
GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Managing Time

Leaders in all professions find they run out of time. No doubt, you've felt that way. I know I have.

Of course, everyone has the same amount of time, 168 hours a week. If we get eight hours of sleep a night, that leaves us with 112 hours, or 16 hours a day to complete our work. Sixteen hours a day is a lot of time. So, why do we experience the feeling of running out of time?

After leading over 100 training seminars on time management, Ted Engstrom (former executive director of World Vision) and Ed Dayton (former vice president of World Vision) suggested two main reasons leaders run out of time.

First, leaders don't plan for tomorrow. Dayton explained, "The leader is so busy doing things he or she doesn't take any time to think about the future. Seldom does he realize that many of his problems can be solved by taking just 5 percent of this time to start working on the future."

Engstrom added, "We terribly overestimate what we can do in one year and underestimate what we can do in five. By planning now, you can begin to get

some control over your time somewhere down the road."

Second, they don't delegate. Engstrom wrote, "Delegation is the word the time experts use. In the church, delegation means discipling: training others."

Dayton noted, "Given a choice of doing work ourselves or doing work through others, most of use will opt to do it ourselves."

Leading Ourselves

When we talk about time management, we are really talking about leading and managing ourselves.

We can't manufacture more time or manage it. But, we can lead and manage ourselves better.

When we say "I didn't have enough time," or "I don't have enough time," what we're really saying is "I didn't lead myself well," or "I didn't manage myself well."

A mature leader recognizes that God has given us enough time for things that matter. And, they take responsibility to lead and manage their life well.

Setting Priorities

Fruitful leaders recognize three realities.

First, God has given us enough time to do the things that really matter.

Second, demands on our time will never end.

Third, we must set priorities.

Setting priorities begins by taking, as Dayton suggested, five percent (5%) of our time each week to think about the future. The average pastor works 63 hours per week. Thus, start setting priorities by setting aside three hours of your time each week to plan for the future.

The way I've been able to carve out three hours of time to think about the future is to go to a coffee shop, or a book store (with a coffee shop, of course), or a library, or a secluded park. In other words, we need to find a way to get away. Find a place to think, and go there each week for three hours.

Take along your notebook or a pad of paper and write down your dreams, plans, and goals for yourself and your church or organization. Set out a schedule for your week or month.

Once you've found your way to get away and think, do the following.

Ask one or two people to help you stay focused. Share your dreams, plans, and goals. Ask them to hold you accountable to compete them.

Then find at least one additional person to be your Barnabas, that is, a prayer partner. This may be an older or more mature person who will pray with you.

Next, determine your particular gifts, talents, and abilities. What do you do well? What don't you do well? Be honest!

Last, take stock of the people in your church. Who's there? What do they do well? How do they match up against what you don't do so well?

Ask those who do things well, that you don't do so well, to help you. If you are unwilling to give away work (delegate), you'll find it hard to disciple others. An I-do-it-all-myself attitude says, "I don't believe in community. I don't believe in other people's gifts." You have to let others help you. If you do, you'll find more time in your schedule.

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