Inside the Mind of a Professional Organizer - By Jessi Bushman aka "Organizer Jessi"
Meeting Agenda's and Priority Management

How often do you find yourself thinking or expressing "there are not enough hours in the day" or "I'm so busy"! Most likely, this is a mindset you have or regularly experience. The ability to understand the difference between being "busy" and being "productive" is a skill you can learn or improve at any age. In addition to our personal situations, we are all overwhelmed with global stress, family expectations and professional challenges. Avenues of communication is one of the biggest components to grasp when improving your priority management skills. Since the majority of our workforce is performing remotely, our communication style has added additional layers of obstacles to overcome.

On a positive note, you can absolutely improve the way you spend your time and enhance your productivity. Work-Life Balance is not achievable if you are always taking work home. We all need to acknowledge, there needs to be a clear division of Personal and Professional time. If you are working from home, obtaining a workspace away from your family is crucial. This will help you separate these two factors and provide overall peace not having the constant visual reminder of work in sight.
Calendar utilization and agenda's are very helpful in every situation. Creating and maintaining a personalized system is where many people fall behind or fail completely. To customize a priority management routine, you must first understand what you are trying to accomplish and your time frame.

Let's dive into your work routine, responsibilities, frequency and duration. I like to share my personal experience, along with ways I've overcome challenges by implementing organization, priority management and up-keep maintenance.

My last corporate role revolved around a split-responsibility position. That job was created to be a 50/50 role, but that proved to be an unfair equation after a short time in that position. Wearing many hats, I was requested to provide administrative back-up, physical upkeep of paper flow, personal assistance, calendar management, software support and education for multiple managers all while *volunteering* to tidy common spaces.

As I stated, understanding your responsibilities is needed before establishing an organized approach to priority management and creating agendas. So... how do you do this?! The power of lists and documenting what you are doing, how much time it takes and the frequency you are performing tasks is a great starts. Create time slots in your calendar and utilizing re-occurring features to block time. Selecting various reminders of your upcoming tasks is a very helpful tool which allows time to prepare, work on, provide updates and complete projects.

If you are meeting with an individual or team of people, its proven effective to have an agenda outlining what you need to discuss during your time together. We all prefer to refrain from thinking "this meeting could have been an email" or "what's my take-away?" or even "what contribution do I need to make to build momentum".

Agenda

If creating an agenda is a new concept for you, an easy outline to start with is:

- Check in with your team – provide opportunity for others to express challenges or accomplishments. This may identify topics for discussion. Its also a great way to express to your staff they are appreciated and recognized. Lastly, it may identify if a one-on-one is needed outside of the meeting.
- Review re-occurring or ongoing projects. Where are you/others at with progress being made? This may apply to many different topics, so be clear on what you are discussing. Be specific on who's doing what, and follow-up to be made.
- Talk about new projects and opportunities. Delegate clearly! Request feedback on these assignments. If someone is overwhelmed, this is a time to identify if someone else can step in to assist.
- Recap what was just discussed. This meeting could have been 5 minutes to hours in duration, so reiterating responsibilities, time frame and goals is an important objective.
- Take action! While topics are still fresh in you mind, schedule time blocks following the meetings on your calendar to complete necessary follow up. Something that takes 5 minutes could ultimately be prolonged and forgotten. Update notes on the agenda so you can effectively share feedback and updates at your next meeting.

Time Management vs. Priority Management

Time is one thing we can not manage and we can never get back. A successful outlook is to focus on Priority Management, and how effective you are with your time.

The person who complains about not having enough time, is likely spending a majority of their time expressing to others, how much they have to do vs. actually being productive!

- Understand and Prioritize your essential tasks to obtain your goals.
- Focus on 3 Priority Tasks. Multi-tasking will take more time to complete something, and most likely, you will not complete projects with high accuracy.
- Focus and complete a project correctly the first time. Save yourself from re-doing.
- Create a repeat system to implement Priority Management. Focus on your hourly, daily, weekly and long term goals.

Lastly, communicate clearly and frequently with others so everyone is on the same page!

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