

## The Secret Sauce to Saving Time

Is finding enough time to do everything you need to do one of your top five small business challenges? If so, you're not alone; just about every entrepreneur lists "time" as a challenge they face today in running their businesses. It's not uncommon to feel stressed and overwhelmed at everything you need to do.

Plenty of time management books will help you use your time more productively, but who has time to read a whole book these days? Instead, here are some quick tips to help you work smarter, ease any stress, and tame the time monster.

### The 4 "D"s

You might have seen a strategy that allows you to evaluate how to handle each task or e-mail as it comes across your desk. Here's mine: 1. Do, 2. Delegate, 3. Delete, and 4. Delay.

It's pretty self-explanatory. For each task you have, you choose one of the four. Do means drop everything and do it now. Delegate means give it to another person to do. Delete means you didn't really need to do that task in the first place and you can cross it off the list. And delay means you're going to do the task later and not now.

Every single thing that comes into your life can be handled using this 4D filter: do, delegate, delete, and delay. It's a great tool, and I'd definitely recommend trying it if you don't have a system for yourself. But there's an even better idea.

### The Secret Sauce

Once you've applied your formula and you've decided on the tasks you're going to "do" today (the first of the "D"s), there's another step we can add that will actually start freeing up some time. With tasks you're going to "do," you have two more filters to try:

1. Can I automate this task?
2. Can I systematize this task?

Go ahead and "do" the task the way you've always done it. Then add another step that essentially asks: "Is there a better way?"

### Take Your Biz Off Automatic Pilot

It's funny how we keep doing the same things over and over again the same way, even though our business has long outgrown the way we're doing it! Sometimes we don't think to question whether there are new ways of doing things faster. We might not want to tackle the learning curve, even though we could save a lot of time in the long run.

A client showed me her invoices recently, and I asked her how long she had been doing invoicing that way. "About 15 years," she said. The second she said it, it dawned on her to change. It hadn't occurred to her to even consider changing before! Once she got the bug to change, you couldn't stop her. She was able to both systematize and automate her invoicing, saving several hours each week. Once her mind was turned on to asking "Is there a better way?", she found dozens of tiny procedures she could change, freeing up even more time in her daily routine.

It can happen when you add or replace an employee, too. You'll see what systems need tightening up, and you can create procedures and implement new software and tools with the new employee to make the job even more effective. This happened recently to an associate when he hired a personal assistant.

### **Workflow Improvements**

Frank is a do-it-now sort of guy. When he needed something, he needed it now. He was making multiple personal errand trips several times a week to purchase groceries, make dry cleaning runs, do banking business, and mail packages. His new assistant, Beth, took over all of those tasks and she also systematized everything. She created inventories and re-order points on all his supplies and even his groceries. She set up procedures for all her new tasks. What took Frank 10 hours a week now takes Beth 3 hours a week because she eliminated the redundancy and streamlined the job. Now that's a time management tip worth implementing.

### **More Important Things**

The 4Ds, Do, Delegate, Delete, and Delay, are a great way to organize your time. To save even more time, take a look at automating or systematizing everything you can, and let us know how we can support you.

Won't it be nice to have time for more important things?