

TIPS FOR BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT

Time is something nobody seems to have enough of. Who hasn't wished for more hours in the day, more time to get work done, more time for sleep, for friends and family and for enjoying personal interests. Although extending the 24 hour day is impossible, there are ways to be more efficient which will allow more time for what is important to you. Speaking at *Prioritizing Skills for Your Legal Practice*, Diane Costigan, Coaching, Consulting and Training, and Jamie Jackson Spannhake, Dewey & LeBoeuf LLP, highlighted a number of tips to help better manage your time.

1. **Rank Your Priorities** – Take time, advised Costigan and Spannhake, at the beginning of each day to think about what is most important. Plan your day in chunks. Divide it up into morning, afternoon and evening and jot down what you hope to accomplish during each chunk. Remember to check throughout the day to see that things are going according to your plan.
2. **Be Strategic** – Plan to do tasks in the most efficient way. Think about the who, what and when of your tasks. Who is this project for? A partner who is understanding or one who is more demanding. This can determine which tasks take priority. What is the task? Is it something that you have done before? Do you have a template you can use? When is the project due?
3. **Be Flexible** – Be prepared to switch gears when the unexpected arises. Though it is important to make a plan, you must be flexible, and be ready to move things around as needed.
4. **Delegate** – To be efficient and effective you must delegate. Lack of delegation means more work for you. Work on honing your management skills and delegate to assistants and junior associates.
5. **Automate** – When and where you can, automate your work. Keep files of examples of memos and save templates so you don't have to reinvent the wheel each time.
6. **Don't Steal Time From Yourself** – Be organized. A well organized space will help you focus and be less distracting. Remember to put things back where they belong; it will take you less time to find them when you need them. Take the time to develop a filing system. Keeping your space organized may take time but it will result in more time saved in the end.
7. **Keep Your Energy Up** – If you push yourself too far you will run out of steam and become inefficient. Most people are only able to operate at high levels of focus for 30 – 40 minutes at a time. So take a break and give yourself some time to refuel. Refueling can be as simple as a five-minute walk down the hall to get a drink of water.
8. **Manage Technology** – Today's technology has significantly enhanced productivity; it allows you to be mobile and

Some projects have a longer lead time than others, note Costigan and Spannhake; it is important to be aware of the timing of the project.

can help you get organized. However, there is a negative side to all the new gadgets and tools, particularly email: it can be very distracting. Try not to check your email continually. Establish guidelines as to when you will check; for example, every hour or so. Only respond immediately to the emails you really have to until you finish drafting that memo or reading that report. Try to avoid the back and forth emails; remember, sometimes it is faster to pick up a phone or walk to someone's office.

9. **Control Interruptions** – Everyone has experienced the person who comes to your office and stays too long or the colleague who stops in multiple times a day. Take control of these situations: offer to come to their office at an agreed upon time. It is easier to get up and leave his or her office when you are ready than asking someone to leave yours. For people who keep coming by with questions, ask that they save all their questions for a daily meeting, say first thing each morning. Block out chunks of time when you are not available. You can do this by letting your assistant know you would like no interruptions, closing your door, or moving to a conference room or library.
10. **Create a Positive Attitude** – Stop saying you don't have enough time and begin to try to make time. Commit yourself to being an efficiency expert, says Costigan and Spannhake, and take the first steps toward working smarter not harder.