

Capitalizing on a Reduced Schedule

The hours spent without clients or classes can be some of your most productive.

Has your schedule suddenly opened up? If you are a group exercise instructor, perhaps the number of classes you teach has been reduced; or, as a personal trainer, maybe you have lost a couple of clients who have moved away, gone on vacation or simply decided to exercise on their own. Now you find the hours of your day, once jam-packed with work, stretching endlessly before you.

Most of us are stressed when we are too busy and fret when we are not busy enough! But is it possible to bask in the pleasure of a reduced schedule, viewing it as a gift versus a curse? Absolutely! It is during slow times that you define the success and sustainability of your busy days. A reduced schedule offers you the opportunity to work *on* your business rather than *in* it. Take advantage of those empty hours to get

Resources

"From the Ground Up," April 2004 *IDEA Personal Trainer*, provides tips on setting goals, as well as a "Business Goal Tracking Grid" to keep you on schedule in attaining them.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey (Fireside 1990) offers a quadrant that can help you with decision making while encouraging you to examine your practice of either proaction or procrastination.

"Web Design That Works," March 2004 *IDEA Personal Trainer*, gives tips on designing a usable, inviting website that makes doing business easier, faster and more profitable.

your systems in order, reevaluate your goals and improve your attractiveness.

GET YOUR SYSTEMS IN ORDER

Disorganization is a symptom of the too-busy, unfocused life. People are much more productive when they are prepared, have a place for everything and put everything in its place. Evaluate your paperwork, documents and office/training equipment. Use some of your newly available hours to get organized so you can respond to a new or existing client's needs at a moment's notice.

Paperwork and Documents

- Start by making a list of all the paper items and computer files you want to tackle.
- Organize client files, updating information and identifying upcoming assessments and program changes. Make sure clients' addresses and phone numbers are current.
- Create a logical, easily accessible filing system.
- Identify and create forms that will make it easier to manage your business.
- Prepare at least 10 new-client packets.
- Take a fresh look at your promotional and marketing materials. Are any changes needed to bring them up-to-date or simply add some spark?
- Create your own website or improve the one you have. I created my site with WebSite Complete 5.0, which I purchased for just \$14.95 from www.godaddy.com. (Also see Resources, left.)
- Transform all your forms into documents that can be e-mailed. Dispose of any forms and documents you no longer use.

Office/Training Equipment

- Evaluate your equipment needs. What do you need to make your daily life easier (e.g., fax machine, cell phone, laptop computer, new desk, training equipment)? Would you benefit from any new software or computer training?
- Do you have equipment that needs to be upgraded or disposed of? Make sure everything is in perfect working order.
- Look around you. What do you need to change to make your office and training facility an inspiring space?
- Once you have identified the equipment you need, create a budget plan and set a timeline for acquiring it.

REEVALUATE YOUR GOALS

Another wise use of your downtime is to review both your personal and business goals. Are you happy with the direction you are heading in? Are you investing your time in the areas you have identified as priorities? In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey suggests that you invest time in things that are important to you, but not urgent. Waiting until things become urgent creates stress and decreases your effectiveness.

Reevaluate your goals and take an honest look at the time you invest in pursuing each of them. Decide what you are willing to give up to have what you really desire in life. Reconsider and renew your goals in the following areas:

Work Schedule

- Is your schedule ideal for you? Define your perfect work hours for each day.
- Guard the time you schedule for yourself (for exercise, lunch, professional development).

Client Load

- Do you have the number of clients

you need and want?

- Do you enjoy each of your clients?
- Do you need to attract more—or different—clients?

Diversity

- Reduce burnout and leverage your career by diversifying. Create at least three different profit streams. Consider speaking, writing, teaching (adult education, local college courses, workshops), leading adventure trips or retreats, developing educational materials (books, CDs, workbooks, videos) and wellness coaching.

Your Legacy

- Revisit the vision, purpose, and mission statement you set for your business. Are they still valid for you? Consider the legacy you want to leave to those you serve.
- Build your daily agenda around your dreams. For example, one of my dreams is to build a home in a beautiful, inspiring location, so I need to find a way not only to finance that home but also to create a business that can move with me. To fulfill that dream, I am actively working to add hours as a coach and professional speaker, while reducing the hours I spend doing face-to-face personal training.
- Keep a detailed weekly schedule. Planning produces self-confidence.

IMPROVE YOUR ATTRACTIVENESS

No, I'm not referring to plastic surgery here—but to the concept of intentionally attracting the things and people you want in your life. Brainstorm ways to improve

have some fun!

Free time isn't all about finding new ways to work! One of the most important uses of a reduced schedule is enjoyment. Try viewing your free time as a gift rather than just a reduction in income. One of the popular concepts in life coaching is to accept the present as perfect. When you have the "present-perfect" attitude, you choose to accept the realities in your life as perfect for you right now. Your responsibility is to deter-

mine how you can make all areas of your life perfect for you, instead of fretting over how you can acquire what someone else has. The present for you may mean fewer work hours. How can you make that situation a perfect one for you?

List 10–20 things you have always wanted to do. Are there trips you want to take, places you want to explore, activities you want to participate in, subjects you want to learn about or books you

want to read? View this time as an opportunity to enjoy yourself! Incorporate fun things into your schedule on a daily and weekly basis. Let guilt go and allow peace with the present to take its place. Take advantage of this time to restore yourself by adding pleasure and relaxation to your days. As you become accustomed to enjoying your free time, you will master the art of living life in the present.

yourself in the following areas:

- attire (work and "out-and-about" clothes)
- client materials
- promotional materials (including your website)
- attitude
- professional education and training

Either you are attracting what you want in life or you are not. If not, why not? And what are you going to do about it?

RELISH THE TIME

You will quickly discover that taking advantage of a reduced schedule can become a full-time job! Instead of wasting precious time fretting about your empty hours, fill them with productive activities

that will provide the organization, readiness, attractiveness and restoration you need to continue life's unpredictable journey. Treasure every moment you have as both an opportunity and a gift. In perfecting the present, you attract a promising future.

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