

Five Tips to Manage Overwhelm

Does it seem like you need to accomplish more in less time than ever before? Just about every small business owner I know is overwhelmed with everything they need to do. Many factors are contributing to this feeling: new technologies, increased government regulation, a need to market harder, and less access to capital are just a few examples.

Is there truly a way to find an extra hour each day? Yes, there is, and here are five tips you can put in place to reduce the feeling of overwhelm, free up time, and feel more in control of your business.

1. Get stuff done off prime time.

Most people drive to work between 7 and 9 and come home between 4 and 6. Save yourself 15-30 minutes per day or more by coming in before or after the rush.

Apply this same idea to your weekly errands or times when you need to stand in line. Go to a restaurant a little early (or late) to avoid the busiest times. Go to the grocery store during the week instead of on Saturday.

Doing this for 10-12 errands per week will save an hour a week or more. Combine that with the time you'll save in rush hour, and you could save as much as three hours a week using this idea. Even if you can apply this idea to only one or two days a week, you'll still be ahead of the game.

2. Delegate clerical or personal tasks.

Make a list of all the tasks you are doing that a minimum wage earner could do, and hire a college student for a few hours a week. You'll benefit from systematizing the tasks you delegate – they will get done more efficiently – and you will have freed up a few hours a week once your worker is trained.

3. Practice Power Hour.

Carve out one hour a day to complete the most profitable task for your business. This might be making sales calls, meeting with a power partner, or designing a new service or product to offer clients. It's best if it's the first hour in your day. In any case, the time should be sacred, with no checking email, no answering the phone, and no texting.

Your business will really accelerate when you make Power Hour a regular practice.

4. Check email and social media less often.

Turn off automatic send and receive in your Outlook or email application. Instead, close (yes, close!) your email application for most of the day. Check it only at 8am, noon, and 4pm (or choose times that work for you). When you can break the addictive cycle, you will have fewer interruptions, be able to focus, and do higher quality work.

Likewise, if you need to spend time on social media, set a timer before you start. When the bell rings, that's it! Get back to work.

5. Nail your time wasters.

The only real way to determine where your primary time drains are is to track your time, minute by minute for a couple of days. When you review the log, you'll be able to see what's going on and what you can do to prevent time from slipping through your fingers.

When you can use your time wisely, you'll not only get more done, you'll get the things done that matter to you.