Making Time Management Work for You: Crash Course Business - Soft Skills #10

Crash Course: Business - Soft Skills
https://youtube.com/watch?v=2Si7ah_h32s
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You know that moment when you've gone too far down an Internet rabbit hole?

You're in the depths of Wikipedia, reading a ridiculously long article about deep sea fish. Those things are so weird.

Then you look at the clock and somehow it's three a.m. You've got a reading you didn't do, a test to finish cramming for, and class in the morning. Or even a job.

And you wish you had managed your time just a little bit better. Well, we've all been there. So today, we're going to give you strategies to **work more efficiently**, **delegate tasks**, and **manage your time better** so you're not late, very late, for your very important dates.

I'm Evelyn from the Internets, and this is Crash Course Business: Soft Skills. [intro]

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to time management. Remember: we're not going to ask you to change yourself to become a business robot. The first step to feeling in control of your time is thinking about your working style, your work, and even your personality.

Maybe you like detailed schedules or have a pretty structured job, like a secretary or government employee. Or maybe you think regimented schedules are suffocating and want the flexibility to work on your own timeline. I mean, that's why I quit my office job and became a freelancer.

So don't listen to those management gurus who say there's only one way to make a daily schedule. Managing your day down to the minute with a sticky note system and a productivity tracker is just as valid as prioritizing big projects and diving in. And you probably have a time of day that you work best, too.

Some people are morning larks who get up early for yoga and a protein smoothie, and then do their best work first thing. Some of us are night owls who would love to sit in our pajamas until 11am, eating cereal and watching Netflix, and do our best work later in the day. Even though us night owls may not appreciate chipper morning larks, and you morning larks may assume we're lazy, there's nothing wrong with either style.

Work with who you are and what you got! Do the super important stuff, like big presentation prep, when you're most productive. And do the low intensity stuff, like sending daily emails, when you're in slump time.

No matter when or how you work, there are ways to make the most out of your time and stay focused. For one, always avoid multitasking. It's a myth.

You're just switching inefficiently between a lot of things. You'll be distractible and probably end up making messes when things could have been simple. So to keep you from running around as mad as a hatter or anxiously dwelling on what you /might/ be forgetting to do, make a checklist.

Put the important stuff first, and complete things one at a time. Once you find your flow, do what you can to avoid interruptions. Even little ones snowball into big chunks of time, and it takes longer to refocus than you'd think.

Say you're hard at work and your roommate offers you something to eat. It might only take a minute to grab that snack, but our brains are weird and don't actually get back to that peak concentration level very easily. This chunk of additional time is called the disruption cost, and you may need something like 15 minutes to get back into the zone.

Now, you don't need to disconnect from people completely and hide in a cottage in the woods like the March Hare or Ron Swanson. It may take a bit of coordination with your coworkers, but if you can, go somewhere away from that open-office floor plan for an hour or two and unplug. I know it's hard to disconnect from electronics, because we give them so much attention every single day.

You've got texts, DMs, and Facebook messages coming in, plus reminders, and your work may want you online for emails or Slack. But you can limit those distractions by printing out your reports or taking handwritten notes, setting a certain amount of media minutes each day, leaving your phone in airplane mode for a bit, or using a screen blocker app. Now, sometimes work is pretty straightforward and specific to you, like writing a report.

But you won't always be able to work solo. No matter your job, you'll eventually be a team member or a leader. And if your to-do list has a bit of everything and you're spread too thin, prioritize your tasks, and then strategically delegate things that aren't your specialty.

Think about it this way. With a little delegation, the Queen of Hearts managed to get an entire garden repainted in, like, 20 minutes. Despite her faults, she was an efficient villain.

But… you probably shouldn't model your people skills after her. So don't delegate things that could seriously burden other people, put them in an ethical pickle, or encourage poor behavior. Remember setting SMART goals?

Handing work off with ambiguous instructions, like, "Do whatever it takes to meet our sales target!", could leave room for corners to be cut. And don't delegate something important just because you don't want to deal with it or, "it's not your job." Sometimes, yes, you could get a request that's out of line. But for the most part, if everyone said, "it's not my job," a lot of important stuff just wouldn't get done.

This avoidance is why HR departments end up handling most sexual harassment claims alone, even though messages of support from leaders and managers about what's not okay in the office go a long way. You should be thinking critically about why you're delegating tasks. So, if you're the best person for the job and you have time, give the work a shot.

But if you're bad at something or your teammate would be a better fit, maybe pass it along. For instance, the designer in your office could work on place settings for the next company fundraising lunch, while you work on the corporate guest list. You'll accomplish more together if everyone's playing to their strengths.

And if you can teach someone a skill, you'll demonstrate leadership, save yourself time later, and make your team stronger. But if delegation isn't cutting it and you still feel like you have too much on your plate, remember that you can say no to another project. Okay, you can sometimes say no.

There are times you've gotta do what you gotta do, especially if you're getting an order that's framed as a request or it's basically in your job description. If you're a card soldier, you can't say no to standing guard. But when you do have the option, remember: there's only so much time in a day, and you want to put your effort towards things that matter.

So an extra responsibility could give you a chance to show your

skills. But think about the time commitment, how important it is, how good of a job you think you could do, and if it helps meet any of your own goals. If you're not hyped about it, then offer a polite, "no thank you." Just don't take too long to decide, because whoever's asking probably has a deadline and needs to find someone else.

If you say no, do it respectfully and directly. Thank them for thinking of you, and maybe throw in another way you can help them out, or name-drop someone who can. To see how you can thoughtfully manage your responsibilities, let's go to the Thought Bubble.

Let's say you're in charge of planning a Fall Fair for your small town. It's a big event, so you've got a super long checklist of things to do. Luckily, you've got a talented team, so you can delegate some of those tasks.

You don't want to dump random things on people's plates, and you know that sometimes people have skills that may surprise you. So during the next team meeting, you ask everyone to tell you where they'd be the best fit. Together, you divvy up responsibilities.

You're in charge of vendors and sponsors. Your financially savvy friend is keeping track of the budget. And it turns out that one of your friends does graphic design on the side, so she's making the flyers and posters.

With more of the work spread across the team, you're still really busy, but you're definitely less stressed. So when another friend asks you to help plan the annual fundraising breakfast for the local police force, you want to say yes. The event is super important to her, and she makes a mean waffle.

You're happy she trusts your planning skills, but you're afraid that one more task will turn your perfectly planned calendar upside down. After you sleep on it, you tell her that you're flattered she asked, and you're passionate about the cause, but you don't have time to take on another event. Then, you suggest that she give your super meticulous sister a call, since she's an expert planner during a crisis.

Your sister's got the time and even convinces her boyfriend to help out! Now, you're not overcommitted and distracted by extra responsibilities, and your friend has the help she needs. Thanks, Thought Bubble!

It's easy to overestimate how much time something is going to take and accidentally take on too much. It happens whether you're working a 9-to-5 office job, freelance gigs, or some sort of combo. So if you're struggling to figure out what you really have time for or what projects you should say no to, try using a calendar.

After you've mapped out your current schedule, pencil in projects you want to take on and their deadlines. That way you can visualize how busy you actually are. Then, you can use your SMART goals to figure out your priorities, and cut what isn't important.

Don't put off projects you really care about until "the right time." Guess what? You're always busy. Now is the right time!

But also remember to pencil in time for you. The key to good quality work is feeling good. If you spread yourself too thin, you won't be doing anyone a favor.

I know I sound like your Internet Mom right now but… You need to get close to 8 hours of sleep. Just because you've heard that successful people get up at 4am doesn't mean you should. Really tired insomniacs who can't focus get up at 4am too.

So get the rest your body needs. And the last thing you probably want to do when you're overwhelmed is hit the gym, but exercise can help you destress and keep your brain working smoothly. If you sacrifice your sleep, healthy eating, social time, or anything else that's important to you... you'll feel worse, do worse work, and spend more time worrying... and probably crying.

Take care of yourself! Perfect is the enemy of good, and if you find yourself stressing, don't overthink it. It's probably great, and it's time to put down the pencil.

Aaand... with that, we've officially used up all our time on time. So don't forget: Figure out what works for you, because we're all different! But multitasking isn't real.

Delegate what you can, and do it thoughtfully. Prioritize your tasks by using a checklist and use a calendar to see what's important. It's better to do high quality work over high quantity, so it's okay to respectfully say no.

We know you're making important decisions on college, jobs, and just life in general. So next time, we'll be talking about how to avoid thought traps and make effective decisions. Crash Course Business is sponsored by Google and it's made with the help of all these nice people and Thought Cafe is our amazing animation team.

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