

## **Small-business Savvy: To-do Lists and Time Management**

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“There never is enough time.”

You probably would agree with me that we hear this phrase repeated over and over by people everywhere.

Because time is a limited resource and we feel we never have enough, we’ve been bombarded with hundreds, if not thousands, of suggestions on how to make the most of the time we have.

One such suggestion is the to-do list.

This list comes in many forms and fashions. Today, many list variations are available in a technology-based format. Yet all are driven by two needs: the need to feel in control and the need to get more done from that scarce resource, time.

Although we have no clear history for when the to-do list began, several articles note that Benjamin Franklin was an early user of the list.

To-do lists have a proven track record of working. And yet, many of us do not see the benefits. We have several reasons for that, reasons that, if we are aware of them, may help us get more from this tool.

Common reasons for noneffective list making come from:

- \* Making the list, and not the items on the list, the priority
- \* Listing too many things - Good lists help motivate us to focus on the priority tasks. They are not intended to schedule every minute of the day.
- \* Making too many lists - Some assume that if one list is good, then two are better. That may be a good idea, but all that happens is we become more frustrated, as well as double-book ourselves.
- \* Spending too much time on the list so that it consumes us and becomes the priority
- \* Not prioritizing what’s on our list
- \* Doing the low-priority items just so we can cross things off as done
- \* Making and then ignoring the list
- \* Feeling guilty when we don’t get our list done

How many of these reasons can you claim? I can put a check beside each one.

And the advent of technology tools, by itself, doesn't solve these issues. Technology actually just allows us to make more and longer lists.

So effective time management through to-do lists requires your awareness of reasons why they don't work for you, changing those behaviors and then checking yourself to ensure you are not falling back into old habits.

As a small-business owner, you have lots to do. Effective time management through the old to-do list can be a great friend. Find a way that works for you.

I leave you with a time management quote from the late Beryl Pfizer, a writer and radio and TV producer. You probably can relate to it: "I write down everything I want to remember. That way, instead of spending a lot of time trying to remember what it is I wrote down, I spend the time looking for the paper I wrote it down on."

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