

Ask SCORE

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Counselors to America's Small Business

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Operations

Put Time on Your Side With Better Task Management

Time is the one resource that most small business owners wish they had more of. But until someone figures out how to make days last longer than 24 hours, entrepreneurs must be content with learning how to sharpen their time management skills.

Fortunately, one of the most effective time management tools is also the simplest -- the basic "To-Do" list. Each day, jot down all of the things that need to get done, all on one sheet of paper.

You can also number or check the ones that are highest priority "must-do" items. As tasks are completed, cross them off. This can help you focus on getting them done one at a time, and also gives you a sense of accomplishment. To add a technology flavor to tracking your tasks, TimeTiger.com provides a web-based to-do list that helps you monitor your project and non-project activities.

Delegating more work can also help ease your time crunch. Many business owners accustomed to "doing it all" find this exceedingly difficult. But even if you are a sole operator, you can pass off tasks to others via outsourcing, for example, to free up time for yourself.

Periodically analyze how time is spent at your business -- and not just your time, but everyone's. Divide the day into small time blocks and record what you, or others, were doing in each block. Now compare this real use of time to your goals, expectations and mission priorities. If they do not align, you'll need to take action. And remember that growing, successful businesses don't put things off. Even a simple "no" response to something on your to-do list can extinguish that item and let you move on.

A variety of technology solutions are also helping small businesses track and manage time. For example, Workarea.com is an Internet-based time tracking system that can provide billing information to the second. The system includes a time clock, time sheet, expense tracking, address book and the ability to access it all via cell phone or PDA.

For businesses with employees, the [TimeClock Plus](#) Small Business Edition lets you turn any PC into a time clock. Employees can sign in or out with the keyboard or mouse, and easily allocate hours and costs to specific jobs.

To learn more about time management issues facing your small business, contact SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business."

The Fox Valley SCORE Chapter offers *free, confidential* counseling to small businesses, including startups. Affiliated with the U.S. Small Business Administration, SCORE has counselors available in eight locations in the counties and suburbs west of Chicago.

To sign up for an appointment at the location closest to you, go to ScoreFoxValley.org.

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