



p-TIPS

It's about time (11 time management tips)

Time management skills are especially important for owners of SMEs, who must perform numerous daily tasks. As Susan Ward points out in an article on the Small Business: Canada Web site (<http://sbinfoCanada.about.com/>), many of us spend the day in a whirlwind of activity and then wonder why we haven't accomplished much. Ward gives these tips for becoming more organized and productive.

- 1) Realize that time management is a myth. The only thing we can really manage is ourselves and how we spend our time.
- 2) Find out where you're wasting time. Track your activities for a week to see where time is leaking away.
- 3) Create time management goals. Eliminate time-wasting activities; for example, decide that personal phone calls must be less than five minutes.
- 4) Implement a time management plan. This is an extension of #3. Don't just set specific goals, but track your progress over time to see whether they're being accomplished.
- 5) Use time management tools. Handheld devices and computer software let you make schedules easily and can be set to remind you of events in advance.
- 6) Prioritize ruthlessly. Start each day with a session to determine which tasks absolutely must be done.
- 7) Learn to delegate and/or outsource. No matter how small the business, you don't have to do everything. Hire part-time professionals as needed.
- 8) Establish routines and stick to them. Even though crises may occur, you'll be more productive if routines are usually followed.
- 9) Get in the habit of setting time for tasks. Dealing with e-mail can take the whole day if you let it. Instead set a limit of one hour daily for this and other tasks.
- 10) Be sure your systems are organized. Don't waste time looking for files on a computer or in a drawer. Reorganize for easier use.
- 11) Don't waste time waiting. Take a laptop, a report to read, or simply a notepad to the dentist's office, on public transport, or anywhere waiting is inevitable.