

## Successful Time Management for Sales Professionals

Time is one of the most essential assets for sales professionals. You need time to build relationships, follow up with leads, generate opportunities and close deals. In short, time is something you need to protect and guard fiercely. But protecting your time isn't enough – you need to manage it. Here's how to do so, in five steps:

### 1. Make your calendar fit your schedule

Your calendar and your schedule are not the same thing.

- **Calendar** = Where you record and track meetings, phone calls and other appointments.
- **Schedule** = Where you define how time should be spent in order to achieve your goals.

### 2. Align your schedule with your quota.

Sales is in large part, a numbers game.

- Your goals have to be reachable in the time you have set aside to reach them.
- Come to reasonable estimates of the time needed to complete steps in your sales process.

By understanding how your time has been spent, you can come to a clear picture of how it should be spent – especially when you clarify what activities lead to progress, and which ones lead to distraction.

### 3. Stop being “always available”.

Protecting yourself from interruptions is essential to time management in sales.

- Turn off your phone, stop checking for messages, and avoid looking at emails during blocked time.
- Set aside time to check and respond in fixed periods each day.
- Remember to be *regularly* available, but not *always* available.

Being regularly available actually increases the perception of your availability because you are able to not only react, but respond effectively and in a consistent manner. This is much better than responding to one issue instantly, and being distracted to the point of missing two other issues as a result.

#### 4. Plan backward, not just forward.

It's important to begin with the end in mind, and work from that future objective back to the present.

- X number of initial contacts will yield Y number of appointments made
- Y number of appointments made will yield Z number of sales
- Z number of sales will yield a predictable profit margin
- Z number of sales will yield other opportunities to sell to the same customer or to people they refer you to.
- Once you define your X, Y and Z, then apply time estimates to the activities associated with them.
- Come out of this with a clear picture of the amount of time that you need to have **scheduled** each month, in order to achieve your sales goals.

#### 5. Find a system and stick with it.

You need a system to help you manage sales scheduling and calendaring. It could be:

- Outlook or Google calendar
- An app on your iPhone or Android device
- A paper-based system such as the Franklin Planner®
- What matters is that you **select a system and stick with it**.

Remember that your goal is to start with a **plan**, then **build** your schedule, and then **manage** your calendar.

For more information on sales planning, please visit [www.debbrownsales.com](http://www.debbrownsales.com).

To gain insights and new ideas for sales, visit Deb's blog at [www.debbrownsales.com/blog](http://www.debbrownsales.com/blog)