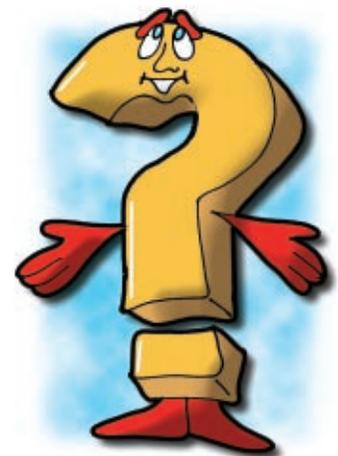
To knock out the tasks on your “to do” list, rank them using one of the following categories:

- *Deadlines* – tasks that have a time-sensitive nature. Accomplishing your urgent, important tasks can get you into a groove that will keep you going on the rest.
- *Location* – tasks in the same area of your home or errands that can be run in the same area of town. By arranging your tasks this way, you’ll conserve energy.
- *Length* – tasks that will take the same amount of time to do. In some cases, it’s better to knock out several short tasks first, so you’ll limit the amount of time left over for the ones you tend to drag out.
- *Interest level* – tasks that you just don’t like to do. Getting boring or otherwise unpleasant tasks out of the way first will leave you more motivated to finish your fun and interesting ones.
- *Difficulty level* – tasks that require more energy or concentration. By doing difficult tasks first, you’ll be able to work on the easier ones even if you’re tired.

Questions Leaders Ask

Good leaders ask the tough questions that cut to the heart of what will make their organizations more productive and successful. **Here are some good questions to ask:**

- ◆ What is the purpose of this organization? What are its goals?
- ◆ What will enhance the financial success of this company?
- ◆ What are the standards for quality performance?
- ◆ How can I improve the efficiency of company procedures?
- ◆ How does each employee contribute to the team?
- ◆ How do the strengths of my team members complement my weaknesses?
- ◆ How can I make a meaningful contribution to this project?
- ◆ What needs to be done on the task at hand?



Manage Your E-mail

Depending on how you use it, E-mail can be an efficient way to conduct business or a colossal time waster. **The following are tips for managing your E-mail load:**

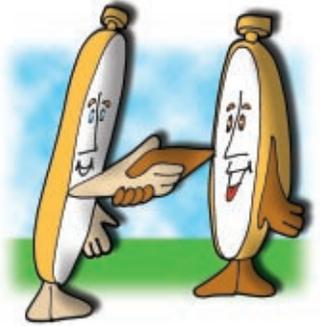
- ◆ *Regulate how often you check your messages.* How often you stop to check your E-mail will depend on the amount you receive and how essential it is to doing your job. If you're checking it more than once every hour or half-hour, may be distracting you too much.
- ◆ *Organize messages into different folders.* If you handle mass quantities of E-mail, you may want to divide your inbox into folders to categorize the contents. These folders may be designated by date, sender, topic, or whether the message was sent to you directly or carbon copied.
- ◆ *Use filters to sort your mail.* Employ the filter feature of your E-mail program to distribute incoming messages into assigned folders by key word or the sender's address so won't have to sort through all of them first.
- ◆ *Avoid unnecessary distraction.* When you need to concentrate on an important task, turn off the chime or pop-up screen feature that announces new mail. You may want to disengage it permanently if you're tempted to check it more often than necessary.
- ◆ *Designate a separate account for personal mail.* Get a different E-mail address for communicating with friends and family. You can forward jokes, games and other nonwork-related material to this address.



Reducing Resentment

Start with a bunch of people who have a variety of personalities and communication styles, add a weighty portion of projects, deadlines and goals, mix in some stress and emotional tension, and what do you have? A recipe for relational resentment. No matter how well-intentioned you and your coworkers may be, conflict is a typical result of relationships under pressure. **Here's how you can reduce resentment in your relationships at work:**

- ❖ Consider any possible causes of resentment that your coworkers may have. What present situations may be causing resentment, or what has the potential to?
- ❖ Examine how you may be contributing to your coworkers' feelings. What are you doing or not doing that may foster this resentment? How might others misperceive you?
- ❖ Be proactive to communicate and make amends. If you know someone who holds something against you, arrange a time to get together and discuss the problem.
- ❖ Ask people to share the reasons for their feelings. What steps can you take to prevent the same problem in the future? What can you both do to make changes to present irritants?



Making Meetings Productive

To make your meetings more productive:

- ▲ *Come with a specific purpose or topic to discuss.* A brief outline of the agenda can help keep you on task.
- ▲ *Come prepared.* Bring the information and resources needed to have an intelligent discussion, as well as the authority necessary to make the decisions.
- ▲ *Come with the end in mind.* Set a time limit for your meeting. Save small talk for time left over at the end.
- ▲ *Come away in agreement.* Make sure both people leave agreeing on what was accomplished.

In Case of Emergency

If a coworker is injured in an accident on the job:

- Examine the degree of injury. Determine how serious the situation is and whether or not you're qualified to take care of it. Ask for help if necessary.
- Consider the potential for further injury. If the person is at risk of additional injury, clear the area of any obstacles, and ask people to leave the area or building.
- If it's a minor injury, send the person to get first aid. Make sure there's a designated person in your organization who can administer first aid at all times.
- If the injury is severe, call for emergency assistance immediately. While you wait for help to arrive, keep the area as quiet as possible, and remain calm and reassuring.
- Record the accident in writing. A minor injury can sometimes turn into a more serious condition. Without proper documentation, the person may have problems making a claim.
- Report the accident. Notify the human resources department about what happened, so they can process a worker's compensation claim if applicable.

Make the Change to Reach Your Goals

Change – the word can be threatening, challenging, or exhilarating depending on your approach to it. No matter how much planning and goal setting you do, you won't accomplish anything unless you're willing to make a change.

To make changes and reach your goals:

- See the need for change. When approaching a challenging goal, imagine what it would be like to achieve it. Then picture what it would be like if you didn't and allowed things to remain the same. If you're not satisfied with this forecast, you have the motivation you need to change and accomplish your goal.
- Assess your abilities, and pool your resources. Do you lack certain skills that are necessary for achieving your goal? If so, take action to get the training you'll need. Consider the time, money, people, equipment and other resources needed to execute your plan, but don't let a lack of resources hold you back.
- Improve your discipline. Once you've formulated an action plan for accomplishing your goal, you'll need self-discipline to carry it to completion. Commit yourself to your goal and to



diligently working step-by-step to finish it. Set interim target dates for reviewing your progress, and ask others to check up on you periodically.

- Position yourself for opportunity. Although success is in large part a result of hard work, new opportunities can open doors to even greater success. Seek out opportunities to be exposed to new ideas and meet new people. If things aren't working out as planned under the present conditions, change these conditions.
- Harness enthusiasm. When the going gets tough, you must have personal commitment and motivation for your goal – not just someone else's enthusiasm for it. Cultivate personal enthusiasm and motivation for your goal daily by reminding yourself of the reasons and benefits for doing it.

Cultivating Self-Discipline

The following may prevent you from being self-disciplined:

- *Bad habits.* Identify the patterns that keep you from doing your best, and replace them with new and better habits.
- *Lack of planning.* Outline clear goals and a plan for getting there. Give yourself precise, realistic deadlines for each of your tasks.
- *Procrastination.* What tasks and decisions do you procrastinate on, and why? Break these down into a series of deadlines.
- *Inconsistency.* Needless time is wasted when you stop a task and then pick it back up again later.
- *Daydreaming.* Develop your concentration, and don't allow yourself to be interrupted.
- *Complacency.* Set goals that will challenge you and make the task more interesting.



Pat Answers

Dear Pat: I work in a large department, which is headed by an incompetent manager. I'm not being mean. He is just way over his head. He's very good at the technical side of his job, but when it comes to working with people – especially managing them – he's clueless. He tends to have "favorites" who get special treatment and can do no wrong. That leads to a lot of resentment among the rest of us. Something needs to be done about the tension and low morale, but the manager doesn't seem to notice there's a problem. How can we get him to see the problem and then fix it?

Pat Answers: You have described one of the most common problems in the business world. Too often technical experts are promoted, not only out of their realm of expertise but out of their comfort zone as well. They try to make sure no one finds out. They do this in a variety of ways. They may try to intimidate or deny access to information, or do what your boss is doing: recruiting allies. When your boss picks these "favorites," he's trying to make friends. Friends who will stick up for him and support him when he screws up. Friends who will help him not to screw up. He seems unaware of the tension and low morale probably because he's so focused on keeping up the appearance of leadership. Why not help him out? No one can be a good manager alone. Offer your own expertise in ways that will help him be successful as manager. Become a true ally. Help him gain the support of the rest of the department. When he no longer feels threatened by his staff, he will be able to see the unique value of everyone in the department.



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.

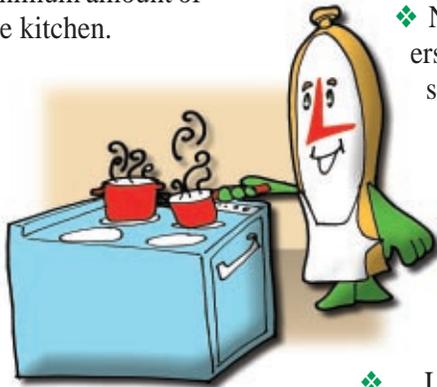
Streamlining Kitchen Time

Preparing meals, cleaning dishes, getting snacks and beverages, and many other tasks cause you to spend more quality time in the kitchen than you really desire.

Whatever your kitchen looks like and no matter how it's designed, you can organize your kitchen in such a way that you can then feed yourself (and those visiting you) with a minimum amount of time in or fuss over the kitchen.

Consider this organization plan:

- ❖ Place a "lazy Susan" in your cabinets. This plastic gadget eliminates having to rummage through everything to find something.
- ❖ Keep your cookbooks on an out-of-the-way shelf instead of in a drawer. You can use handy cabinets and drawers for things you use regularly.
- ❖ Make use of your Crock-Pot. Put your recipes together in the morning and let them simmer all day.
- ❖ Organize spices in alphabetical order for quick access.
- ❖ Store items as close to their functioning area as you possibly can.
- ❖ Add racks to your cabinet doors to double your space.
- ❖ Always take note of items you're running low on. Keep a notepad and pen in the kitchen and write down items you start to run low on *before* you



completely run out of it. This saves you from emergency grocery trips.

- ❖ Cook most of your meals ahead of time. Freeze them and then reheat these ready-to-go meals when meal-time nears.
- ❖ Clean items immediately after you finish using them. Then, once they're dry, put them away.
- ❖ Number your containers and lids with corresponding numbers. Nothing frustrates people more than not being able to find a lid for a container in which you've already placed your leftovers.
- ❖ Learn to cook with your microwave. It saves time and doesn't heat up the kitchen.

- ❖ Buy extra measuring cups and spoons to store with the items you most commonly use them to measure.
- ❖ Use an automatic dishwasher, whenever possible.
- ❖ Plan your menu for the week and type out a menu. Allow family members to offer menu suggestions a week in advance.
- ❖ Store leftovers in see-through plastic containers so they're easily identifiable and available to eat.
- ❖ Cook in larger containers than what your recipe requires. You'll avoid having to clean up spills afterwards.



Cool Off When Arguments Heat Up

If you're in a typical family, you've probably encountered arguments from time to time. But, arguing doesn't mean you and your partner should dissolve your relationship due to irreconcilable differences (the most commonly cited reason for divorce).

The first step to take is to *handle problems as they occur*, instead of allowing small matters to escalate into major divisive rifts. **Some other strategies that may help you and your partner include:**

- ◆ Keep complaints short and simple. Stick to the point, voice your concerns immediately after they come to mind, ask that your partner let you finish speaking before responding and, once you're done, listen to your partner as well.
- ◆ Clarify anything that either of you is unclear about.
- ◆ Avoid speaking sarcastically toward, or insulting, your partner. When you use sarcasm or insults, you're only hiding your true feelings and hurting your partner's feelings. If your partner uses these tactics, change the subject of your conversation instead of retaliating.
- ◆ Take time to cool off by scheduling a time later in the day when you both can talk about the problem with a level head. Go for a walk, visit a friend, or take a relaxing bath. But, remember to talk to your partner at the appointed time.

Phone #'s from the Net

At about a dollar each, it can be costly to get a few telephone numbers from long-distance "information." But it's free to get them on the Internet. More importantly, you get addresses, e-mail addresses, fax numbers and website addresses. Leading Internet directory assistance services are: • Big Book: www.bigbook.com • Big Yellow: www.bigyellow.com.

Learning to Live in the Present

Have you ever thought about how much time you actually spend thinking about the present? Often, people waste too much of their time brooding over the past or speculating anxiously about the future. Living in the present, on the other hand, encourages greater productivity and gives you more energy to face and enjoy life.

Here are ways you can become more present-minded:

- ◆ Get out of bed immediately. Avoid the temptation to delay the day by hitting the snooze button. When the alarm goes off, open your eyes and get out of bed.



- ◆ Practice “now” thinking. Once a day, sit down and quiet your mind. Think only about what’s going on around you at the moment. What do you feel like now? What do you see and hear?
- ◆ Focus. Just like any other exercise, it takes practice to train your mind to live in the present. When you find yourself wandering into useless thought, consciously bring your attention back to the present. Concentrate on one thing at a time, and make an effort to enjoy “now.”

Are You a Good Time Manager?

Your reserve of time is one of the most precious resources you have. In this new year, how will you use your time? Will you waste it, or will you use it as a new opportunity to move closer to your goals and dreams? **Answer “yes” or “no” to the following questions to find out how well you use your time:**

- Y N 1. Do you have a clear picture of what you want to accomplish each day?
- Y N 2. Do you list tasks and appointments on your calendar?
- Y N 3. Do you have a few clear goals for each activity and project you’re involved in?
- Y N 4. Do you group similar tasks together to do at the same time?
- Y N 5. Do you feel obligated to read everything that crosses your desk?
- Y N 6. Have you put off a project in the last three months that required frenzied hours of overtime to finish?
- Y N 7. Do you prioritize your tasks in order and stick to top-priority items?
- Y N 8. Do you keep important references and supplies within arm’s reach of your work area?
- Y N 9. Do you give clear instructions to coworkers, so they can take care of minor jobs without interrupting you?
- Y N 10. Do you work on highly involved tasks when you feel the most alert?
- Y N 11. Do you stop working when you feel fatigued?
- Y N 12. Do you break large projects down into manageable pieces to



finish one at a time?

- Y N 13. Do you survey your long-term goals regularly?

Scoring:

- ◆ Questions 1-4, 7-13: 1 point for each “yes.”
- ◆ Questions 5-6: 1 point for each “no.”

Results:

11-13 points: You’re a good time manager, doing what’s important in the time available. Evaluate and redefine your current goals to ensure that you invest your time wisely in the New Year.

6-10 points: You know the basics for getting things done. Refine your time-management skills this year to further maximize your potential.

0-5 points: Make a fresh start this year, and commit to develop your time-management know-how.

“It’s not so much how busy you are, but why you are busy. The bee is praised. The mosquito is swatted.”
– Mary O’Connor

Expedite Reader Comprehension with Writing Skills

Whether good or bad, immediacy is key. The Internet has made us impatient with anything that can't be skimmed. Quick access to information mandates that readers understand the layout of your document, so they can pick and choose, sort and file as they read. **Consider your own impatience:**

- Do you like being put on hold?
 - Do you find canned online tutorials helpful?
 - Do you enjoy receiving a 67-page report to read and then spending 45 minutes in a meeting to hear what the report said?
- Readers react similarly. Ensure your success by giving readers quick access to what they need. **To edit your writing for content and layout so that readers can easily find specific information:**

◆ *Focus on the reader's interests up front.* "What's in it for me?" The first step in writing must be to consider the needs, interests, experience and knowledge of your reader. If her interest is money, did you sidetrack to tell her about the prestige involved in owning the product? If he's primarily interested in speed of operation, don't let your document trail off into economics.

◆ *Check accuracy and completeness.* Errors will cost you. If readers find one error, they'll often doubt everything else in the document. To ensure accuracy, proofread! Double-check all graphs, tables and figures.

"Jim" investigated a job-related injury at his company and submitted a report of the accident to be used in an upcoming lawsuit. Unfortunately, his company had to settle out of court after reading his report. Why? He had stated that the accident took place on October 16 rather than on October 15 (simply a typo). Because of that one inaccuracy, company lawyers pointed out that the plaintiff would question every other detail in the investigation.

Consider another area for inaccuracy: names and titles. People get offended when you don't consider them important enough to verify the correct spellings and titles.

- ◆ *Add authority.* Gone are the days when anything in print seemed automatically believable. Adding authority to your writing will add credibility to you and your topic. *To do so:*
- Avoid the use of vague, unsupported generalizations.
 - Identify subjective statements as such.
 - Use numbers, statistics and symbols with care.
 - Omit unnecessary auxiliaries or conditional words, such as "can," "may," "would," "should" and "might." State what you can support and nothing more.
 - Consider using quotations to add weight to your arguments.

- Be precise and diligent in presenting the details and statistics necessary for your intended audience and purpose.
- Interpret facts.
- ◆ *Eliminate repetitious details.* Repetition poses problems for the reader who has little time. Reiterating previously stated points creates frustration for readers whose schedules are already overtaxed. See how annoying that is? The bottom line: Cut details that say what you have already made obvious either directly or indirectly.
- ◆ *Separate paragraphs by idea and for eye appeal.* Paragraphs are chunks of text that either invite readers to continue or convince them not to. Consider coherence. Does the paragraph flow logically? Are irrelevant details buried in the middle of an otherwise organized paragraph?



Consider length. Generally, a paragraph should complete the subject at hand – one idea, one paragraph. However, the paragraph must also have eye appeal; long paragraphs tire the reader and make the material look too complex. On the other hand, short, choppy paragraphs cause the reader to lose the thread of a discussion. There's no minimum or maximum paragraph length. Do unto your readers as you would have them do unto you.

- ◆ *Use easy-to-skim lists.* A list is like a red flag saying, "This is important!" It draws immediate attention. *Use lists to do the following:*
- Highlight major, important ideas.
 - Break complex information down into smaller, more manageable chunks.
 - Overview and review key information quickly.
 - Beware of misusing lists – too much of a good thing can be a bad thing.
 - ◆ *Add informative headings and adequate spacing.* Informative headings and subheadings allow readers to skim the essentials. Think newspaper headlines. *Some good examples are:*
 - "Test Results Showed Hydrogen Leak"
 - "March Scheduled for Transferring Permanent Records"
 - "Upward Sales Trends in Chicago"

Finally, a crowded page or screen makes written material look too complex, but adequate spacing will tempt your readers to continue.



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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PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Cultivate New Ideas

Inventors grow new ideas every day. Product development people make their “bread and butter” processing ideas hatched by others. The “better idea” is the stuff of desire and genius but, more than that, it’s the product of targeted work and specific thinking.

Consider the following tips on cultivating new ideas:

- ◆ Focus on a problem. Is there a particular problem you face consistently? Make a list of ways to handle it or improve it. Add to the list every day for a week, then determine if one of your new ideas will be helpful. By considering the same problem each day for several days, you’ll devise many potential solutions.
- ◆ Respect yourself and your instincts. You have your finger on the pulse of your industry. When you have an idea, act on it. Ideas are fleeting, delicate things not to be neglected.
- ◆ Move forward with courage. Don’t be afraid to confront change. Learn to handle both the expected and the unexpected. Face the things you fear and handle them.

The ideas you generate by ridding yourself of old assumptions will carry you far if you cultivate them, air them and allow them to grow.

It’s You Alone Vs. Procrastination

Procrastination is an immense disadvantage to time managers. It costs you time, energy and momentum as you wait for that “feeling” that tells you it’s time to get busy. It can also cause you to become a chronic time waster instead of a successful time manager.

Conquering procrastination is no easy task. You must have a strong self-discipline or create a new routine that eliminates procrastination. Only you and your mind can defeat procrastination, no one else can help you. **To get started in this battle against procrastination, start your attack with these “weapons”:**

- Break down tasks into pieces you can handle easily, one at a time.
- Make yourself accountable by writing out a contract with yourself. Lay out what and when things must be accomplished and write out rewards and penalties for meeting or not meeting your deadlines.
- Find the areas that plague you with

procrastination. Begin making decisions in these areas quickly and taking action right afterwards.

- Set priorities and complete the high-yield projects first.
- Complete tough items on your daily to-do list in the mornings. Then, you can breeze through the rest of your day.
- Approach your work like you would a game and try to win out.
- Reward yourself appropriately for each step and task you complete.
- Post your deadlines in a highly visible area in your office.
- Focus on one task at a time. This will stop allowing the multitude of tasks you have overwhelm you.
- Avoid perfectionism. Complete things as best you can and don’t worry about a few imperfections because unless you complete it, it’s not useful at all.
- Concentrate on proposing a solution to tasks rather than focusing on their time schedule or size.

