

It's About Time

Learning to manage it will help make your practice work for you.

BY LYNN HOMISAK, PRT

To our Readers: There are no foolish questions. Chances are that if you have a question or concern in your practice, others are experiencing a similar situation. We're here to help. PM [doctor and staff] readers are encouraged to submit questions to lynn@soshms.com which will be printed and answered in this column anonymously.

Topic: Managing Your Time

Dear Lynn,

I can never accomplish all that I need to by the end of my workday. There are just not enough hours in my day! What's the secret?

"Practice management" encompasses a variety of organizational skills that help you to manage your practice. That includes your finances, employees, standards of operations, and time. Regarding time, it's not necessarily about it but about making better use of the time you have. That said, reviewing these five proven time management "not-so-secret" secrets (below) will shed some light

on how to be more time-conscious. Then, if one or two (or all) of them should become routine, who knows? They just might, in time, even eliminate some unwanted headaches, in-

of them and in no particular order; b) organize your tasks according to categories, i.e., outgoing phone calls, errands, correspondence, projects, miscellaneous, etc. Then, tackle by

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crease productivity, and make your practice work for you.

1) Plan and Prioritize

Plan your work and work your plan and that starts by keeping a neat work area. You can work a lot faster when everything is in its proper place. It helps to make sure you straighten up your work area before leaving for the day, so you can start a new day fresh—void of yesterday's clutter. Second, create a list of "things to do" and put it on paper so you can visualize it. Any of these simple approaches will work: a) create a list of things to do by jotting down random tasks as you think

group; c) differentiate urgent tasks from non-urgent, and important from not important, focusing on the urgent and important ones first; and finally, d) partition your workday into hourly slots and fill each time-frame with tasks you want to accomplish. Of course, checking off tasks on ANY "to do" list means you have, in fact, "done" them. Revel in your productivity!

2) Organize Your Day According to Your Energy Levels for Best Achievements

Don't ignore your internal clock. Align your busiest schedule for when

Continued on page 56

About Time (from page 55)

your energy levels are at their highest and take care of less energized tasks or a lighter schedule during your “downtime” or when you tend to feel more sluggish. Late riser? Start late; work late. Early riser? Start early; end early. It has been proven that during your prime, energized time, you are far more productive. Your batteries are charged, your brain is ON and your focus is good. But when you are in slow mode and dragging, so too does your brain. Whether the start of your day is early or later, just remember to start on time! You’ve heard this before. The #1 reason we fall behind schedule is not getting started on time. It also helps to use automation when available; it’s there to make your life easier. Take advantage of it.

for some things we actually can because we’ve developed a “we can do this in our sleep” mentality that enables us to accomplish menial, routine, mindless tasks—like walking and talking at the same time. But the reality is, the term “multitasking” was actually created for computers, not humans. Our brains are not wired to multitask. In fact, we are said to be 50% LESS effective and accurate when we try to juggle two (or more) things



5) Eliminate distractions and time wasters.

Time is precious. You cannot rewind or bank minutes, so you want to use each one as con-

56

3) Avoid Procrastination

Nike had the right idea. “Just do it!” However, for the 20% of our population who are chronic procrastinators, that is easier said than done. Something or someone holds them back from starting and/or completing what they set out to do. If you don’t know what or who is holding you back, maybe it’s be-

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at the same time. When we do, we spend more time correcting errors, re-doing work and overlooking important steps. It leads to less focus, less productivity, wasted time and far

structively as you can. Determine where you could be wasting your minutes that lead to wasted hours. Is it the phones, emails, unlimited social time with patients or co-workers, unnecessary paperwork, or not being able to make prompt decisions? Once you identify them, slowly weed them out and voila! In doing so, you will create more room for productive ones.

Align your busiest schedule for when your energy levels are at their highest and take care of less energized tasks or a lighter schedule during your “downtime” or when you tend to feel more sluggish.

Each minute we are given is a valuable commodity. And until we value our time, we fail to care how we spend it. **PM**

cause you never really made an effort to find out. Try a little introspection. Ask yourself why, by finishing the statement, “I’m avoiding this task because...” Your response might provide all the insight you need to forge on. If certain projects feel overwhelming, maybe it’s because they are. Don’t let that be the reason you drag your feet. In those cases, start small. Small action is still action. You’re on your way.

4) Don’t Multitask; Do Delegate

There is a part of us that thinks we can effectively multi-task—and

more stress. Experts agree. In order to do a job well, we must concentrate on one thing at a time. Start it. Finish it. Begin the next task. Now, if you find you have too much on your plate, rather than trying to take it all on yourself, ask for help. Remember, though, do not delegate a task because it is too difficult or boring; do so because someone else (a staffer or co-worker) possesses the proper skills and is perfectly capable to pitch in. As a bonus, when combined with proper training, delegating tasks helps staff learn and expand their responsibilities. That’s the essence of teamwork.



Ms. Lynn Homisak, President of SOS Healthcare Management Solutions, carries a Certificate in Human Resource Studies from Cornell University School of Industry and Labor Relations. She is the 2010 recipient of *Podiatry Management’s* Lifetime Achievement Award and was inducted into the *PM* Hall of Fame. She is also an Editorial Advisor for *Podiatry Management Magazine* and is recognized nationwide as a speaker, writer, and expert in staff and human resource management.