CHAPTER 4

TIME MANAGEMENT: THE KEY TO SUCCESS

One of the biggest challenges real estate agents face each day is getting everything done that we set out to do and keeping everyone around us happy. This task doesn’t have to be as challenging as it seems, or as some of us allow it to be.

By taking control and having the right systems in place, you can manage and protect your time just like you manage the rest of your business. All it takes is adding discipline and routine to what you do each day. When you are planning your days and weeks,
remember to keep in mind the things that are important, not only in business but also with your family. By maintaining one calendar for everything you do, you can efficiently plan your business, family, and personal social activities. Be sure to schedule items in your calendar that are most essential to you first, and then work around them.

Time management is the difference between top-performing people and those who constantly struggle. We all have the same number of hours every day, but why is it that some real estate agents do well over a $1 million in commission every year, and other agents who work just as hard, if not harder, barely make $50,000 a year in commissions?

The difference between the two is time management. Successful agents manage their time better and focus on the activities (or pro-activities) that will generate the highest return for their business.

We all fool ourselves by saying we work 12-hour days. When you really analyze what your productivity is throughout the day, you'd be shocked at how much time you waste on doing nothing. And things that are not pro-active do not add value to your business. As real estate agents, we get paid the most money by prospecting, listing homes, selling homes to buyers, and negotiating. Everything else should be delegated to an assistant.

Craig Proctor taught me a time management tool to use to evaluate a daily schedule. For one week, at every half-hour, jot down what you did in that half-hour block. You will be shocked at all the time you squandered doing things that were not proactive. Whether it was hanging out by the water cooler or going to lunch for a couple hours with another agent, you’ll find yourself jotting down a lot of time wasted on non-income-producing activities.
In his book *The Ultimate Sales Machine*, Chet Holmes outlines six steps to organize your schedule so that you can focus on the right things, things that are proactive for your business. They are:

**The Ultimate Sales Machine on Time Management**

1. Touch it Once
2. Make Lists
3. Plan how much time you will allocate to each task
4. Plan the Day
5. Prioritize
6. Ask Yourself, “Will it hurt me to throw this away”

**STEP 1. TOUCH IT ONCE.**

As real estate agents, our paperwork becomes tremendous. We could spend tons of time on paperwork, and handling it inefficiently is a huge waste of time, especially if you are handling it more than once without a system for completing it.

An example of a system to help you only touch it once is utilizing a software program such as Evernote. Evernote allows you to clip web articles, capture handwritten notes, and snap photos so you can keep digital details of your projects. You can scan or take pictures of things you want to keep for future reference. You can forward emails
to your Evernote account. All of it is stored in one central location in the cloud. Anytime you need something, you can reference it by typing in a name or word from the document you want to recall, and Evernote will pull it right up for you. It will allow you to become almost paperless in your office. Think about all the time you waste looking through files and paperwork on your desk that should be filed and never looked at again until needed.

**STEP 2. MAKE LISTS.**

Lists are very important. We all tend to write things on paper napkins, sticky notes, or the backs of business cards. This is an easy way to lose leads and phone numbers. Learn to put everything down on a sheet of yellow lined paper. Go through and list everything that is on your mind or anything that needs to be done. It doesn’t mean that it is going to get done that second, but it is on the list so you won’t forget about it.

If a client asks you to get back to him on a cost market analysis or says she would like you to list her home Saturday morning at 10:00, and all you do is jot it on a sticky note, you might misplace that small piece of paper. That slip-up could cost you thousands of dollars in commissions in a lost sale. But if it is on your yellow pad list, you are far less likely to lose track of it.

As real estate agents, we get paid the most amount of money by prospecting, listing homes, selling homes to buyers, and negotiating. Everything else should be delegated to an assistant.
STEP 3. PLAN HOW MUCH TIME YOU WILL ALLOCATE TO EACH TASK.

When you plan your day, be realistic. You can only get to five or six major items on that list. So if your list runs seven to ten sheets of paper, create a separate list for each day. Now, go through that to-do list and circle the things that you feel are an A-plus priority, items that must get done that day or within the next 24 hours. Pull those off, and put them on a separate list.

Allocate your time. If you pull five or six different to-dos off your master list, the only way they are going to get done is if you time-block them into your schedule. If you don’t have each item blocked in your schedule, other things will pop up and manage your time for you.

So, if you need to prepare for a home listing the next day, and you need to do some research or a cost market analysis and marketing plan, block out one hour the day before to do that research and create a good presentation for that seller. Write it into your schedule just like an appointment and shut off all the phones and other distractions, because phones and emails are time vampires.

Time vampires are the constant interruptions that you receive during the day in an office. Whether it is people walking up to your desk or coworkers giving you the old “got a minute?”, we all know that one minute quickly turns into 15 to 30 minutes. Anything that controls our time for us is a time vampire. That is why you should list and then allocate adequate time for important tasks that you need to accomplish in your schedule.
STEP 4. PLAN YOUR DAY.

On Sunday nights, my wife and I look at our schedules together and plan out the next two weeks. It doesn’t take more than 15-20 minutes to do, but it is vitally important.

The reason I am attracted to the real estate business in the first place is the time flexibility. The reason I see other agents fail in this business is because they don’t know how to use that flexibility to their advantage. They were told what to do and when to do it in their prior jobs. As real estate agents, we are entrepreneurs, and as entrepreneurs we have to be very disciplined to control that flexibility. Not controlling your time on the right activities will take you out of this business quickly, because you will not make the sales you need to survive in this business.

STEP 5. PRIORITIZE.

Every real estate agent’s top priority must be prospecting and doing pro-activities that are going to generate sales for their business.

You have heard it over and over again: 20 percent of your efforts will bring in 80 percent of your results. It is very important that you don’t get stuck doing busy work, because busy work is part of the 80 percent that won’t make you money. The 20 percent includes the pro-activities that are going to give you 80 percent of your sales results. Set aside a two-hour time frame in your schedule every day to make between 40 and 50 calls. In reality, you are probably only going to reach a third of the people you call. Whether it is calling your past clients, calling your current clients, or calling on leads from the
website, you want to make sure that you block out two hours a day for that dollar-productive activity.

By not scheduling these priorities, you will find yourself being more reactive than proactive. You want to be in a proactive position rather than a reactive position, and that is where you will find yourself if you have your day planned out ahead of time. If you just show up at the office and just go with the flow, then you are letting everyone else dictate your day.

**STEP 6. ASK YOURSELF, "WILL IT HURT ME TO THROW THIS AWAY?"**

Eighty percent of all the paper we file away never gets referred to again. Make good use of scanning your files and storing the files on your server or using a program like Evernote to store online. You can locate the information more easily and waste a lot less time looking through messy and bulky filing cabinets.

Everyone wants to be their own boss—until they are. Being your own boss comes at a price, and that price is managing time correctly. If you don't use your time efficiently and on important tasks, in the end that is exactly what will put you out of business.

Come up with what works for you. I was able to apply time management tactics that I learned from Dan Kennedy and Chet Holmes books to my business. These tactics have worked well for me, but everyone is different. Some people like to have a paper format for their schedule. I like to put my schedule on my smartphone because I can share that calendar with my wife. She can then put in doctors’ appointments, sporting events, and birthday dinners. Those are my big rocks—the things I don't want to miss. Then I work around those dates. If that means I work from 8–10 o’clock at night on a project
because I needed to be home from 4–6 p.m. for a birthday party, then that is what I do. I am here to say that you can have a great family life and a great business life if you have effective time management skills and plan your schedule every day accordingly.

Here are my five time management must-dos:

**5 Time Management Must Do’s**

1. Plan your week.
2. Plan your day.
3. Control Incoming Calls.
4. Schedule 2 hours proactive (lead generation) activities a day.
5. Take at least one day off per week.

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1. **PLAN YOUR WEEK.**

By planning your week, you build structure into your life. The use of only one calendar is imperative to avoid losing track of appointments, since missing an appointment can cost you thousands of dollars.

You also want to schedule time off. Time off is not going to just appear on your schedule. You actually have to schedule it. I recommend taking at least one day off a week. If you can’t do it on the weekend, then take a day off during the week to spend time with your family or do personal things you enjoy. You also want to carve
out time for healthy activities. So if you need to get to the gym three or four days a week, block that into your schedule.

I have a schedule template that I call the “perfect week” that I give to agents. You can get a copy of it by going to www.freewilliestuff.com. I break it down from going to the gym four days a week to checking emails and voice mails three times a day to blocking pro-activity time, and at the end of each day, make time to plan your following day.

I mention only checking your emails and voice mails three times a day, because studies show that every time you stop to look at emails it takes you about 12 minutes to refocus on what you were doing. So shut the email alert ringer off on your computer, because there is nothing that urgent that should interfere with your pro-activities.

2. PLAN YOUR DAY.

Take 15 minutes the night before to plan the next day. First list out your follow-up calls. You want to get back to people in a timely manner. Don’t wait two to three days to follow up with someone. Block those power calls into your two hours of proactivity time.

Next, add in your to-do items, and last is everything else. You want to prioritize in that direction. You don’t leave the important calls and meetings to the end where they might get neglected, or worse, not done at all.

3. CONTROL INCOMING CALLS.

Incoming calls are huge time vampires and something that need to be controlled. That is why we have voice mail. But some people
feel they have to answer every call for fear that they are going to miss a lead or a sale.

Last week I was doing a training class for 15 of my agents. We spent about two hours focusing on how to better grow our referral business. During this meeting, I noticed that one of my agents was a little fidgety. I asked her if everything was okay.

She said, “Everything’s fine but I left my phone at home.”

I said, “No problem. When the class is over, you’re more than welcome to go home and get your phone. Are you sure everything will be okay?”

She said, “Yes, but I might get an offer on this one property and I don’t want to miss the agent calling me.”

I said, “You’re not going to miss anything. Right now, you have blocked out your schedule for training, and this is more important in helping you grow your business. I’m sure that offer will still be good two hours from now.”

Over the next half-hour, I noticed that she was still a little fidgety and not as focused as she needed to be. Then, all of a sudden at the break, she started packing up all her stuff, put her coat on, and she said, “Willie, I can’t stand it. I’ve got to go home and get my phone. I’m sorry. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

It really comes down to the cell phone being an addiction, but it can also create a lot of stress and anxiety.

I view a cell phone as a huge problem because of all the distractions it creates. It doesn’t allow you to disconnect from society and focus on the important things you need to do or be engaged with. The constant texting and social media distractions are becoming the biggest time vampires in our business, and those who learn how to disconnect from them will be the most productive and successful.
Many studies have already proven this to be true, and it will be interesting to see how most agents handle this problem in the future.

You can control incoming calls by leaving a message on your voice mail that says you will be doing just that. For example, I have a voice mail script that says, “Hi, you’ve reached Willie Miranda with Miranda Real Estate Group. Please note that I will be in meetings throughout the day and returning phone calls between 11 and 12, and again between 4 and 5 p.m. For immediate assistance, please contact my office at (XXX) 555-5555. Or leave your name and number after the tone, and I’ll return your call as soon as possible. Thank you and have a great day.”

By leaving that script on my voice mail, I’m showing callers that I’m in meetings or taking care of other clients. People appreciate it because they know you are going to give them a call back within a certain time frame. It is very important that you do follow-through on returning calls, because you will quickly lose credibility if you don’t call back within the time frame you promised.

I use a tool called a voice mail log from Rediform. Every time you listen to a voice mail, write it down and put it on this format or on your to-do list. It is a great checklist for you to refer back to weeks or months from now. But more importantly, it keeps you from having to go back and listen to all of your voice mails again, wasting even more time.

The one thing that really irks me is when I call a real estate agent’s phone and I get a message that says, “Sorry, this mailbox is full.” There is no reason any agent should have a full voice mailbox if they are retrieving all of their messages and returning those phone calls in a timely manner.

Structure return calls by blocking your new leads, your seller calls, and buyer clients into the first segment of your calling. You could
also write personal notes in this first two-hour block. I encourage my agents to write at least five personal notes a day to people they talked to that day or people they want to reach out to in the near future.

Another pro-activity is adding and deleting people in your database. A good database is only as good as the information you put in it. If you have people in your database that you know shouldn’t be in there, remove them. Make sure to update your client information regularly and keep great notes on conversations you have with them. Clients are amazed at how much you remember about them and their families. Good notes will allow you to do this, and you will build a better bond with your clients.

A day without lead generation is a day that you didn’t work. If you don’t block off a minimum of two hours a day for lead generation, then you didn’t work that day. I don’t care how busy you were with closings or inspections or even sending out newsletters. I’ll say it again, if you didn’t block out at least two hours a day for lead generation, you simply didn’t work that day. As I mentioned before, 20 percent of our effort returns 80 percent of our results. If you work 50 hours a week, 20 percent of that time is about ten hours a week. If you are working a five-day workweek, that’s exactly two hours a day. Focus those two hours a day on proactivity, and that will bring in 80 percent of your sales results.

4. TAKE ONE DAY OFF PER WEEK.

I can’t stress enough the importance of taking at least one day off to recharge and re-energize. If you can’t take a full day, then definitely take at least two half-days off. If weekends are a challenge, take time off during the week. The body and mind require the time to rest and refocus.
5. CELEBRATE.

The other piece in planning your week is to schedule in celebrations. If you have a good month or quarter in sales, you definitely want to schedule in a celebration for that. For instance, I schedule in a massage appointment to celebrate goals I have achieved. Taking time for yourself will make you a much better real estate agent. Some may choose to buy a gift or take a day trip to a special place. It can be whatever you want it to be, but it is important to have something to look forward to as you accomplish the goals you set for yourself.

In closing, time management means you must prioritize, implement, and evaluate your schedule. Prioritize your A, B, C, and D list each and every day. Do your A’s first. Be flexible about moving your B’s and C’s. Give yourself the grace that not everything will get done in one day. You can always push it to the following day.

Implement, implement, implement! Work hard and stay focused on getting your priorities done for that day and stick to your daily plan. Highly successful salespeople know how to implement and take action.

But at the end of each day, it is important to evaluate how well you managed your time. Before you go to bed, take a look at your list. There is something psychological about being able to cross things off your to-do list that will definitely have a positive impact on your business. You want to acknowledge those achievements with coworkers or family.

Determine what you could have done differently throughout the day and make future changes to improve them. Plan out your next day by creating a new to-do list. It’s not good time management to keep running off the same list or sheet of paper.
To download a copy of my “Perfect Week Schedule” and to-do list visit: www.freewilliestuff.com.