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The lover wrote

*Time stands still with gazing on her face  
Stand still and gaze for minutes hours, and years, to her give place:  
All other things shall change but she remains the same  
Till heavens changed have their course and time hath lost his name.  
Cupid doth hover up and down blinded with her fair eyes  
And fortune captive at her feet contem'd and conquered lies.*  
John Dowland 1603

Time flies

(Cambridge idiom dictionary)

Whichever one is your understanding of that 60 second, 60 minute, 24-hour-a-day counting time, we all have the same allocation per day: what we do with that might vary. Have you noticed how some manage to fit far more into a day while others rarely seem to achieve much, and you are left wondering... what *do* they do all day?

Live life: your choice

I do not want to live saying if only I had more time... so I choose to live as if today was my last. This has several connotations to it, and one of the helpful ways of considering this is making the most of what we have, rather than procrastinating or delaying what we know can be achieved and finished today. Celebrate our achievements rather than regretting the lack of them. Tasks within time have a correlation to each other. The more you have to do, the likelihood is the more you will achieve. Many say, give a busy person the task to do and it will be done!

Expandable job within expandable time

Consider the student writing essays: they have a week for their assignment and how many actually start work within four hours of the deadline, and then work like stink to get it written? And with experience of life and multi-tasking we run the risk of getting more student-like in our approach (especially when we do not want to undertake the task!). We are the same in the way we look after our business... ( yes I put myself in this category!). For some reason, there is something else to do, a new job to quote for, activity to undertake, person to phone, washing to hang out... or coffee to drink!

Check in time

Occasionally we set our own deadlines but then move them, whereas a deadline set by others or external influences are honoured. Consider your productivity just before going on holiday: the plane, train or taxi will not wait for you to undertake just one more peripheral task, so you are ruthless in your timely application and focus. Is it possible to apply the same focus daily to the work we want to or need to achieve? I would suggest yes, after applying a couple of ideals to work around.

What strategy do you need to have in place?

Is your working day balanced around the school run? Do you have a certain start and stop time for your working that actually generates a tight framework to operate in? If this is the case, use this structure to your own advantage: assess how many hours you have to use, and the number of tasks to hand. Itemise the urgent/essential, the important/necessary and the interesting/pleasant... how can you grade these? Once graded in terms of urgency,

allocate time requirements to them and then work in a focussed and specific way allowing for no distraction until the first, second and third item is completed.

#### Rocks and sand

Take a jam jar, and fill it to the top with sand, and then add water. Now consider the same jam jar, this time fill it with rocks, stones and pebbles. When it's full of rocks, now add in some sand, and water. How much more were you able to fit in the second time? As the big objects take up the bulk of the space you can fit smaller items around it: so it is with the jam jar of time we have for each day: fill it with the small tasks all the time and you will not have room/time for the bigger ones.

#### Realistic planning

Consider the size of the task... and time needed to complete it, recognising that we are generally over-optimistic in our planning. If a job is estimated to take one hour, allocate 30 minutes more, and then, when achieving your goal, not only have you completed the assignment within the time allocated, but you might have been able to fit in a small task as well (an unplanned bonus).

#### Keeping focussed strategy: one thing at a time

A method of working under pressure that I use to keep the focus and to achieve more in a general working day that does not have deadlines, is to have an alarm clock or timer on the work station, and to set it for one hourly intervals (about as long as I can work in one position without getting cramp, and a good marker for taking a stretch to ensure that circulation and ergonomics are adjusted). Before each hour, decide the one achievable goal for that hour, and work through until the alarm surprises you. Yes, time stood still! (I applied this very theory to the writing of this article...) It's a temporary focussing method that allows concentrated spurts of work, with a measurable end in sight.

[Mark Forster \( Do it tomorrow, ISBN 978 0340 909 126\)](#) explains that when you have a backlog, it is better to put that into one 'backlog folder' and place it behind you, and carry on with the task for the day, rather than to be distracted. Work on today's tasks in the categories used earlier (urgent, important, interesting), putting to one side distractions or work which has come in during that day. Plan to undertake the new work the following day or at the end of this working day. Spend time on your back log folder each day until the backlog is no longer there!

#### Time sheet

This practical exercise and the resulting learning is one that we use when working with consultants who are office based and whose earnings are not dependant on their billable hours (unlike an attorney from a John Grisham novel). Asked to allocate the effectiveness of their day and the likely chargeable time they generated per 8 hour day, we asked each person to keep a time sheet for that day of every single activity and we then set the information into a graph. The graph gives the visual representation of each day's activities so that comparisons can be made against the expected and the actual use of time.

**Remember!** Using your daily allocation wisely, efficiently and effectively allows for the ultimate: time to consider!

*"What is this life if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?" W.H. Davies*

Did you know that 20% of your time is spent doing the useful stuff, that is equal to 80% of value to your business. And the remaining 80% is...

Useful phrase: Just do it
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