

Get out of your comfort zone

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Q: What tools and/or techniques are available for a Realtor and Site Agent to use to efficiently manage our time?

A: The thought that we can “manage” time is a little absurd. There is nothing any of us can do to get more than 24 hours in a day or make a minute longer than 60 seconds. What we can do is manage ourselves within the time we have available.

The best tool to do this is a planner. Whether its computer, phone, or paper based, you need one location to keep your calendar, task list and notes together. Knowing how to use your planner is also important. Franklin Covey has a great one-day class that teaches how to use its planning systems. However, the tools and techniques they teach can be easily modified for other planning systems. David Allen, author of Getting Things Done, also teaches a system for properly utilizing your calendar and task list for maximum productivity.

Q: What is the best way to schedule time for activities and what exactly does “time blocking” really mean?

A: Before you schedule activities, it helps to know what you want to accomplish. Compile a list of all the things you need to do, including business and personal tasks, and small tasks and large projects. First thing in the morning, before you check your emails or voicemails, determine what your top 1 to 3 priorities are for the day and schedule time to do those tasks or projects first. Most people find it helpful to work on their top priorities first thing in the morning before the majority of interruptions and emergencies have a chance to throw their entire day on a totally different course.

Time blocking refers to setting aside time to work on specific activities free from other interruptions. For example, some business executives find it beneficial to block out an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon to respond to all phone calls and emails. As a Realtor this may be unrealistic. However, you could adjust this strategy to blocking out the first 15 minutes of each hour to respond to phone calls and emails and use the remaining 45 minutes to focus on a specific task or project.

We have to eliminate the mindset that we have to respond to everyone else’s emergency, or we won’t be successful. If you want to feel in control, you have to take control.

Q: What is a professional way to turn down or say “no” to an invitation or request?

A: Most of the time we say no because either, 1) we don’t want to do “it”, or 2) we don’t have sufficient time to do “it”. If you know what your goals and priorities are, you’ll be more confident in declining invitations that aren’t in line with your business and personal priorities. Be honest in your response without giving away too much information. It’s okay to politely say, “I really appreciate the offer but unfortunately this doesn’t work for me at this time.”

If you are not sure about a request, give yourself time to think about the offer and assess the “consequences” of saying yes or no prior to committing. Most of my regret comes when I respond to an offer too quickly without analyzing how the request impacts my current and future plans.

Q: I am often interrupted throughout the day when a prospect visits the community. Once they arrive I leave my desk and whatever work (and that is usually multiple tasks) I was completing. Once I return to my desk (often 1 hour later), how do I best complete my tasks without having to start all over to find where I had left off? By this time I have forgotten what steps I had already finished as I start and stop repeatedly!

A: The first suggestion is to stop multitasking. Fifteen years ago almost all time management books and trainings discussed techniques for being a better “multitasker.” Current research, however, is clear that when we multi-task, we are less productive. Unfortunately, despite the research and warning, most of us still see multitasking as a strength. Work on just one task at a time.

The next part of remembering where you were is to let go of the reactive mentality. When a prospect visits the community, quickly welcome them and then take a moment to jot down a note of where you are at in your task or project. This will take less than a minute and will save time and energy when you return to your desk once your prospect leaves.

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