

TIME MANAGEMENT

What you accomplish during a 24-hour period depends on your own motivation, your energy, your skills and abilities, and other resources.

Since there are always demands on your time, it may be helpful to think about what you will do with your time and to consider some strategies for more effective time management.

Time management is not a way to make you work harder and longer, but a means to help you work smarter to accomplish your work more easily and rapidly.

If you can manage your time more effectively, you will be rewarded in a variety of ways:

- You will be more efficient in serving your district and will be able to support your chapter better
- You will achieve greater success in your very important, and highly visible, role as a FGB Leader
- On a personal level, you will certainly feel healthier, more energetic, and in a generally better mood

Even with clear objectives we can stumble for a variety of reasons. We are told to present the message of the Gospel, “The Good News,” and make disciples. But what is the “Good News”? The good news is that your heavenly Father still loves you; He never stopped loving you; He loves you so much that He sent His Son Jesus to bring you back, and all you need to do is let Him. Even though this message is simple, many are disorganized in what to do. Both believers and recipients of the message will say “NO” I don’t have time.

While ministering on the street, people are in a hurry. They normally will give you two minutes of their time, but there are many distractions. Their friends are telling them. “we need to go or we will miss our bus, etc.” The noise of the traffic also interrupts the message, but once the message is delivered the response is incredible. Many receive Jesus as savior and are totally changed. The person who was in a hurry now has time – time to be discipled. What can we do when we are inactive? We can tell someone about Jesus. How does this relate to your business as a FGBMF member?

There are a lot of things that make it difficult for us to manage our time effectively. Let’s consider some of the most common ones, and see if they apply to us:

- Unclear objectives – It’s hard to hit a target with your eyes closed, and it’s just as hard to accomplish something when you aren’t exactly clear about what you want to achieve
- Disorganization – It’s easy to see when your desk is too messy, but sometimes you have to step back and ask yourself if you are taking an organized approach in completing all of your tasks
- Inability to say “no” – We all want to be as helpful as we can when others need us, but this can mean taking time away from other priorities to do something we may not have planned
- Interruptions – Many times we are in the middle of accomplishing something really important and the telephone rings. These calls can not only take you away from your task, but sometimes they interrupt your train of thought and you can’t return to where you were without retracing your steps
- More interruptions – We all like to visit with others, but conversations at inappropriate times can cost us time when we have to stop what we are doing and redirect ourselves from our plans

- **Periods of inactivity** – As much as we think we are busy, there are times in our day when we are not really doing anything. Recognizing and making use of these times can have a positive effect on our efforts
- **Obstacles of Efficient Time Management**
- **Too many things at once** – Many of our tasks are not routines. They require concentration to detail. When we are attempting to do too many different things at one time, each individual task suffers as a result
- **Stress and fatigue** – Everyone experiences stress from time to time, and sometimes we actually operate a little better when there is some level of stress. Too much stress, on the other hand, causes our work to suffer and wears us down physically and mentally. Dealing with stress is an important part of time management
- **All work and no play** – Most successful people know how to balance work and play. When work takes over your life, you not only give your body little time to re-energize, but you may end up sacrificing the really important things in life like family and friends

What Can We Do?

- The obstacles that we face are not insurmountable. Sometimes, the hardest thing to do is to identify that these obstacles exist and are affecting your ability to manage your time
- When you have identified your obstacles you can begin to overcome them
- Here are some strategies you can use to overcome the obstacles we just examined:

Set Goals

The first, and most important strategy you can employ to manage your time is to set clear goals for yourself. As a FGBMF leader, you will want to accomplish many things in your time in the office. The best favor you can do for yourself is to determine what those goals are and make sure your efforts are always directed toward their achievement.

Effective goals share a number of characteristics in common. Effective goals are:

- **Specific** – When a goal is too vague, you may never know how to reach it or even when you have reached it. Make sure that you know exactly what you hope to achieve
- **Measurable** – When you have a goal that is measurable, you will know how far you have to go to reach the goal, and when you get there For instance, “I will support extension in my region” is a vague goal, while “I will establish five new chapters in my region is both specific (new chapters) and measurable (five).
- **Achievable** – It is commendable to set your sights high, but sometimes we try to accomplish more than we can actually do. Training and certifying ten FGBMF members in your region in one year may or may not be achievable at this time for a number of reasons. Your goals should be such that, if you “extend yourself” you can just reach them.
- **Realistic** – Can you establish a program in your region to help everyone understand the vision and then the mission to accomplish the vision? The vision can be introduced through business seminars in the marketplace.

Time-based – Most of the goals that you establish in your position as a FGBMF leader will not be long-term. It is important to set time guidelines for your goals, so that you can keep track of your progress as you are going along and can be alert to when you are falling behind schedule.

(You may wish to state a goal that meets the five characteristics, and ask participants to explain how each characteristic is met. For example, “We will increase retention of current members in my region by reducing the dropout rate to X % by the end of the fiscal year.” Further, you may wish to provide a non-example and ask participants to restate it to meet the five characteristics. For example, “We will improve the service we provide to our community.”)

Prioritize

As a leader in your chapter or region, you will be faced with many tasks. It is safe to say that you will not be able to do everything, so it is wise to periodically make a list of the tasks that confront you and prioritize them. The following technique may be helpful in prioritizing: (Note: You may wish to provide examples of tasks that you have placed in each of the four categories that follow. Explain why you made the decision, and how it positively impacted your time management.)

Do – Determine from the list the things you think are most important to accomplish, and are things you should do yourself.

- **Delegate** – Remember that there many members within your region with skills, experience, and motivation to carry out a wide variety of tasks. A truly effective regional director understands that real leaders do not try to accomplish everything themselves and recognizes that some things are better handled by others. Delegating not only frees up your time for other things, it ensures that resources are used wisely and that FGB members who want to help are motivated and involved.
- **Delay until another time** – Some things can wait. The danger is delaying too many things until deadlines are near. The best policy here is to consider when things are due, how long it will take to accomplish them, and what your current workload will allow. For instance, registrations and request forms that are not yet due could be sent to National Directors earlier if you have time. It makes sense to delay things that are not due when your are “overburdened” and to accomplish them ahead of time when you can.
- **Delete** – If you have set goals using the guidelines we mentioned earlier, you may recognize that some of them are not achievable or realistic, or that they are just not important. A good leader knows when to concentrate on the important and eliminate the rest.

As time allows, you may wish to:

- Ask selected participants to share tasks that they will prioritize into the four categories
- Break participants into small groups and ask them to create a list of chapter tasks that could be prioritized using the four categories

It is important when you have prioritized your tasks that you:

- **Address the urgent** – Take care of things with short-term consequences as soon as possible.
- **Accomplish what you can early** – Reports, registrations, requests that can be handled early should come next. Don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today.
- **Attach deadlines to things you delay** – When you have determined that something can definitely wait, don’t just toss it aside until later. Establish a deadline for the task in your schedule, and make a note to remind you to begin working on it.

Note: You may wish to emphasize the 80/20 rule here. (20% of your tasks can take 80% of your time.) This is a good point to keep in mind as you prioritize tasks.

ORGANIZE

As you prioritize tasks and set deadlines, you will want to organize your plans and actions. Some of you may be more comfortable using paper and pencil, so I urge you to make use of a planner with a calendar and plenty of space to make notes. Many planners contain not only calendar space, but also room for daily activities, contact information, and “to do” lists. Find a planner that fits your needs and use it. You will find this to be an indispensable tool for managing your time.

Maybe you use, or would consider using, a computer to help in organizing your time. Today’s computers often come equipped with software programs that include calendars, task lists, reminders, and contact information. If your computer does not have such a function, software is readily available that you can install.

You may also consider a small personal digital assistant, or PDA. These devices are small enough to fit in your hand, and use the same software your home computer uses. PDA’s are helpful tools when you are away from your computer during the day or are traveling on business.

(Note: This would be a good opportunity to share whatever tools you use to stay organized. If you use a planner, bring it out and show how you use it. If you use computer software, explain the program and how it helps you. You may also ask participants if they have any other organizational ideas, like reminder files for each week or month.)

Whatever method you choose, make sure you organize your tasks so that you can stay on track.

LEARN WHEN TO SAY “NO”

The strategies we have mentioned so far have all concerned common business practices. Now I would like to address some more “personal” strategies that you can apply to your life. These also have a great impact on how effectively you manage your time.

The first of these strategies is being able to say “NO” when it is appropriate. Your life in FGB has always been about giving all that you can to serve your community. That doesn’t change, but as your duties expand as a FGBMF leader you will find you are called on to do much more than you have ever been asked to do before.

When you learn to say “NO” you are not closing the door on your responsibilities, but rather you are making sure that you can meet your commitments and accomplish the maximum possible in the time available to you.

To be able to say “NO” you will have to accept these three principles:

1. I realize that I can’t do everything
2. I won’t agree to undertake a task or project that I know I will not be able to complete in the timeframe required
3. I will not make commitments that are not consistent with the goals and objectives I have set for myself

If you keep these principles in mind, you will find it easier to justify (and explain) why some requests must be turned down. You will also find that you are better able to accomplish the things that you have prioritized as “must do.”

USE YOUR WAITING TIME

Another personal time management skill is to make good use of your “waiting time.”

Have you ever thought about how much time you spend doing nothing during an average day?

Usually this is not a situation where you planned to do nothing...it just happened. Think about all of the things you could accomplish if you could make use of this time. For instance:

- Time you spend commuting on a train or bus
- Time you wait at the doctor or dentist office for your appointment

- Time you spend on a plane, waiting for your plane, or the time you spend waiting for your baggage
- Time you spend “on hold” on the telephone
- Time you spend when you arrive at work or at a meeting earlier than you had anticipated

You may include other examples or ask participants for their own ideas.

- There are two ways to look at these periods of time. You can either consider them as “wastes of time” or as “gifts of time.” If you choose to think of them as gifts of time, you can use them as opportunities to accomplish routine tasks that are necessary, but don’t require large periods of time.

Most successful people have already found that there are a number of things that they can accomplish while they wait.

Use Your Waiting Time

The trick to making use of your waiting time is to always make sure you have something with you that you can accomplish in the event that you are kept waiting. For instance:

- Reading correspondence – Take your mail with you and read it while you are waiting or traveling. Some PDA’s have e-mail capability, so you can read your e-mail on a train or plane or at the doctor’s office
- Writing letters or memos – While you wait, you can take out a notepad or use a PDA to write letters or memos. This could also be a good time to update your planner
- Reading or listening to tapes – Carry a book or magazine or a tape with you. You can also download books and articles to your PDA. There is often no time in your schedule to keep current on books or articles related to your business or to self-improvement. Instead of being impatient when you are delayed, this could be a perfect time to advance your own knowledge and skills.

This would be a good time to describe some ways you personally fill the “waiting times” in your schedule, and how you feel it has helped you manage your time overall.

Concentrate On The Task At Hand

You will be juggling many tasks while you serve as a FGBMF leader. There is no way around this fact. But one important strategy to keep in mind is to concentrate completely on the current task. Concentration can be difficult when you have a lot on your mind. Your time will be better spent if you are able to:

- Focus on your goal – You may have many commitments and many concerns, but you will accomplish more when you keep focused on the one task you are performing at the moment
- Tune out interruptions – You will find your concentration is at its highest level when you can set aside times during the day when you will not answer the phone or schedule visitors. You can’t isolate yourself all of the time, but by avoiding interruptions for specific periods of time, you may find you can accomplish tasks successfully in far less time than you anticipated. When you must respond to phone calls, be assertive in minimizing interruptions by asking if you can call back at another time or meet another day.

Consider Your Personal Prime Time

Are you one of those people who gets up before the sun rises and starts working? Is the early evening, after the evening meal, your time to work? Or are you someone who prefers to wait until the quiet of the late night hours to do the really hard tasks?

Everyone is different. Most research shows that tasks that take the most mental concentration are most effectively accomplished early in the day, but even these studies acknowledge that this is not always true, and that everyone has a “personal prime time.”

When you plan your tasks, think about your own “prime time.” If you do your best work early, plan to do the routine tasks later in the day and concentrate on the more challenging tasks when you are at your best. If you don’t really get going until later, handle the routines in the morning and save the more difficult tasks for later.

Celebrate the achievement of your goals to maintain a healthy balance in life between work and play. Reward yourself when you complete a task or finish a project.

If you worked in a team setting, or delegated some tasks to others, reward the efforts of all involved.

Celebration is a vital part of all project management. No matter how tight your schedule looks, this is TIME WELL SPENT!

Review the strategies for time management that you have presented.

Set goals

Prioritize

Organize

Learn when to say “NO”

Use your waiting time

Concentrate on the task at hand

Consider your personal prime time

Celebrate success

You can either perform the demonstration described or discuss the short story below to conclude the session.

One day an expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students and, to make a point, he used this illustration. As he stood in front of the group he pulled out a large wide-mouthed Mason jar and set it on the table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen rocks and placed them, one at a time, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "Really?"

He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. He dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the space between the rocks. Then he asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class began to understand. "Probably not," one of them answered. "Good!" he replied.

He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in the jar and it went into all of the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?" No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good."

Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?" One student raised his hand and said, "No matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things in it!" "No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all." What are the 'big rocks' in your life? God, Your spouse, Your children; Your loved ones; Your education; Your dreams; A worthy cause; Teaching or mentoring others; Doing things that you love; Time for yourself; Your health; (or significant other). Remember to put these **BIG ROCKS in first or you'll never get them in at all. If you sweat about the little stuff (the gravel, sand, and water) then you'll fill your life with little things you worry about that don't**

really matter, and you'll never have the time you need to spend on the big, important stuff (the big rocks).

So, tonight, or in the morning, when you are reflecting on this short story, ask yourself this question: What are the 'big rocks' in my life? Then, put those in your jar first.

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