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WHO KNOWS WHERE THE TIME GOES

An update on Time Management

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28 MAY 2018: Judy Collins' recording of the iconic 1960's song, "Who knows where the time goes", began with the lines "Across the morning sky/ All the birds are leaving/How can they know/It's time for them to go". And while birds have an

instinctive mechanism that regulates their activities and tells them ‘time’s up...go south”, we humans tend to rely on more well timed implements such as wristwatches, cell phones, computers, Fitbits and day-timers.



Still, these tools often fall short of our expectations by only keeping us apprised of the time, without any helpful hints on how to use our time efficiently and constructively.

Travel industry trainers and pep-talkers offer time management coaching but somehow, with all the sage advice, we fall into the same trap: Where did the time go? When am I ever going to get things done?

Here are a few thoughts to proactively influence your time skills.

- 1) Start by figuring now where your time goes:
 - From the moment you wake up, note how long things take to do. Make coffee, drink coffee, take a shower, dress, drive / bike or bus to work...

- Setting up your desk and getting ready to sell.
- Average chat time / booking time with clients.
- Number of phone calls today? Emails? Drop by visits. How many?
- Average time spent researching.
- Time spent marketing.
- Figure out which people are monopolizing your time?
- How many meetings/ PD sessions/ Fams do you attend in a month?

The idea is to think through every minute you spend in your personal and professional life. Do this for 30 days to work out your TIC-TOC Quotient. (time-in-control/ time out of control). Then when someone asks, "Do you have time to..." you will be able to say, "Hold that thought, I have X things to do and it will take me until...to complete them. Then I would be happy to lend you a hand". See, now you know where your time goes and how much of it is left to take on new initiatives. Who knows where the time goes? You do!

2) Make a List. It's the easiest way to keep track of everything you need to do. But not everyone looks at lists in the same way.

- Real Listers - these are people (like me!) who write down a daily or weekly list of what needs to be done so that all tasks, big and small will be given some attention. Creating a visual of all your tasks, allows you to prioritize on a daily/ weekly and monthly basis, as well as to allocate some of the nice-to-do but not-essential-to-my-livelihood tasks to next week or next month.
- Non Listers - They're famous for saying ' don't worry, I'll remember'. Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't
- Fake-Listers - their usual reply to you is 'if I don't do it by Thursday, then feel free to remind

me'. You are usually reminding them!

- Compulsive Listers - they actually write down tasks they've already completed, just so they can cross them off the list and feel better about their accomplishments.
- Sarcastic Listers - the attitude is that Ok if I'm going to do a list, then I will include every detail of my day to show you how incredibly busy I am.
8:59 am Walk in the door, take off my coat. 9:00 am sit down and turn on my computer. 9:02 am Check my phone messages, etc. etc.

3) Let's do the Time Warp again. Most people get locked into a cycle of spending time, as opposed to saving time. Now that you know your work habits, can you do better? Of course you can but you still need to double-check your documents, respond to emails and phone calls within 24 hours, proof-read what you send to clients, and attend to unexpected drop-ins or requests for meetings with clients.

Likewise, maintaining your social connections brings in business (and revenue and commission). If you are posting on a social site (Facebook, Twitter, Linked in, Instagram etc.) then you need to read and respond to inquiries and comments. If you have a website, you need to keep it up-to-date with refreshing photos, videos and text.

There's a ton of things to do during the day...so don't throw your 'hands' up (that's a clock joke) in frustration. Think of ways to save time!

4) If I could save Time in a Bottle. Ahhh...the old Jim Croce song. Did you know that Fam trips are perfect 'tools' for saving time? By maximizing the fact that you are at a destination, with suppliers, attractions, local contacts and other travel advisors, you actually save time by not having to

add “research the destination” to your list of ‘must- do’s’. Take tons of photos and videos to feature on your website. Take great notes or use a voice recorder to remember important details. Meet with the hotel managers. Bring a list of your clients’ special interests (weddings, antiques, hiking etc.) so you can contact the destination movers-and-shakers when you need to work magic for a client.

And if you want to continue saving time, then take advantage of professional development opportunities available to travel advisors. The same protocol for gathering information to save time applies with regard to conferences, supplier events and PD courses.

5) Planning and Cramming. We all remember our high school and/or university days. Some of us planned and some of us crammed. There were those who planned to complete an assignment at least one week before it was due, and there were others who planned to cram—they would start the assignment the day before it was due, work all night and then, bleary eyed and un-showered, show up to class to hand in their work.

In the real world of travel professionals, last minute cramming usually implies that there was no planning involved. A meeting with a client should be relaxed and not an anxiety-filled encounter where you are secretly saying to yourself “I hope my India-bound clients don’t ask me about the Taj Mahal”. As you acquire experience through trial, success and yes, even error, you can store information in your computer or in a folder in your desk (whatever works best for you) and using key words, retrieve facts or advice or suggestions on favourite attractions, best restaurants, special interests and more. Pre-planning means no cramming (and it rhymes so

you can remember this!), and it saves you time!

6) Can we talk? The ideal situation is to get involved in a 'job' that quickly morphs into a 'career', guided by passion and filled with your mastery of destination skills, customer service and sales skills, with the end result being grateful clients who want to book with you again and again. But a successful career also means taking time to smell the roses: jogging before or after work, spending time with family and friends, relaxing with a good book (or Netflix) on the weekend. This is all part of time management. By knowing where your time goes and what you need to accomplish, you can make a few small changes that will make life easier. The clock is ticking!



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A tireless promoter of "infectious enthusiasm about travel", Steve delivers his wisdom once a month in his column *The Travel Coach*.