



Although people are more important to our success and happiness than most tasks, we often give them less respect, thought and scheduled time. Intentionally seeking and scheduling people focused time is an easy and essential part of effective time management.

(Reading time 180 seconds).

“We consider the new crowd in the company ‘The Enemy.’ They’ve taken no time to get to know us, and they are issuing orders like taskmasters, when we are supposed to be equals and a team. I’ve put my resume out and will be gone from here after bonus time.”

That statement was made to me by the highest billing individual in a professional services firm, a valuable player to the organization’s future. Her new teammates from a friendly small merger, weren’t acting very friendly at all. Despite efforts on one side, “the enemy” had made no attempt to connect; to establish a positive human relationship with their new co-workers.

The new players needed help in doing their jobs but were interacting with their new teammates as taskmasters. Unfortunately, taskmasters are often people failures.

From a time management perspective, positive relationships expedite getting things done; negative relationships slow down or undermine them. Who is more likely to quickly provide you correct needed answers, or complete tasks for you . . . your enemy or your friend? On the other hand, who is most likely to neglect your requests, attend to them haphazardly or worse sabotage them and you?

Hopefully, you are not perceived within your organization as the enemy. But negative perceptions can happen in degrees without even realizing it.

I saw this as I was checking into a hotel this week. The young shift manager behind the desk had a maintenance request and called the maintenance man this way: “Paul, get down here - NOW!” The woman checking me in said under her breath, “You could have at least said please.” Yes, he could have.

Now, that young manager probably thinks he doesn’t have time to fool with such niceties. He has important things to do and for others to do. Well, what he is failing to realize is that the people around him won’t easily find the time to help him achieve those important things if he keeps treating them that way. In fact, they may put lots of roadblocks in his way.

Do you think Paul, the maintenance man, was so motivated that he came bounding down 7 flights of stairs so he could quickly attend to the manager’s request? I doubt it. Instead, I pictured him making a journey of it - meandering his way to the elevator and then lighting up the buttons for every floor, maybe exploring a little at each stop. He certainly hadn’t made it to the desk by the time I left the lobby after making some phone calls, quite some time later.

The time, even if brief, that you spend interacting with people every day is as critical to your success and happiness as the time you spend completing important tasks & projects.

There are two key ways to routinely invest in positive people time. The first is to look for unplanned opportunities as they arise to create a positive connection. The second is to consciously plan and schedule your time to make them happen.

LOOK FOR UNPLANNED OPPORTUNITIES

Last week I took the opportunity to compliment a police officer on what great shape he was in, and we talked a bit about his work-out routine. I did this at a police station as my daughter was filing a police report with the desk officer on her stolen wallet and lost picture ID. She needed the report as a substitute for her ID so she could get through security for her flight back home the next day. The desk officer informed her she had three problems: that she was in the wrong precinct; that to file a theft report of a stolen picture ID, she needed a picture ID (?); and the time for getting a report back was 3 to 5 days.

As it turned out, the officer I was talking with was the Sergeant in charge and he made all the problems go away. Wrong precinct – no problem, they would copy the right precinct on the report. No picture – your Facebook picture will work. 5 days – no problem, we’ll have the report completed for you in the morning.

By looking for the opportunity to notice something positive about him, we had created an ally in the Sergeant. He was able to turn what would have been a stressful, maybe futile waste of time day - running from police station to station, into a quick resolution. That cleared the rest of the day for my daughter to have a wonderful visit with her sister, Mom, and I.

Managing your relationships well is critical to the timely and quality accomplishment of meaningful tasks.

SCHEDULE TIME TO ENRICH EACH RELATIONSHIP

We all routinely spend time in dealing with people at work, our family, friends, dates, and mates. Some of that time should be planned and scheduled to focus on things to make each relationship more valuable. It could be play, relax time; compliment time; listen time; get it done together time.

I recently heard a mom express how rewarding it was to hear her daughter say that her favorite part of soccer was the car ride to and from practice with her Mom. Her daughter enjoyed soccer, but the time alone with her Mom was special. This mom made it a point to create and make the most of people opportunities, like the car ride. She thought about what she might say and not say; to focus, listen, and talk with her daughter. So instead of just a rush task to get to practice on time, the thoughtful ride had become a cherished time in their relationship.

Everyone you interact with has their own aspirations – their own motivations and joys – and certainly their own pride in their job and sense of accomplishment. Good time management requires scheduling time and watching for opportunities to connect to those things. In doing so you create friends, allies, and more loving family relationships. Plus you get more done, in less time and have much more joy in the doing.

Why not schedule some intentional person time on your calendar right now?

Jim Bird, Publisher

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Quotes by Mary Kay Ash

“Pretend that every single person you meet has a sign around his or her neck that says, “Make me feel important.” Not only will you succeed in sales, you will succeed in life.”

“There are two things people want more than sex and money... recognition and praise.”

“Everyone wants to be appreciated, so if you appreciate someone, don't keep it a secret.”

Mary Kay Ash (1918–2001) was an American businesswoman and founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics, Inc. She considered the Golden Rule the founding principle of Mary Kay Cosmetics and advocated “praising people to success.”

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Schedule people time as well as task time. What would be valuable to ask, say or accomplish for them? What real compliment can you give or enjoyable experience can you share? Have you given them some pure listen time lately? If the conversation is really important, outline your talking points. Decide. Now go do it or schedule it in your calendar. Your thoughtful investment in people time pays the biggest of returns.

Work-Life Balance Lessons

By Dan Pearse

Like many of us, my work-life balance needs evolve and change. When my daughters were younger, I attended their games and swim meets, coached their teams, and volunteered with extra-curricular activities. With the oldest in college and the youngest in high school, there are fewer school-related demands on my time now, but something else always fills any vacuum before too long. For example, for the past few years, we have also been supporting my wife as she struggles with serious health issues. This has taught me to be flexible and to shift gears quickly. Fortunately, I work in a very supportive environment, which helps with the balance issue.

Here are some of the things I've learned over time about achieving the balance that works for me and my family as our needs and priorities change:

Prioritize your current situation. Our jobs are busy, but we also have outside influences or situations that can change our priorities. Know what's most important for you today while being sensitive to issues or tasks that are time-sensitive.

Keep things in perspective. No matter what happens today, the sun will rise tomorrow, and we will have a chance to start all over again. This might mean changing priorities or directions to get on the right track. But that next day usually provides us with a chance to make things “right.”

Let technology help with stress and time management. Staying on top of the changes in technology can be a challenge for some, but we need to leverage tools and resources such as TurnerTalk, BIM, and RACS so that we can get our work done more accurately and efficiently. Technology can also offer us greater flexibility. For example, if I need to be at the hospital with my wife, I can use my Blackberry to stay in touch with the office. This helps my colleagues because I can keep things moving forward, and it helps me reduce my stress level.

Look for “two-fers.” I try to combine work and relaxation by participating in charity golf tournaments or other events with clients. We get to know each other better in an informal and entertaining environment, which helps us build relationships. Construction is a people business, and “people do business with people,” so it's important to invest time in getting to know clients better.

Find time for yourself. I unwind by doing yard work (so my lawn looks like a golf course), but I also enjoy relaxing in the pool. Volunteering with non-profits helps me remember what's important, too. In addition to serving as the board director for our home owners association, I'm working with a group that helps prevent substance abuse among youth. Working with this organization helps me feel like I can make a difference.

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