

# Facilities Focus

## Where does the time go?

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Ever wonder where the day went? Or why you didn't get any of the things done you wanted to? As a wife, mother of two, and a full-time Facilities Project Manager, it happens to me more times than I can count. Sometimes things get so crazy I literally forget what day it is.

Not long ago, I attended a great seminar on organization and discovered I was not alone. I realized that a big part of getting organized was developing and practicing good time management. I learned about the top "Time Robbers" and some helpful ways to overcome them. I also discovered the value of Rubbermaid containers but that's a story for another time.

In an international survey of Business Managers worldwide, the top ten "Time Robbers" were:

- #1 Telephone Interruptions
- #2 Crisis Management
- #3 Lack of Priorities, Goals, Planning
- #4 Drop-in Visitors
- #5 Ineffective Delegation
- #6 Attempting Too Much
- #7 Meetings
- #8 Personal Disorganization
- #9 Inability To Say "No"
- #10 Lack of Self-discipline

Believe it or not there are ways to deal with these "Time Robbers" and easy changes that can be made to increase productivity. I have encountered just about every one on the list and I'm sure you have too, especially the telephone interruptions. Today, not only are there frequent interruptions at the office, but they follow you wherever you go, due to mobile technology. With frequent telephone calls and drop-in visitors, one easy way to address these interruptions is to try to limit the time you spend on each call or with each person, but remember to be tactful when ending the conversation. Try using body language by standing up to indicate to your face-to-face visitor that it is time to close out the conversation. If that doesn't work, start walking to the copier or somewhere else to move the conversation out of your office. People are less likely to ramble or carry on a long conversation in the hallway.

There is little to be done to alleviate crisis management issues. Emergencies are going to happen, especially in the field of Facilities Management. However, once the emergency is resolved, you can reschedule the abandoned work to a more productive time the next day. Remember, too, that you can delegate the problem solving.

My best defense against the ever challenging lack of priorities, goals, and planning is to make a "to do" list. Use your daily planner or PDA to make action lists and prioritize your tasks. This also helps with #8 – personal disorganization. My day-timer is probably my best tool at work. At the end of each day I try to take a few minutes to jot down the things I want to accomplish the following day. Written lists help you remember, keep on track, and stay focused.

Often we think, “I can do this faster than telling someone else how to do it”, but trying to do everything yourself can be a “Time Robber.” That said, ineffective delegation can be a problem too. Delegation is giving someone something to do and being available to mentor him or her through the process. Once someone fully understands how you want a task done and they do it well, your comfort level with delegating future work increases. Which brings me to No’s 6 & 9 - attempting too much and the inability to say NO. They go hand and hand. Remember when making your action list to estimate how long each task will take – DO NOT OVERLOAD YOUR DAY! Also, when agreeing to take on new tasks with specific deadlines always check your schedule and ask “Can I get back to you on a completion date?” If it looks like you are on the verge of overbooking yourself, set a realistic goal and then adhere to it.

How many times have you been in a meeting that did not pertain to you at all? Ask to preview the agenda prior to the meeting. If you are the meeting facilitator you can lead a productive meeting by doing just a few things. First, set the subject of the meeting. Allow your attendees to provide input as to the issues to be discussed to encourage equal participation among the attendees. After getting feedback from the participants, create an agenda and set time limits for each of the topics on the agenda. Documentation of the meeting should be distributed in the form of a conference/meeting memorandum that includes a summary and future action steps. This will ensure that everyone walks away with a clear understanding of what was discussed.

Only you can manage your time and when you think about it, it just might be one of the only things in life you can control. How you chose to spend your time can make a difference in the quality of your work and personal life.

Tell us what you think. Send feedback/comments/suggestions to:  
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