

Chit Chat Adds Up

The average telephone call contains about 30 seconds of idle chitchat. If you make 20 calls a day - and most of us make more - you're wasting at least ten minutes per day and probably more.

Try starting your calls without the chitchat. You'll be amazed at how quickly you get to the point ... and how little you miss the idle banter.

When Task Management Fails

Task management is like spinning plates on sticks. With five or six plates up and spinning, careful attention is required to ensure none fall.

When something doesn't get done, don't beat yourself up! Learn from the situation and apply the lesson at the next opportunity. You'll improve your skills, and someone else gets a chance to shine.



This Segment

- Eliminating Distractions and Interruptions P.1-2
- Tracking Interruptions P.3
- Focusing on What You Get Done P.3
- Time Frustration and Discouragement P.3
- Finding Time to Achieve P.4

Finding Time to Achieve

Americans spend billions of dollars each year on sports, hobbies and pastimes designed to help them make the most of their free time. Achievers know the truth, however: Free time is a marketing ploy, a societal myth, a well-worn fraud.

Free time does not exist.

Free time is really *achievement time* put to a different, more self-serving purpose. Consequently, you can be just as productive when engaged in a solitary recreational pursuit or when spending time with your family as you are when you are working to achieve. The key lies in planning how you will spend time and refusing to be swayed from your *Time Picture*.

Eliminating Distractions and Interruptions

By freeing yourself from distractions and interruptions, you allow yourself to deal with less-important items after high-payoff work has been done.

You know how annoying distractions can be when you are trying to concentrate on getting something done. Any time you are distracted from a task, additional time is required to refocus. People require from 45 seconds to 16 minutes to get back to what they were doing before they were distracted. Even if you are quick to refocus, you probably waste at least 15 minutes for every five times you are distracted.

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Helping Others Grow

As much as delegation focuses on getting things done through other people, the real purpose of delegation is helping others grow and improve.

Self-improvement industry founder Paul J. Meyer put it this way: "You have to evaluate the time cost of everything you do. If I employ someone who can do something 80% as well as I'd do it, I let them and I use the time for something else. They get better with practice, and I'm more productive as a result."

Where would you be today if someone had not allowed you to grow and improve? Think back. Maybe you had a parent who refused to limit you, a teacher who overlooked your mistakes, or a boss who helped you learn a new skill. Where would you be without them?

Where will other people be without your faith and confidence in their ability to succeed?



What really counts is what you get done ... not how hard you worked doing it.

Distractions are everywhere! We all know the value of an orderly and efficient workspace, but some people are their own worst enemies. Take a look at where you work – your office, your desk in the den, your craft room or your workbench in the garage. Does that space resemble a small mountain of chaos? When you sit down to work, does a pile of potential distractions await?

Instead of creating a pile of papers or materials, use baskets or small boxes in fixed places around the room. Separate incoming items into three or four broad categories. Then, deal with these distractions in low-payoff time; they should not be the focus of your high-payoff activity.

"Have-a-minute" encounters are distractions in human form. If you have children, you know how annoying their endless questions can be, especially when you are trying to concentrate on something else. Questions from

grownups waste even more time, and most people spend nearly two hours per day in "have-a-minute" conversations. Two hours per day equals *30 days* per year! This extravagant allocation of time is necessary only because those who interrupt are not as organized as you are.

Family members and coworkers likely use questions as opening gambits for these "have a minute" encounters. Each of these interludes typically wastes five minutes or more for everyone involved. Multiplied through the course of every week, the amount of lost time can be significant.

Rudeness isn't required to head off time-wasters. Instead, try this simple tactic: Wherever you are working, close your door. If a closed door sends the wrong signal to your family or colleagues, try rearranging your workspace so that people passing by cannot make eye contact with you.

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Do You Have a Daily Crisis?

If you experience a *crisis du jour* in your personal or business life, don't despair ... many people have a new crisis to contend with each day!

Often, the cause is a faulty self-image or an unconscious belief that you don't deserve a hassle-free day. You may also be influenced by people who are 'fire-starters' - individuals who thrive on creating crisis and chaos.

If it's hard for you to imagine going through a day without a crisis, try going for two hours instead. When those crisis-free hours become a habit, stretch them to four hours, then six, and eventually, an entire day. Compartmentalization works, and you'll discover that crisis are as counterproductive as they are unpleasant. Increased mental energy and physical stamina are yours when you learn to avoid them altogether.

Tracking Interruptions

Most interruptions are well-intentioned. For example, you may be stopped by a family member who wants to discuss an event that took place the evening before. Time is required for you compare mental notes, agree on a common viewpoint, and decide to move on. While the process may take only a minute or two, your train of thought is interrupted, and time is required to refocus.

All interruptions, including "have a minute" conversations, are *allowed* to happen. You can avoid many time-wasters by drawing a clear line between your *high-payoff* and *low-payoff* time. Most interruptions can wait for low-payoff time, when you are not involved in a high-payoff activity.

You may think it overkill, but try using the *Interruption Tracker* to track interruptions for a few days. You will discover many interruptions with the same root cause. Solve the problem that creates them, and you can save an hour or more each day. When you multiply that hour per day over weeks and months, the amount of this "rescued" time grows exponentially ... and your achievement time increases exponentially as well.

Focusing on What You Get Done

For any form of achievement, what

really counts is what you get *done* ... not how hard you worked doing it.

The long-hours myth holds that the more hours you work, the more you naturally get done. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you spend most of your time on high-payoff activities rather than dealing with interruptions, you can achieve twice as much in half the time. This is not to suggest that you should head home or to the golf course after lunch each day ... but if you manage time according to your high-payoff activities, you probably could!

Remember a simple mantra:

Goals, Results, Rewards!

The *Time Tracker* that is part of this Segment will help you track the time you actually spend on high-payoff activities. For each new week, set four or five specific performance goals. When you reach your objective, reward yourself with free time. Take an afternoon off to spend with your family or hit the links ... it's up to you! Keep score according to what you've achieved, and relax knowing that you have spent most of your work week focused on high-payoff activities.

Time Frustration and Discouragement

Everyone becomes discouraged from time to time. Often, that discouragement takes the form of time frustration. Instead

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The Knock-On Effect

If you sat at a traffic light today, you saw the Knock-On Effect in operation. Traffic delays tend to compound themselves, resulting in something we call the Knock-On Effect.

The Knock-On Effect also happens in the world of work. In a medical practice, a doctor is stopped in the hallway by an office worker. The ensuing five-minute conversation means the doctor must make a choice: Shortchange the next patient, or watch the five-minute delay ripple through the rest of the day.

The Knock-On Effect is the real reason why many of us run 30 minutes to an hour behind each day. Avoiding the Knock-On Effect is simple enough: Run your day according to a schedule. When you hit a red light, find ways to minimize the delay!

of focusing on what we get done, we tend to focus on our inability to achieve as much as we want in the time we have.

Instead of wasting time feeling discouraged about your lack of progress, focus your effort and energy on a positive, productive outcome. Fear, worry, doubt, indecision and negative thoughts are time luxuries that you cannot afford.

One of the best strategies for freeing yourself from worry and discouragement is to write the subject of your concern on a sticky note. You might write, "I'm discouraged by my low billable hours," or "I'm worried about my son's progress in school." Crumple the sticky note and give it to someone who loves to worry ... we all know at least one person who does! Say, "I know you love to worry, and I don't have the time. Would you worry about this for me?"

This seems like a simple and silly suggestion, but it works. When you free your mind from the constraints of time frustration and discouragement, you can focus on the things that really count. Pay attention to the challenges that help you achieve rather than those which hold you back.

Finding Time to Achieve

The challenge in finding achievement time lies in managing choices. We can

use our time for a positive, productive purpose, or we can spend that time in dissipation. Each choice is significant because it engenders a permanent outcome.

Because you have developed a clear understanding of your values, high-payoff activities and tools for managing time, you've already made your choice. That decision is the hard part; getting things done comes easily to those who chose to achieve.

Remember to read or listen to this Segment once a day for at least five days. Listening with spaced repetition helps you internalize the ideas presented here. Complete the Application Exercises before your next coaching session.

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