

The Successful SUPERVISOR

2010

September

Tips from  LifeSolutions®

“My staff members complain that they can’t find the time to get everything done during the day. I think the issue is time management, but I’m not sure how to help them improve their skills. What would you suggest?” LifeSolutions is repeatedly asked to provide training on time management for both managers and employees. Often managers contact LifeSolutions for help when they don’t know how to get their team members to focus on their tasks or to meet the deadlines they set. This issue of *The Successful Supervisor* offers some insights and strategies for maximizing time and energy. Because we are always interested in your questions and comments, please contact LifeSolutions at ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com or call an EAP account manager at 1.800.647.3327.

Annette Kolski-Andreaco, LSW, MSW, MURP - LifeSolutions Account Manager

Time management is a skill you can learn and one you can model for your direct reports. It’s an appropriate job performance issue that can be addressed through ongoing coaching and supervision. In this first of a two-part issue of *The Successful Supervisor*, we’ll look at the basic components of a time management strategy.

Getting Started with Planning and Organizing

It’s clear that the number of hours in a day is finite; it’s the same 24 hours no matter how you slice it. No one has one more hour in the day. This fact begs the question, “Can we manage time?” Of course the answer is “no.” The goal is not to manage time itself but to manage our use of time.

The critical challenge is in being absolutely clear about what we must accomplish in the amount of time we have and how we go about doing it. Planning and organizing is the key to using time effectively. Ironically, it’s often the one thing people will say they don’t have time to do.

“If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Before we can begin to plan our time, we need to understand our own habits and routines. Looking at your time management behaviors can help you to: (1) improve your own skills and (2) assess your staff’s need for coaching.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- ◆ Do I establish goals and priorities for myself?
- ◆ Do I know when I arrive at work what will be my two or three primary tasks?
- ◆ Do I do my most difficult tasks when my energy is at its peak?
- ◆ Do I allow for a limited number of unauthorized interruptions a day?
- ◆ When I have the option, do I say “no” to tasks or obligations that are unrelated to my goals and priorities?
- ◆ Do I establish realistic deadlines when I have control over the schedule?
- ◆ Do I complete tasks by the deadline?
- ◆ Do I take time for myself during the day?

Implied in these questions is the central role of clear goals, priorities, and deadlines and how they become the organizing principles around which you can successfully structure your time.

Does everything need your attention now?

We can all learn to pay more attention to the degree of importance or urgency of a situation or activity. When employees struggle with priorities, it is often because they respond to everything as if it is urgent. This tendency has been called the “tyranny of the urgency.” Concluding that a situation is important — but not urgent — relieves the pressure to give every demand the same level of attention.

Identify What Isn’t Working

If identifying goals, priorities, and deadlines is difficult, then the place to start is to find out what isn’t working for you. You might complete the following sentences:

- ◆ I never have time to ...
- ◆ I spend way too much time on ...
- ◆ One thing I wish I could do every day is ...
- ◆ I procrastinate whenever I have to ...
- ◆ It’s hard for me to say no to ...

Your answers to these phrases will help clarify the unhelpful tendencies that drain your time and energy. By paying attention to what isn’t working, you can begin the process of focusing on the essential tasks: setting goals, establishing priorities, and meeting realistic deadlines.

In next month’s issue of *The Successful Supervisor*, we’ll cover the common causes of procrastination, a major obstacle to effective time management. We’ll then apply all that we’ve learned to show you how to coach your staff to take command of their time and improve their overall performance. Feel free to call LifeSolutions if you any questions or you want to consult with our team.

Online Leadership Support



As leaders, what we do and say can have significant impact on those around us. *LifeSolutions* offers a series of self-guided online courses specifically developed to equip managers and supervisors with the appropriate tools to help make a positive impact in the workplace.

In keeping with the theme of this month's *The Successful Supervisor*, we offer the following *Skill Builder* course:

Time Management

Are you increasingly feeling stressed because the days are going faster and faster but you aren't making headway on your "to do" list? Time, our most valuable and transient resource, is either used or lost. Maybe it's time you took control of the situation.

In the Time Management course you will learn:

- ◆ **Ways to determine the best payoffs for you**
 - How to identify the goals that you will invest time to achieve
 - Methods for determining how you are currently spending your time

- ◆ **Ways to plan your activities to save time**
 - Tips on how to identify low-payoff activities
 - How to write and prioritize "to do" lists
 - Methods to schedule daily activities that will save you time
- ◆ **Effective ways to control time wasters**
 - Ways to minimize drop-in visitors
 - Tips to increase the productivity of meetings
 - Ideas on how to organize materials and surroundings to save time and effort
 - Insights on how to overcome procrastination

Follow the steps below to learn more and to get started:

- ◆ Access www.lifesolutionsforyou.com.
- ◆ Click on the *WorkLife* Log In at the top right.
- ◆ Enter your company code. If you do not know your code, call 1.800.647.3327.
- ◆ Locate Site Search on the right-hand side of the page.
- ◆ Type in *time management*.
- ◆ Scroll down to the *Skill Builder*.

If you have questions, call **1.800.647.3327**.

Nothing in this information is a substitute for following your company policies related to information covered here.