



Top Time Management Tips for Accountants

Each e-bulletin, I provide some practical time management tips that accounting firms we work with use from day to day. The idea is to challenge your current approach. Just try it, even if you are not sure it will work for you. By doing things differently, you will quickly discover what is effective and what is eating into your day. In previous months, I have covered

- #1 Tackle small tasks on the spot if they can be done quickly.
- #2 Use the 4-D approach - drop it, do it, delegate it or defer it.
- #3 Using emails more effectively
- #4 Take a break, regularly
- #5 Use a weekly planner
- #6 Manage your client relationships proactively
- #7 Document standard working papers and review processes
- #8 Implement a strong screening process for phone calls
- #9 The 6-step process for more effective meetings

This bulletin's tips:

- #10 Look critically at your approach to task management

Most people make use of to-do lists in some form, however a specific task list is key to productivity.

Categorising the day's tasks in terms of priority and when it is due is important but you shouldn't get too carried away with trying to achieve too much in one day. Sometimes it is just not feasible to attempt fitting 12 hours worth of work into eight.

It is easy to become too optimistic when you have so much to do. A good rule to follow is not to schedule more than four hours worth of tasks in an average 8 hour day. The rest of the time will be consumed by emails, phone calls, meetings and other urgent tasks or interruptions you may need to attend to. Using this rule will ensure you are not disappointed by your progress at the end of the day but still allows you to gain the satisfaction of crossing all your tasks off the list.

If there is anything to be carried over to the following day ensure you create a new task list before you leave. Transfer remaining tasks to this list and add any new tasks for the next day. Finally, throw away the old list!



11 Implement Quiet Time:

Do you ever get the feeling that you're being interrupted every five minutes? These interruptions, although small can really impact on your productivity. Sometimes it is helpful to shut yourself off from the rest of the office.

Set aside a specific, uninterrupted block of time per day (depending on your schedule) to complete any important tasks that require your complete focus. Close the door, or if you are in a cubicle put up something that signals you are now in quiet time e.g. a colourful scarf. Alternatively you could also send an email around the office simply stating that you will be having two hours of quiet time.

During this time you should refrain from checking or responding to any emails or phone calls. This is also a good opportunity to ensure reception offers for anyone who phones with a query that isn't urgent to send it by email. This way you will not have a long list of calls to respond to at the end of your time block.

These hints come from **Take Control of Your Time – A 10-part Time Management Program** specifically developed for Accounting Firms.

Visit www.bizaptitude.com.au or contact Dorothy Crosby on 02-9904 8400 for more information on how you can help your team develop their time management skills.