

# Too Busy? Or Do You Need Better Time Management?

by Jamie Herman,  
*Training Specialist*



I must admit, the past few months I have been more than a little short and cranky at times. In my defense, I have been very busy, trying to complete a variety of tasks in the shortest amount of time. Does this sound familiar to anyone else? Yea, I thought so.

During that span I felt like I was just keeping my head above water. Sometimes figuratively and literally. Then one evening I had dinner with a wise old sage. Okay, he really isn't that wise, but he sure is old! For our purposes, let's call him Doug Smorol. Well, Doug and I had dinner and I discussed how busy I was, and Doug just snickered and passed on some advice. He advised that most people who are continually behind or are just meeting deadlines, usually need to better manage their time. I agreed, without fully understanding time management techniques.

A couple days later, I decided to do some research on time management. I quickly realized that when you start to feel overwhelmed, simple, common sense skills seem to go by the wayside, causing confusion and poor time management. In my research, I discovered some tips to follow to maximize your work time, and I will share those with you.

**Plan each day in advance:** This will help you accomplish more work while feeling like you are in control of your life. Make a to-do list (kinda like a Honey do list, but for work stuff), prioritizing the tasks in order of importance. Log your activities to help prioritize, and to prevent confusion and last minute conflicts.

**Do the job right the first time:** Allow yourself enough time to complete an assignment or task adequately and safely the first time. How come there is never enough time to do something right? But always enough time to do it twice?

**Prioritize tasks:** Complete those tasks which are most important first, then move on to other, less crucial items as time allows. Sometimes, unimportant tasks can turn into very time consuming activities, putting you further behind.

**Delegate assignments:** This one is my favorite. Take a look at your to do list and see if there are any tasks that a coworker may be able to accomplish, or may even be more qualified to complete. Don't feel like you need to do everything yourself. Trust fellow employees to be able to assist, and use their skills when offered.

**Limit distractions:** Let people know you are

busy and ask them to afford you the time to complete your tasks. Ask coworkers or managers to contact you at specified times throughout the day with questions or further assignments. Ask family members to call only if it is an emergency, except for lunch or break periods.

**Break large, dreaded tasks into smaller tasks:** This may allow you to complete the assignment while still responding to smaller or emergency issues. It should also allow you to remain focused and not get stressed out.

**Say no to nonessential tasks:** Consider your current workload and timetable before accepting or agreeing to accomplish additional tasks.

**Allow for "you" time:** Understand that you need to have a personal life, and need time to focus on yourself. Maintain a healthy dose of personal activities, both with your family and loved ones, and for yourself. Don't allow yourself to become a workaholic. Get adequate amounts of rest and exercise, and focus on a positive attitude.

**Take a break when necessary:** So many of us focus on a specific break period each day. However, if a specific task causes you extreme stress, or causes you to lose focus, take a break, and return to the task once your calm and relaxed.

**Evaluate your time management:** Maintain a daily log and periodically review the work you completed and the timeframe it required. Assess if there were ways to save time, or if more time should have been allowed for a more thorough completion. Note any suggestions or ideas that may have saved time or money, and therefore allowed you to complete the task in a more suitable manner.

These are just a few ways to better manage your time. We all know that issues arise daily that must be addressed. The key is to stay focused and not allow stress to deter our mental attitude toward coworkers or customers, and complete each task in order of importance.

Perhaps the hardest thing to do is to maintain a happy medium between your work life and your personal life. However, it is probably also the most important. When you feel the stresses of work becoming intolerable, it is time to take at least a brief vacation. A positive attitude and focus will certainly allow you to accomplish your work assignments in a safe and time effective manner.

Now, if I could only practice what I preach. That's my goal for the upcoming year; become more organized and manage my time more efficiently. Well, I'd like to stay and chat but I have a million things to do... 🍷