



Tyme Management™

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Staying Focused Amidst Interruptions

Interruptions present themselves in many shapes and forms – daydreams, visitors, phone calls, and unexpected projects or tasks are just a few. When you're interrupted, you most likely automatically turn away from the task you're working on for at least a few minutes. How does this impact you?

Interruptions – whether they monopolize a long or short period of time – slow down your pre-planned schedule or the schedules of the people who are waiting on your completion of the task.

To prevent the domino effect of interruptions:

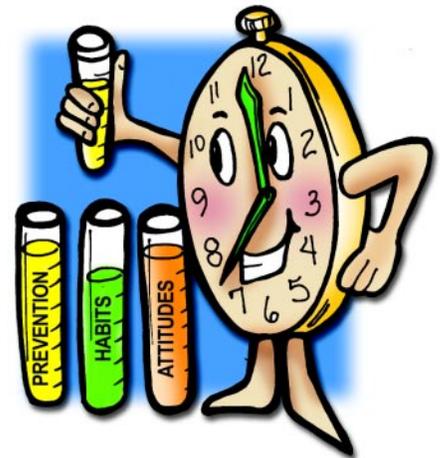
- ◆ Realize that it's okay to make the interruption wait for a minute while you finish your thought on the current project or while you write notes on where you were or what you were doing.
- ◆ Expect and plan for slight delays or interruptions in your projects.
- ◆ Focus on your highest priorities and weigh new projects according to your existing priorities.
- ◆ Clear your desk of all other materials except those that are necessary for your current project.

Prevent Time Loss with Prevention

The old adage “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is especially true when the ounce of prevention consists of attitudes and habits that prevent time loss. Investing your time wisely brings profits and achievements which enable you to enjoy the important things in life, such as more time with your family and greater personal satisfaction.

Most scholars would agree that it takes less time to prevent time wasters than it does to extricate yourself from the crisis situations they inevitably produce. **To prevent time loss in your life:**

- Organize your desk or office so that you can work efficiently and productively. A clean work area provides less distraction and gives you room to spread out your work comfortably.
- Accept your right to say “No.” Overcommitment is one of the most common time thieves. When you have a clear sense of how you want to invest your time, you can more easily refuse tasks that are unprofitable for you. Carefully weigh new tasks according to your goals and priorities. Then, determine whether you can add more tasks or not.
- Put things back where they came from. Leaving items wherever you happen to be when you finish using them is a false time saver. Putting things back where they belong takes only a moment, but saves you valuable time later.
- Listen wisely. Focus not only on the



words, but also on people's tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language. Learn to concentrate, ask pertinent questions, and think about what you hear and observe.

- Write things down. While the brain is a powerful creative tool for thinking and planning, you don't want to overload it. Filling your thoughts with all sorts of information such as appointments, telephone calls, and miscellaneous errands siphons off the power of concentration that could be directed to important decisions or work. Use your planner to record future appointments or tasks.
- Play a time limit game. Assign a time limit for a specific job and set a timer or alarm to sound when the time is up. The object of the game is to finish your task before the alarm sounds. If, when the timer sounds, the job is completed, reward yourself.

Improve Your Memory to Save Time

What did you do yesterday? What was the name of the last person you called from work yesterday? How many tasks did you complete and what were they? If these questions are met with a perplexed look and a blank mind, you may need a memory boost. Memory is a difficult thing to improve, but it can be done.

Consider improving your memory with these tips:

- Make the item you're committing to memory into a rhyme, acronym, or any other memory-jogging formation. Do you remember the old memory-jogger, "'I' before 'e' except after 'c'"? You can make similar ones for your business matters.
- Spend time thinking about the material. Some names like Black, Green, White, and others conjure up memories of similar items in your mind, like crayons. Use these connections to help you remember them.
- Organize your life. Place hooks on your walls for umbrellas, keys, and hats. Set things in the same place every day and use colored filing systems so you can find things quickly by color.
- Use a pen. Write down whatever you must remember. School teachers believe that once you've heard, written



down, and looked back over something, it usually goes into your permanent memory bank.

- Realize that outside factors could be influencing your memory capacity. Alcohol, cigarettes, some medications, and high stress can cause your memory capacity to falter.
- Visualize what you must remember. A mental picture of something will often stay with you longer than mere words or numbers.
- Do things differently. Routines often take over for your mind. Many people forget whether they've completed such simple tasks as locking the door. *Tip:* Doing routine tasks differently makes them memorable. Use your non-dominant hand to do things or complete tasks in unusual ways to help you recall their completion.

Strive for High-Quality Output

Are you valued by your organization? You will be highly valued if you utilize your time most effectively every minute, hour, day, month, and year. Productive people are valuable people.

To become highly valued, you simply must provide more than the current standard calls for. In other words, you should strive to provide high-quality work combined with high output. **To accomplish this goal of producing premium and productive work, gain ground in these four areas:**

- ◆ Spend the majority of your time accomplishing goals and tasks that your organization deems highly important.
- ◆ Utilize all opportunities to hone and refine your job skills.
- ◆ Discard hindering habits. Apply all of your effort each day to high-priority matters.
- ◆ Gather new knowledge and skills. Continuing education courses and self-help books in your field could grant you the advantage you need.



Support Your Ideas With Explanations

How you view others affects your time management more than you may think. Time is often wasted by attributing attitudes to other people that may or may not exist. Many people defeat creative ideas before mentioning them to others because they believe others wouldn't go for such an idea. This foregone conclusion could be completely wrong.

When you have a good idea, take the time to explain it to others and attempt to win their agreement and cooperation before you disregard the idea. The time spent in presenting a new idea and gaining its acceptance is time well spent. It's truly productive time with a high payoff in the end. Saving the time that it takes to sell ideas to others is a false saving; it multiplies over and over the loss of productivity that could have resulted from selling an idea with merit.

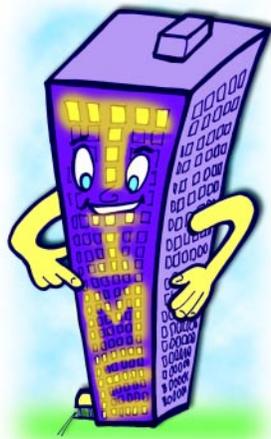
How to Accomplish More, More Quickly

- ▲ Understand your assignment. If the instructions are written, read them carefully. If your instructions are verbal, repeat the assignment's main points in your own words to make sure you understand.
- ▲ Know what's desired. You need to know the expected results, the deadline for finishing, resources available to help you, and the reporting method desired. For long projects, schedule periodic meetings to review progress and share ideas..
- ▲ Make your plan. Remember to allow for special circumstances, events, or changes. Be flexible in your scheduling.
- ▲ Maintain good notes. Your notes can keep you on task and serve as written documentation of when things are completed.

Structure Your Time for Success

Ancient wisdom says, “If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always gotten.” This means that if you want to improve your life in any way, you must change your behavior. It also suggests that you can take control of your life and, by changing your behavior, direct yourself toward the goals and objectives that are important to you.

Since every individual has an equal supply of time, it’s how time is used that is the determining factor in increasing productivity. Time can be an asset or a liability depending on how it’s used. Most of the tasks that you perform can be grouped into four general categories: planning and goal setting, communicating, directing, and doing.



- ✓ Time for Planning and Goal Setting – At the beginning of each week, lay out specific blocks of time on your calendar for planning and goal setting. Mark these times on your planner and keep your appointments. Occasionally, emergencies may use up this scheduled time. If this happens, reschedule your planning time for later in the day. When planning and setting goals, be sure to include long-term and short-term goals with action steps for their achievement.
- ✓ Time for Communicating – Once planning and goal setting are accomplished, goals and plans must be communicated to others whose cooperation is needed. Remember that communication is a two-way exchange – both talking and listening. Successful people realize that time spent listening pays double dividends. Listening effectively gives you insight into the feelings, needs, and knowledge level of others. Cut your “telling” time significantly by knowing exactly how to phrase your message so that it will be accepted quickly.
- ✓ Time for Directing – Directing your own activity and the activity of others involves choosing what to do, then planning and using all the available knowledge about how to do it. The time you spend in directing activities becomes more manageable when you first give adequate attention to planning and communicating. Tracking results is a good way to check on the effectiveness of the goals and plans made for the organization and on the efficiency achieved in carrying out those plans to reach your goals.
- ✓ Time for Doing – Much of your time is spent performing the skills you were hired to do. Finding quality time to focus on your high-payoff tasks and accomplishing them is vital. It requires adequate planning, communication, direction, and concentration. As you move up the corporate ladder, it’s important to set aside high-payoff activities for yourself to do and to delegate some tasks to others. Often, managers find themselves spending a larger amount of time managing and a decreasing amount of time doing.

Take Time to Release Your Frustrations

Crisis situations, conflicts, and deadlines can make you feel like you’re on an emotional roller coaster. **To minimize your mental and emotional reactions to stress, practice “letting go” with physical activity:**

- ◆ Spend your lunch hour at the gym. Swim, play racquetball, jog, or take a brisk walk.
- ◆ Squeeze the phone tightly after each call you make to release the muscle tension in your hand.
- ◆ Grasp the bottom of your chair as you sit. Use both hands and keep your feet on the floor and your arms and back straight. Using your arms, lift your body up slowly, staying seated, and feel the release of tension in your back and arms.
- ◆ Stand up two to three feet behind your desk and put your hands on it. Place your feet three feet apart. With your back and arms straight, do a slow push-up.

Reach Your Goals with the Power of Affirmation

Setting a goal is simple but achieving it is another thing. One way you shore up your confidence and keep your desire and interest high is to create personal affirmations. Another word for affirmations is “self-talk.” They are positive statements that create positive expectancy. **Here are a few ideas on possible affirmations:**

- If it’s to be, it’s up to me!
- I won’t be denied!
- Use time or lose time!
- I do what I say!
- I’m focused and I’m organized!

Affirmations like these can be used to displace old thinking, attitudes, habits, fears, and doubts. Create your own affirmations and repeat them often.

Do You Have Too Many Projects “Cooking”?

Placing projects “on the back burner” is a common business occurrence. But, placing projects on hold for too long can cause them to boil over and scald you.

Here is a plan to avoid putting off projects too long:

- Schedule a review of projects on hold at least once every two weeks.
- Set tentative deadlines for doing these projects.
- Break the project into smaller, workable pieces.
- Consider delegating your “back-burner” projects to someone else who can work on them.

Manage Your Time Wisely

Anyone can attempt to manage time but those who are successful devote themselves to learning and practicing time management techniques every day. Once time habits are set, wisdom can be applied in future situations.

A successful time management system begins with a life mission. Write it out so you'll know why you're where you are and what you long to do.

Next, write out your goals for each of the six areas of your life. **Remember to include one goal for each area:**

- Family and Home
- Mental and Educational
- Spiritual and Ethical
- Social and Cultural
- Financial and Career
- Physical and Health

After you've determined your life's mission and goals for the future,

apply the following suggestions:

- ◆ Divide goals between those you *need* to reach and those you *want* to reach.
- ◆ Assign high priority to "need" goals and less priority to "want" goals.
- ◆ Create steps to help you reach your goals. Label these steps as 1) urgent and important, 2) not urgent but important, 3) urgent but not important, and 4) not urgent nor important.
- ◆ Realize that category 2 steps impact your life most positively.
- ◆ Schedule your tasks for each day, week, month and year.
- ◆ Include at least one activity each day that pushes you a little closer to reaching your goals.
- ◆ Show and tell loved ones and friends that you love and value them daily.
- ◆ Avoid tasks and people that deter you from your goals.
- ◆ Live as if today is the last day of your life. Wouldn't you live to the fullest if you knew today were your last day?
- ◆ Learn from past mistakes and then forget about them.
- ◆ Always strive to improve yourself.
- ◆ Look to the future but remember to live in the present.
- ◆ Have fun! Life moves along better when you have a smile on your face.



Be Productive Every Second Each Day

The pressure of squeezing every ounce of productivity from every second of time can add stress to you, both physically and mentally. **Consider these small but significant ways of taming time's effect on your mental and physical well-being:**

- ▲ Eat a light lunch. Heavy, fat-laden foods slow your physical body down and tire your mind. Your productivity in the afternoon is extremely limited when you eat a heavy lunch.
- ▲ Break for lunch. Working through lunch every day may be admirable in some instances, but it's also unhealthy. People tend to concentrate better when they refresh themselves with periodic breaks, especially lunch. View lunch as the final pit stop you take on the way to racing for the checkered flag at the finish line of your day.
- ▲ Listen to books on CD or tape while driving. This can save you time and offer you the mental break of listening to interesting subjects.
- ▲ Record your favorite television shows and view them at a more convenient time. This allows you to complete work at your home or the office and puts you in control of your time instead of a television network. You can also shorten the amount of time involved by fast-forwarding through the commercials.
- ▲ Choose gas stations where you can pay for your gas at the pump. You can save the time of having to go inside and wait in line for an attendant to assist you.
- ▲ Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day. Your body functions best when it's in a regular rhythm. Determine those times of the day that are best for you and do your highest priority tasks then.

Gaining Control of Your Time

Is your life out of control? Do you long to be in control of your time, your work, your home and your personal life? For some people, these long-ings may be stressful. But, it doesn't have to be this way. **Consider these small adjustments you can make to gain control of your life:**

- Keep a list of your priorities with you at all times. Refer to your list each time you must make a major decision.
- Focus on one major goal or task at a time.
- Review your routines. Change routines that aren't effective.
- Take care of surprise tasks, that are important, when they occur.
- Leave your past behind. Move on to new challenges and pursuits.
- File items correctly the first time.
- Throw away items that aren't of value to you now.
- Realize you won't achieve all of your goals every day. Practice patience.

When You're at a Loss for Words...

Whether you're writing an important contract, press release, memo, or marketing flyer, sometimes the words simply just won't come to you. At moments like this, writing anything at all can be a chore. Writer's often call this "writer's block."

Fortunately, there are ways to break out of these mind blocks and jump-start your flow of ideas once again. **Here are several ways to overcome a loss for words:**

- ◆ Question what you're writing. Ask yourself six questions beginning with these words: how, what, when where, who, and why. For example: What is the purpose of what I am writing? Who will be reading what I am writing? Why am I writing this? After you answer questions similar to these, arrange your answers into an outline of the words you will write.
- ◆ Have a brainstorming session. As ideas come to you, write them down on small pieces of paper and put them in a stack. Once you have enough "idea pieces" written, begin to put them together into a story as if it were a puzzle.
- ◆ Work backwards. Begin by writing the end paragraph or conclusion. Forming a great conclusion can often inspire a great beginning.
- ◆ Jump-start your creativity. Take a break from writing and read a magazine or book on the subject your writing. Reading about your subject could jump-start your own thinking and encourage your creativity.
- ◆ Determine the importance. If you're having trouble putting something into words on paper, consider your other alternatives. Would a simple phone call be a better choice of communication?

Do You Have Time for Another Task?

Time overload often begins with agreeing to add one more task to your schedule. Then, it often snowballs when you add one more and then just one more task to your already growing workload. **If you're out-of-control in your willingness to take on new projects, these tips may help:**

- Have a visual picture of your workload and job requirements. Analyze what your priorities are and determine what areas of your job are not productive or time efficient. Consider delegating these tasks or saying "No" the next time a new task comes your way.
- Determine the priority of new tasks. Is the new task a high, medium, or low-priority project? Slip the new task into its proper priority level and avoid the tendency to "get right on it."
- Check for any conflicts or possible delays. If the task will keep you from



completing your current high-priority tasks, decline the new task or explain your workload and request that other tasks be removed from your plate.

- Offer a reasonable suggestion. When you're handed a new project that may interfere with your priorities, suggest someone else on team who could do the task. Be sure to recommend someone who is knowledgeable on the subject and who is capable of handling the project.

Save Time with Speed-Up Tactics

Saving time is simple. All you have to do is cut the amount of time it takes to complete a task by a second or two and you will gain "extra" time in your day.

Consider these simple "speed-up" tactics:

- ✓ Take a step or two more per minute than normal until the new speed becomes your normal speed.
- ✓ Plan ahead. Set out your clothes and make your lunch or your kids' lunches the night before.
- ✓ Touch papers only once. If you must respond, do it now. If you should file it away, do that now. Or, if it's a waste of time, toss it now.
- ✓ Know your moods. When you're feeling creative, number-crunching may not be the best task to tackle. Like-



wise, when you're feeling analytical, brainstorming ideas or creating a new marketing piece may not be the best choice. Match your mood to the task you tackle.

- ✓ Strive for excellence, not perfection. The champion team in any sport isn't perfect, just above average. Strive to do things well, but avoid the tendency to be "perfect."
- ✓ Practice neatness. A neat office most often means you're organized and efficient. When you finish a task or stop using an item, put it away before moving forward.
- ✓ Have a "do-it-now" attitude. There are two choices to every item that crosses your desk: you can take action on it or delegate it to someone else. Make your choice as soon as possible upon looking at an item.

Be an Active Leader

In today's business environment, the leader of an organization must meld gentle authority with swift decision-making, closeness to and understanding of employees and customers, and confident kindness in dealing with difficult people. The catalyst in the mixing of these attributes is effective communication.

Leaders cannot afford to have conflicts, be misunderstood, be frustrated, become angered, or be inarticulate. A successful leader must listen attentively and speak clearly, congruently, honestly, compassionately, and with proper timing.

To do this, consider implementing these ideas:

- Pay attention to employees when they visit with you. Go into a room with few distractions, face the employee, keep your arms and legs uncrossed, lean slightly forward, maintain eye contact, nod your head occasionally and respond when necessary.



- Respect your employees by listening to them. Choose a soft tone of voice and avoid invading their personal space.
- Clarify what you mean. Misunderstandings cause bad attitudes and disgruntled employees. Know when you're misunderstood and explain what you meant, without being angry.
- Deal with difficult people now. Separate the problem from the person. Stay calm and explain what you think needs to happen.
- Praise people profusely. Everyone enjoys being praised for a job well-done. But, being praised for something that is done regularly and unflinchingly astounds and impresses people.
- Deal with anger calmly. When you're angered, close your eyes, count to 10 and breathe deeply. Gather yourself, then address the anger's source.
- Replace negative behavior with positive behavior. Make requests instead of complaints, ask for what you need instead of accusing someone of not completing their tasks, and seek supporters of your vision instead of sympathizers with your dilemma.

Reshape Your Attitudes Toward Time Usage

Improving time use to increase productivity requires reshaping some of the attitudes that now dictate how you use your time. **Review some of these unproductive time patterns and see how attitudes contribute to them:**



- Low-priority activities. Doing tasks that don't advance important goals inhibits productivity. Large blocks of your time can be completely lost on unimportant details and routine tasks that won't really advance you to your goals. Evaluate your tasks and focus your energy on high-payoff tasks that help you achieve your goals.
- Lack of self-discipline. Lack of self-discipline causes some people to find it difficult to stick to a task until it's completed. Unmotivated people allow distractions and interruptions to destroy their concentration. One who lacks self-discipline tends to allow the current events to set priorities.
- Lack of persistence. Many people who are eager for new jobs, responsibilities, and assignments start with a big impact, making quick progress, but soon fade away and never finish the job. Avoid becoming harried by details or buried under uncompleted work and disorganization. Focus your attention on the most important tasks and prioritize other tasks accordingly. Determine to reach your goals.

Focus on Making Your Dreams Come True

Keeping your dreams in view will help prevent the details of everyday life from obscuring your greater purpose. One effective way for visualizing your goals is to represent them in pictures. Images not only symbolize, but also imprint themselves in your mind, furthering your desire and motivation. **To keep your dreams in view:**



- ◆ Collect pictures from books, magazines, and other sources that portray each of your goals in life.
- ◆ Arrange these pictures on a piece of poster board and post it on the wall in a place you see daily.
- ◆ Study your dream poster at least once a day and reflect on each of the goals it symbolizes.

Are You Meeting More, but Accomplishing Less?

According to humorist Robert Orben, the two biggest problems in life seem to be making ends meet and making meetings end. Often, the concept of having a meeting means “open discussion on several issues.” Sometimes, those who need to build consensus on decisions do so by letting every meeting become an information free-for-all. That’s not to say that meeting leaders should become dictators or simply a narrator of events at the weekly staff meeting. But it is to say that all meetings are not created equal.

So it’s up to the meeting leader to give a meeting more forethought and focus to accomplish objectives in an efficient manner. **There are two basic planning steps for effective meetings:** setting five-part agendas and planning efficient methods to exchange information.

First, the agenda. *With each agenda item, try to include five things:* the topic stated in question form, the person leading, the information the leader is responsible for, the time allotted for the issue, and the action/reason/purpose of the exchange. For example, an agenda item might be listed as such: *Should we exhibit at the IBAG trade show in May?* \ Joanne \ Statistics on Last Year \ 10 min. \ For Decision.

A second agenda item might be given as such: *What should we include in our proposal for the FAA project?* \ Mark \ Analysis of Strengths & Weaknesses on Prior Proposals \ 20 min. \ Brainstorming for Content.

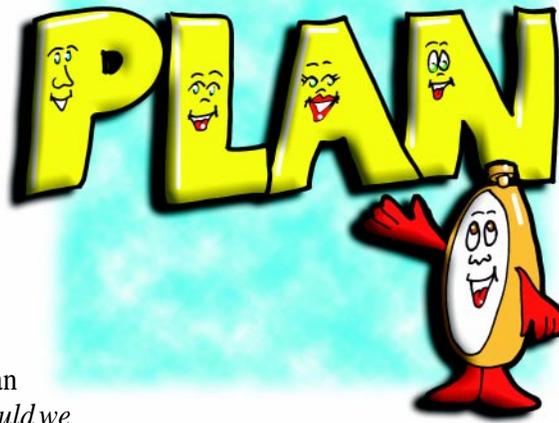
A third agenda topic might be listed this way: *How many leads did we generate from the Harcourt mailing?* \ Carole \ Lead Generation Analysis \ 5 min. \ For Information Only.

You’ll be surprised how smoothly a 10-minute discussion will move once you have a specifically focused issue, have the pertinent information at hand, and let the group members know whether they’re to make a decision or simply toss out the pros and cons for someone else to sort through.

Second, consider the variety of ways to exchange information. Rarely does everything on the agenda deserve equal time and effort. Your role as a meeting facilitator dictates that you give forethought to efficient ways to exchange information, so it’s most usable to the right people without wasting everyone’s time on subjects of little interest or value.

Here are a few suggestions for evaluating interest, exchanging information, and making decisions:

- ◆ Survey by show of hands (or member names or numbers written on a card for the purpose of the meeting), and simply count and report the results.
- ◆ Survey by show of hands/names/numbers, and ask meeting participants to note the responses. They can then make arrangements to see each other later for private discussions or information sharing.
- ◆ Pose a question and have participants respond electronically or in writing. Collect the ideas, report them, piggyback them, or eliminate the less-often-mentioned ideas.



- ◆ Pose an issue, state the apparent opinion/position, and then ask those who have an exceptional situation/position/opinion to elaborate on their exceptions or objections.

- ◆ Post agree/disagree statements on the wall, pose a question/issue, and then ask meeting participants to stand beside their response. Have each of the two groups quickly generate a list of reasons for their opinion. Then, call on one speaker from each side to succinctly present their list of supporting reasons.

How many times has your meeting group debated an issue without having the pertinent facts at hand to come to a decision? Anticipate such situations, and provide information at the *beginning* of the discussion rather than after the fact. Invite a panel of experts/representatives who can provide the necessary information for making a decision.

Although there are several other methods to facilitate efficient discussions and come to decisions, these few will save you innumerable minutes of rambling.

Before the next meeting starts to wander off-track, remind yourself of the two most important preventative measures: a five-part agenda and the properly selected method of information exchange.



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TIMESAVERS

Avoid Waiting in Lines When Possible

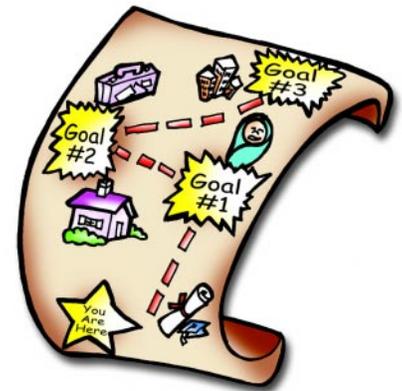
Waiting in line is not only a bore, it's also a waste of time. To improve your time management, it's important to schedule your time so that you won't have to wait in long lines. **Here are several suggestions:**

- ▲ Spend more money to save time. Pay a neighborhood teen to mow your lawn or to pick up your dry cleaning for you. Use a car repair shop that will pick up and deliver your vehicle.
- ▲ Use automated teller machines when you need cash. These machines can offer a time-efficient means of avoiding lines at the bank. However, be aware of any special charges you may incur.
- ▲ Pay bills online. Many banks and other companies offer online bill-paying. This helps you avoid the time of preparing and mailing a bill or standing in lines to pay them.
- ▲ Avoid peak hours. Grocery shop on Monday, take your vacation in the fall, or workout in the middle of the afternoon if possible.
- ▲ Utilize room service for breakfast when on the road. This will help you avoid morning crowds.

Determine Your Blueprint for Success

With the new year just days away, it's important that you begin making plans to make the next 12 months successful for you. **Here is a blueprint for using your time effectively in the new year:**

- ❖ Take a look at the new year as a whole. Plan your desired accomplishments for each month. Then, plan the steps you must take each week. Remember to include the highest priority goal you'd like to reach in the new year along with action steps to achieve it.
- ❖ Devise the general plan to show where you must commit your time in the new year to reach your goals. Determine ahead of time what weeks or days will be your busiest and plan ahead to ease your stress level.
- ❖ Plan activities for every day that will help you move one step closer to your desired goals. Place importance on meeting your planned daily goals because your monthly and annual goals



will be achieved when you focus on reaching your daily goals. Be sure to keep the big picture in mind, but focus on the "little steps" it takes to reach the ultimate goal.

- ❖ Review your progress often. Set aside time each month to review how you're progressing toward achieving your long-term goals. Check to make sure you're staying on task and progressing at the rate you anticipated. Correct any problems you foresee and direct your efforts around any obstacles.

How to Get a Quick Response

If you need a quick response to an E-mail, keep your message brief. Shorter messages often produce quicker replies. This may be because a short message fits on the recipient's screen more easily and prevents scrolling back and forth on the screen.

