

The Focused Internet Marketer

Getting More Done In Less Time

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Getting Into Time Management

Time management is a term business people hear often, especially Internet marketers whose job descriptions run the gamut from executive decision maker to coffee maker. So what does the term really mean, and more importantly, what does the term mean to you?

Time management isn't just a lofty concept that conjures up visions of easy workdays and unstressed task completion. It is a process that, when learned and used properly, can actually make a difference in how successful your business actually becomes.

And, although the term time management encompasses many different techniques and rules, the key component to any successful time management plan is commitment: commitment to learning a new way of doing things, commitment to action, and commitment to long-term change.

Once you have the commitment the next step is learning how to plan your time and rigorously sticking to that plan. Although that may sound difficult, the success you will achieve will come quickly. By beginning with even the simplest of changes, you will immediately discover more time, better results and the lessening of stress.

So, how can time management techniques deliver these benefits? Time management techniques allow you optimize your efforts and focus your time and energy more efficiently on tasks that actually affect your bottom line. While doing so, time management techniques also allow you to decrease the energy and effort you waste on necessary yet unimportant tasks. Together, these techniques help you ***raise productivity, reduce stress, achieve goals, and save time.***

Think of it this way: if you are currently wasting more than half of your time and effort on actions that are not results-driven, like answering repetitive emails or waiting on responses to phone calls, then less than half of your actual workday is dedicated to productive work.

To understand how much this misuse of time is really costing you and your business you need to understand just exactly how much, in dollars, your time is actually worth.

Start by figuring out the annual operating costs of your business. Include the cost of any office space you rent, equipment you use, office supplies you use, monthly charges your

business incurs, and other expenses. To this figure add the approximate yearly salary (or profit) you intend to make.

Now, to calculate how much each hour of wasted time costs you and your business, determine how much it costs you to run your business for one hour on any given day. Assuming that you work 7.5 hours each day, you will have 1,500 hours of open for business time each year.

Using these figures, calculate your hourly rate. The number will probably surprise you. Do you really want to waste that amount of money checking unimportant emails or net surfing each day? Probably not. And if not, you are not alone. Time management is an important concern for most small business owners.

Now that you understand just how much your unorganized time is costing you, you need to decide if a time management renovation plan is right for you and your business.

Common Time Management Issues

Net Surfing

Let's face it. The Internet, with its extensive amounts of information, lightening fast speeds, and varied content, has become a necessary tool for any small business owner. However, that same information and interesting content is responsible for untold amounts of time wasting each day.

It is easy to fall prey to its charms. You log on to verify a shipment or research a new possible product line and it happens... you see a blurb about the hottest new vacation spot and off you go. Hours later you have read the latest international news, checked your investments, booked your next vacation and bought a pair of house shoes. Unfortunately, however, you haven't gotten a bit of work done.

So, with all the temptation and the necessary information to contend with, what is an entrepreneur supposed to do? The answer is simple; you need to find a balance that focuses your efforts more successfully.

Start by reviewing your Internet use. Pay close attention to the amount of time you spent surfing compared to the amount of actual work you completed. Once you can see the problem in black and white, you can actively see the need to do something about it.

Next, make an online "to do" list. While the heading "Internet" can be a daily entry on your regular "to do" list, you need to make a separate, more detailed list for your online activities each day. Include everything related to the Internet on this list including reading emails, ordering supplies, booking your vacation, even shopping for your mother's birthday present.

Once your list is complete, reorder the entries according to priority. Next, jot down an estimate of time next to each entry. For example, agree to let yourself spend ten minutes searching for and booking your hotel accommodations. Adjust the time allotment according to importance and degree of difficulty.

Once you have your list completed and your time boundaries in place, vow to adhere to the list. Also, select a dedicated time period of each day to concentrate on your online "to do" list. This will keep you from hopping on and off the Internet at many different times throughout the day and running the risk of varying from your online "to do" list.

So, now that you have your Internet time organized, how do you fight the temptation to wander off task? One good way is to take advantage of bookmarks. It is very easy to happen upon an interesting, and potentially important website while conducting a work related search. But, instead of ruining your well laid time management plans, bookmark the site and add exploring that site to a future "to do" list.

All browsers have a bookmark or "favorites" options that allows you to save web pages to a folder for later viewing. Take advantage of this time management tool by creating folders based on topic and interest and delegating all newly discovered sites to the appropriate folder for future viewing.

Email

There is nothing more discouraging then logging on to your email account and realizing that the high number of new messages is sure to throw off your carefully calculated time allotment for the task. But do not despair. By creating a quick and organized email plan you can ensure that all important emails are taken care of in a timely fashion, while still leaving room for the less important, or even mundane, messages.

No matter which type of mail system you are currently using (Microsoft Outlook, AOL, or any of the others) they all come equipped with tools to help you organize and prioritize your message. Spend some time now learning about these tools and organizing these systems in order to cut down on wasted time later.

- **Make routine emails easy to recognize.** Many mail systems come equipped with a color-coding option. Use this option to identify emails from regular contacts so that you can immediately determine whom the message is from and what you need to do with it. When using Microsoft Outlook, choose the heading TOOLS and then ORGANIZE to select USING COLORS in order to select the color code you want for each contact.
- **Organize with labeled folders.** Most people already use this option to create folders dedicated to a certain contact or resource. But, you can also use the folders to organize your mail in action categories. For example, adding folders headed with the titles Immediate, This Week, and General, will allow you to quickly move the messages into the appropriate folders and store them in the order of priority for later review.

Phone Calls

Phone calls, both incoming and outgoing, can cause major disruption in your workday flow. Simple five minutes phone calls turn into fifteen-minute phone calls. Repetitively left messages turn a two-minute task into a thirty-minute chore. The game of phone tag extends a twenty-minute phone call into a weeklong business meeting.

The first step in managing incoming phone calls is deciding whether or not to answer them. This step isn't really about screening your calls and deciding whom is important enough to talk to. It is more about deciding how those phone calls, no matter which contact they are from, will affect your daily work plan.

So, how do you decide then? The decision is simple if you use the three-part Quick Decision plan.

1. **Needs your full attention.** These calls are the ones from clients, suppliers, or other contacts that will need your full attention, and most likely some support paperwork, in order for you to complete any business during the call. These calls should be put through to voice mail. Then, when you are prepared for and focused on the matter, you should return the call.
2. **Pressing, but can wait an hour or two.** The calls that fall into this category are the ones that you had planned on making or returning later on in the day, or calls that you do need to attend to but that are not "drop everything" important. These calls should also be allowed to go through to voicemail and only retrieved when you are ready to carve out time for return phone calls.
3. **Vitally important.** These are the calls that you need to take to continue working on your projects for the day, or calls that you have been waiting on and there may not be the option of a better time.

Once you have made your decision, stick with it. If you let a call go through to voice mail, do not retrieve it or return it until the time is appropriate according to your individual time management plan.

Now that we have tackled the problem of incoming phone calls, it is time to take a look at ways to manage outgoing phone calls. Since you are in charge of placing these calls, they are ultimately much easier to control. By planning ahead and taking a moment to focus your thoughts before each phone call, you can easily shave hours off of your daily phone call routine.

- **Schedule phone calls into your "to do" list.** Set aside at least two time periods each day, one in the morning and one in the late afternoon, for making and returning phone calls. This scheduling will free up your time in two ways.
 1. You will not have to stop yourself in the middle of a project each time you remember an important phone call you need to make. At the very least, you may need to stop a minute to add the phone call to your list, but then you can forget about it until the designated time.
 2. You will have time to plan for the phone call and prepare all relevant documents you need if you know exactly what time you are placing the call. This step will save you from hunting around for information while on the phone and ultimately using up more time than you had intended.
- **Plan each phone call when you add it to your "to do" list.** Take a few moments to gather crucial information, think about the reasons for the call, and determine the desired outcome. By having a purpose in mind before you make the call, you will be more apt to stay focused and achieve the desired outcome of the call while taking as little time as possible away from your dedicated work hours.
- **Prepare yourself and work area for the task of making phone calls.** Prior to dialing the number at the top of your "to do" list, clear your desk and your mind. Keeping your desk clear from anything other than information pertaining to the call at hand will keep you from becoming distracted and prevent you from attempting to multi-task.
- **Place calls at convenient times.** Yes, you want to attempt to make all of your outgoing calls at a time that is most convenient for you, but you also need to consider the schedule of the person you are calling. If you know that a certain contact never arrives at his office until after 9 a.m. it won't do you any good to schedule a call to him at eight.

Planning your calls based on your own schedule and the schedule of those you are calling will go along way toward cutting down on the amount of time you waste leaving messages, retrieving messages and playing phone tag.

- **Have a message planned in the event that you reach voice mail.** Having a planned message in front of you just in case will ensure that you leave all of the information you originally intended to. Plus, detailed messages will help your contact know how to respond to your call and save you time when you receive a call back. State your name, a detailed reason for your call, the time and date of your call, your contact information and the best time to contact you, and, most importantly, exactly what type of information you would like to be called back with.

Procrastination

Benjamin Franklin once said, "You delay, but time does not". That statement pretty much sums up the problems of procrastination. Those individuals who fall prey to procrastination often find themselves putting off important tasks, time and time again, until time has run out.

In order to beat procrastination, you must first understand why you let it happen. Maybe it comes from a subconscious fear of the project at hand. Maybe the pending task rates as the least enjoyable thing to tackle on your "to do" list. Maybe the project seems too large to ever accomplish. Maybe you are waiting for the "best" time to take on the project – a time that never seems to come.

Whatever your reason is for allowing procrastination to destroy your plans, it is time to learn how to control this major time management problem. While you will probably not be able to beat this destructive habit overnight, taking small steps each day to improve your situation will inevitably result in success.

The first step in beating procrastination is recognizing the problem. Do you put things off because you lack motivation or because the project scares you? If the problem is lack of motivation you need to pinpoint areas that you need to change. For example, if you usually tackle high-energy projects after lunch when all you really want to do is lay down and take a nap then you need to reschedule your workday to reflect your most productive hours.

If the problem is your fear of a certain project, review the project to pinpoint exactly where the problem lies. For example, maybe the third part of the project involves using software that you are unfamiliar with. This fear can keep you from tackling the project thus allowing you to avoid the possibility of failure. To overcome this problem break the project down into achievable segments and learn what you need to about the project to become more confident in your abilities.

After you have identified why you procrastinate you need to remove the word procrastinate from your vocabulary. The more you call yourself a procrastinator the more likely you are to become one. To help with this step start replacing the negative word with a more positive motivating one.

For example, if you have put off deciding on a new banner ad campaign instead of saying, "I need to stop procrastinating" say "I will begin this project in one hour and impress myself with how much I can accomplish". With the first statement you are cementing the negative habit and turning the act into a self-fulfilling prophecy. With the second statement you are reinforcing a positive action and increasing positive energy.

Another way to overcome the mental causes of procrastination is to stop and think about your behavior each time that you find yourself falling into this time wasting trap. The next time that you find yourself jumping at any excuse not to tackle a pending project, stop, take a breath and ask yourself what the problem really is. Why do not you want to complete or even begin the project? Even if this step doesn't motivate you to change your behavior right then and there, at least it will help you become aware of the problem and the thoughts that lead to the continuation of the cycle.

Once you have adopted the above mental tips, it is time to tackle the actual act of procrastination. The simplest, and most effective, way to do this is just to start. Many times people avoid a large or confusing project because they cannot visualize ever completing it. This fear of ending keeps them from ever beginning in the first place. The next time that you find yourself in this position, force yourself to start the project without worrying about the end.

Starting something is usually fairly easy. The actual start, or beginning of a project, consumes only a small amount of time and lacks the importance of the actual body of the project. By using that mentality for each section of a project, you can keep yourself from

becoming overwhelmed and actually finish a project before you feel as though you have even begun.

So, the next time that you are facing a large project, begin each day with a vow to "start" the project. Then, pick up where you left off last time, only this time tell yourself that you will just "start" the work and see how far you get. You will probably surprise yourself once the pressure is off and work longer and more intently on the project than you first expected.

Another great way to overcome the temptation of procrastination is to remove the things that trigger these thoughts. For example, if you have to clean up your desk or sort through a stack of jumbled notes before you can even begin working on a project, you are more apt to put it off than if it was all set up and ready to go for you.

Organize all of the paperwork on your desk. Keep your folders, both physical and those stored on your computer, organized and labeled for ease of use. Use color-coding or another organizing system to track and separate the different segments of the project and make them easier to work with and within.

If you have implemented all of the above techniques and still find yourself battling with the pitfalls of procrastination, motivation may not be your problem. More likely, you have problem differentiating between the importance of each task and end up doing too many things at once. This "being busy without actually accomplishing anything" mode can get out of hand and lead to your being bogged down with numerous areas of unfinished work. To defeat this type of procrastination problem, you need to learn how to better differentiate between important projects and urgent ones.

Important tasks are those that must be done in order to further your career, build your business, or add to your personal life. These projects must be done on a regular basis and are usually easy to focus on because they are driven by personal reasons to succeed.

Urgent tasks or projects, on the other hand, are those projects that require immediate action- your website is experiencing problems, your shipper cannot make a deadline, your wholesaler will be unable to deliver the promised product- yet are not as important to your overall goals as the important projects. Contacting your web designer to fix a problem with an ordering button will, of course, make business run better today, but it is still a problem that is easily fixed and will not affect the long-term outcome of your business.

Devising a company growth plan and working out the steps necessary to achieve this goal, however, will matter in the long run. Without a plan in place to research and navigate change and growth, your business will stay the same, or maybe even lose profits, a few years down the road.

While urgent projects cannot usually be planned for, they do need to be taken into account each day as you plan your work schedule. In the ideal time management plan, 75% of your actual workday will be dedicated to important tasks, those that grow your business and ensure your success. The other 25% of your day should be dedicated to urgent tasks, routine tasks, and "housekeeping".

So, what do you do if every time you sit down to work on an important task, an urgent one interrupts you? The most effective thing you can do is plan ahead. By knowing that these tasks will pop up and having a clear plan as to what you will do when they occur, you can minimize the amount of time it takes to fix each problem or tackle each task.

Plan ahead by making a list of the possible emergencies or urgent tasks that could pop up. Then, make a notation next to each item regarding possible actions and solutions for each scenario. Possible courses of action include documenting the names and numbers of individuals that you can effortlessly delegate the task to, documenting the names and contact information for experts you may need to rely on, and planning out step-by-step plans that will lead to a speedy solution.

If, after you have explored all of the areas of procrastination and implemented each of the above techniques, you still find yourself losing numerous hours to procrastination each day, it maybe time to bring in some outside help. The most effective option, albeit the most expensive, is to hire a procrastination coach. These experts have years of experience working with even the most stubborn procrastinators and can use their knowledge and experience to formulate a plan that addresses your individual needs.

If the cost, and maybe even the awkwardness of hiring a stranger to watch your every move, intimidates you, you may think about asking a friend or mentor to become your procrastination coach. This person could be in charge of checking on your progress throughout the day and making you feel accountable for your actions. Usually, just knowing that someone will be judging the amount of work you have accomplished each day, especially someone that you respect or look up to, is enough to force you to let go of your procrastination habits.

If nothing else, at least try to find a friend or business associate that has overcome the habit of procrastination and ask them for advice. Sometimes just knowing that this habit can be beat is enough to motivate you to keep trying.

Whatever you choose to do about your procrastination habit, vow to start now. Tell you friends and family members about your goal, write it down on a piece of paper that you post by your desk, do whatever motivates you to avoid letting your procrastination habit kill your procrastination goal!

Learn To Set Goals

The ability to set goals is a key factor in any time management plan. Without proper goal setting knowledge and skill, the best laid time management plans will never lead to success.

In order to reach your destination - successful time management - you must first be able to define exactly what you want to achieve and the steps that it will take to get there.

The first step in mastering the ability to goal set is to understand the purpose of setting goals. The act of setting goals gives you a long-term vision. Seeing your goals in writing enables you to visualize your future and what you have expected to achieve.

Goal setting helps you keep your focus. By seeing concrete levels of success in writing, you are able to focus your time, concentrate your resources, and organize your efforts in a way that will better enable you to achieve your goals.

The act of setting goals, and achieving those goals, also increases your motivation. Once you achieve a goal, your self-confidence increases and you are propelled to try to achieve even more.

You can also use goal setting as a way to track your progress and measure your success. By meeting the deadlines that you have set forth for each goal, you build a record of achievement. This written record helps you keep track of your progress and determine how much longer you will need to continue working on a goal.

Goal setting also allows you to monitor your efforts and enables you to catch problems before they get out of hand. For example, if a deadline for a goal is fast approaching and the action steps that you are currently taking are not moving you towards that goal, you can change your action steps before the deadline has come and gone.

Now that you understand the purpose of goals, you need to know the most effective way to define and write them.

Define Your Goals

Let's start with how to define your goals. Begin by making a quick list of the things that you want to accomplish by learning how to better manage your time. This list can include things such general items as work less hours each day, or accomplish more each month. But, it can also

include more specific items such as find time to research more sales leads, or spend less time filing paperwork.

Now that you have a direction that your time management goals need to take you, you need to break these goals down into smaller ones that can include more detail and actual action steps that lead in that direction.

No matter what your ultimate goals are, there are a few smaller goals, or action steps, that are universal to all time management plans. These goals include such things as organizing your systems, delegating and outsourcing nonessential tasks, and eliminating tasks that waste your time. In the next chapter we will explore these goals in more detail. For now, we will look at ways to write a goal to ensure its effectiveness.

The Proper Way To Write Your Goals

Although the main point is that you get your goals in writing, it helps to know how to write the goals in order to ensure effectiveness and achievability. The following is a list of goal writing tips and techniques that will increase the success of any time management plan.

- Make sure that the goal is achievable. Working one hour less each day is an achievable goal. However, vowing to answer fewer emails each week is an unattainable goal because the numbers are never the same. This fluctuation would make it impossible to document your success or improvements.
- Make sure that your goal is realistic. It will not do you or your long-term vision any good if the goals that you set may be unreachable. It is OK to dream about reaching ten million dollars in Internet sales within one year, but not necessarily realistic. This is especially true if your current sales have only reached \$100,000!
- Make sure that the goal is in keeping with your main, larger goals. If your main goal is to increase your time management skills, yet one of your smaller goals is to eat fast food less often each week, then that particular goal does not belong in this goal plan.
- Make sure that your goal isn't too difficult or too easy. Goals that are too easy do not cause change and goals that are too difficult cause frustration. Balance the difficulty of each goal so that you stay motivated while still affecting improvement in your daily habits.

- Write the goal in a positive manner. Negative goals, such as "I will stop being a procrastinator" only work to make you feel bad about yourself and your current shortcomings. Goals with positive spins, such as "I will execute each task in a timely manner" will motivate you and increase your confidence about achieving the goal.
- Phrase the goal in the present tense. By using the words "I will" instead of "I want" you place the goal in the present tense. This simple trick can cause your subconscious to view the goal as already achieved. Once your mind believes that you have reached a goal, it drives your actions and thoughts to act accordingly.
- If necessary, add motivation to the goal. If you have written a goal that you think will be hard to achieve but that is still necessary to your overall plan, you may need to include some extra motivation. For these goals, jot down a line or two of incentives to keep you focused on achieving the goal.

Now that you have learned how to write an effective goal, let's look at a few examples of well-constructed goals. As you read the following goal statements, take note of how each of them incorporates the main points from the guidelines above.

"I will increase my sales by 2% this month by increasing my use of banner ads."

"I will decrease my rate of returns by 5% in the next six months by rewriting my product specifications."

"By the end of the year, I will stop working twenty minutes earlier each day by delegating my filing to my assistant."

Notice that each goal statement follows a similar pattern. Each goal statement contains a specific goal, an action step, and a deadline.

Now that you have mastered proper goal writing, take a few moments to write a few of your own goals.

The goals that you have just written will form the basis for your new time management plan. Take a moment to review the goal management plan provided in the appendix and add your personal goals and actions to that basic formula. Once you have your own individual plan complete, it is time to start implementing that plan.

Put Your Plan To Action

Get Rid Of Your Bad Habits

In order to eliminate your main time wasters, review chapter 4 and use the techniques and guidelines supplied there to change your habits. These techniques include ways to deal with net surfing, emails, phone calls and procrastination. Once you have defeated these common time wasters, it is time to improve other time consuming areas of your workday.

Be Organized

Just as organizing your incoming mail saves you time when it comes to in and again when it is time to send it out, organizing your other systems can perform double duty.

By organizing your computer files you will save time when you create a document by already have a place (folder) to save it in. And, you will save time again when you go to use that file and do not have to waste precious seconds searching for it.

Begin organizing your computer systems by reviewing your current documents, headings, and folders and devising a simpler, more organized system.

For example, to house all of your advertising documents create a main folder titled "Advertising". Then, inside of this folder, create more folders in order to designate what type of advertising information they contain. Make separate folders for your banner ad ideas, your print ad information and your pay per click designs.

Remember to create a folder inside each of these folders that is labeled "Contract Specifications". In this folder store all of the legal and logistical information that deals with that type of advertising.

Repeat this process for every type of document you currently have. Be sure to include picture files, design files, and even personal files.

Once you have a place for everything on your computer, and you have put everything in its proper place, you will be able to save a considerable amount of time. However, even with all of your organization techniques in place, it may still be easy to misplace a file or even forget exactly where you chose to store it. This is especially true if some of your topics or documents overlap.

Solve this problem by installing and using a search tool. Yes, your computer probably already has a search tool. This would be the tool you find by clicking on the start menu and choosing "search". However, a faster and easier to use tool is available.

The Google Desktop Search Tool is one such tool. With this tool finding a document on your computer is as easy as determining the whereabouts of your college roommate on the web.

To try this tool go to Google Search: <http://desktop.google.com/>. By downloading this type of search utility and allowing it to index your computer files, you are always just one word away from finding the exact document that you desire.

No longer will you have to remember the title you gave your document or the name of the folder that you stored it in. Instead, you will just need to type in one word that you know appears in the document and hit search.

Now that you are confident that you can find any document, either electronic or paper, anywhere in your office in record time, let's look at how automation can further increase your time management efforts.

Automate Your Business

If you are a successful Internet marketer, or at least have plans to be, then sooner or later you will need to deal with a large volume of customers.

While achieving the mark of high volume seller is every Internet marketer's dream, the details involved with taking care of all of those customers can be time consuming. The fastest, and easiest way to deal with this potential time crunch is to automate your business.

The use of autoresponders can save you time in many different areas of customer communication. For example, autoresponders can be used to answer emails that request technical support. These responders contain a message confirming the customer's request and include information regarding the timeframe in which you will fix the problem.

Autoresponders can also be used to reply to customer's requests for price lists, to answer commonly asked questions, and even to deliver a free "report" or mini-ebook on the topic of a product or service you provide.

As far as frequently asked questions go, you can also monitor those questions and opt to create an FAQ web page or add to the one you already have established. This option can be used instead of the autoresponder option.

There are many different types of autoresponder services on the market. Deciding which service will work best for your business will depend on what you want that service to accomplish. To try out a free autoresponder service, log onto www.automatic-responder.com and see what options work for you.

Another area that you need to automate under your time management plan, if you haven't already done so, is your shipping operation. There are numerous automatic shipping options available today that can help you with every detail from the moment a customer orders your product to the moment it arrives at their door.

By using an automated shipping system you can decrease the amount of time you spend each week or day typing and entering address, printing labels and calculating shipping costs.

Automated shipping services, such as those offered by delivery companies such as UPS and FedEx, offer a wide variety of shipping tools that include such time-savers as automatic printing of shipping labels, printing of packing slips, and one-click options for tracking packages. This last option is especially useful as it cuts down on the amount of time you spend answering such queries over the phone or via email.

If your business is still too small to benefit from a fully automated shipping system- especially true if you are still stocking your product in your basement and preparing shipments at your dining room table- then you should at least look into automating how you purchase shipping supplies.

Small businesses can buy stamps automatically and save a trip to the local post office. They can also order most shipping supplies -boxes, packing materials, labels- online and set up an automated delivery schedule to restock supplies.

Once you have set up any and all automated systems that you care to use, it is time to look into another time-saving tool: delegation.

Learn To Delegate

Delegation is one of the easiest, yet most overlooked, time management options. Many Internet marketers, especially those wary of spending unnecessary funds or giving up total control over their business, fail to consider the benefits of this useful option. Or, some individuals choose to ignore this option until their business has grown so large that they can no longer thrive without help.

Either way, these entrepreneurs are doing themselves and their businesses a disservice. Any business, whether it is an established operation or a small start-up operation, can benefit from the help of some form of assistance.

In order to avoid the cost and fear that comes with hiring an employee, start small and delegate a few smaller jobs to computer software. For example, you can use a software program like GoldMine to automate and organize your contact tasks. This software can be programmed to deal with contact information, appointment setting, email scheduling, and lead follow-ups.

Other types of software can be utilized to automate computer check-ups, virus scans, scheduling reminders, and even stock reordering. Depending on your needs, delegating any type of menial tasks to software programs can certainly save you time and money.

But what do you do if you need to delegate a more hands-on task - especially one that you just do not feel that software could handle? You hire an assistant, of course. But you do not have to hire an expensive, forty-hour-a-week assistant to benefit from this type of delegation. Other options definitely exist if you know where to look.

Let's say that you just need someone to read your ads or other reports for typos or grammatical mistakes. For around two dollars a page you can hire a freelance proofreader to check your document over the Internet. Simply email the document to your freelancer, and within a day or two, the corrected document will be waiting for you in your in box.

This type of online assistant can also help you with other tasks such as scheduling, writing follow-up emails, and setting appointments. And because these freelance assistants work from home and have the flexibility to carry multiple clients, their rates are usually much cheaper than those of a full-time assistant.

Do you like the idea of an online assistant but also wish that you could afford someone to help out in person on a more varied list of projects? In that case, you may want to look at hiring a part-time intern. Interns are usually college or high school students who are looking for a way to make a little extra cash and gain some experience in their chosen career field.

Many business course interns can be hired to run errands, sort mail, pack boxes and type documents. They agree to perform these menial tasks in exchange for experiencing the activity associated with a small business.

To see if this option is right for you and your business, contact the career development department of your local junior college or high school.

A third, and maybe most efficient, delegation option is to hire a family member. Spouses, children, nieces and nephews often make great employees and will usually agree to work odd hours for lower rates of pay. Plus, if the arrangement works out well, and your family member enjoys what they do, you may just find your first full-time employee.

Once your new delegation plan is in place, it is time to review how you accomplish the rest of your remaining duties. The best way to accomplish this is through scheduling.

Learn To Schedule Your Business Day

With all of the hats that an Internet marketer is expected to wear, it can become quite difficult to stay on top of every task everyday. After all, someone has to monitor the web site, organize the product, answer the phone, pack the shipments, make the coffee, and buy the stamps. And, most likely that someone is you!

In order to ensure that every task gets done in a timely manner everyday, you need to learn how to schedule every portion of your day. Scheduling is a fact of life for any business owner. There are only twenty-four hours in each day and there is nothing you can do to increase that allotment. You can however, use those hours wisely.

With a well planned daily schedule you can easily determine how much you can expect to achieve during a given time period, plan the best use of that given time period, and cut down on the stress that you experience when you inadvertently over commit your time.

Although your exact schedule will change each day, there is a basic formula you can use to ensure that you stick with your main time management plan and continue to use your time wisely.

Set Time Limits

The term "time limit" makes most people think of racing the clock. "I only have five minutes to do this!" or "Hurry, I have to finish this project in the next ten minutes or it is over!" But, time limits do not necessarily have to conjure up fears of rushed time. In fact, the act of setting time limits can actually make your work efforts more efficient and lead to a better organization and use of your allotted time.

So, how can you use time limits in your management plan in a positive way? Start by timing some of your more mundane activities. Do you need to file a stack of invoices? Make a list of supplies to reorder? If so, use these activities to become more comfortable with racing the clock. Since they are not important, though time consuming activities, there will be no pressure from making sure the job is extremely well done.

Start by setting a kitchen timer or other type of timepiece to a ten-minute limit. See how much you can accomplish in that allotted amount of time. Did you finish filing the invoices, or did you need more time? Use the results of that time limit test to acquaint yourself with the amount of time it takes to realistically complete these types of tasks.

Then, the next time that your schedule calls for filing or list making, break out your timer and race yourself. Can you beat your last time? And if so, by how many seconds or minutes?

These "beat the clock" games can make mundane tasks seem more exciting and actually work to keep you focused, increase your productivity, and increase your interest in a repetitive task.

Another way to positively use time limits is to use your knowledge of how long certain tasks take. If you know that it takes you ten minutes to sort through your incoming emails, or to print that weekly sales report, you can use that time limit to tackle other tasks that also take that long to finish. And, since the time limit is so short, you can use race the clock to quicken your efforts.

For instance, if you are adhering to your written schedule and find yourself waiting for a report to process or print, you can tackle a few or all of the tasks on your "ten minute" time limit list.

The final way that you can use time limits in your new time management plan is by limiting the amount of time you spend taking on extra tasks. Although you may want to believe that you can do everything –run a business, spend time with your family, host a charity event- the truth is that no one person can possibly take on every responsibility.

Your time is important and how you choose to spend that time and mean the difference between a successful Internet business and one that no one will remember five years from now.

Use realistic time limits to determine exactly how much you can commit to doing. Learn how to say no in a positive way to the things that would ultimately tie up too much time without adding enough benefit. The art of saying no is a very useful time limit technique. Use this technique to protect your time and your business. In other words, use the word no to set time limits in a way that reflects how highly you regard your time.

Aside from using time limits to maximize your efforts, there is another way that you can ensure that you get the most benefit from the time that you spend working. This option involves the use of routines.

Establish Routines

Think about your current routines for a moment. Your morning routine of showering, shaving, brushing your teeth and getting dressed, or, your starting-work routine of bringing in the mail, making your coffee and clearing off your desk. These are all things, or tasks, that you do each day, usually around the same time each day. What's more, you probably do them without giving them much thought.

In fact, while working through these acts you probably do not think about the actions that you are performing at all. Instead, you probably let your mind become occupied with other thoughts such as items to add to your "to do" list, or the logistics of changing your web site. The great thing about these routines is that they allow you accomplish a great deal of mundane tasks while simultaneously allowing you to let your creative thoughts flow.

So, what does all of this talk about routines mean to you and your new time management plan? Simply that by establishing certain routines each day in order to complete

your mundane tasks, you can accomplish more items on your "to do" list while still managing to carve out time for free flowing thoughts and brainstorming.

There are two keys to establishing good routines. First, make sure that the items that you place in the same routine category are similar in act, or at least in location. Secondly, make sure that these items can be completed during the hour of each day.

For example, sorting your incoming mail, clearing your desk of paperwork, and paying bills can all be included in the same routine. These items are mostly similar in act, they are all done at the same location –your desk-, and they can all be done around the same time each day.

If you schedule this routine first thing in the morning on your "to do" list, then you can use the time to think about the day ahead and mentally review your schedule. If you plan this routine towards the end of your business day, you can use the time to contemplate your "to do" list for the next day.

No matter which set of actions you choose to incorporate into routines, or what time of day you choose to complete them, once they are established you will begin to save time almost effortlessly.

Now that we have explored a number of ways to implement your new time management plan, it is time to look at a few ways that you can customize that plan for your Internet marketing needs.

Tools For Time Management

Time Tracking Software

Just as with any job or responsibility, having the right tools can make carrying out any time management plan easier. Not only will these tools help you save time, they can also help to keep you focused on your newly formed time management plan.

The first tool that any effective time management plan should include is good time tracking software. These types of software packages allow you to track your time precisely as you move from project to project. This feature makes it possible for you to manage your time more efficiently and to determine which projects require the most of your time.

There are numerous types of time tracking software currently on the market. The ones that we will explore, however, are easy to learn, run on windows, and include extra reporting features.

1. [Time Writer Time Tracking Software](#). This software allows you to track your time via an on-screen scheduler. The entry screen consists of a weekly grid displaying hourly entry areas. The benefit from this type of screen is that entries can be made quickly and without much effort. Another benefit to this software is that aside from the time tracking feature, it also offers a great report compiling function.
2. [TraxTime Time Tracking Software](#). This software contains another simple to use time tracking system thanks to its "punch clock" type feature. With this type of entry system, adding start and stop times is quick and easy. This software also includes a memo feature, a customizable report feature, and the reports can be viewed in a wider variety of formats.
3. **Track-It Light Time Tracking Software**. This software is unique in that it offers a variety of time entry methods. Using this feature, entrepreneurs can experiment with different methods until they find the one that works best for their tasks and their system. Another great feature of this software is its ability to handle multiple projects. This feature can come in handy as you work to combine your numerous responsibilities. But, maybe best of all, this software is relatively inexpensive and does not require the large amount of computer resources that most time tracking software systems do.

4. [Responsive Time Logger Time Tracking Software](#). This software is similar to the others in that it easily and efficiently allows you to track your time. It does, however, contain two unique features that may cause it to stand out from its competition. One is the drag and drop feature that allows you to customize on-screen reports. The other is its Palm O/S interface that allows you to track your time even when you are away from your computer.
5. **Prof Clock Pro Time Tracking Software** This time management software contains all of the basic features of the other examples –time tracking, expense management features, and customizable reports- plus, it can be used by multiple users. If you have hired an intern or family members as an assistant, this feature may become very valuable to you.

With the great number of time tracking software packages to choose from it is best to start simple until you become more accustomed to their uses. Then, when you have a better idea of what features you will use the most and what type of entry system you prefer, you can upgrade if you need to. And, as your business grows and changes, so will your time tracking needs.

With a good time tracking tool in your time management arsenal, it is now time to explore the use of some other tools, namely Day Timers and calendars.

Day Timers and Calendars

While time tracking software can help you monitor the time that you spend completing certain tasks, tools such as Day Timers and calendars can help you plan that time in advance. These tools are necessary when using the schedule that we talked about and devised in chapter 6. The key is to get that same schedule organized in three distinct ways- with a Day Timer, a calendar, and a "to do" list. Since the Day Timer and calendar are similar, we will explore those first. In the next section we will tackle the in and outs of "to do" lists.

Although it may seem repetitive at first glance, any successful time management plan really needs to utilize both a Day Timer and a calendar. The calendar will soon become your master planner, and your Day Timer will become your daily planner and the container for your "to do" list.

Let's start out discussion with calendars. It doesn't really matter which type of calendar you choose, however, you should pick one that contains large enough spaces in each square to

hold multiple entries and notes. To use your calendar efficiently start by importing the tasks from the schedule that you completed earlier.

Since your Day Timer will contain all of the detailed information from your schedule, you do not need to make entries on your calendar like sort incoming mail at 2 p.m. You do, however, need to enter all meetings, appointments, time sensitive report running, and major deadlines.

For example, your meeting with a client at 9 a.m. on Monday, your 10 a.m. Tuesday appointment with the web designer, and your 5 p.m. deadline on Friday for advertising bids should all be included on your calendar.

Your calendar is also the place to add entries regarding entire days that need to be devoted to conferences, large computer projects, and personal events such as family dinners and birthday parties.

Since you will be recording both personal and professional entries on the same calendar, it can help if you start color-coding these entries. For example, you can record all professional entries in red or black ink. Red ink can be used to denote outside engagements, and black ink can be reserved for engagements that will take place at your office or home. Then, blue ink can be used to denote all personal entries. By using this color-coding system you can more readily grasp the extent and nature of your commitments with a single glance.

Once you have entered every appropriate schedule entry onto your calendar, it is time to break out your Day Timer.

When scheduling with your Day Timer your objective is more complex. Your calendar entries were made in order to guide your general schedule for the month and provide you with a master plan. Your Day Timer entries, however, will be used to guide your efforts on a weekly and daily schedule.

Using the same type of color-coding that you used with your calendar, begin entering your tasks into your Day Timer. However, this time you not only want to include more detail, but also specific time allotments that you have determined are necessary for the completion of each task.

For example, when entering the 10 a.m. appointment on Tuesday with your web designer block out the hours between 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m., or however much time you will

need to complete the appointment and travel to and from it. You also need to include information such as the web designer's phone number, address, and directions to the meeting.

By making detailed entries such as these in your Day Timer you can make sure that your time schedule is efficiently planned and avoid searching for supporting information each time that you prepare to move on to the next scheduled task.

Continue adding items from your calendar and schedule to your Day Timer until each day is organized and each task is assigned its own time slot. At this point, you still need to exclude "to do" list activities. Those items will be addressed later. For now just continue filling your Day Timer with the above information.

To Do Lists

Everyone makes "to do" lists- from middle school students to those individuals trying to fill their retirement hours. However, not people do not make (or know how to make) a time efficient list.

With the proper "to do" list you can get your time and your life under control in short order. Think of your "to do" list as your daily bible. If it is on the list, then it will get done. If it is not on the list, it is not a priority. It is that very philosophy that makes "to do" lists so important for Internet marketers.

As an Internet marketer you face a different reality than your 9 to 5 counterpart. Your business responsibilities are all inclusive, often vary greatly, and can crop up at all hours of the day and night. With all of this variability and almost complete lack of boundaries, ensuring that each of your responsibilities get taken care of can be quite a large job.

To ensure success and reap the benefits of being able to set your own schedule, you need to create and follow a comprehensive "to do" list. In order to create the most useful and efficient "to do" list follow the suggestions below.

- First, brainstorm and list every task that you need to complete on a weekly basis in order to manage and grow your business. Some tasks that you should include here are merchandise purchasing, description writing, shipment preparation, pay per click bidding, blog or forum posting, ebook research, article writing, and the securing of advertising.

- Next, list all of the tasks that you need to complete each week in order to keep your operations running smoothly. Think of these tasks as your "housekeeping" tasks. Items such as sorting mail, making phone calls, filing, and report generating should be included here. Now, every task that you complete each week in association with your business should be accounted for.
- Now, review the list and check for any tasks that need to be broken down into smaller tasks. For instance, posting to your blog is really a few tasks in one. First you need to post a new blog entry. Then later, you need to check that entry for any responses or comments. Depending on what you find, you may then need to post again. Break items such as these into the appropriate amount of necessary steps and include them on your list as separate actions. If you skip this step you will be unable to accurately allocate your available time.
- Next, review your list for any items that must be completed more than once each week. Retrieving phone messages, for example, may look like one task, but actually it could constitute as many ten tasks since you will probably want to check your messages at least twice a day five days a week. Once you have identified these types of tasks, break them down into the appropriate number of entries and write each entry separately in order to create a clear picture of what you actually have to do.
- Now, review the list and note any tasks that have to be completed on a specific day. For example, if you offer an ezine as part of your Internet marketing business and that ezine always goes out on Friday, then that task always has to be entered on Friday. Plus, certain aspects of putting an ezine together must be completed by certain days prior to its release. Break those tasks down also, and be sure to enter them on the appropriate days.
- The final step is to place any unassigned tasks in the remaining time slots on your "to do" list. As you fill in the available time slots, keep two things in mind. One, place high-energy tasks in the time slots where you have determined you are at your most productive level. If you are a morning person, place high-energy tasks on the list before noon. If you get your second wind around 2 p.m., place your high-energy tasks in that time slot. And two, try not to schedule two difficult tasks back to back. By doing so you run the risk of running out of steam before you can complete the second task. If at all

possible, schedule only one difficult task per day. At the very least, try to schedule a few hours of easier tasks between each difficult one.

Now that your "to do" list is essentially complete, it is time to add a few finishing touches. First, review your schedule for mistakes. Doing a quick double check now can save you a lot more time later on.

Also, check the list for any items you may have omitted the first time around. Sometimes the simple act of rereading your list can jog your memory and help you remember something that you initially left out. If this happens, just go back through the previous steps with the forgotten task in mind to ensure that it gets entered into your "to do" list correctly.

At this point you may be thinking, "Wow, this seems like a lot of work. Do I really need to go through all of this trouble each week?" And the answer is yes and no. Yes, you need to take the time to complete a "to do" list each week, but no; you will not have to go through so much trouble each week.

For one thing, after you have made a comprehensive "to do" list a few times you will not have to think so much about each step as you complete it. Plus, once you have your first comprehensive "to do" list done you will most likely find that many of the items can just be left in the same slot on the same day each week. In fact, if you create your "to do" list on a computer updating your list on Friday for the upcoming week could be as easy as just adding or subtracting a few items.

Actually, after working from your "to do" list for a month or two, you may find that it does not seem like a chore at all anymore. You might find instead, that you couldn't imagine ever living without it. In that case your only problem might be that your list becomes too routine and you find that you have to change it up a little to avoid getting stuck in a rut.

One final note on "to do" lists. Once you have gone through all the trouble to create one, it is essential that you vow to stick to it. After all, every task on that list is one that you decided was essential to your business's success. Knowing that, you would be doing yourself and your business a grave disservice by ignoring the list.

You're On Your Way!

Time management is not a lofty goal; it is an achievable reality that just about anyone capable of owning a business can implement. Good time management is a goal that is well worth aspiring to. Time management starts with the commitment to change and evolves as your commitment strengthens. As you have learned, the key to effective time management is detailed planning of your time and the adamant wish to protect that planned time. Without proper planning your time is lost to chance and circumstance.

Time management is also a time sensitive goal. You cannot benefit from it immediately, like all things it takes time to learn and become comfortable with. So, the key is to start now. The longer you wait, the more time you will have wasted doing things the hard way.

And finally, time management is a necessary goal. As your business grows and becomes more successful, your responsibilities will grow too. Without the skills to manage your time you run the risk of losing control of your tasks and losing your business in the process.

Start changing the way you do business today by changing the way you use your time. Vow to be successful, vow to grow and flourish in your professional and personal life, vow to become a time management master!