

3 Ways To Do More With Less Time by Yolanda A. Facio

We live in a world where more is expected of us every day

First there were fax machines, now email and cell phones. Our number of communications daily from various sources is extreme.

How can we get to all of it in a timely fashion and still get 8 hours of sleep?

Here are three time reducing strategies that are easy to implement:

1. **Schedule.** Like it or not in today's world if you want to achieve greater levels of success you must learn to use a schedule. You can use a Palm Pilot, a journal or a Daytimer. I use the Franklin-Covey Planning software for windows. It pops up when I turn on my computer and it is compatible with my Palm Pilot so that I can sync at night when I leave my office.

Now, having a schedule isn't half as important as *using* a schedule. It doesn't work if you don't use it... everyday.

I keep track of appointments, make a To Do list and then as I work on projects I enter them in so that I can make a journal of my day. Later, this will help me remember how much time I spent on tasks for billing purposes. I schedule in exercise time and I schedule in personal development time for reading and writing.

Once you get started, you'll find it easier and easier to use. The amount of time saved by spending the time to keep your schedule can be enormous. It helps to eliminate the clutter we create on our desks and in our minds when trying to remember all the things we need to do.

It can also help to eliminate unnecessary tasks. Many times we say 'yes' when something is not really in alignment with our goals. The act of making time for it and getting on the schedule will cause you to evaluate its importance. This can be a tremendous time saver.

2. **Systems.** Systems are a key component in time management. I have a system for everything! Systems do not have to be complicated but they help to keep you on track and save time.

For instance, I use a 'system' for my after-work time. When I leave the office my evening everyday is pre-planned. I drive home, I change, I make dinner, I watch one hour of TV, I work two hours, and I go to bed... A system.

I follow the same system every single day. It removes wasted time trying to decide what I'm going to do with my time. Setting up systems for checking email or taking calls can be a real time saver. If you have tasks that you do regularly, think about ways to systemize them. Sometimes setting up forms or check lists, creating schedules or flow charts, delegating, just about anything can be turned into a time saving system.

3. Lists. Keep lists. You can keep the lists in your schedule but you need to get into the habit of making a list for tasks and systems. Checklists save time because you don't have to think about what comes next. The amount of time I save by using a calculator instead of figuring in my head is enormous.... Using lists is very much the same.

By removing the "think" time you streamline processes and save brain energy for more important things. I have a grocery list prepared in Excel, I print it off before I head to the store and buy only what I need. No time wasted wandering the aisles.

I have a checklist for updating my weblog and writing my newsletter. I have templates for the newsletter and I have time scheduled to do both.

Many times a little time spent upfront can be a huge savings later. When I find myself doing a task that I've done before and feel like its taking too long, I sit down systemize and make a checklist and suddenly I've found 15 or 20 minutes.