



Fifteen Proven Time Management Strategies

From Jones Loflin-The Speaker With TWO Last Names

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Identify The Pain

Most people only go looking for help with time management when there is a problem. But what specifically IS the problem (or problems) you are experiencing? Just making better use of how you manage your time during the workday rarely addresses the deeper issues. Ask yourself these questions and don't settle for anything else than your most honest answers:

- ◆ In your struggle to get it ALL done, what is NOT getting done? Is that a problem worthy of you changing work habits and life routines?
- ◆ If you could do one thing for yourself each week that you are not currently doing, what would that be? Again, is that an opportunity worth making some significant changes to how you carry out our day?
- ◆ What are you at risk of losing? Is keeping it worth making some painful choices?

If the answers to the second half of each of these questions is "Yes," then you are more likely to actually adopt some of the following strategies.

Change Your Daily Routine

John Maxwell says it best: *You will never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of your success is found in your daily routine.* What do you need to change about your daily routine? Do you need to take a few minutes to plan your day instead of just responding to the first crisis, phone call or e mail? Where, in your day, do you notice things getting the most out of control? What needs to change about your daily routine to be better prepared for those events or situations? Is there a poor habit you have developed that needs to change?

Live In A State of Perpetual Prioritization

In every waking moment you should have clarity about your top priorities as it relates to:

- ◆ People
- ◆ Projects
- ◆ Tasks

If you have made everything a priority, then NOTHING is a priority.

Develop Periods of Focused Intensity

Create times where you are fully engaged on a task for a specific period of time. Allow no distractions. Use a countdown timer to maintain a sense of urgency to complete the task-or at least move it forward as much as possible. The [Pomodoro Technique](#) is an excellent tool to develop this habit.

Single Task When Possible

Peter Drucker is quoted as saying, *One hour of uninterrupted time is worth 10 times the amount of 4 15 minute segments.* Multi-tasking dilutes our ability to get something done WELL.

When you want to single task, tell your staff/family/friends etc. that you're unavailable during certain hours of the day and to hold their questions until you're available unless it's an emergency-or waiting to act has major consequences (define what those are!). Let your calls go to voicemail and turn off email notifications. The goal is to accomplish one thing WELL-not just attempt to get five things done.

Also, invest time preparing for the single tasking exercise. Gather any materials or information needed prior to that time so you can spend your single tasking time really focusing on completing the task-not looking for that manual, report or email.

Read more about [multitasking](#) and [single tasking](#) on Jones' website.

Get It Off Your Mind

David Allen, author of *Getting Things Done*, writes, *If it's on your mind, your mind isn't clear. It must be captured in a trusted system outside your mind-and you have to come back to it as needed. The reason something is "on your mind" is that you want it to be different than it currently is.*

Notice that the key is to get the thought somewhere that you can reflect on it later-when you are ready to take action on it-or at least plan how to accomplish it. If you refuse to get it off your mind, it's because you don't have a trusted place to put it.

Maximize your use of technology. I use an audio recording app on my smartphone that I can click one button, record my thoughts and then click another button to immediately send the

information to me via email. The goal is to keep your mind clear for the task that is in front of you.

Make Quick Decisions About Best Using A Short Period Of Time

Frequently find yourself with blocks of 5-10 minutes of time? Don't let it slip away. Take a few seconds and ask yourself the following questions to best determine how to use it.

- ◆ How much time do I have? (Time not moving or having to engage in another activity)
- ◆ What are my priorities today?
- ◆ What is my level of mental (and/or physical) energy right now?

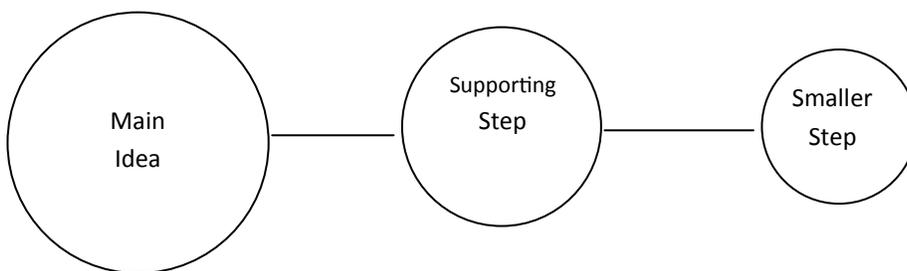
Based on my answers and where I am physically at, what should I do with this time?

Use The Four D's to handle any incoming possibility

- ◆ Delete
- ◆ Delegate
- ◆ Delay
- ◆ Do

Use Mind Mapping

Too often we try and work through new ideas in our head instead of creating a visual picture that our mind can easily follow. Google "mind mapping" and you will get lots of models to use. The one that is easiest for me to follow when fleshing out a new idea or project looks like this:



Let's take a main idea of "Clean out the garage." A supporting step would be to "get boxes" or "determine time/date." A smaller supporting step to "get boxes" might be to "Call Joe about boxes" or "stop by grocery store." You can add as many supporting steps as needed and still keep your thoughts organized.

Be Clear About “Done”

Whether professional or personal, it’s important to be as specific as possible about what constitutes a completed task. Some things need to be done well while other things just need to be done. For the ones that need to be done well, begin looking at times you can single task to achieve a better outcome. My daughter gave me a quote I frequently use: “Done is better than perfect.”

Minimize Procrastination

Start by recognizing that the pain of inaction will be greater than the discomfort of action. Then dig deeper to determine why you aren’t taking action more quickly. Seth Godin, (Best-selling author and marketing guru) gave four thoughts in a blog about “what is getting in the way” that really help me determine why I’m procrastinating. They are:

**You don’t know what to do*

**You don’t know how to do it*

**You don’t have the authority or the resources to do it*

**You’re afraid*

Once I determine the reason, I can more specifically address it. From there I develop a doable action to move the project forward. If it’s a big project or I need additional information, I’ll tell someone who will hold me accountable.

[Read more thoughts from Jones about procrastination.](#)

Survive the E Mail Tsunami

Email overload is, for many people, about like the weather. They talk about it, but they don’t do anything about it. Some proven ways to better handle your email include:

- ◆ Develop a system for managing incoming email instead of just dumping them into a general inbox. Create folders like “Action Needed” or “A/B/C Priority.” Set rules that send emails from certain individuals into your “A” priority folder so that you can quickly see and retrieve them.
- ◆ Set specific times to check e mail. Research shows that just looking at the subject line of an email interrupts your focus level for over one minute.
- ◆ Train your recipients about how you are going to manage your email. If they know, then they can plan accordingly how to best work with you.
- ◆ I have a 50 word rule about email. If it’s going to take me (or the sender) more than 50 words to make the request, I pick up the phone.

Another tool or methodology I use is Inbox Zero. [Read more about it here.](#)

Stop With the “Victim Mentality”

Be more proactive about communicating your current workload to others when they want to add more tasks to your schedule. If the person is a boss or supervisor, ask them for help in determining priorities (hint-it’s what they get paid for). Lastly, ask for resources to complete the new task. That includes people, time, space and financial resources.

Insulate Your Schedule

For any task of at least an hour, add 10-20% to the expected amount of time for completion. You wouldn’t drive to work without allowing time for traffic jams, construction or a stop along the way. Why should it be any different with other major tasks?

Passionately plan for all 3 areas of your life

Most of us do a good job at planning for work tasks. But when it comes to relationships and taking care of ourselves, we fall miserably short. You need the physical, emotional and mental energy that is gained from your other areas to be more effective at work.

You can learn more about Jones’ 3 ring planning philosophy in his book, [Juggling Elephants](#).

Jones Loflin is an internationally-recognized author and speaker. His messages focus on change, motivation, time management and work/life blend. He is the author of three books, including *Juggling Elephants* and *Getting the Blue Ribbon*. Jones’ newest book, *Getting to It*, is now available wherever books are sold. His humor, energy and audience engagement make an **impact** on every member of your group, not just an impression.

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