

Manage Your Time for Maximum Results

By Mike Hulser

Production framers are consistently dealing with shortages or other issues with key resources—materials, equipment, people, etc. While they might not take the time to consciously think about it, it is likely that the resource with which they struggle the most is time. For a busy production framer, whether those that are growing rapidly and dealing with those issues or those that simply “have business issues,” time, not money or other key ingredients, is the scarcest resource.


Time is a unique resource. You can't store, stockpile, or save it. It comes at everyone at the same pace—24 hours a day, period. In effect, time is the great equalizer. The question for everyone is, how can you become more equal? Here are some tips to help.

Effectiveness vs. Efficiency

Doing the job right is important, but doing the right job is critical.

- Efficiency = Doing the job right.
- Effectiveness = Doing the right job.

Effectiveness is far more important than efficiency. Efficiency can be treated as a personal issue that can be solved by working until the job is done. Effectiveness, however, is a business problem. If you and your team are not working on the right stuff, it doesn't matter how



**Here are
some good ideas
to help make
effective use
of your day**

good you are. A key point is that the first job of an owner or manager is to continually ask, “Are we working on the right stuff?” If you make a bad choice of what to work on, you are hurting the business. Only after you answer the “right stuff” question should you then go on to “What is the best way to get that done?”

Be sure that you and your team are working on the right stuff.

The 80/20 Rule

If you are not already familiar with this rule, you need to be. It is both an effective and efficient perspective from which to choose what to work on. Basically, the 80/20 rule says that, of all the things you could possibly work on, it is highly likely that 80 percent of the solid contribution to desired business results resides in only 20 percent of the work elements. The rule underscores the principle that choosing the right stuff to work on is critical. Effectively using the 80/20 rule can build both a com-

pany and a career.

Delegation

Business continuously places increasing demands on your time. Using both efficiency vs. effectiveness and the 80/20 rule will help a lot, but to be successful in running your business, you need to become comfortable with and be competent at delegating. To stay on top of things, you must continually:

- Delegate by pushing work down to the lowest level at

which it can be accomplished.

- Shed the least meaningful work altogether. Over time, some work simply becomes not worth doing any more.

Inability on the part of an owner or manager to delegate can undermine the viability of the business itself.

When you can't or won't delegate, all too often:

- Your best resources, including you, are not available to tackle complex problems or to exploit key opportunities.
- Competitors are able to exploit opportunities while you bail the boat.
- Business performance declines.
- More management and more controls are instituted to reduce mistakes.
- Cost goes up and speed goes down.
- Business performance declines further.
- Unfortunately, a death spiral can be the result.

A basic truth is that you can't effectively delegate if you don't have capable people, which is generally caused by a lack of:

- Talent – In some cases, you need to go recruiting in search of a higher level of resource.
- Training – A chronic problem in most businesses. Everyone believes in it, but people don't do nearly enough of it. Think of professional athletes or the Navy Seals. They constantly train!
- Tools – Whether it is sharp saw blades, functioning underpinners, or PCs that aren't as slow as molasses, your people need good tools to do a good job.
- Expectations – Small businesses often suffer from a lack of expectations on the part of the owner or manager. High expectations don't guarantee high performance, but low expectations guarantee a lack of it. A well understood expectation is a powerful motivator.
- Support – A key responsibility of an owner or manager is to remove barriers and obstacles to staff performance. This job never stops. You also need to celebrate your team's successes when they please you. This is very important!

You can address each and every one of these root problems, paving the way for effective delegation of work.

A Few Time-saving Tips

- Use some type of organizing tool—a planner, an appointment book, or an electronic tool. The last thing you do today should be to make sure that you have a results-oriented plan for tomorrow and the next few days.
- Do it now. Don't procrastinate. Get started. Be wary of preparing to work.
- Distinguish between “urgent” and “important.” Work on the important.
- Just say no. Some work doesn't deserve doing, at least any time soon.
- Try to touch things like correspondence, e-mail, etc. only once. Reply, file, or delete. Make maximum use of the trashcan.
- Effectively manage meetings (which can be a big time waster):
- Have a known agenda.
- Invite whomever you need, but only the people you really need.
- Think about meeting start time. Meetings that begin at 11 a.m. or 4 p.m. are typically pretty efficient.
- Have a known stop time.
- Publish notes. If the meeting is truly important, it deserves notes.

The Rolling Stones had it only partially correct. Time is on your side—but only if you actively work at it.

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