

## HOW TO

BY DOUG PACKARD

### Maximize your return on time

Imagine spending all of your time exactly the way you want to. Many business leaders think it's impossible until they retire. As calendars and check lists drive their schedules, they fail to spend time doing what they value most.

To overcome this paradigm, focus on the important roles you play in your business and personal life — your “To be” list — and then plan your “To do” list accordingly. Doing so allows you to transform your time management strategy. Rather than a tactical tyranny-of-the-urgent approach, you can drive yourself based on an intentionally strategic approach. I often recommend the following process when working with leaders to help them start the transformation:

- 1. Track your business and personal time for a week or a month depending on the rhythm of your life.**
- 2. Name the roles you are playing and what percentage of time you spend in each.**
- 3. Determine which roles you spend too much time in and the roles in which you spend too little time.**
- 4. Determine your ideal percentage of time for each role — for now as well as the future.**
- 5. As you identify roles in which to reduce your time, consider the options for making adjustments:**
  - End a role completely that has run its useful course.
  - Reduce your time in a role with a specific maximum time amount.
  - Outsource a role to another organization.

- Delegate within your own organization.
- Improve and/or automate processes, thus reducing the time required for a role.

#### Case studies

As an example of the results a leader can expect from the above process, a local CEO client was reorganizing his company and board of directors due to acquiring another company. Spending so much time on strategic changes, he found himself feeling out-of-touch with his frontline staff. After examining his roles, the CEO proactively scheduled a half day per month in each of his four major departments. That allowed the CEO to experience the rhythm of each department yet not over-invest in reconnecting with the front line.

Another Maine business leader was growing her company rapidly, but she had no systematic method of gaining strategic input from her customers. After analyzing her roles, she decided to meet with a different significant customer each month for a strategic discussion. This gave the CEO the input she needed and the right balance of customer time in relation to her other strategic roles.

Time analysis can also identify personal roles that need more attention. A company president realized at an annual goal-setting session I facilitate that he wanted to spend more time with his brothers. They had not seen each other in almost three years following the passing of their parents. After sharing the goal with his peer group to gather some ideas, the company president established a quarterly event calendar with his brothers. Twenty minutes into their first get-together, the brothers wondered why it took so long for them to reconnect and expressed how grateful they were to have avoided a potential major regret.

#### Be intentional rather than reactive

The more you invest your time based on your important roles and relationships, the more you will realize the benefits of a strategic, intentional, to-be approach. The analysis process should be an on-going endeavor as you periodically pause to assess where you spent your time and then plan forward to invest your time wisely.

By being intentional rather than reactive with time management, you will maximize your return on investment and your return on time. The time you invest intentionally will pay back the most important dividends — few regrets and maximum satisfaction.



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