



Take Time to Take Back Your Time

By Nancy Black/ Mangement
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As a businesswoman, do you find yourself spending more time fighting fires than sparking new ideas? Are you getting lost in the details?

If you have too little time to make plans for your business or to step back and see the big picture clearly, then chances are you have a clutter problem. That's right, clutter.

Not just the paper piles and congested files that the word implies, but also those day-to-day details that crowd your mind and get in the way of you accomplishing what's most important.

If you want to take back your time, then you must clear your plate, your office and your mind so you can spend more time thinking about — and then acting upon — your business priorities.

Where do you start? First, assess the way you currently spend your time, and then develop an action plan for yourself.

Where Does Your Time Go? Henry David Thoreau said, "It is not enough to be busy; so are ants. The question is, what are we busy about?"

The first step in taking back your time is being honest with yourself about how you are currently spending your time. People tend to be unrealistic about the number of directions they're trying to run in simultaneously until they analyze how they spend their time.

There are only 168 hours in a week — how are you spending them? Each morning, your Time Bank credits you with 24 hours (or 1,440 minutes), and no balances are carried forward to the next day. How much daily credit are you wasting?

Now, decide how you'd like to spend your time. Learning how to say "no" is an essential skill to master. What are your goals and priorities? Once you've identified them, you can focus on them.

Time management can produce some dramatic changes in your business, because giving yourself the gift of time to think lets you be proactive, not reactive.

Triumph Over Time. Stephen Covey said: "How different our lives are when we really know what is deeply important to us, and keeping that picture in mind, we manage ourselves each day to be and to do what really matters to us."

We can identify our values and schedule our time so that we spend more of our time on the things we value most. This will put you ahead of most businesspeople, who don't consider taking the time to get organized a top priority. They often don't realize the cost of being disorganized.

For example, people in offices lose an average of four hours per week — that's 10 percent of their weekly work time — searching for misplaced or misfiled items. If you've cleared away the physical and mental clutter, you can take that time back.

You owe it to yourself and your business to make the most of every day. It's never too late to establish a timesaving system that works for you and improves your business' bottom line.

If you say to yourself, "There just aren't enough hours in the day," remember your day has the same number of hours as Oprah Winfrey's or Nancy Pelosi's. It's all in how you choose to spend those hours.

Exercise your power to focus on top priorities, and you will have more time to do

what you want to do. You can take back your time. The choice is up to you.

Specializing in organizing systems for busy professionals, Nancy Black of Organization Plus in Beverly has been helping individuals and businesses improve their organization and time management skills for over 24 years.