



Changing Habits to Master Your Time ***Change bad work-related habits in 21 days*** ***(or less)***

"Busy" is the enemy of a controlled life. The key to being more productive on the job is to master time, not increased activity. Your greatest enemy in mastering your time is the desire to be busy. The old saying "work smarter, not harder" rings true. External forces constantly encroach on our lives to distract us from achieving our objectives. We feel we must stay active to produce results and impress the boss. Your job, though, is to be more motivated by your internal forces than the external ones. The more you believe you CAN control, the more you will TRY to control, and the more you WILL control. It is entirely up to you. You CAN master your time and take control of your life. After all, you can't change your past, but you can always change your future. Your time is your life. And as you master your time, you create a better life for yourself.

There is another saying that makes an important point: "The more you do of what you're doing, the more you will get of what you've got." In order to change old work habits, you have to WANT to change. Desire is the key to success or failure in changing any behavior. Old work habits are hard to break but many time-management experts tell us that in three to twenty-one days you can change your work-related habits. If you consistently practice the new time-management behavior for three weeks, it will become the predominant response behavior. At that point you will have replaced the old habit with the new one. But where do you start to replace self-defeating habits with self-reinforcing ones?

- 1.** To begin taking back control of your life, you must identify the habit you want to change. The more you know about what you do, when you do it and why, the easier it will be to identify habits that are hurtful or detrimental to your work life. This means you need to analyze most of your work-related behaviors and the situations where they occur. Then identify the precise behaviors you wish to change. You also need to examine your assumptions to see if any of them are holding you back from achieving the change you desire. Are you consistently late for work or meeting deadlines? Examine the behaviors that lead to your not being on time. Maybe you like to stay up late and don't get up in time to get ready. Perhaps you allow outside (external) forces to control your time, causing you to

not meet deadlines. Often our habits have been with us for many years. It might even take a review of your earlier years...what were your study habits like in school? Did you have difficulty turning in assignments or starting them on time?

2. Carefully define the new habit you wish to develop. You might admire someone else who has mastered this habit and want to counsel with them about how they developed this behavior. They might possess a habit you have been wanting to adopt for some time, but you have been putting the change off. Now is the time to act! Procrastination will be your worst enemy at this stage of the process. Begin by recording what you want to change on paper. This is the first step in "journaling" your changes. A word on Journaling: Journaling is a great way to keep track of not only your time, but your progress as well. The best time masters chronicle their schedules, plans and goals to check on their own progress to see where they have come from, and where they are going. Learn to keep track of your time in a Day-Timer, Outlook or ACT Calendar, Personal Data Assistant (PDA) or similar method for recording your steps. You will improve your time-management habits only if you are honest with yourself and develop a realistic, doable action plan.

3. Begin the new behavior as purposefully as possible. Every journey starts with the first step. Make yours a step in the right direction. Once you have identified the new habit you want to develop, it is a good idea to tell people about it. This way you won't be tempted to fall back into your old behavior. You should establish new routines associated with your new habit. Put up signs on your workstation, in your car, or bathroom mirror (at home) to remind you of your new behavior. It is important that you do everything possible to alter your environment to give the new habit a fertile place to take root and grow. Listen to motivational tapes that both encourage and inspire you to change and stay with it. Associate songs or poems with the new habit that you can repeat to yourself or remember in your head as you stay with the new behavior. Also, it is very important to set a date that you are aiming for you to have the new habit established as your regular behavior. Since this is about managing your time better, establish a deadline. Remember: people who don't set goals rarely ever attain them.

4. Never deviate from the behavior until the new habit is firmly established. Keep the pressure on! My friend Joe Bonura tells about a young man who was working on a marketing campaign. He had some successes and failures. The successes did more harm, though than the failures. Once he succeeded, he decided he didn't have to work as hard the next day. Sure enough, each day thereafter, he worked less and less on his plan. After just one week, he had lost his rhythm and motivation for his marketing campaign. Eliminate the phrase, "Just this once won't matter" from your vocabulary. It will matter. In my Keynote on the Seven Dwarfs of Change I talk about Sneezzy. Remember Sneezzy? He would sneeze constantly, but when a finger would be put under his nose the convulsions would cease. The minute, though the finger was removed...BOOM! He'd sneeze stronger than before. Don't let take the pressure off, or you'll explode back onto

your old habits worse than ever.

5. Ask other people to help you change. Find someone to hold you accountable. Rarely do we make significant changes in our behavior without the support of others. Family, friends and co-workers are usually great sources of support because they typically have a vested interest in your welfare. Think carefully about who might be able to help you. Ask yourself who has supported you in the past and who truly believes in you. Go to the person (or people) that think you can do it. Seek out those who you have trust in and whose advice you value. Choose members of your support team wisely. How could they help you best? What responsibilities will you put on them to help you out? If you build a strong support team around you, new habits are much easier to master.

6. Reward yourself for attaining your goal of adopting a new habit. What gets rewarded gets done. It's that simple. Find some luxury or special treat that you value highly to reward yourself with when you know you have completed your change of habit. It might be a meal out at your favorite restaurant, a movie you treat yourself to, or a trip to a place that is enticing enough to help you stay with your plan to change that old habit. Make a reservation in advance (good Time Masters schedule everything) if that helps you stay focused, but DON'T treat yourself until you have made the new habit your standard behavior. Celebrate with your support team. Bring those along who helped you get there. It will make the party that much richer and more memorable for you.

Now that you've changed one time-management behavior, you can see how easy it is to change others. You now have a road map, a process in place that, hopefully you wrote down in your journal by which you can work on other old habits and forms of detrimental behavior. Best of all, you can now encourage others (just as others helped you) in their efforts to change their behavior for the better. Take what they did for you and pass it forward. "And," as the song says, "the world will be a better place..."

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Jim Mathis, CSP is an international Certified Speaking Professional, executive coach and trainer. To subscribe to his free personal and professional development newsletter, please send an email to: subscribe@jimmathis.com with the word SUBSCRIBE in the subject. An electronic copy will be sent out to you every month. For more information on how Jim and his programs can benefit your organization or group, please call 888-688-0220, or visit his web site: www.jimmathis.com.