

## Making The Time To Make More Money

One of my clients said something pretty interesting the other day. “95% of all quick printers want to make more money, and probably 50% of all quick printers really *need* to make more money. I guess I shouldn’t be surprised that I’m a member of both groups.”

“It’s just so damned hard,” he continued, “to find the time. I spend most of mine putting out fires. Most days I go home exhausted and I can’t point to anything I’ve really done to improve my business.”

If that sounds familiar, you might benefit from the first piece of advice I gave this client. “You need to take that word ‘find’ and kick it out of your vocabulary,” I said, “and replace it with the word ‘make.’ If you really want—or need!—to make more money, you simply have to make the time to make it happen.”

### Selling Time

For this particular client, some of the “need” is to increase sales volume. He’s had some experience in sales, and he tells me that he’s pretty good once he gets himself in front of a prospect or customer. The problem, of course, has been “finding” the time to do the prospecting and follow up that will put him in front of those people.

The solution is a combination of time management and a systematic approach to the early stages of the selling process. I prescribed a slight variation on the program I wrote about a few months ago (The 7-Hour Selling Plan, *QP*, August 2005), and if he’ll follow the program, I’m pretty sure he’ll be happy with the results. As I told him, selling doesn’t have to be a full-time activity, but it has to be a consistent activity.

If you don’t think you can manage a 7-hour selling plan, how about a 5-hour plan? I have no problem at all with you starting small. The first major accomplishment for many of the quick printers I’ve worked with is the realization that “I can do this!”—and that’s not just limited to learning that they can actually convince people to buy from them. It also includes the realization that they can make time for enough selling activity to make a real difference in their business.

### Management Time

Do you spend most of your time “putting out fires?” If so, have you noticed that many of those fires are variations on the same theme? If you have recurring problems, you can probably reclaim a lot of time by finding “once-and-for-all” solutions to those problems.

Here’s my recommendation. Schedule an hour every day to look back at yesterday. The best time for that, assuming that your employees arrive at 8:30 AM and you use the first half-hour of the day to schedule production and other activities, would probably be the 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM block. Start out the hour with a short conversation with each employee. “What problems did you have yesterday?” Then take the list of problems back to your office and close the door. First, separate the minor problems from the major ones, and then look for relationships between the problems. It may turn out that minor problems in one area create major problems in another. It may also turn out that the problem was solved effectively by you and/or your employees. If not, take advantage of “20-20 hindsight” to think about what you or your employees could have done/should have done to resolve—or avoid!—the problem.

The result of this exercise can be new policy or procedures. “This is what we’ll do in the future if something like this happens, or to keep something like this from happening.” The best time to explain these new policies/procedures to your staff might be on Monday morning. You could schedule a staff meeting from 8:30 to 9:00 every Monday, and then roll into the Monday production meeting immediately afterward.

It’s been said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The idea here is simply to make the time to understand and solve your problems. You may need to bring in other resources, and that may require even more time and some expense, but your *opportunity* is to act in the short term to save time and money in the longer-term. I don’t expect you to need an hour every day to look back at yesterday’s problems, by the way, especially after this process solves some of your current repetitive problems. Keep scheduling the time, though, and if you don’t need it all, you can move on to whatever’s next a little earlier than planned.

### Living Time

The stress level among quick printers is way too high. (I can imagine some of you thinking “Tell me about it!”) Part of that is related to the need to increase sales, so part of the solution is to make the time to sell. Another part is caused by your repetitive problems, so another part of the solution is to make the time to understand and solve those problems. A third part of the problem for many quick printers is simple burnout, both physical and mental.

The solution to physical burnout is to get some rest and then get some exercise. Many who know me know that I’m an aging jock (*aged* as my wife says), so exercise has been a way of life for me. I’m convinced, though, that the

exercise is what gives me the strength to work long, hard and productive days. It also gives me relief from the mental stresses of my job. You may prefer reading or fishing or spending time with friends and family for that purpose, the point is that you have to do whatever it takes to keep yourself mentally sharp! I recently suggested to another one of my clients that she spend either 30 minutes walking or 30 minutes reading for pleasure between 12:00 noon and 1:00 PM every day. She reports that she look forward to that break, and that she feels a lot stronger at the end of the business day. Her productivity is up and her stress level is down—not a bad combination!

### **Scheduling And Commitment**

“OK,” that first client said, “it’s easy to write the schedule. But it’s hard to actually follow it. Another fire comes up and my best laid plans go right out the window.”

Here’s my solution to that problem. Set the fire aside, not the activity you had scheduled.

It’s hard for me to accept that every “fire” needs your immediate attention. Sure, there are circumstances that do, but let’s not elevate every problem to a life-or-death situation. Remember, your desire—or need—to make more money is directly related to the time it takes to make it happen.

It all comes down to this, I think. You have a finite amount of time every week. The amount of money you’ll make from that time depends on how wisely you use it.