

Time management

## How to become a Master of Time Management with 2 Simple Questions.

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Time Management is one of those topics that book shelves and libraries are full of. When writing this article, I did a quick search terms for 'time management books' and found 20,000 titles ranging from 'time management from the inside out' 'time Warrior', 'How to get things done' and how to live on 24 hours or even 4 hours a day.

The trouble is, each one of these 20,000 books has a so-called 'proven method' for mastering time management, overcoming procrastination( and laziness) and hence finding the secret to success.

So which one is best, and are there actually more than 20,000 different ways to conquer time management?

### **Juggling balls**

In my opinion, it really depends on how you look at it. I designed my own time management method some time ago, it was different and it worked really well for me for a while. (My patented system was based on the concept of juggling balls or balloons... "Keeping the balls in the air" and involved a white board and varying colours of 'yellow stickies'). But really, it was just another variant on one of the many different to-do list methods...

As a matter of fact... most of the time management methods I've come across fall into two camps: Firstly there are the many variations on working with to-do lists. Some of those involve a perpetual list; others involve a new list every day or every week. Some list-methods tell you to divide your tasks in 3, 4 or 6 different categories, and others suggest to just dump every action no matter how small or large in the same list. Some ask you to filter out the most important tasks and do them first, others suggest you do the one you like least first etc etc.

The second approach revolves around varying ways to manage your diary and your day: Some tell you to keep lots of blank space in your diary, some direct you to plan your day in 10 minute blocks and others ask you to just stick the "Big Rocks" in your diary.

### **10 minutes**

I worked for a specialist time management consultant for a little while and part of his "IP" revolved around teaching people that every action that would take more than 10 minutes had to go in the calendar and anything smaller than 10 minutes had to go in the task list.

And you know what... I'm pretty sure all of the methods work, and that all of them are fantastic for the person who designed them.

## **My lazy client**

But that ain't you.

Some time ago, I worked with a client who used to beat himself up something shocking over his laziness and procrastination.

One Monday he came in to one of our sessions in a particularly foul mood. To my inquiry about his weekend, he snapped: *"I didn't get that bloody Tax return done again yesterday!"*

When I asked him what had happened he responded with:

*"I cleaned up the garage, I mowed the lawn, I watched the rugby game and I took my girlfriend out to lunch". "To be honest, I have been procrastinating for weeks over this tax return and even after making the decision to get it done this weekend, I still never even made a start on it".*

"Wow", I said, "That sounds bad. But did you enjoy yourself doing those other things?"

*"Of course" he replied, "the garage really needed cleaning, the lawn was weeks overdue, the Wallabies won and my girlfriend really appreciated the attention. However, that's not the point... I still didn't do my tax return after making a commitment to do so".*

"I understand that you are disappointed" I said, "But tell me, have you always done your tax return?"

He pondered for a while and responded: *"Yes, ever since I was 18 and my father taught me how to do it, it always feels really good completing it myself and getting some sort of refund".*

"Ok", I said, "so you have never missed a deadline before and are you late with it now?"

*"Oh no", he replied, "I have always done it and on time and I actually have another 2 whole weeks before it has to be in... I just wanted to get it in in a few weeks early, in case something came up"*

Through my smiles I responded: "Well... maybe something did come up? Maybe the lawn, the garage, the game and your girlfriend were more important this weekend? Is there actually any real reason to assume you won't get your tax return completed in the next two weeks?"

(In case you're interested... my client completed his tax return the next weekend... he still had a week to spare)

## **The two questions**

You see, we only ever do something for one of two reasons:

- 1) We want to do it
- 2) We don't want the consequences of not doing it

What client had 'wanted' to do was fix the garage, the lawn and the game and spend time with his girlfriend. He wasn't a procrastinator at all. He just didn't particularly 'want' to do his tax return that weekend, and the consequences of not doing it were minimal.

So this is how I'd like you to think about time management.

As long as you are not 100% clear on what you want to do and you are not 100% clear on what consequences you fear - you will constantly confuse yourself and you'll tell yourself you are an exasperating lazy procrastinator and that you need a better time-management system.

So, by all means... experiment with any of the well-established systems (personally I like the Steven Covey's Urgent V Important approach) but no system is going to help you unless you constantly ask yourself: What do I want to do and what do I not want the consequences of not doing?

Give it a go... much more fun than beating yourself up... I guarantee it.

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He is also the author of the acclaimed "The Ten Truths books for business owners". Roland runs a webinar called "The Small Business Masterminds" every month, on the 10 key aspects of business that all business owners face when developing their businesses. First time is free, normally \$99, book in here:

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