

Managing Your Time Well Makes for Restful Sleep *By Patti Brotherton*

I have been working with agents for several years and find that they all need some tips on managing their time better. They go through periods of “spinning wheels” with no time off and little rest at night thinking about all the things they have to do. All of this, of course, leads to less time to make sales. We all have the same number of hours in the day, the most successful agent makes the most of his 24 hours.

Number one rule is schedule prospecting time in your calendar as an appointment with yourself. This way it doesn't get shoved aside for non-producing items. You don't break appointments with your clients, don't break them with yourself!

Keep a daily journal. Just a simple spiral binder that you can put your to do list in, your seminar notes, your listing notes, your phone calls, everything. Put the date at the top. This way you will never lose your notes or that all important phone number. A time waster is keeping phone messages on your voice mail; you have to go through all of them constantly to get to the latest messages. Put them in the journal.

Answer phone calls in clusters. Put your voice mail on when you are busy prospecting and answer your messages at certain times. The beauty of this is that when a problem comes up first thing in the morning and you are not available, it is unbelievable, but the problem usually gets solved without you. If it didn't, then you are available to handle it and still did the most productive thing first, prospecting. When you are returning phone calls, preface each call with something like, “I have 10 calls to return, but wanted to get to you first, what can I do for you?” Use that line with each call and you will be surprised how quickly people get to the point. If you call someone and get voice mail, tell them why you are calling and when you can be reached so that they have the answer and call you at your specified time. Don't just leave your name and phone number.

When you have something you are dreading, do it first! You feel so much better that everything else just seems to fly by. When you put it off, you do everything with half attention and very slow so you get much less accomplished.

Use your driving time for learning. Listen to tapes. You just might get one more idea for your business. Also, return calls from your car instead of waiting until you get into the office.

Never drive straight anywhere. Drive by a new listing that just came up so that you are more informed than the Realtor who waits until caravan day to see it. Drive through your farm and see what is happening there. If you see someone, stop and say hi so that they know you are in the neighborhood, but don't get out of the car. Put postcards in the glove box of your car, and when you drive by a client's house, write a quick note about how their yard or house looked (just a one liner) right their in front of the house and mail it when you return to the office.

Make up listing proposals and FSBO packages ahead of time so that they are always ready to go. Carry the FSBO packages in the trunk of the car and when you see a FSBO you like, stop and go up to the door right then. Don't drive away thinking you will contact them later—you won't! Fear will get the better of you. Do it when you see it and you will have met one more prospect. Then write the address and phone number directly into your calendar to call in two days.

When you make a sale today, you have so many things to arrange, have a checklist and put it on the outside of the sale folder so that you can refer to it in the morning and take care of it. Of course, the best, is having an assistant who can take care of that for you.

It is good time management having help, but only if you have clear, concise jobs for this person to do. They should have assigned times for taking care of certain tasks. That way you both know what is being done and can adjust the schedule as needed. For example, between 9:00 and 10:00 AM the assistant might be doing seller follow-up. OR, 3:00 to 5:00 PM getting lead follow-up letters out. Whatever. The goal here is to help the assistant be cognizant of time, too. But, don't forget to build in some flex time.

When you find yourself with a little extra time because of a cancelled appointment, make the most of it. Call several of your past clients to say hi; run home and put a load of wash in the machine; etc. Don't sit around talking with other agents in the office.

Don't let agents take your time. It's good to share, but let them know the parameters. Tell them you can spare two minutes, but no more. When the two minutes is up, walk away or get up from your desk and go get something. They will get the message.

You can't let clients control your time. You can set the appointment times. If they are anxious to buy a property, they can make themselves available during the day. This isn't always possible, but take more control.

Utilize brokers open houses to see as many properties as you can, but don't go with someone who is going to slow you down. If you see a property that would be right for one of your buyers, you want to be free to call them and get them into it right away. If you have a car full of agents, you probably will not just drop them off to do that, or if you are in their car, you can't expect them to return you to the office. Also, when you are out looking at brokers opens it is a good time to prospect those FSBO's and expireds.

When you are ordering cards for your farm area, why not order for the whole year at once. That way you don't have to think of it again. The best is to order through a service that will print them and do your mailing for you. That's prospecting done and you aren't worrying about it at the end of the month wondering what you are going to get out the next month.

If you have something that you must do on Saturday, open your calendar to Saturday and write it in there. Then you can forget about it. Use your calendar as a reminder. Your computer will do the same thing, it will tell you when it is time to send a follow-up letter, etc. Just don't forget to turn your computer on.

A great time saver is a good database management system on your computer. Hire a student to enter the data. It is not good time management for you to be doing that. That does not make you a sale! Your database can send emails to your clients automatically. What a time saver! Sending 400 notes all at the same time and with no cost.

Look at your emails in the morning, at noon, and at the end of the day. And, just like mail, when you read them, answer them. If action is required of some of them, copy them and put them in your journal to do at a specified time, but let the person sending the email know you are working on it with a

time as to when they can expect the information. Then get it to them before that time.

Write down your buyers names and phone numbers on a sheet of paper and carry it in your journal. Everyday look at it first thing in the morning and you will be surprised how your subconscious will help you find property for them. Also, when they purchase a property, cross their name off, but keep the list going. It's a great incentive to see that you are finding property for these buyers. By the way, every time you cross a name off, you should be adding one.

Use your journal for items needing to be done. Prioritize it. And as you accomplish each task, cross it off. Amazing how easy it is to stay on top of everything when it's right there in front of you.

There are a lot of little things that make a difference each day in saving you time. Adopt some of these ideas and see what you can do with the extra time you have to sell; and enjoy a good night's rest.