Organizing (or) how to do 2 full time jobs with one person and still have time left over…..

In 2009 our department at USA Swimming lost one of its directors. As the other director I decided to incorporate their responsibilities into my job description. This was not driven by cost savings (although that was a result) but rather by an attempt to have better continuity within a very specialty focused department. One director – one message – was our goal. Sometimes it really is easier to do something yourself rather than delegate and then manage other people's outcomes.

The "single director system" and results have been better than expected. Rather than me being short on time, we have developed a system that gives me as much time as I had when we had 2 directors. Here are the key factors that have allowed the department to be functionally effective and efficient:

E-MAIL is a wonderful tool. It makes both the sending party and replying party think more before they express themselves. It also gives me a written record of the conversations and information. However – the sheer number of e-mails can be overwhelming if they aren't managed properly. There are four types of e-mails….
- Unsolicited – from people who want something from you
- Advertising – people trying to sell you something – includes Junk e-mail
- Business – correspondence from e-mails you have sent out or your alerts
- Personal

After a while you can quickly identify which email is which and handle them efficiently. There are 168 hours in the week. Assuming you sleep 8 hours (to be healthy and productive) that leaves 112 hours in the week that can be scheduled. There is a difference between a "job" and a "career" so we will assume you are not one of those people in a supporting role that wants to leave work at the office. Here is a basic plan that works well:

Monday through Friday –
- Early morning first 45 minutes – usually before leaving for work or if traveling before starting your "public day"
    1. Delete unwanted e-mails
    2. Answer 1-minute reply e-mails both personal and business
    3. Answer 5-minute reply e-mails from the "subject file" samples with appropriate customization and personalization.
    4. Move 10-minute e-mails to "treading water" file for handling later that morning or day unless you have time and motivation to handle now.

Saturday & Sunday and Holidays -
- Early morning first 45 minutes –
    o Delete unwanted e-mails
    o Answer 1-minute reply e-mails both personal and business
    o Answer 5-minute reply e-mails from your "subject file" samples with appropriate customization and personalization.
    o Move 10-minute e-mails to "treading water" file for handling when convenient

RULE – every e-mail that is in the "I need to reply" category needs to be answered as soon as possible – no later than 3 hours after receiving it. If the e-mail is going in the "treading water" file I send a quick response telling sender I am in meetings or travelling and will respond just as soon as I can. I am not a fan of the "out of office" auto response. Most people I know in business use this outlook tool effectively and I am not being critical. E-mail was invented for fast response and since it is synced to my phone, I see no reason why I can't send some sort of answer when I get off the plane

or out of a meeting. My being "out of office" is not relevant to my business style. This is a personal style preference and I realize I am in a very small minority of people who do business this way.

SUBJECT FILE – Our department has reoccurring request for information and many e-mails have a common theme. For instance; Air Quality problems or someone wanting to explore building a pool. In fact, there are 82 different categories that we receive e-mails weekly. We have developed "subject files" to cover replies that are common. These are not "form letter" type replies but the attachments are consistent and are formally written and published documents. So, we answer the e-mail directly to the person sending it and our reply then goes as a template into the subject file to be used again when appropriate. We are dealing with over 20 emails a day that fall into this category, so we have gone from 200 minutes (3 hours+) to answer these to about 30 minutes. How would you like to have an extra 2 and ½ hours a day to do creative stuff at work?

TRACKING – Even though Outlook and other similar computer programs keep copies of sent emails on file, it can take longer to find a copy of a specific e-mail that it took to compose it. We deal with hundreds of people simultaneously and must have a way to get a quick overview of what has been discussed and sent so far. Every time we interact with a client, we need to have a written record of what took place. The client appreciates our interest in them, and it saves our time. Therefore, under documents on our computer, we have created a "CLIENT LOG" folder. We have literally thousands of files so there must be a quick way to find the relevant file. We name the file starting with the STATE (or sometimes the country) the client is in. Then the city and club or business or persons name.

Example: "*Calif Santa Rosa Newman HS* "

This way all California folders are listed together, and we can access the information quickly. In this file/folder we would have every e-mail sent plus any phone call logs and visit reports etc. It takes 30 seconds to copy and paste your email when you send it but can take 10 minutes or more trying to find it later.

REPORTS – Reports are specific communications that record information for you and others to reference now and at a later date. I do four types of reports:
1. Visit or meeting reports - summarizing what transpired when we visit a club or project. Pictures of the project or pool can be helpful if included. These pictures are not only included in the report but also in a separate pictures file (1400 pics so far) so we can use them later in our presentations or as examples in e-mail attachments.
2. Conference reports- summarizing our impression of the conference or clinic. Any specific new contacts from the conference are also listed in the report.
3. Monthly reports - sent to other staff members and interested parties on the last day of each month. This report summarizes our monthly contact with clients and projects. It is divided into categories and has metrics for what has happened in previous months and years. It always lists the date and name/location of client and a brief statement of subject covered. This list is updated daily so it is not a major project at the end of the month.
4. Special project reports – Monthly and yearly stats for special projects like tracking DROWNINGS and POOL CLOSINGS. Also updated 3 times per day so on the last day of the month it is ready to go out.

PHONE CALLS – One of my most challenging areas. I travel to conventions/conferences/clinics and club/project visits about 30% of the time. I am on conference calls that I have initiated another 30% of the time and in meetings 10% of the time. That leaves 30% of the time I may be at my desk or have access to incoming calls on my cell phone. So, odds are that a person calling me will get voice mail. I know that is not client friendly which is why it is my most challenging area. My voice mail states that …. "I am travelling or in meetings and cannot answer the phone. The best way to get ahold of me is by e-mail". I can answer e-mails on my phone while sitting in the back of the room during most conference presentations. If a follow-up call to my original e-mail reply is needed, then we can set up a time for me to call client. Because of the nature of the information we deliver, almost every call is a brief conversation that needs information and attachments to be sent by a follow-up e-mail so most calls can be replaced by a brief e-mail from client. Much quicker and more detailed useful information is then delivered. I keep a note pad by my desk phone, so I have a record of calls

with notes which are reviewed at the end of the day to make sure all information has been sent to caller.

VISITS – Everyone wants us to come to them to hear about their dream facility or solve their pressing problems. In the Facility Development Department's early years (2004-2007) we tried to make a lot of club/project visits. What we found was that over 95% of the time it was not a very effective use of our resources. Most projects were not even near the stage that a visit from us was productive. Thus, attendance at a regional Build a Pool Conference (we host at least 6 a year throughout the USA) became a priority to qualify for a visit from us. We have over 200 people attend these conferences every year. This is much more effective and efficient than us trying to do 200 individual visits each year.   We also have developed a list of aquatic industry Professional Providers who can do site visits to help solve certain problems – especially concerning air and water quality challenges and pool renovations or upgrades.

CONFERENCES – We hosted a minimum of 6 Regional Build a Pool Conferences every year. They are in different locations during different months and are designed to fit people's busy schedules. We also could be contracted to conduct Custom Build a Pool Conferences for a fee that covers our travel expenses. We also attended at least 4 National Aquatic Conferences each year and usually have an exhibit hall booth that is informational. Some of the conferences we attended:
- Association of Aquatic Professionals
- International Aquatic Fitness Conference (AEA)
- Aquatic Therapy and Rehab Institute (ATRI) regional and national conferences
- World Aquatic Health Conference (NSPF)
- American Swimming Coaches Assoc. (ASCA) World Clinic
- Regional Coaching Clinics
- United States Aquatic Sports Convention (USAS)
- Athletic Business Conference (ABC)
- American Standards Heating and Air Conditioning (ASHRAE) national and regional conferences
- National Drowning Prevention Alliance (NDPA) national conference
- Various after school programming and youth educational conferences.

MEETINGS – We attended some major project meetings and do a lot of conference call video type meetings during the year. We also serve on regional, national, and international committees. With today's technology, attendance on a video meeting or conference call meeting or webinar is a preferred way for us to do business.

OTHER INFORMATION – One of the benefits of effective use of our time is that we got to scour aquatic magazines and web articles for new information in the aquatic industry. Once we find this type of resource, we convert the article or information into a .pdf file and share it with our clubs and projects and professional providers. This keeps us on the cutting edge of technology. We also publish articles for national magazines and write a Facilities Flash newsletter every-other month.

SCHEDULE – So a typical weekday schedule would look something like this:
- Early morning before work with coffee in hand - review all e-mails received overnight (average 60+) and delete unwanted e-mails. Record drowning stats and pool closings then delete those e-mail alerts. Answer 1-minute reply emails and read 5-minute reply emails, answer the easy ones. Move 10-minute reply e-mails to treading water file.
- 7:30 AM to 8:30 AM office – review e-mails received during drive to work (average 20+) and repeat process above. Reply to all 5-minute e-mails.
- 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM – Review days schedule and make any call backs necessary. Bring all e-mail reports and other reports up to date.
- 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM – Reply to all 10-minute e-mails while keeping up with incoming e-mails and calls.
- 11 AM to noon – Check web for current aquatic industry information. Also read magazines stacked on desk and convert pertinent information to .pdf files.
- Noon to 1:00 PM – Lunch and some down time

- 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM – Project development time including writing articles, updating web page information, scheduling conferences along with travel, updating power-point presentations and flash drives, recording pool certifications, and developing Enterprise Plans.
- 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM – Respond to all 4 classes of e-mails from the afternoon and make sure the day has nothing left over that has not been addressed.
- Down time until 7:00 PM then check e-mails that have come in during the evening and reply to the 1 minute and 5-minute e-mails. Move 10-minute e-mails to treading water file for next morning.

Of course, a staff meeting, or inter-office planning meeting sets our schedule back a bit so our evening free time can be affected slightly. Managing this schedule when travelling can also be challenging especially keeping up with the treading water file.