

## Setting Time Limits and Working Efficiently

Everywhere I go, I hear that time is a problem, too many clients / customers and not enough time. There are possibility three areas that might be looked at. One area that always wasted time was when a client didn't show and I waited for them not wanting to start some new work. I suggest that they be called the night before and reminded. This could be accomplished by having a senior citizen volunteer or work experience call.

The second area that I find took more time then needed was when a client thought they were the only person I saw that day. Many would talk and I did not want to rush them so I ended up being behind. I learned later to say up front to the client that I was happy to see them and that we had 45 minutes together to work on... It might not be a bad idea to give them an agenda with some goals for that time. "Here is what I would like to accomplish in the next 45 minutes."

The third area that I hear a lot of complaints about are long staff meetings. Most meetings should not be more then an hour and should end on time. Everyone should be given an agenda at least the day before with what is going to be discussed. It is always good to have the first five minutes with something either funny or educational or both. There are lots of short 5 minute videos out that talk about on a verity of subjects. Then the sacred rule, end on time. It is ok to start late although not suggested but never end past the time you said.

If you have any things that you do to save time let me know and I will pass them on.

## **RESPONCES**

**Save time? It is impossible to save time..... Time passes, regardless of how it is used, but no one has ever been able to save time and use it later.**

**Now I know I have stated the obvious, but sometimes folks don't think of it in that manner.**

**Now - how do we USE our time.**

**I realize the examples above are talking about "others taking up our time" and how do we manage that. But let's talk about how we use our time.**

**Steven Covey has a priority window of Urgent and Important categories... When we do the important things, before they become urgent is when we best use our time.**

**Preparing agendas for meetings and following them, makes good use of our time.**

**However, when our agenda becomes sacred and we lose the flexibility to "work with the issues at hand" I fear we put efficiency ahead of effectiveness.**

People that are so concerned about their time that they don't have time for their clients need to find another job. If you are going to "help" you client, you need to get to know them. When they are "wasting your time" is often when you get to really know what they are like, what their weaknesses are, and can start to devise a plan to help them or "deal with them" if they are beyond help. GW UT

As it regards staff meetings, we have cut down the content considerably, by emailing general info, and if there are questions we clear them up BEFORE the staff meeting. While waiting for clients to show up I do data entry or something that I can drop and pick up later when they come in. Also I make it very clear what the agenda for the meeting is and stick to it. If you are not careful you will be listening to their life histories if you allow it. Just keeping leading them back to the agenda, I have it right in front of me, and check off as we go along. Damian

Thank you for the suggestions on how to better manage time w/clients. The problem in our department is that our boss is the one who is not respecting our time. He will dominate our staff meetings and he knows he does it, interrupt, and then keep us there sometimes 2 1/2 hours for a staff meeting!!! We will just happen to pass by his office and he will have us "join" him while he's talking to someone that we don't even have anything to do with this person. I've gotten to where I avoid coming near his office during the busy times of the day. I've confronted him on this and he just laughs. I have 260 kids in my out-of-school program (with only 3 staff to assist me), many are in project-based learning components in our building and need my attention, but the numerous meetings w/him keep me/us from doing my/our job. Do you have any suggestions for a boss that dominates time of his staff? anonymous in CA

Having time to do everything is a constant never-ending struggle for me. Because I have a lot of paperwork to weed through what works for me:

" every piece of paper I pick up I have to do something with...and not put it back on my stack.

" set daily goals of work that I want to accomplish, ie., employee evaluations, regulations that I need to read, etc.

" learn to say no. Too often I take on more than I can handle because I can't say no....tomorrow night I'm making 4 doz. miniature cheese cakes because of this.

You identified a few already: time spent waiting for clients where we don't work on another project, when client meetings run long... (My personal favorite was having to run to another floor of the building and wait my turn every time I'd like to make a copy of a resume or job order for a client sitting in my office--it's something I didn't think much about until someone asked me how much time I spent making copies.)

What I'd like to know is:

**1. In your travels have you come across a top 5 or 10 list of activities/habits/tasks that are notorious for 'sucking time' away from providing efficient services to clients?**

**And more importantly:**

**2. Have you encountered anyone who has found a way to help case managers evaluate their own work habits & tasks so they can find & reduce the impact these 'time suckers' have on their efficiency, stress level, and services to families? AK**

**I usually tell a customer up front how much time I can spend. If he/she is still with me longer than the designated amount of time, I get up from my desk and start walking while talking with to the customer. By the time we get to the rest room door our conversation has ended on a positive note. Ed.**

**The second area that I find took more time then needed was when a client thought they were the only person I saw that day. Many would talk and I did not want to rush them so I ended up being behind. I learned later to say up front to the client that I was happy to see them and that we had 45 minutes together to work on... It might not be a bad idea to give them an agenda with some goals for that time. "Here is what I would like to accomplish in the next 45 minutes."**

**I love it! Ironically, I never really thought of addressing time so bluntly with a client. However, instead of 45 minutes I will suggest 20.**

**Regards, Mauricio Madueño**

**On the time issue, my clients, customers are usually early and I get them in as soon as possible. But the ones that do not come are sanctioned. It is really interesting how fast they come in afterwards. I enjoy talking with them , but most of them are in a hurry to get out of the office.**

**love the one about setting a time ahead such as 45 minutes. Very good idea. That is what I deal with primarily and I will pass the other suggestions on to the appropriate personnel.**

**A couple of things that work for me. I am a "block of time" person. I set aside x hours, preferably in the morning (since I am a morning person) and get the things done that I need to do independently before my day starts in the One-Stop. If I am working on a budget with other parties, I ask them to review all materials and then make a list with questions rather than having everyone keep calling with questions as they come up. Not a perfect system but works well for me in my time management policy.**

Also, we set meeting with a time start and a time end and really stick to it. With a good agenda, it makes you move along and make the meeting more productive. Interesting that you bring up the time issue. I am in the middle of an article on Time, not on how to handle it, but having the clients realize how time rather rules our lives and how they need to be mindful of how being "timely in their job search" and how "timing is everything when you wait too long to check on a job", etc. In preparing for the article, I made a list of time: good time, bad time, time-in, time out, overtime, big time, in-no-time, hard time, olden times, time off, summer time, spring time, winter time (rarely do we hear autumn time or fall time I think...), limited time, time off, bedtime, daylight savings time, timing is everything, lunchtime, dinner time, time limits, wasted time and most importantly to clients I think is ON TIME. There must be others, but as I gathered my thoughts about the article, I started wondering which of the above list of times do our clients leave out and can there be something done about running a workshop not on time management, but just the concept itself. Many of my clients have done hard time and have had bad times, but don't know much about overtime (pay), punching a time clock, having paid time off, having a regular bedtime, lunch time, or break time - especially if they have never worked. We see them as wasting time - both ours and theirs - but do they even get it? Hopefully if we can help them realize that timing IS everything and they can get a good job, in no time they will have good times -BIG TIME!! CA

Anyway I just wanted to let you know how true it is in what you said in not using your time in a productive matter. Every time we go to a meeting it really amazing me all the time we waste and that most of what is talk in the meeting never gets to be done nor accomplish. I really believe that management needs to look at this meeting more close and discuss issues among upper level and then pass them on. Of course this is just my opinion Hilda CA

One thing I do is to have a list of short projects to do sitting on/near my desk. If I have an appointment in 10-15 minutes and don't want to get into anything else that will take time, I get some small projects done. This may even be some data entry on a participant.

**Rich Kobre**  
Davenport, Iowa

Regarding time. Time is a big problem for my clients also. Some of them call me that they don't have time to come in to the One-Stop because they have a job interview or there's always a childcare issue, or their child is sick, etc. The thing is, working people, working 40 hours, have the same exact problems and issues in life, but need to deal with them before or after work, or at lunchtime. When you're not working, time can become a big issue without one noticing it! It is so easy to waste time on unimportant things that soon take up the day. Like I said before about

myself, when I was unemployed, I would get up, take the kids to school, go home, read the newspaper, make myself breakfast, wash dishes, do chores around the house, then head out to the local One-Stop, which happened to be 3 minutes away. I would fax out a couple of resumes, look for job leads, then go home to prepare lunch, then get ready to pick up my kids. I was in reality goofing off but if I was doing a household chore I felt justified that it was okay. Weeks went by like this, I had developed very bad habits, none of these chores were important enough to let them take away from my job search, I was really just kidding myself! Whoever said that looking for work should be a fulltime job was right on the money! Anyway I see a lot of these habits in my clients.

By the way, California EDD has a program called Worksmart ( I have it on my computer) that helps people in their job search. One section regarding being job ready and timeliness asks you to check off how much time you use in the AM to shave, shower, iron clothes, prepare breakfast, fix lunch, etc. Then it calculates it for you. Then it recommends ways to save time like ironing clothes the night before or making your sandwich the night before etc. This maybe can help some people to not be late! I personally can relate to this because my mornings are pretty crazy, since I have to get three kids up for school every morning and get them fed, make their lunches, and drive them to three different schools in two different cities before going to work in a third city.

So like you had mentioned before, a lot of people have barriers, and need help dealing with them, and I think time management is right in there as part of everything, like the air we breathe. Zeke Gracia CA