



For Managers, Principals, Team Leaders and Internal Consultants
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Issue No 17: How you can achieve more each day

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How you can achieve more each day

The three biggest issues for clients in my current one on one coaching work are: a) reducing levels of stress, b) finding ways to improve people performance, (including their own), and, c) achieving more in a day. In this *be your best* online report I want to focus on finding more time in your day.

People constantly say, "I need to find more time in my day," and this is often followed by, "but ..." and the rest of the sentence will have something to do with circumstances, other people's demands, the demands of 'the job' – all things outside of ourselves.

The issue is often talked about as 'finding more time', or, 'better time management', when in fact the real issue is 'self management'. It is about your willingness to change your habits, (often ones you've had for a long time), and your self-talk.

Naturally, we can always spot other people's 'bad' habits or beliefs and postulate how these may hold them back. It is always far more difficult to see our own habits and beliefs and how they impact upon our own effectiveness. To achieve more in a day you need to look very carefully at your habits, behaviours and attitudes.

Self –Assessment

Answer yes or no, (for yourself), to the following questions:

- Do you have difficulty saying NO to requests?
- Do you have too many interruptions?
- Do you procrastinate on important tasks?
- Do you push deadlines because your work is never 'perfect enough'?
- Are you slow to deal with under performers?

- Do you have too many conflicting deadlines?
- Do you find you attend many ineffective meetings?
- Are you doing tasks others could do if they were trained?
- Are you too short of time to stop and listen to what people are saying?
- Are you starting projects without clarity on desired outcomes?
- Are you involved in too much talking/politicking?
- Do you find it challenging to focus long enough to achieve tasks?
- Is your role, and/or roles within your team, unclear?

Effective self-managers can answer a consistent 'no' to the above questions. Can you?

So what lessons can we learn from those who are good 'self managers'?

Locus of Control

As you can probably glean from the list above, if you want 'more time', you have to take back the power, control and responsibility for your time. Taking the locus of responsibility from outside of yourself back to yourself is the key. Rather than saying, "If only Jim would do X, I could get more done," you need to ask yourself, "What can I do that will make things different?" It might mean risking conflict or disagreement; it might mean dealing with an underperformer; it might mean listening, or any or all of these things. It is about taking some action to find the path to change.

Breaking your own habits, (and yes, I struggle to change my own), can be very challenging. What it takes is learning some good habits and 'practice, practice, practice,' them until they become second nature. And go easy on yourself – you have been practicing your old habits (whether you've seen it that way or not) for a very long time. Breaking habits takes time and commitment.

If you are unsure of where to start, here are a few options:

1. Read a good book like the 'Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,' by Stephen Covey and complete the exercises. (See <http://www.icleadership.com.au/books.htm>)
2. Engage the services of an experienced business coach, or
3. Attend a highly regarded training course.

I have recently coached several people who have participated in a course run by Leadership Management Australia (LMA) (www.leadershipmanagement.com.au), on improving Effective Personal Productivity. Unlike a lot of training courses, this course is structured - both in content and support - to ensure that participants are able to transfer their learning into the achievement of worthwhile goals. I have observed some amazing transformations in a short time, (see *the case study below*), in the people participating in the course.

Self-management is an issue that we all deal with to greater or lesser degrees. You are not alone and indeed there are plenty of resources available to help you better manage yourself and achieve more in your day.

Case Study – sustaining high performance

Tony is a territory manager for a medical appliance company in Victoria. During 2005, Tony achieved amazing sales results in his first year as a territory manager. His performance was so good he won an overseas trip as part of his reward package. Tony worked very long hours in 2005 and although he achieved great results, he did feel burned out.

Tony felt confident at the start of 2006 and was looking forward to another excellent year. However, feeling a little burned out and seeing the high mountain he had to climb again, he was not able to sustain his performance and had only achieved 50% of his budget nine months into 2006. Tony's confidence was down and he felt he was in a downward spiral. His manager suggested he attend the Leadership Management Australia course on Effective Personal Productivity and within two weeks of starting the course Tony's performance was starting to improve.

By the end of 2006, Tony had exceeded his budget by more than 200 units. Tony was also finding time to exercise regularly and go for evening walks with his young family. What did Tony do to turnaround his performance?

- He set both business and personal goals that he wanted to achieve for the rest of 2006. As Stephen Covey says, "We get control of time by being clear on what we want to achieve- what is important to us."
- He took personal responsibility for *'getting back on track'*.
- He used positive affirmations to defeat any "negative tapes" going on in his head.
- He broke old habits – for example, one of the old habits Tony had to break was responding instantly to every request made by clients or colleagues, (he felt he had to do the right thing). He then found that he had no time left to focus on what was important and he would have to take work home to do. This compounded his feelings of being burned out. By prioritising his work and time blocking tasks, he found that he was actually more productive and his clients were still delighted with the service he provided.
- Everyday, (and before each call and meeting), Tony would decide the outcome he was seeking so no interaction was wasted.
- He worked through a process, (learned early in the course), to ascertain his high priorities and he then structured his week to focus on these.

- He learned to say NO and delegate to a sales assistant. He learned how to say NO so it sounded like a yes and everyone felt they had won.

- He structured his week in blocks, allocated time to tasks and stuck to his plan.

Importantly, Tony had the support of his manager, his coach, his family and the course facilitator to learn new habits and integrate them into his day. The results speak for themselves.

Creating more time is possible and the ball is in your court. Get yourself into a good program and start changing your habits now and create more time for the things that are important to you in 2007.

"The common denominator of success –the secret of every man (woman) who has ever been successful- lies in the fact that they formed the habit of doing things that failures don't like to do." Albert Gray

For more information about LMA courses see contact details at (<http://www.icleadership.com.au/books.htm>)

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