

Time: How have you spent your 525,600 so far?

By Catherine Milward-Bridges

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If you subscribe to the old adage, "Time is money," then belated congratulations are in order! On 1 January 2014 you were awarded all of 525,600 'spending minutes' for the year.



Question is: What are you going to do with your 'fortune'? Have you drawn up a 'budget' to guide your expenditure?

These guidelines have been tried and tested at simplyput.co.za. Give them a go!

Change your mind

Have you been too afraid to take a good, hard look at how you spend your time; to fix what needs fixing? Do you feel like you're stumbling ineffectually from hour to hour? Then it's time for a total paradigm shift. Start viewing time as a tool, rather than an impediment. Then, truly value and respect it!

Time rates amongst one of our most valuable, yet elusive gifts. It's free, yet wasting it could have catastrophic consequences in business, and in life. Once you change your attitude towards time, it will become your ally.

Have a plan

"Lost time is never found again." - Benjamin Franklin

There's no reason why the very mention of the word 'TIME' should reduce you to a puddle of sweat. If long-term planning is too overwhelming for you, then start with a daily plan.



And when there's a project/event looming, try using the six Ws and an H to think through every aspect:

1. Why: are you having the event/project?
2. What: is your understanding of it/needs to be done?
3. Where: will it take place?
4. Who: will be involved/is your contact person?
5. When: is the deadline(s)?
6. What if: something goes wrong; do you have a back-up plan?
7. How: will you execute/achieve the end goal?



The more you practise planning, you'll start experiencing the benefits of:

1. efficiency
2. the ability to identify and remove pitfalls timeously
3. having direction and clarity of mind
4. the capacity to deal with eventualities
5. being prepared - there's NOTHING better!

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Learn HOW to say 'NO'

Ever wished you could be like those people who only take on as much as they can manage, and simply 'discard' the rest with ease? Then you need a big gulp of assertiveness!

Make a conscious decision NOT to go into convoluted explanations when saying 'No'. You'll only leave yourself open to being coerced, otherwise.

Don't put it off

1. Procrastination is indeed the thief of time.
2. Trade your "Tomorrow's another day" approach for a "Do whatever can be done today" one.

Here's how:

1. Draw up a to-do list and don't divert from it.
2. Focus on the task at hand and be disciplined about completing it.
3. Tackle the most difficult tasks first and tick them as you go, to highlight progress.
4. Take regular, but calculated breaks.
5. Reward yourself after completion of major tasks.



No half measures

"If you don't have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?" - John Wooden



When guided by a plan, you're unlikely to approach your responsibilities haphazardly. You will have allocated enough time to be thorough in your delivery, in each task.

Doing something right the first time not only gives us a sense of pride, it also renders us reliable. The converse will leave us embarrassed, and having to waste precious time undoing our doing.

Do it right the first time by:

1. learning to value and respect time
2. striving for excellence
3. developing a keen eye for detail.

Adopting half measures is like flushing money down a toilet; or allowing a tap to run, while you simply stare at it. It's sacrilege!

Savvy reigns

When you've developed a healthy respect for time, you'll start treating it accordingly - approaching it with an "I have one shot at this" resolve.

Show time savvy by:

1. getting a good understanding of your realm of responsibility
2. training yourself to identify time wasters



3. managing expectations (not committing, unless you can deliver).

Some harsh truths about time:

1. it's priceless
2. is irretrievable
3. cannot be bargained with
4. doesn't subscribe to sentimentality
5. doesn't know prejudice.

With these in mind, start viewing your annual gift of 525,600 minutes for the treasure that it is, and you'll go from being its prisoner, to being its beneficiary. Then, reap the benefits - in your business and life in general

ABOUT CATHERINE MILWARD-BRIDGES

Catherine Milward-Bridges is a passionate communication specialist and founder of simplyput.co.za. Catherine guides her clients in taking their engagement efforts from good to great; and helps them optimise social media with strategic know-how.

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