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Assessing your time: A guide for the marketing professional.
By Andrea Norman

I sit at my desk on a Friday afternoon and wonder where the week has gone. I have telephone calls from Monday I haven't returned. I have stacks of paper that I have shoved aside to deal with the present moment's crisis and am looking at a packed calendar for next week. Monday, it will begin again.

Do you ever feel like you are controlled by the crisis of the day? Are you a poster child for the "before" picture of organizational systems? At times, I feel like that, too. Other times, not. Some days, I feel like I have accomplished so much and still have time in my schedule for a quick break or a few extra "to-do" items. Other times, I feel like no matter how many times I pick up the telephone, sit at my desk to write, sit in meetings, or read email, I cannot get traction or accomplish anything. Imposed upon this level of inconsistent results is the ever-present question, "Is what I am doing making a difference for the firm?" When I sold products and services for IBM and IKON Office Solutions, it was pretty easy to evaluate if what I was doing was working or not. I had quarterly numbers to meet, weekly forecast calls with my manager, and tremendous pressures both financial and organizational to "achieve my numbers." Now, in the A/E business, I find myself alternating between relief that I don't have that type of pressure and frustration that I cannot measure my results.

In order to better measure results and guide my actions, I analyzed my job description and corporate and personal goals. I then took a good look at how I was spending my time. Was I driving my schedule, or was my schedule driving me? I invite you to evaluate your time with me as we align your goals with your actions on a daily basis. First, step away from your planner! Think about your day in terms of your work hours, your pace, your natural rhythm, and your likely interruptions. Get a piece of paper and write down your estimate of what you do on a daily basis for a period of one week. Write down what you usually accomplish, would like to accomplish, and value (i.e., promptness, returning calls quickly, extra preparation for meetings, keeping up-to-date on the latest city or state events, etc.) Then, write down the goals you have for yourself and your business in the next month, six-months, and year.

Now, take a look at your PDA, paper calendar, sticky notes, or ink on your hand. How are you spending your time? Is it consistent with your estimates? Or does your calendar simply keep track of the important ABSOLUTELY DO NOT MISS items in your week?



Now, over the next week pretend you are a lawyer and are billable in six-minute increments. Every hour or so, notate how you are spending your time. The typical job description for a business development/ marketing person in the A/E business includes the following categories:

- **Business Development/direct marketing** (networking, proactive meeting with targeted prospective clients, proposals, interviews)
- **Market visibility/ marketing tactics** (direct marketing database, public relations, advertising, charitable)
- **Brand management/marketing content** (collateral materials, graphic consistency, proposal content, managing marketing within project)
- **Client service** (meeting with clients before, during, after; troubleshooting; marketing within project)
- **Leadership, management, communication** (facilitating communication within firm and with clients, managing marketing staff, strategic planning)

My job includes the first five key areas listed. However, what I am finding is that there are categories I do not have listed, like accepting telephone calls from team members or potential team members, managerial responsibilities, and providing ad- hoc marketing and business development advice to associates. There are even activities I would hate to admit are categories, like multi-tasking time (checking e-mail, voicemail, and writing a memo simultaneously), cleaning up the desk time, "searching for the file that I know is there but can't find time, etc." All of these areas of time should be tracked, not swept into the guilty corner of "Gee, I shouldn't have those kinds of times."

Spend time over the next week, WITHOUT JUDGMENT, tracking all of your time. Then, at the end of the week, again, without judgment, evaluate where you are spending your time and whether or not the activities will lead to the goals and outcomes you want for you and your business.

After you finish the analysis, sit down with your calendar and proactively plan ahead. Decide next week, even before the week begins, when you will take your telephone calls, when you will prepare for meetings, when the pre-proposal conference will be, etc. Look at your goals and work backward to ensure the activities you spend time on today will yield results for you tomorrow.

Good luck in aligning your activities with your goals. That is the surest way to succeed!