

# TOP 100 TIPS TO FIND MORE TIME



## Time to Deliver



1. **Client satisfaction is your income.** The success of the business depends on the strength of your client relationships. As it is not possible to build excellent relationships with absolutely everybody, it helps to explicitly **prioritise relationships**, not tasks. We are always saying 'No' to somebody – implicitly or explicitly.
2. **Implement “focus time”** when fee-earners can get on with work without interruption; even from you!
3. **When estimating work, add a 20% contingency** which can either be used to deal with unexpected time required – or to delight the client by exceeding expectations.
4. **Carry a file of buffer tasks** that can be done in the car, while waiting for a client, in a restaurant while waiting for service, at the airport or when appointments get cancelled.
5. **Set the duration for every meeting, and aim to finish 10 minutes early.**
6. **Be on time for all appointments.** Allow for traffic jams etc. by leaving extra time; this can be used to get on with tasks from your buffer file.
7. **Drastically reduce meeting times.** It is possible to have a very effective meeting in 30 minutes. Most clients (unless they have travelled long distances) will be impressed with a professionally-run 30-60 minute meeting.
8. **Make more use of scheduled telephone meetings, rather than seeing prospective clients up-front.** Why travel to see a prospect that has made no commitment to use your services?
9. **If a client requires a query answered immediately, ask them why - respectfully and politely.** Perhaps their deadline is driven by misunderstanding; or perhaps you will come to a better understanding of their business pressures, that may in turn create new opportunities in that niche.
10. **Explain to new clients that you offer a high-quality service, rather than same-day turnaround.** Negotiate and agree appropriate service level standards up-front.
11. **Provide incentives to clients to provide you with good quality information earlier.**

As professionals, time is our key asset.

We want to be outstanding - not just in our mastery of time, but by providing excellent service to clients.

Mastery of time helps us build an outstanding reputation – which means that clients come to us, saving us further marketing time and resource.



davisbusinessconsultants.com  
Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this document can be reproduced without permission.



## Time to Deliver (contd.)

12. **Jargon is the enemy of communication.** Speak clearly and simply to clients in words they can understand. Do not talk down from a superior position of expertise. This alienates clients and prompts them to look elsewhere.
13. **Reserve the first hours of the day for delivery to clients.** As a professional, your reputation for delivery is your income.
14. **Set clear boundaries, and learn to say 'no' to people where appropriate.** Practice saying 'no' without giving reasons or justification. If you cannot say 'no', what is your 'yes' worth?
15. **If you have difficult telephone calls to make, do them as early as possible.** This reduces the 'dread' factor and makes the rest of the day more enjoyable.

“  
The time is always right  
to do what is right.”

- Martin Luther King Jr.



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)  
Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this  
document can be reproduced  
without permission.

## Time to Plan



16. **Spend the first 15 minutes of the day planning the day ahead.** Lock-in that day, deferring other matters arising to the following morning's planning. Do not accept interruptions to your schedule for today.
17. **Put new queries on the planning agenda for tomorrow.** This means that however tomorrow's plan may change, today's does not.
18. **Rise 30 minutes earlier in order to make time for planning and reflection.**
19. **When time taken to do a job exceeds the estimate, consider first amending the checklist for doing estimates** – rather than blaming either yourself or someone else. Improving the methodology of quotations is a permanent benefit to your business.
20. **Where possible, combine activities.** For instance, rehearsal of a speech can be done whilst enjoying a walk, and your mental 'to do' list for the day can be started in the shower. Look for activities which serve multiple purposes – could you spend time with your children and learn a sport at the same time?
21. **Grade "to do's" by A, B, C in order of priority, and do the A's first.** Work on an A even if you can only spend 5 minutes on it, rather than picking off the C's. Our working days are made up of a lot of 5-minute intervals.
22. **Break large projects into bite-size pieces.** Your estimate of how long it will take will be more accurate.
23. **Break down your monthly or annual target into a daily one.** Take 15 minutes at the end of each day to reconcile time spent with daily target. Some professionals fail to bill all the time they could because of the phone-calls etc. that are forgotten and not allocated to any job.
24. **Consider strategic alliances** that allow other professional's "warm market" access to yours and visa versa. Alliances are very time-efficient in bringing in new clients; but they usually take several months (even years) to mature. Client confidentiality and data protection law must of course be respected.

Protect these times in  
your diary now.

30 MINUTES PER DAY

1 HOUR PER WEEK

½ DAY PER MONTH

1 DAY PER QUARTER

2-3 DAYS PER YEAR



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)

Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this  
document can be reproduced  
without permission.

## Time to Plan (contd.)

25. **Ask clients for referrals while they are still clients** (not afterwards). Design a menu that informs them of the services you offer. Not only will this avoid extra “after-service” meetings, it may prompt extra business while the relationship is at its strongest.
26. **If finance is troubling you, consult a financial professional or coach** rather than trying to work out the options alone.
27. **Ensure you have adequate property, life, liability and disability insurance.**
28. **What keeps you awake at night?** Is your will up-to-date? List your worries and plan the time to deal with them. Who can help you? A problem shared is a problem halved, and tiredness is one of the worst time-thieves.
29. **Keep a ‘To Do’ list, and ensure it is of manageable and achievable size.** A ‘To Do’ list is not a wish list or a good-ideas list – keep these elsewhere.
30. **Don’t set yourself impossible targets.** If your ‘To Do’ list is too long, acknowledge that you can’t do them all and ask yourself “which will I have to drop?”

“

To achieve great things,  
two things are needed;  
a plan, and not  
quite enough time. ”

- Leonard Bernstein



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)  
Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this  
document can be reproduced  
without permission.

## Time to Manage



31. **Value your time.** At €1 per minute, a three-hour meeting of three solicitors costs e540. Justify as you would an external spend of €540.
32. **Refer-out difficult clients, and give awkward ones the choice of staying or leaving.** Don't run the risk of wasting time with a dissatisfied customer.
33. **Manage to a three-month rolling forecast.** This will give advance warning of workload or financial issues. With some businesses, individual fee-earners can usually advise monthly client forecast totals. Prepare and review monthly financial summary –v- budget (and sales forecasts) by the 10th of every month.
34. **Cashflow management should not be taking more than 15 minutes of your time per month.** If it is, review sales forecasting, billing and receivables procedures. Are the procedures automated and fully delegated?
35. **Allow staff that want to leave to do so promptly, and without regret.** If a support team is to be really supportive, all members must be fully committed. Those who are not will leave eventually, anyway.
36. **Build a culture of appreciation and reward to minimise the loss of valued staff** – hence the time used up replacing and re-training them.
37. **If some team members are dragging their feet, not following procedures, or de-motivating others; invoke disciplinary procedures promptly.** Your initial misgivings are probably correct; delay only allows negativity to spread.
38. **Clarify team structure, roles and responsibilities.** This avoids time wasted in confusion or politics, provides clear paths of action and lessens confusion.
39. **Providing incentives and rewards for exceeding measurable objectives** fosters a growth mentality among the team and allows them to share in your prosperity. This leaves you with less “motivation work” to do.
40. **Be sensitive to inter-office rivalries.** In particular avoid partiality to those team members whom you find it easiest to get on with. This causes resentment and loss of productivity.

The team is one vital asset  
that does not appear on  
the balance sheet.

Are they all singing from  
the same hymn sheet?



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)

Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this  
document can be reproduced  
without permission.

## Time to Manage (contd.)



41. **Employ your own quality team of fellow professionals** (accountant, lawyer, banker, coach, IT guru). Check out new initiatives with them in order to avoid wasting time going down blind alleys, and maintain a “helicopter-view” of your business.
42. **Identify very specific niche markets;** become a specialist in that market and raise your fees to reflect the extra value offered.
43. **Set your fee structure sensitively by niche market.** But once you have, do not negotiate. It diminishes your authority, and the time taken for negotiation is at your cost.
44. **Have a clear-cut competitive strategy,** e.g. niche differentiation; ideally one that avoids competing by price or rapid-turnaround. Both the latter are recipes for stress.

“

Time is free, but it's priceless. You can't own it, but you can use it.

You can't keep it, but you can spend it.

Once you've lost it you can never get

it back. ”

- Harvey Mackay



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)

Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this document can be reproduced without permission.



## Time to Organise

45. **Do not open new email until at least mid-morning** - until you have made progress on your planned workload. Plan some time every day to action emails and general correspondence.
46. **Ensure there is a single contact database that everyone can use.** Each person should only appear there once – no duplicates. Essential features include the ability to put each contact in multiple categories, a “notes” facility (which everyone should be encouraged to use to summarise conversations) and the ability to quickly generate emails to a distribution list from the categories.
47. **Have your receptionist or business manager capture all administration details** so that fee-earners’ time is not taken up with writing names, addresses, phone numbers etc.
48. **Upgrade systems no more than twice per year.** In between upgrades, implement a freeze policy to minimize IT-related disruptions.
49. **Keep data backed up off site.** When did you last test your contingency plan? Every business experiences a disk crash from time to time; are you prepared for your next one?
50. **Unsubscribe from email lists.** Become an expert unsubscriber and you will become an expert at clearing the clutter in your inbox.
51. **Try to handle all paperwork once only.**
52. **Familiarise yourself with shortcuts on your PC.** This will save you hours of ‘click time’.
53. **Use your wastepaper basket.** Does the piece of paper in your hand REALLY have value? Does it really need filing? Or should it be disposed of?
54. **Delegate tasks wherever possible, but be careful not to dump them.** A few minutes spent carefully checking that the task is clearly and fully understood is time well invested.
55. **Delegate all administrative functions** (not just the tasks) associated with collecting cash, book-keeping, taking messages, bank reconciliation, cash management, completion of compliance paperwork – in ways that mean you are not involved in these functions at all.

Being well organised is not  
a matter of luck.

Taking time to review our  
infrastructure is a matter  
of importance rather than  
urgency.

Perhaps this is why it  
keeps getting postponed.



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)

Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this  
document can be reproduced  
without permission.



## Time to Organise (contd.)



56. **Design systems for everything:** answering the phone, registering a new client, raising invoices. Make sure the system is followed every time. Plan the business as a set of systems that can function without you. This might at least result in you being able to take holidays without the business collapsing.
57. **Make filing so easy that you can do it yourself promptly.** This avoids a backlog of un-filed papers on secretarial desks – often the very papers you are most likely to need!
58. **Dedicate an hour every week to paying domestic bills, so that they don't accumulate.** If they have already accumulated, plan the time to clear them.

“

There is never enough time to do everything, but there is always enough time to do the most important thing. ”

- Brian Tracy



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)

Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this document can be reproduced without permission.

## Time to Grow



59. **Consider flexi-time arrangements for staff that have family responsibilities.** They will work at their best when not worrying about a family member.
60. **Welcome your clients warmly;** many of them may be suffering financial or legal distress that they may not divulge immediately. A welcome should be conveyed at all times: from the initial call to the business, by reserving them parking space, to their arrival and through to their departure. This will accelerate the process by which they come to trust you.
61. **Involve your clients in the process of making recommendations.** Explaining and exploring options and consequences will prove invaluable in your relationship and will save you time in the long run.
62. **Invest in consultation skills;** so that time is not wasted discussing unimportant issues. Involve your team members in communication skills training and coaching.
63. **Honour appointment times.** Try to avoid even a few minutes' delay.
64. **Confirm appointment date, time, duration and location by email immediately after the appointment is made.** This minimises forgotten appointments, turning up at the wrong office, etc.
65. **Make it easy for new clients to get their first appointment.** If necessary, reserve some space in your schedule for new clients.
66. **Give clients good reason to tell friends and colleagues about the high standard of your work.** Personal referral is worth hundreds of adverts or sales-calls. When most of your business comes by referral, you can spend less time networking or marketing.
67. **Provide useful materials, downloads, surveys, reference tables, etc.** that will attract potential new clients to identify themselves to you, rather than you having to spend time finding them.
68. **Keep in touch with old clients or potential clients via an enjoyable or useful newsletter.** Do not however turn the newsletter into a sales brochure, as readers will unsubscribe.
69. **Once you have identified your niche markets, network only in circles where you are either going to meet ideal clients, or others who regularly come in contact with them.** General business networking, while effective, is time consuming.

Great relationships build  
great business.

Great conversations build  
great relationships.

Great conversations  
require time.



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)

Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this  
document can be reproduced  
without permission.

## Time to Grow (contd.)



70. **Maintain strong and consistent relationships with at least 6 “centres of influence”** – people who appreciate your work and are in a position to send you lots of quality referrals. Show everyone your positive overview of how the business is progressing. Your enthusiastic attitude is worth hours of meetings and discussion.
71. **Remember to show appreciation to your suppliers**, and pay bills on or before the due time; so as to ensure swift and responsive service when you really need it.
72. **Consult with a supportive coach or mentor for help and guidance in maintaining an emotionally cost-free business.** In particular, seek support during times of major change; this will minimise the time lost through demotivation or procrastination.

“

The years teach much  
which the days  
never know. ”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)

Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this  
document can be reproduced  
without permission.

## Time to Play



73. **Take 20 minutes of physical exercise (swimming, cycling working-out, running etc.) immediately after work.** In a few weeks you will enjoy it, and it serves as a 'switchoff' from the working day and generates more energy.
74. **Consider ending any relationship which is consistently keeping you awake, dragging you down or draining you.** Seek professional help and advice earlier rather than later. Whatever you do, deal with it.
75. **Always speak the truth as you see it.** It never pays to lie or exaggerate.
76. **Block out holidays and planning time in your diary for the following year.** We will only plan if we have planned the time to plan.
77. **Ensure your car is in reliable condition,** that it does not need repair, cleaning or mechanical work.
78. **Unless repairing appliances is a fun hobby for you, do not waste weekends fixing things.** Either replace appliances that do not work, or employ somebody to get them repaired.
79. **Unless you love gardening, consider employing a gardener.**
80. **Rise at the same time every day – even during weekends.** Eventually you will not need a wake-up call; and the extra time you have at weekends can be used for relaxation and play.
81. **Eliminate from your circle of friends people who criticise, judge or try to change you.** Trying to please others is a huge waste of time.
82. **Avoid excessive indulgence in food or drink;** this leaves you lethargic and hung-over, with less energy.
83. **Spend some time every year writing / reviewing a mission-statement or life purpose.** You will have more fun, make better decisions, and make much better use of time when you are clear about your personal and professional direction. When you love what you do, you will never have to work again.

You are more than  
your business.

You are more than  
your career.

Money is a replaceable  
asset.

Your life is not.

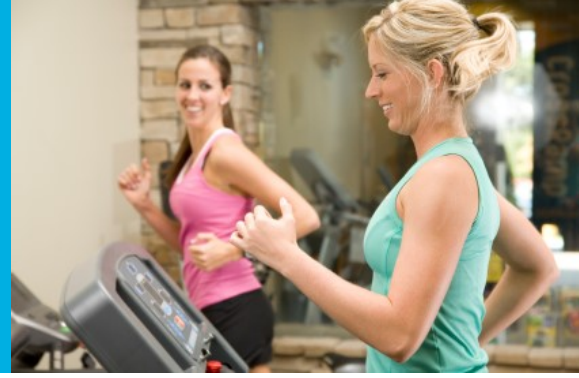
Take time for the  
things you enjoy.



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)

Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this  
document can be reproduced  
without permission.

## Time to Play (contd.)



84. **Avoid idly surfing the internet.** If you HAVE to use it, consider keeping a list of sites you want to visit, wait until you have at least three, and then limit your time online. Many clients have saved an hour per day on this alone – that’s five hours per week, over 200 working hours per year – which is more than many professionals’ annual holidays!
85. **Become familiar with teleforums and online communities,** which allow you to keep in touch with many people simultaneously, and enables you to make new friends.
86. **Get a swim-buddy or workout-partner** so that your commitment to them will over-ride the temptation to stay on in bed or in the office.

“

There is only one you for  
all time. Fearlessly  
be yourself. ”

- Anthony Rapp



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)

Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
All rights reserved. No part of this  
document can be reproduced  
without permission.

## Time to Rest



87. **Avoid invalidating a day off by opening a briefcase, switching on a computer, visiting the office or reading your diary.** The objective of a day off is to get totally away from the business.
88. **Employ a cleaner so that your home is clean and tidy.** Do not waste time off by doing chores. Similarly, can you delegate laundry, ironing and shopping?
89. **When you want to switch-off, put the phone on an answering machine that you cannot hear.**
90. **Go to bed earlier (or later) so that the timing of your sleep is ideal for you.** Rather than compromise with other family members, ask for their support if necessary.
91. **Prioritise the elimination of all debt, except that secured on property.** Cut expenses if necessary to ensure that you live within your income. Financial worry is a frequent cause of sleepless nights.
92. **Have regular checkups with your doctor, optician, audiologist and dentist.**
93. **Review the newspapers and magazines that you read.** Are these really inspiring or relaxing, or are you bingeing on a diet of depressing material?
94. **Avoid watching television, unless you have a specific programme you want to watch.** Random TV is 'chewing gum for the eyes', and contributes little to quality of life.
95. **Clear the clutter from your life.** Whether it's old files or old clothes, it takes up space both in our heads and our lives. If you are in any doubt about this, just choose one room, clear it, and watch what happens!
96. **It may be difficult to adjust to a vacation if they are too infrequent.** Plan at least 4 weeks of holiday every year, and put the dates in your diary.
97. **Make amends to anyone you have hurt, damaged or offended.** This will allow you to reclaim the hours wasted on feeling guilty.
98. **Spend at least 20 minutes every day in deep relaxation, meditation, or other peaceful or spiritual activities.** These give perspective, and make all other activities more enjoyable.
99. **Before settling down to relax or play, remove all traces of work from your lounge, bedroom, or other immediate environment.**
100. **Invest in labour-saving devices for your home and (if possible) employ someone to use them!**

There are better ways to change our habits than by solitary implementation.

If you are ready to go further, see the following pages for details.



davisbusinessconsultants.com  
 Copyright © Davis Business Consultants.  
 All rights reserved. No part of this document can be reproduced without permission.



[davisbusinessconsultants.com](http://davisbusinessconsultants.com)

Copyright © Davis Business Consultants. All rights reserved.  
No part of this document can be reproduced without permission.