

PRINT MATTERS

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Time management tips for publishers

In the publishing business, time is a rare commodity. When you're running the show on your own, managing the precious little time you do have can seem downright impossible.

Not only is organizing your day doable, it's one of the smartest things you, as a publisher, will do. Taking the time to put proven time management strategies in place can save you countless headaches in your daily work. In many cases, these strategies can be the key to moving you out of survival mode and into a highly productive mode instead.

"You absolutely have to have some kind of organizational system in place," says publisher Tracey Guhl of *Perspectives* magazine. "I know a lot of people say they don't have time for a system, but they're just shooting themselves in the foot."

To get you started, we've listed some guidelines from Guhl based on her experiences in publishing.



1. Refine your process. Don't be afraid to make changes. Consider what's helpful and what's creating more work.

When Guhl started her publishing career in 1991, she had basic organizational skills, but lacked a system for her particular needs. Over the years, she's had to examine her approach to time management and occasionally fine-tune her practices. "First of all, I used to save every piece of paper," she recalls. "Now my filing is much leaner and neater. I only keep what's relevant."

2. Organize your day. Guhl cultivated some of her favorite strategies years ago during a Day-Timer day planner seminar. She highly recommends maintaining some kind of daily schedule, a practice she continues today. In her planner she displays her daily schedule on the left side of each page and a call log on the right.

"I love my Day-Timer," she says. "I keep all of my deadlines in it. I can't live without it."

3. Get it in writing. It sounds simple, Guhl says, but writing notes to yourself can be a lifesaver. Keeping track of phone numbers, daily goals, changes in the routine, instructions for yourself and myriad other items can prevent problems down the road. "You think you'll remember that detail, but you won't," Guhl says.



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This habit is especially valuable in publishing. Guhl writes notes for her interactions with writers, advertisers and artists – everyone who has an impact on her magazine.

4. Back away from the laundry. Staying on task can be especially challenging for home-based publishers. Don't let your personal to-do list – or an enticing TV show – hinder your productivity. If you're in your office, stick to your job.

"You've got to be disciplined," Guhl says. "Look, if your work is not done, it bleeds into the night. Find out what your weak points are, and work on them."

5. Don't procrastinate. You're doing yourself a favor when you find ways to get work done in advance. "Our industry by nature is very deadline-oriented, but as much as you can mitigate that, you should," Guhl says. "We all know crunch time is when the mistakes occur."

Guhl also recommends carefully monitoring your progress as you move closer to deadlines.

Also, stay in communication with the people you rely on to get the publication completed. If there's a potential roadblock between them and their deadline, you need to know.



6. Skip the multitasking. Most people are capable of juggling multiple tasks through their day, but that doesn't mean they should. Research shows that multitasking ultimately makes people less productive than those who concentrate on one task at a time.

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— Tracey Guhl

"I literally work on one thing at a time," Guhl says. "When your brain is working on several things at once, it's exhausting, and it's stressful."

7. Keep it clean. At the same time, Guhl says, she makes a point of removing potential distractions from her workspace. "If you've got a big pile on top of your desk, you can't focus."

When she fails to reach someone she's calling, she places his file aside in a pending pile. "It may sound crazy to have one thing on your desk at a time, but it really makes a big difference."

8. Take a break. Guhl's next tip tends to go against the grain for those in the industry, but it does have an impact on productivity. You can't work non-stop and expect good results.

"When you own your own business it's really hard to take time off, but it's important. You work so much more efficiently when you have downtime." And

be kind to yourself, she adds.

"When you get an issue out the door, don't go right back to work. Get an ice cream – or do something you love – because you earned it."

9. No is not a bad word. Guhl has gotten a number of requests over the years to speak in public. She doesn't always accept them. "While it's good exposure for your organization, it comes at a cost to the publication. Do what you reasonably can manage."

Sometimes we even have to trim our own responsibilities and delegate. If you work alone, you might have to outsource. "Many of us feel we can't afford to outsource," Guhl says. "But sometimes you have to let go."

10. Timing is everything. Are you a morning person? If you are, that's when you should be tackling the toughest tasks in your planner.

"Schedule difficult tasks for when you're at your best," Guhl says. "My best time is 8 a.m. For other people, it's midnight."

11. No e-mails allowed. Never mind the temptations of going online. The simple act of checking e-mail, even for work-related reasons, can throw you off course. "It is the biggest productivity waster I know," Guhl says.

If you must check for work, consider scheduling this task for set intervals. "Try to limit yourself to every 30 minutes," Guhl suggests. "And turn off the audible notice."

If you would like more tips, stay tuned. We'll share another publisher's ideas in the January 2012 issue.

One on one

JPA profile: Jeff Metroz, assistant pressman

Number of years with JPA: More than 21 years

Why he loves JPA: “The other employees, working together as a team, the new faces and the old faces.” Metroz says he often runs into retired co-workers around town. “They’re in their 70s and 80s; they were here when I started in 1989.”




Jeff, Courtney, Betty, Adam

Family life: Metroz and his wife, Betty, have three children: Jordan, 24; Adam, 21; and Courtney, 14. Jordan is engaged and has a child on the way. Adam was born with CHARGE syndrome, a genetic pattern of birth defects involving medical and physical difficulties.

The name is an acronym for a list of conditions seen in many of the children with this disorder. “He wasn’t supposed to live past 3,” Metroz says. “He’s had over 40 surgeries to keep him with us.” Doctors also told the family Adam would never walk or talk, but he has learned to walk and communicates with sign

language. He’s now completing his final year of high school. “He loves school,” Metroz says. “He sees that bus and starts laughing. The kid’s super smart; it’s just his body. He’s come a long way.” Courtney is a freshman in high school, enjoys reading and participates in Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). Her long-term goal is to become an archeologist.

Hobbies: Metroz enjoys visiting autograph and trading card shows about once a month and hunting for additions to the museum of sports memorabilia he’s created in his basement. On weekends, he plays basketball, and sometimes he plays in three-on-three tournaments. He and Adam like to go to Macon Speedway in Macon, Ill., where they visit with NASCAR racer Kenny Wallace, the co-owner. “Kenny comes and gives Adam a hug and kiss and gives him a T-Shirt,” Metroz says. “Everyone there is nice and gives him a hug.”

One cool fact: Not only does Metroz enjoy time with his wife and children, he values the moments he gets to spend with his dad, Dick. “I really enjoy it. We’ll talk cars.” When he can, Metroz surprises his dad with an addition to his sign collection. “I’ll see the smile on his face, and it’s worth it,” he says. 



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RECIPE

Ranch Burgers

Add one package of dry ranch salad dressing mix to one pound of ground beef or pork. Mix in your choice of shredded cheese, then shape into balls and grill.

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