

Nanette Schiller, left, plans each day the evening before, to make morning less hectic.



Be the Go-To Gal

Get ahead with time management tips for work ... and life

Story by Amanda N. Wegner / Photo by Shanna Wolf

Does this sound like your day?

“I know I left that note somewhere. It’s here on my desk, I know it.” “Oh, yes ... the meeting? Right. No, I didn’t forget. I’ll be there in a minute.” “Yes, I am working on that project. I’ll have it done soon as I can. I’ve been caught up in other things.”

Work, and life, go much more smoothly when you learn to manage your time and space. Luckily, with a few simple tools and changes in your work style, you can better manage your time to be the go-to gal. Jill Annis, owner of Simply Organized, offers these time management tips.

Do not check e-mail first thing in the morning.

It’s easy to get distracted and waste time responding to low priority items.

Make a to-do list ... and follow it.

Prioritize and tackle the highest priority item first; work on that project until you are completely finished with it.

Finish great.

Spend 10 minutes at the end of the day clearing your desk, filing papers, putting items away and making your to-do list for the next day.

Keep on track.

Use a timer or alarm to keep yourself on task. The alarm can be set, says Jill, to go off at regular intervals; when it does, ask yourself if you are doing what you are supposed to be doing. It can also be used to limit the time you’re spending on e-mail or lower-priority projects.

Skip multitasking.

“Multi-tasking used to be the norm, but it’s costly in the long run,” cautions Jill. “It leads to stress, confusion and mistakes. Focus on one project at a time until it is completed.”

Stay organized.

Break down large projects into manageable pieces and determine a timeline for the completion of each piece. Set up a good paper management system to eliminate time wasted looking for important papers. Tools that can help with papers are binders, desktop file boxes or file sorters and a good filing system.

Another good time management tool is a white board. Hang one on your office wall for planning projects, your week and to-do lists.

Choose your planner.

Do you prefer to see what’s happening a month at a time? Or is it more your style to keep everything in the palm of your hand with a BlackBerry

or another digital device? Choose a planner that fits your personality. “You are more likely to use a system you buy into rather than one forced upon you,” says Jill.

Managing your time wisely at work will reap dividends for managing your home life — and vice versa. Nanette Schiller, a senior financial analyst at American Family Insurance and a single mother of two, knows just how valuable it is to manage time in all aspects of life. “Sometimes you have to pick your priorities, but other times, being organized and being able to manage your time well will help you accomplish more than you thought,” says Nanette.

Jill suggests preparing as much as possible the night before work. For instance, choose your clothing, iron it, gather your paperwork, pack your briefcase, prepare your lunch and pack the car with items you may need for errands, working out or non-work meetings.

Preparing the night before helps Nanette tremendously. She sets out her boys’ belongings the night before, including breakfast dishes and breakfast foods that don’t need refrigeration. Nanette also suggests enlisting the help of your children, if old enough, or a spouse to make things run smoothly. “My boys open shades, take their vitamins and more. Each has their own jobs.”

Another tip for better managing time between work and home is to use one calendar or planner for all appointments and meetings. Include all personal and professional appointments, as well as your family’s commitments. Don’t overschedule, and allow plenty of travel and preparation time between appointments. “And,” stresses Nanette, “be sure you keep it updated.”

Also be sure to schedule some family and “me” time in there, because after a long day, you certainly deserve it. **mb**



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