



[DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

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Time: A precious commodity

Well, can you believe it? It's that holiday time of the year again — a period when “managing our time,” professionally and personally, goes a long way to reducing our stress.

In the entire world, there is one priceless asset to which we all have equal access — time. In any given week, there are exactly, and only, 168 hours available to each of us, no matter whom we are or what we do for a living. It's how we use this time that determines how successful we are as individuals.

As a result, it is necessary to actively manage our time just as we must manage any other asset to derive the greatest benefit. In fact, it is probably more important to manage time than any other resource. Not only is it perishable, but if we aren't careful, our time can be taken away without our noticing it is being stolen.

Everyone seems to want more time. Unfortunately, this isn't possible. Time is a paradox. We never seem to have enough time, yet we have all the time there is. Time, not activities, is the limiting factor. Tough choices must be made; consequently, something will need to be left out. The problem, then, is not a shortage of time, but how we choose to use the time available.

On many occasions, because we do not have enough time to satisfy us, we soon are forced to begin to think about using it differently, hopefully better.

An old Chinese proverb provides excellent insight: “Besides

the noble art of getting things done, there is the noble art of leaving things undone.” In other words, minimize, or when possible, eliminate the nonessentials.

Time is not adaptable, but people are. Managing time means adapting ourselves to its passage in some appropriate, satisfying manner. If time seems to be out of control, it means that we are out of control. To bring ourselves back under control, we must learn new, more appropriate behaviors. We need to change if we are to improve.

The following strategies will leave you with more time for your own priorities — the ones which make life a rich journey, rather than a hectic, repetitive merry-go-round ride:

- Set priorities each morning and attend to them one by one.

- Use the 80/20 rule. Plan 80 percent of your time, leave 20 percent free for handling interruptions, crises and changes.

- With complex tasks, take the first step to begin as soon as possible.

- Apply the “Is this the best use of my time?” question.

- Continually ask yourself: “What is the purpose of this activity, what is its worth, and what is its significance?”

- Place a large planning calendar on the wall so you are aware of key meetings and deadlines.

- Concentrate on only one thing at a time to avoid fragmentation.

- Be mindful that other people's goals are not pulling you off course.

- Avoid negative people who sap your energy and who have a “can't do” approach to the world and their work.

- Stay in touch with enthusiastic people who motivate you by their productivity and zest for life.

- Get organized! Designate a place for everything and keep it there.

- Stop shuffling through papers and avoiding decisions; try the “handle it once” method.

- Spend less time on the phone (are you socializing too much?).

- Stop procrastinating. Follow the Nike motto, “Just do it.”

- Recognize your energy patterns, and work with them to keep your efficiency level up.

- Information is increasing daily. Purge your paper files, as well as your electronic files periodically.

- Develop trust in others so that you can delegate effectively.

- Learn to say “no,” giving options when possible.

- Check old habits. Are they helping or hindering you? Consider making changes where necessary.

- Reserve time for yourself!

The bottom line is that time management is self-management. Relentlessly practicing the various strategies for managing time will enable us to effectively plan and control life's activities. Remember: You control time, it does not control you.

For information regarding business etiquette and image workshops, contact Dr. Shirley at (225) 769-2307 or by e-mail at info@successimages.com. □