

By not living in a constant state of urgency, you'll become more focused on your priorities. Everyone is so pressed for time. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't hear how stressed a client, friend, or acquaintance feels. In spite of claims to the contrary, our time-saving technology—whether it's e-mail, pagers, cell phones and PDAs—adds the pressure.

Time management used to be the solution. But time management focuses externally on solving time-related problems. The latest twist is focusing on self-management rather than time management. Savvy meeting professionals will embrace this as an important concept that will help you achieve top performance.

Gain Control

The premise behind self-management is that you are responsible for the appointments and tasks that you choose to do at any given time. How many times do you say that you have "no choice" about meeting Rick on Tuesday at 7:30 a.m., for example, because he has a conflict at a time that is more convenient for you?

This isn't to say that you should schedule appointments only according to your schedule. Instead, understand that typically we are more others-focused than self-focused. In our intensely service-driven work culture, we're great at managing and prioritizing for clients and co-workers, but not so great at managing ourselves.

Become Accountable

Plan your days with a reasonable number of appointments and tasks that favor your workflow and you'll make the pleasant discovery that life seems a little less stressful. Constantly accommodating everyone else's schedule depletes the time we need to accomplish our real priorities.

I know someone who prints the monthly version of her Outlook calendar as a quick reference guide. She learned that if she has appointments that aren't visible in the daily box, she booked too much for that day. She developed the self-management discipline to make sure that all appointments are visible, ensuring that her day will be manageable.

When we feel out of control, several things can happen. We procrastinate. We work off of the adrenaline rush of last-minute deadlines. We also allow other people's urgencies to become our own instead of managing their expectations about our delivery time.

Focus on What's Important, Not Urgent

Once you take control of your time, you'll spend more time on things that aren't necessarily a crisis but are extremely valuable, such as strategic thinking, networking, professional growth and leisure time. Concentrating on important things is a key to self-management.

By not living in a constant state of urgency, you'll become more focused on your priorities. And you won't play the blame game.

When torn about how to spend your time or whether to take on a particular activity, ask the following questions:

- Does this activity fit within my key roles?
- Is it essential for mastering my job?
- How will I feel later if I do this instead of something really important?
- How can I leverage this activity?
- How will doing this help me achieve my goals?
- Can I delegate it to someone else?
- Is this really important?

Focus on self-management, and chances are good that you will be more focused and get more accomplished with less stress.

The Vantage Group can help you develop a plan to increase productivity and revenues by harnessing the power of your future leaders today. To find out more, call us at 616-676-3330 or email us at Darrell@vantagegroupinc.com.