

Time and Energy Management Tips

By International Institute of Municipal Clerks

Today's fast-paced world requires that you manage both your time and energy extremely well. Here are seven very important tips for you:

1. If it takes two minutes or less to complete a task, live the Nike slogan and "Just Do It." It's not worth taking the time to write it down or commit it to your memory.
2. Highly effective executives avoid multi-tasking. Instead, they "spotlight." They focus (spotlight) their attention, even if very briefly, on the task/encounter immediately at hand. It appears as if these executives are multi-tasking because a lot gets done in a very short period. It is their laser focus that gets results-not their ability to diffuse their attention.
3. An old boss once told me, "Finding your quiet time to handle paperwork and high priority tasks is a lot like slicing a ring of baloney. You can cut a chunk off either end or you can cut a chunk out of the middle. I don't care if you find your quiet time during the early morning, around noon or in the evening, but you must find it each day. It's what productive people do." I have never forgotten his advice.
4. Ninety percent of our behavior is dictated by habit. Embrace your positive habits (rituals) like daily exercise, eating healthy food, etc. Indeed, these things sustain you and keep you sane. Enlist the help of a buddy to rid yourself of negative rituals like smoking, procrastination, and so on. Peer pressure is a very powerful thing.
5. Keep a master list. This is not a daily to-do list. It is a running list (warehouse) of everything you don't want to forget-books to read, gifts to buy, ideas, etc. The mind can be a leaky warehouse. As soon as you think it, ink it-either electronically or on paper. Don't let it escape-capture it! Then, you can scan it and prioritize it on a regular basis.
6. The mind needs a break every 90-120 minutes. Build "air pockets" into your day. Get up and walk around, do some brief exercises, etc. An office manager tells me that she goes on a "lion hunt" several times each day and catches some of her co-workers "leading the organization with the heart of a lion." She makes time to praise her colleagues, and then goes back to her office. This technique rejuvenates her as well as her staff.
7. One of my favorite musicians, James Taylor, said, "The secret to life is to enjoy the passing of time." Time is not money. You can always enjoy time without money. Think of time as honey-not money. Learn to savor it and "drink it in" without regrets.

We are living in a do-more-with-less-and-do-it-faster world. May you continue to enjoy your work as well as your time away from it.

Editor's Note: Mark "Tenacious" Towers will be presenting an Academy session at the 2009 Conference in Chicago, IL.

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