

Time Management

Notes from Mayfield Business Forum (MBF) meeting 5 Nov 2013

The meeting discussed

- What works
- What hinders us
- What we can do to improve

with everyone present sharing their experiences

What Works

The list of tools and techniques that had been used successfully by MBF members includes:

1. Making a list with priorities. It is important to make the list realistic so we can feel pleased with our progress after a good day's work
2. Using a diary, paper or electronic, to note key tasks as well as appointments
3. Setting alarms in our diary, using colour coding to highlight the important tasks
4. Making a daily plan of what needs to be done and tackling important tasks before we can be distracted by other issues
5. Starting the day with some smaller tasks that we can tick them off and so build momentum for bigger tasks. This is a good procedure to follow on days when we are having difficulty getting started
6. Taking breaks after periods of intense work. We can do more mundane tasks or take a complete break from work to refresh ourselves
7. Booking meetings with ourselves in our diaries for important work where we need to be uninterrupted. Let others know that we are not available during these times and be as firm about keeping to these meetings as we would be if they were meetings with other people
8. Rewarding ourselves but only after completing a difficult or important task – this could be by chatting to someone, having a KitKat or a reading the news: whatever we enjoy, will not take too long and will give us new energy to get back to work

It has been shown that when we form even one small habit it makes it easier to go on and create others. So if we can do one of the above on a regular basis, it makes it easier to do some of the others.

What hinders

There are two major types of interruption – other people and letting ourselves become distracted from the job in hand.

Ideas to deal with them are:

- Other people: when we really need to focus, we should switch off phones, log out of email and even ignore the doorbell. Also we can tell colleagues so that they help rather than hinder. There will always be times when we are unavailable even to important clients, so let's not be afraid to create some uninterrupted time for important tasks – many of these tasks will help us serve our customers better in the future

- Distractions: if we are worried about something, we can allocate time to deal with the issue in our diary – but after the important work has been done. If we are easily distracted by social media or staring out the window, then “rewarding ourselves” as set out above can help us focus.

We should all prioritise (“Don’t surrender your dreams to an empty inbox”)

The **urgent / important matrix** below gives a great guideline. We should spend 20% of our time on time on Urgent/Important and 80% on the areas inside the blue circle

<i>URGENT</i>	DO <u>AFTER</u> IMPORTANT WORK IF TIME	IMMEDIATE ACTION
<i>NOT URGENT</i>	FORGET	PLAN TIME TO DO
	<i>UNIMPORTANT</i>	<i>IMPORTANT</i>

Note: if you have staff reporting to you, you can delegate urgent/unimportant tasks

What we can do

“Strategies are universal, tactics are idiosyncratic”

We all struggle with time management so we need not feel alone. We can employ some of the general principles set out above but choose the details that work for each of us

- Morning or evening person? Allocate time for important tasks and those that require thought when we are at our brightest
- Paper or electronic – write down what we are going to do and have it some place which reminds us, especially to get back on track after distractions
- Reward ourselves in a way that is motivating

Also we can realise that we will not do a great job, for ourselves or our clients, if we are constantly chasing our own tails