

## A Lost Secret to Greater Productivity... Setting the Timer

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Who's in charge of your time and life, anyway?

Far too many trainers have totally given up control to others. Have you? How much of your time is spent "working" on someone else's agenda (not your own)?

Working too much "IN" your training program... instantly responding to emails, picking up the phone whenever it rings... scheduling, scoring, tracking, grunting and grinding over working "ON" your training – cultivating, maturing and leading your program – is the main reason why good trainers ... "GO BAD".

### What camp do you live in? Let's take a look.

We can begin with the access you allow, with the way people are trained and permitted to communicate with you. As many time-management experts claim – technology has allowed the proliferation of "junk communication". The easier it has become to communicate, the more quantity of unnecessary, poorly thought out communication has multiplied. To put it simply, easy communication channels coupled with "useless" communication seriously hampers productivity.

### The Email Vampire "Time-Suck".

Because sending email is so EASY and doesn't even require the labor of walking over to the fax machine... people send e-mails any time they want to. So many emails are sent with no real "thought" – literally going out every time someone has a "brain hiccup". In today's day and age, entire conversations are being held with email. If you're like many people and you jump up every time Outlook chimes a new email delivery... you can't possibly be productive. Some people check their email constantly, compulsively or worse, responding to emails as they arrive – and this, my friend is a recipe for productivity disaster. (Mental note... how did we survive without email??)

Eventually what ends up happening is that you work strictly off of someone else's agenda over your own, never sticking to your daily action plan, list of goals or today's "to do list". Unless of course, "check my email box and respond" is the only thing you have on your list.

### Tick, Tick, Tick.

Allowing "frivolous" questions to arrive via email, faxes and phone calls and then automatically responding to them is no way to run your training program.

For far too many people, the phone, the fax machine, email, etc., this type of communication attention invokes a Pavlovian (think Pavlov's dog) reaction. If you're "drooling" every time Outlook sounds its chime – let this be a warning to you. If it has never occurred to you before, you ought to see this now as weird behavior.

### **Secrets to Greater Productivity.**

If you do take an incoming call, when you get on the phone with someone, it's a smart idea to set up the exit time, right away. For example, you might say: "Jen, I have a conference call starting in 20 minutes, but I wanted to take your call. I hope that will be enough time for our discussion. (And this part is real important to say...) Do you agree, or should we set up another call at a different time?"

Set the Timer. By being strict with this you will begin to train others as to the value of your time and you position yourself as someone who does not take kindly to unscheduled events or interruptions.

Check your email once a day (twice max). I know this may sound crazy at first, but follow me here. In order for you to be as productive as possible, you really need to stick to your agenda. I won't go over other time management skills such as prioritizing your list, identifying important vs. urgent tasks... but what I will say is that sticking to your own list is what's most important. If you check your email first thing or an hour or two into your day, you can identify the higher priority items, pull them out and add them to your "to do" list.

Now don't get me wrong – some daily tasks are collaborative in nature and do require you to be attentive to emails... but those are "scheduled", meaning you know their coming, so you're going to be on the lookout.

If it's absolutely necessary to check your box more than once, I recommend you check it mid to late afternoon for the purposes of building your "to do" list for tomorrow.

This is a re-organization of thought and bad habits. You need to isolate yourself from daily distractions and concentrate on the tasks at hand.. namely YOUR TASKS.

This process does require a little bit of training to the part of the Vampire Time Suckers. You need to start positioning yourself as "hard to reach". You won't win any awards for being sociable, but you'll have shorter, more purposeful telephone conversations and meetings. Callers will gradually learn to call ahead and set up phone appointments and better prepare themselves for that call. Emailers will get the hint that you do not operate in a "knee-jerk" fashion.

Time is money. Your time costs money. The formula is simple – use your time wisely and you'll not only be more productive.. you'll save your company money in return.

When you condition everyone around you that you will not tolerate "time vampirism" – your working-life will change. I call this "bringing the vampires to the light." You see, most people will suck up about as much time as you let them. Salespeople calling on you feel like they're productive and satisfied as long as they're talking to you (while they're avoiding the risk of confronting and selling to new prospects). Employees too, will also dilly-dally in conversation... heck, it beats working! Conversations have a way of stretching to fill whatever amount of time is available for them.

Develop a system that removes you from answering frivolous questions on a daily basis. Have a FAQ sheet developed (based on previous vampire questions) and make it available 24/7, online as a resource for your people to go to (because.. frankly, you're done. Your time is too valuable). Using an elearning management solution to host your training programs and information and make it available, online 24/7 is probably the smartest thing that you can do as a trainer. Why? Because it removes you from the day-to-day interactions (mostly coddling and hand-holding) which you do not have time for.

## **When Bad Leaders GO GOOD.**

1. Limit non-sensical communication,
2. Remove the day-to-day, grunt and grind administration (you're too important for that and your time is too valuable)
3. Stay focused
4. Remain vigilant

When you do this right, you're life becomes more "exact".

5. Move your training department forward
6. Discover new learning techniques for more rapid employee advancement
7. Spend more quality time devoted to one-on-one coaching and skill-set development

## **Tick, Tick, Tick.**

Your time is the most precious element you have and one that you have full control over... if you safeguard it with your life!

### **Be Busy... & Be Obvious About It**

Obviously, busy people are interrupted less than unbusy people. Time Vampires will send idiotic emails with no-thought, call for no reason and will cruise the office and halls looking for the best opportunity and the easiest targets.

If you are sitting at your desk, comfortably, appearing relaxed... TAG, you're it. Of course, you might be contemplating a formula for advanced "engagement" and "interaction" techniques for the new training course you're about to unveil, but that won't matter because it's not obvious.

Set the blasted timer. Let others know the value of your time and what it should mean to THEM. Two things may happen. You'll be more productive and if your message is clear... they may be more productive as well.

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