The High Trust Advisor Series: Managing Your Professional Time

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Busy professionals can be constantly time challenged. The question is... are they being efficient or effective?

Efficient means that you are doing the job *right*. Effective means that are you doing the *right job.*

I often find that a huge amount of professional time is wasted by our focusing on the wrong things. Working with my many coaching clients they consistently raise the issue of 'time management' being a problem.

However my old mentor and friend the wonderful speaker, author and behavioural psychologist Dr. Denis Waitley once said that "Time management is a fallacy – you can't manage time. One cannot make an hour longer than it is or bring yesterday back to today".

He said that it is our *focus* that we should manage and not our time. Manage your focus and time starts to work for you.

Would it not be fair to say that as experts, leaders, managers, sales professionals, relationship managers, professional advisers and consultants (where time and expertise are often our only resources) we get absorbed too often into the business and lose our sense of what also matters in life?

As a result we may find ourselves wishing there were 24 hours in the working day. We may find that we are reacting and fire-fighting rather than being pro-active and in control. Not enough time for the important things like self and family.

If you'd like to get more power over your personal organisation and make more time to strategise, advise or spend time doing the important things in life then here are a few ideas on how to get back on top on your time:

Schedule 'Virtual' Meetings.

Ask yourself this question...who is your most important client or internal stakeholder?

If they wanted to meet with you right now - you'd meet them, wouldn't you? You'd drop everything to be there for them right?

But how about reflecting on the fact that YOU are your most important client?

How about planning a regular weekly 'client' meeting with yourself, with your 'virtual self' sitting opposite you at the table and wanting to know where things are and what you need to do to get the most out of things?

Create a time in the diary every week when you have that meeting. Create a written agenda for what you want to 'discuss' or reflect on - and this is one meeting that NEVER gets de-prioritised or re-scheduled.

Every one of us can benefit from the ability to create some enforced reflective space. But unless we diarise it and treat it like an important client meeting, it never happens.

Without investing in ourselves, pretty soon we run out of the energy to invest in others – and in our business and our career, that's crucial.

Stop Hesitating; Delegate!

Every leader and manager worth their pay grade should be able to delegate, yet few know how to manage it. So here are some suggestions;

First, make a list of what exactly you do. Everything.

Then think about what each hour of 'routine stuff' that you can hand to someone else can earn you if you are working on the 'money stuff'. Prioritise what you decide to keep and what you want to 'hand off'.

Second, make a list of the talents of your team members, associates, colleagues or sales support.

What are their strengths? What are their career goals? How can you help them grow – provide a reward

- by allocating a relevant project or task to them? Let them show you what they can do for you - always delegate to their strengths.

Don't just give them the rubbish stuff either - hand over things that will challenge them and help them grow – or that gives them some 'face time' with (and recognition from) more senior

stakeholders. There should be some obvious benefit in doing it for them.

Third, involve them in the solution of how best to handle the matter.

Discuss with them what exactly you want and invite their views on how they can make it happen.

It doesn't always have to be your way. That which we co-create, we own. The more they input how they will handle it, the more likely they are to take ownership and responsibility for it.

Lastly, agree to check back with them at regular intervals - and then let them get on with it.

Make Personal Time.

Why do you do what you do? Taking time out for you is the best way to re-charge and it is something many of us fail to do.

Years from now it won't be the late nights at the office that we will fondly remember but the moments and memories with family and friends that forge the life we want to reflect fondly on. Family and friends may respect what we do but it's us they love and want with them - not our work. Surveys have shown that the most successful of business people routinely plan the vacations they intend to take at the start of each year.

Knowing they are taking regular breaks helps them to stay motivated for a specific, intense period of time. Then they go get rested – and come back with even greater energy.

Even weekly personal time can be beneficial…..all it takes is a decision.

Try this experiment. Head home, one day a week, every week, for the next three weeks at 4pm – no later. Start as early as you like, but lead the traffic home once a week and plan something with family and friends.

You may find what a previous client of mine once found – that the extra hours he was putting in had become habitualised – but neither necessary nor productive. Work expands to fill every vacuum.

Manage Your Focus and Your Professional Boundaries.

It's tempting to chase all the business there is, to go from contract to contract, deal to deal, project to project - especially if we're always focused on the money. It's tempting to say 'we can do it' to every request that comes from clients or even colleagues – particularly senior ones.

The problem is that we quickly find that we are being very busy but not every effective. Then we blame poor 'time management' as the problem – when actually what we are doing is letting our professional boundaries 'bleed'.

The real challenge is managing our focus, *what* we really should be doing and *why* we really should be doing it. It's a bit like business meetings. How many business meetings do you attend that really are a waste of time.

Try this filter for the future:

1. *Must See or Must Do*

2. *Nice to See or Nice to Do*

3. *Deferrable/Delegate-able* for both people and activities and see how you win back more time for the important things.

Learn to push back by saying 'No' elegantly. Say 'No for Now' – do not accept things simply because they are out in front of you. Push back a little, challenge their perceived need and balance it against your resources to deliver.

Ask:

'Does this need to be done now?' OR

'I am busy right now but I could get to it tomorrow would that be OK?' OR

'X is the real expert in this area you really should reach out to them...'

Just because people ask doesn't mean we always have to take something on board.

The last person you want to be seen as is someone who over-promises and under-delivers OR someone so important, so indispensible to the running of your team that you can never be promoted out of that role.

The CIA Formula
Effectiveness comes down to levels of control. The CIA formula (which I drafted from The Serenity Prayer) helps clients cope with managing focus and is a great little tool for self-awareness of the limits of our control.

Make a list of all the things that you think you need to get done. Then apply the following formula:

C = Control - Act on What You Own (First Level of Control)
Mark the things that you directly have authority for and can control or make happen without reference to anyone else. Do these first.

I = Influence - Reach Out to Others (Second Level of Control)
This is about leverage and is where your internal networks become important.

We don't control these things and so can't just make them happen. We need *to reach out and influence someone else* who has the power to make sure that an action comes to pass.

This is therefore any goal or task that requires us to influence someone else to do it and so takes a little longer to happen and we have less control over the outcome.

A = Accept for Now (Third Level of Control)
Actually this is more of a level of self-control.

I see too many professionals beating themselves up over things that they do not control and cannot influence even though there is really nothing that they can do here.

Just becoming aware of that and focusing on what you can directly control or have others influence for you makes us far more effective and happier.

We need to leave that which we have no control or influence over alone. Then in time it will either become a 'C' or an 'I' or just fade away because it was never important in the first place.

Remember while our work is important, both to ourselves and our clients, we work to live - not live to work.

Take just some of these steps and watch your energy rise and realise something …your business productivity increases when you take adequate personal time to recharge...and you take back control.

The High Trust Advisor (Leadership and Sales) Team Coaching Program

How to Win Clients and Lead Teams in the Age of AI

In an increasingly flat-lined, matrix managed and artificial intelligence world it's not enough anymore to rely on being a technically expert professional to succeed as a leader or a sales professional, we must also become compelling influencers and communicators.

It's no longer enough to continue to lead or develop business with reflexive masculine values of competition, command and control we must now also invoke powerful reflective feminine values of collaboration, synergy and empathy.

In the future AI (artificial intelligence) will provide the expertise, the knowledge and the processes to get the job done - but the ability of skilled human influencers to provide empathy, engagement and care to lead, to advise and to inspire will become a much sought after skillset.

Find out how Sean's customised individual and team coaching programs can help your leaders or management and sales team become more powerful influencers of their colleagues and clients.

Help them master the arts of networking, messaging, presenting and speaking, meeting management, coaching and mentoring, time management and building highly trusted relationships with their key stakeholders and team members. Email for coaching program details here; Sean@SeanWeafer.com

The Author

Sean Weafer is an international leadership and sales communication coach and professional speaker who works with medium to large corporate firms, business owners and associations to transform their leaders, executives and sales teams into Highly Trusted Advisors able to win clients and lead teams in the Age of AI.

He is the creator the G2S® coaching system, is a Marshall Goldsmith certified leadership coach, CPD-certified coach and coach trainer and is a qualified psychotherapist. He is the author of three books; 'The Business Coaching Revolution' (2001) 'The High Trust Advisor' (2013) and 'Invoking the Feminine: Strength, Love and Wisdom' (2019) and several e-books on management and sales communications.

You can see some of his speaking presentations, master classes and tips at
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