



Better Time Management Program

Welcome

If there's one thing that accountants could use more of, it's time. It seems like there's never enough of it in order to get everything done both professionally and personally.

Over the next few weeks, you will learn how to better manage your time, making it possible to be more productive, more efficient, and have more time for yourself and the things you love.

In conjunction with The Smarter Accountant Program, you are going to get clear about where you waste your time and how to create a much better time management system.

Other than your mind, time IS the most valuable asset you have. Figuring out how to manage it better will not only help you balance it all, but will be an incredible gift to your family as well.

Better time management = living a deliberate, balanced life

Time Wasters

Before you learn how to create more time, you first have to take a look at how you are wasting it.

The two biggest time wasters are Perfectionism and Overwhelm. As you use the Manage Your Mind Model, the tool from the Manage Your Mind Program, you will begin to understand the reasons that you waste time.

Basically, perfectionism is the belief that something could be better, causing you to ruminate and waste time trying to make it perfect. You'll see perfectionism in the "T" line of the Manage Your Mind Model.

Overwhelm is a tricky time waster because when you feel overwhelmed, your brain will look for relief in the form of distractions. You'll find overwhelm in the "F" line of The Model.

The Formula

The formula for better time management is the acronym G.P.A.

Get items out of your brain

Put it on the calendar

Assess your follow through

No matter what you might think, your brain is for processing, not for storing. Therefore, the best way to manage your time is to get everything out of your brain and onto one piece of paper. It literally frees up space in your mind in order to be more efficient, reducing cognitive overload.

In our high-tech world of accounting, it might seem antiquated to put things on paper but there's a reason for it. Writing things down engages your brain in a way that typing doesn't.

And the best part is, when you follow the Better Time Management Program, you will be throwing away that to-do list after things are calendared, literally or figuratively.

You can keep a "someday, maybe" separate list of things for the future, but our work together will be focused on one week at a time. By using the G.P.A. formula, you will be amazed at how much time you can create and how easy it can be to manage it.

The Process

Thankfully, the time management system you're going to learn does not take a lot of time to implement.

Each week you're going to set aside an uninterrupted hour before your week begins (I usually do this on Sunday) and follow these steps:

1. Spend 15 - 20 minutes doing a To-Do List Download - turn off all phone notifications, eliminate distractions and look at the week ahead of you. Write **everything** you have to do. Get it out of your head and onto paper.
2. Break the list of things down into smaller items (ie, preparing the Financial Statements for a client would be broken down: reconciled Cash, reviewed Liability balances, or even smaller chunks). Big items overwhelm your brain, causing it to look for distractions, so the smaller you can break them down the better.
3. Before you start to put anything from your list onto your calendar, you **FIRST** have to plan and schedule your free time. This is how to reduce overwhelm and burnout.
4. Assign time for each thing on your list. Don't forget things like showering, eating, getting dressed, errands, etc. Don't spin in confusion about how much time something will take. Make a best guess because you'll assess later.
5. Once everything is scheduled, throw away your to-do list (literally or figuratively).

The key to being incredibly productive and efficient - schedule 2 hours of Focus Time every day (that's 2 hours in a row). This means that you close every web browser and email, turn off all notifications, and limit every distraction as much as possible. Focus time is one of the keys to getting more done in a day.

During Focus Time you are working to produce a particular result. At the end of Focus Time, you will have produced a result that you decided beforehand. This is not time for regular daily tasks like doing laundry, checking email, etc. It's uninterrupted time to create and produce.

If you are using Value-Based Billing, Focus Time is going to be a huge asset. You will be amazed at the value you can produce during Focus Time.

One word of caution - as smart accountants, we think we are incredibly good at multitasking, and while it might appear that way, you aren't actually doing two things at once. Your focus is darting between multiple things, slowing down your efficiency more than you may realize.

Of course, we can all brush our teeth and wipe down the bathroom mirror at the same time, but what makes that possible is that those activities are already formed as habits in our brains. When you constrain to one thing at a time, especially when it comes to accounting work, you actually improve your productivity and efficiency tremendously.

Assessing Your Follow Through

If you have followed the previous steps, all you will need to do each day is honor what's on your calendar. Sounds easy right?

Well, the issue is that the lower part of your brain which is similar to a temper-throwing toddler is the part that runs your life more than 80% of the time. It is motivated by three things - to seek pleasure, to avoid pain, and to be efficient.

Therefore, it's VERY important for you to know that when it comes time to do what's on your calendar, your lower brain will not want to do it, most of the time. Unless it seems pleasurable and easy, that toddler part of your brain will more often than not resist what you have scheduled.

Just know that that's totally normal, but DO IT anyway and do it when you previously decided you should do it.

The secret is that you actually used your higher brain when you were deciding what needed to be done and when to do it, therefore, all you need to do is follow your calendar.

Since this is easier said than done, at the end of each day, you are going to take a look at what worked, what didn't, and why.

This is where The Model will be incredibly useful. It's the key to a better time management system.

Using The Model

Anyone can create a plan, or schedule things on a calendar but the most important thing is following the plan and understanding your unique brain better.

So after you have scheduled your time and are assessing your follow-through at the end of the day (or the end of the week), it's incredibly important that you understand why you did or didn't follow through with what you put on your calendar.

This is where The Model comes into play.

This is all about being aware of what you are thinking, which is the driving force for everything you experience in your life, especially when it comes to time management.

For this Better Time Management Program, you can just focus on the "T" (Thought), "F" (Feeling), and "A" (Action) lines of the Model. This T > F > A cycle will show you everything you need to know about your follow-through.

You will put your actions or inactions in the "A" (Action) line of The Unintentional Model and fill in the rest of the Model. This will help you to see what you were Feeling that fueled that action or inaction, and what you were Thinking that created that Feeling.

Next, you'll create an Intentional Model. This is where you are in control of choosing your Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions. This is really important because by learning how to assess your follow-through, you will now be in charge of your time and getting more things done, as well as reducing wasted time.

The issue most people have with time management is that they resist making a plan and then following it, but wonder why they don't get more things done or achieve better results.

As we work together, you will learn that you have to be willing to be uncomfortable and that any resistance you feel is only because of what the toddler part of your brain does.

It's also important to know that we are the only species with the ability to plan. Unfortunately, we also resist making a plan because we're afraid we won't follow through, that it will take too much time to create and implement, or that it will take the spontaneity out of life.

But I promise you that the answer to having a more balanced, deliberate life, is better time management.

I'm really looking forward to showing you a better time management system that will not only help you to be more efficient and productive but will also help you create more time. And what accountant doesn't want more time?!!

More Tips

- Make sure you are distraction-free when you are doing your weekly to-do download (ie, kid-free, technology-free time, etc.).
- Be kind to your future self that is going to have to follow the plan; don't overestimate what you can get done.
- In the beginning, you are just gathering data about what works and what doesn't so be gentle with yourself. Be open to learning as we do this work.
- It doesn't matter what type of calendar you use (technology or not), just that you use it but I prefer a paper calendar because it doesn't open the "rabbit hole" that technology does; writing things down triggers a different part of your brain and can create an easier way to remember and follow through.
- Plan on feeling resistance when you are following your calendar; the toddler part of your brain doesn't like to be told what to do.
- Every day set an intention to follow your calendar exactly as it's laid out. Take notes about what did and didn't work.

- Plan for “Overflow” time - this is for those unexpected times when interruptions happen. You can schedule 30 minutes at the end of every day for time to catch up if there are usually unexpected interruptions.
- Plan for transition times if you normally struggle with them (ie, plan in a way that takes care of you and how you want to feel).
- Start scheduling work time based on the Results you want, rather than the Actions you’ll take. By focusing on Results, you’ll get more done in less time without the usual wasted time on “busyness”. For example, I’m scheduling 30 minutes to have the outline for my blog (Result) done. I’m scheduling 1 hour to complete the review of the tax return (Result). What will you produce? Begin to focus your time on Results as often as you can.
- Create a rhythm where your brain gets used to doing X activity on Mondays every week at 8 am and Y activity on Tuesdays every week at 10 am. The more time habits you create, the less your toddler brain will resist what’s on your calendar. Rhythm and time habits are your friend for a better time management system.

- If you tend to get easily distracted, use an “Urge Jar” - this is a glass jar you’ll have near your desk with a bag of 100 beads next to it (or other small objects). Every time you have an urge to do something other than what’s on your calendar, allow that urge to be there, but don’t act on it. Let the feeling of the urge be there for a few minutes. Notice what you’re thinking. Let the urge pass and put a bead in the jar for every unanswered urge. This can be a game changer!
- In extreme emergencies, you can reschedule something on your calendar but the goal is to not let the toddler part of your brain tell you things are an emergency when they’re not (ie, a kid is sick is an emergency; you forgot to pick up toothpaste is not an emergency).
- Start discovering and creating “chunks” for various categories of your time. For example, early morning is Creative Time where you would calendar writing blogs, working on Your Future Vision, etc. or evenings are Family Time where you calendar spending time with your family but you might also calendar time to call family members or friends.
- Check-in with yourself before you start your day and think about how you spent the previous 24 hours.

Do you like how you spent it? Why or why not? What needs to be added or subtracted?

- At the end of the work week, find 3 things that went well and celebrate them with yourself and others. Also, find 3 things that you'd like to improve upon for next week.
- I promise you that the time you take to set up, implement and follow through with this Better Time Management system, will come back to you 10X.
- Remember to always choose curiosity rather than condemnation when you don't do what's on your calendar; look at each day as an opportunity to gather information about what works for you and your unique life.
- Every time you follow through with what you planned on doing, you build self-confidence and reclaim your power to have the life you want.
- You truly get to live a deliberate, balanced life when you learn the skill of managing your mind and then using that skill to implement and follow through on the better time management system.
- The truth is that you need both a good system and mind management. You need to know how to work the system and how to work your brain. Just one or the other will not change things.

- Remember to have fun with this and enjoy your productive, efficient, and balanced life!