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Podcast:

Seizing Your Time - a breakthrough first step in time management

Hello, this is Mark Orton, your Business Coach. This podcast is: “Seizing Your Time - a breakthrough first step in time management”

There are lots of books, blogs and gurus on the topic of time management. This is no surprise because time is the one resource you can not buy, borrow, or inventory. Time is the one resource everyone needs in order to make a difference. Learning to manage one’s time is the necessary first step in becoming an effective manager. In fact, without good time management it is nearly impossible to become an effective manager.

In work with my clients on time management, I noticed that the hard part of time management is actually doing it. Following the initial guidance of time management books is relatively easy. You keep a log of activities for a couple of weeks and learn where you might prune out activities. Very few people, however, seem to actually get to actively managing their time. By this I mean actually creating blocks of their own time, time for important tasks that will actually drive the company forward, to spend more time working on the company instead of just in it. Changing one’s behavior incrementally seems not so easy.

I had a breakthrough recently with one of my clients.

I said, “Forget all of the analysis and just seize some time and say to yourself, “This is my time. I am going to work on important projects that will make my company more successful”.

Now I have had experience with many clients who have simply seized blocks of time during the week and gotten to work on the really important things they feel they need to do to improve their contribution to their company.

It works like this.

Look at next week's calendar and mark off one, or better, two hours on some day where there is nothing now scheduled, or there are meetings or tasks that really can be skipped. Block this time off on your calendar - mark it "My Time". Send an email around to everyone who reports to you announcing the time for your Private Work session. Tell them that you will be working on an important initiative and that barring a fire, you are not to be disturbed until the session is over.

When the hour arrives put a sign on your door or at the entrance to your cubicle, "Private Work Session - Do Not Disturb". Turn off your email, instant messaging, cell phone, Blackberry, iPhone or any other communication device that can interrupt you. Sit down at your desk or worktable and get to work on that project that you have not gotten to because of all the other "important" tasks in your day-to-day work life.

Do not be surprised if it takes a few minutes or more for you to get into a state of flow in which your total attention is on the project - you really become totally engaged.

When your Private Work Session is over, take a few moments to consider what just happened. First, your organization did not collapse while you were occupied. Second, you actually accomplished work on a forward looking project. Seizing personal work time also energizes your efforts to really learn how to manage their time. You already see that you can make real progress working on the future instead of constantly balled up in the day-to-day activities of the company. It is a demonstration of the power of spending significant time working on your company instead of just in it.

Now, before you move back into day-to-day activities, put another Private Work Session on your calendar. Be daring and schedule two or three hours for the next week.

A couple of thoughts now about identifying your personal optimal schedule for Private Work Sessions. First, think about what time of day you feel the most energized. Some people are morning people, others midday or afternoon.

Whatever time of day is your high energy period, schedule your Private Work Sessions then. Second, develop a sense of how long the Private Work Session should be. This is determined by how long you can sustain a state of flow - that state of being totally engaged by what you are doing, that state in which all of your senses are focused on the task at hand and the outside world seems out of sight. Some people can do this for 45 minutes at a time, others 2 hours. You just need to take your personal flow style into account.

Now, lets quickly review this breakthrough step in time management. It is quite simple. Schedule Private Work Sessions - one or two hours will do. Prevent all interruptions from people and technology - turn off cellphones, Blackberries, etc. Get to work on a future oriented project that will make a difference to you and your organization.

In closing, I don't want to suggest that you should not continue to work on managing the rest of your time. There is much to be gained there. But, by starting out by seizing your personal time, you will start with the biggest benefit of managing your time - creating private time for you to work on projects that only you can do and that will contribute to the future of your organization. This breakthrough in time management will amaze you because you will discover that relatively short periods of time regularly devoted to developing your business will produce real results quickly.

Thanks, your Business Coach Mark Orton