

Excerpted from:

Holland Cooke Monthly Newsletter

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MANAGERS: FORGET "TIME MANAGEMENT." DON'T EVEN TRY! News flash: Time cannot be managed. But tasks can.

As we install new PDs at several client stations, I will share with you what I'm sharing with them: Four techniques I myself have found EXTREMELY helpful over many years of dancing-as-fast-as-I-can in several over-tasked management positions.

- **"Mapping" your week.** Use a spreadsheet, to create a schedule that doesn't change week-to-week. Slot-in items like:
 - a) Your show, if you're on-air, and show prep, when you do your daily promo, etc. Or PD/talent meetings, if you're PD.
 - b) Regularly-scheduled Boss Time (see "folders") below.
 - c) Is there a weekly staff meeting or department heads meeting? Do you routinely meet with Sales? Slot it in.
 - d) In-bin and phone time (see below).
 - e) Days you're available to do-lunch, or for Sales calls.
 - f) MBWA time ("Management By Walking-Around"). Build it in.
 - g) What else?

Tip: Round-up. If something takes 45 minutes, slot-in an hour. That allows for bathroom breaks, checking voicemail, or running-across-the-street for a cuppa cawfee. Consider doing so even if there's free crankcase coffee there at the station. Building in a couple short walks each day can really help you clear your mind between events.

This map you are making is "a living document;" subject to ongoing revision. But plan-your-work-and-work-your-plan, and you'll find that lots more gets done. You'll also find that people respond by being more punctual for you.

Tip: Find a hiding place. Always-being-in-your-office tempts interruptions. Two decades of management – and 23 years as a landlord – taught me how some issues that seemed "urgent" to people-seeking-your-attention tend to resolve themselves before the would-be interrupter finds you.

- **Show your boss two file folders**, one with your initials on the tab, the other with his/her initials on the tab.

Give him/her the one with your initials, and keep the other one. Then, schedule a regular meeting (that goes on your map). The meeting can be weekly, daily, Monday/Wednesday/Friday, whatever. Lock it in, show up on-time.

Pledge to each other that you will avoid ad hoc, single-topic conversations. Unless someone is bleeding or something is on fire, the conversation can wait for a scheduled meeting. Toss a note, or pertinent document, into the folder.

I started doing this when I worked for a particularly "spontaneous" GM. NO NAMES. His half-dozen daily "Got a minute?" interruptions were extremely disruptive. And he was flattered when I showed him the respect of blocking-out Quality Time for issues we shared.

Sure, he'd back-slide from time to time. When he did, I would ask, politely, "Do we need to handle this now, or should I put it in The Folder?" He took the hint; and praised me later, during my Performance Review, for suggesting the idea, which he instituted with the Sales Manager, Business Manager, and Chief Engineer. THANK ME LATER FOR THIS ONE.

- **Don't answer the phone!** That's why there's voicemail. Shut off your wireless phone unless you're expecting a call, or on-call. Phone calls about every little thing are a torturous pause button, and invite 12-hour workdays and more and taller piles of half-finished tasks. Set aside two times per day to schedule and return calls. Quality Time. Try it, and you will REALLY thank me. And I saved the best for last...
- **Touch each piece of paper ONCE.** See "In-Bin time" in your weekly "map" above. Do one-of-the-following with every piece of paper that finds you:
 - a) Deal-with-it instantly (i.e., scribble-a-response-and-return to sender), or otherwise bring the issue to closure; OR
 - b) Send it to someone else ("delegation" in management lingo); OR
 - c) File it; OR
 - d) Circular-file-it (sort your mail over the wastebasket); OR
 - e) There is no e).

Ritualistic as all-of-the-above may seem, YOUR LIFE WILL CHANGE if you take these suggestions literally. Things are busy enough that no routine less-structured will suffice. And conducting yourself accordingly will send staff an important message.