Just Sold!

The Real Estate Professional's Guide to Selling More in Less Time

BRADLEY K. WARREN

Real Estate Business Coach and Seminar Leader

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Address all inquires to:
Bradley K. Warren and Associates, Inc.
5320 Proctor Lane
Castro Valley, CA 94546-1550
510-537-0107
brad@bradwarren.com

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For additional copies, email:
brad@bradwarren.com

Everyone on Planet Earth has the same number of minutes every day: 60 in an hour, 1,440 in a day, 10,080 in a week. But what varies is our experience of those minutes. I think it can best be summed up in the words of Albert Einstein:

"One's experience of time varies according to the circumstances. A young man with a pretty girl sitting in his lap experiences a minute much differently than if he was sitting on a hot stove."

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Chapter 1:

Why such a fuss about time?

Time. Our most precious commodity, in my opinion (and by the way, this entire book is my opinion, so hopefully that's the last time you'll see me write that expression in this book!). Once it's gone, it's gone and it can't be replaced. And in fact, we can't really say it's gone. Where'd it go? In fact, the whole notion of time is one that we humans made up. The concept of a second, a minute, an hour, and so on, are just ideas that we made up. All that you can really say about time is...well, that it's time! It just is. Period, end of story. Yes, I've heard it said that God invented time so things wouldn't all happen at once. But when you think about it, look at all the ways we talk about time. We spend time, we invest time, we use time, we lose time, we waste time, and so on. In reality, all we can really say is that time goes by and we do things in time. We do certain things, we utilize time to accomplish certain activities, we exist in time, and that's it. I'll cover this more in Chapter 3, but in fact, "There ain't no such thing as time management!" We can't "manage" time. All we can do is make promises and commitments to our self and others to do something or accomplish some task within a time frame.

Now lots of other people have written some great books about time management (see the bibliography at the back). And they've even broken new ground by talking about priority management or energy management instead of time management. What's different about this book are two things: 1) it's very practical and down-to-earth. There's no theory, just practical, useable tips and techniques that are immediately implementable. No further thought is needed, no further study, no practice, just implementation (which, by the way, is always the hardest part of any new learning). I'm reminded about something I heard Doug Nelson say when I took Harv Eker's Ultimate Leadership Camp training. He said the secret to success was the following: Step 1 - learn something new. Step 2 - implement it. Step 3 - repeat Steps 1 and 2! All you have to do with the material in this book is take the parts that you find useful, that apply to you right now, and put them into practice. I'll be telling you very clearly and succinctly how to do that. And 2) it's focused on Real Estate Professionals (brokers, real estate agents, mortgage consultants, escrow officers, etc.). Again, in Chapter 3 I go into more detail about why I think Real Estate Professionals need time and activity management more than others, but having spent over 5 years working as a business coach for one of the largest real estate companies in North America, I can tell you that Realtors are the most time challenged individuals I've ever worked with in my over 33 years of being successfully self-employed as a speaker, coach, consultant, and seminar leader.

There are basically three ways you can read this book. Start at the beginning and read it all the way through, implementing a piece here and a piece there. Or go right to the chapter that interests you the most, the one that you find is calling out your name

saying "Start with me!" and do it that way. Or start by reading Chapter 5 on goals and goal setting, and then Chapter 10 on how to plan a week at a time. In all my years of coaching, what stands out as the two most critical skills that my clients say they lack is the ability to set clear, attainable, realistic goals, followed by their inability to effectively plan their work week. I have found that when I am first introduced to a potential new client, before I'll even consider working with them, they must write out their yearly, quarterly, and monthly goals before I'll even think about taking them on. And after we've spent the first couple of calls going through their lists and applying all the criteria mentioned in Chapter 5, we spend the next one or two calls making sure they know how to plan a week at a time. Once they know where they want to go by having what are referred to as SMART goals, then it becomes a matter of making sure they're planning and scheduling their activities in such a way as to make sure they will accomplish those goals. Nothing is more frustrating than knowing exactly where you want to go but not being able to get there because of poor choices regarding how you utilize your time.

I'm going to make a bold claim right now, and please let me know if you were (or weren't) able to achieve what I'm about to say: that if you implement even just a few of the tips and techniques I've mentioned in this book, you will find that your productivity goes way up and your stress goes way down. I'll even go so far as to say that you should be able to get an extra hour out of each day that you work, meaning that you'll either get 9 hours of work done in 8 hours or you can go home an hour early and have accomplished what you would have had you stayed through your normal work day. And that's the minimum that I would expect. For some of you, you'll see as much as a 20-25% increase in what you can get done in a day. And if you're like the Realtors I know, this could mean an extra hour at home with your family, out on the golf course, or, if you so choose, selling an extra house or two each month! Your choice.

So, in the interest of "saving" you some time right now, let me bring this chapter to a close so you can get right into the heart of the book. Good luck!

Chapter 2:

How the real estate industry got us into this mess we're in, and how the real estate industry,especially real estate professionals, is going to get us out.

At the risk of oversimplifying the recent economic meltdown, I think everyone will agree that the bottom line is this: way too many people who shouldn't have been allowed to get a mortgage got one. Period, end of story. Then their rates began to adjust way upward, they weren't able to meet their monthly payment, and they lost their home. This continued to happen over and over again, exacerbating the problem. Then add to that the political turmoil in lots of countries around the world, the specter of entire countries defaulting on their loans, massive layoffs which caused more people to miss their mortgage payments, and so on and so on and so on, and bingo! You have a depression/recession/economic meltdown.

Now I'm not usually one to point fingers, but I can't help myself. Many (but certainly not all) of those Realtors, mortgage consultants, title and escrow people, bankers, and so on knew in their heart of hearts that they shouldn't be allowing their clients to take out those loans and buy those big, expensive homes. They knew about the housing bubble, it had been talked about and pointed to on numerous occasions by many different people, but for whatever reasons (hey, they had mouths to feed and families to take care of and their own mortgage payments, too) these Real Estate Professionals allowed, and even encouraged, their clients to move ahead with the purchase. But what's done is done, I say, and it's time to move forward.

So if you agree with my analysis so far, that it was the real estate industry and Real Estate Professionals who got us INTO this mess in the first place, then guess what? They're the ones who will get us OUT of this mess! Think about it for a moment. The real estate industry drives a huge percentage of our economy (I don't know the exact amount, and I don't think anybody can accurately estimate it, but think of all the industries that are tied to the buying and selling of a single house: banks, mortgage companies, title and escrow, Realtors, gardeners, landscapers, painters, roofers, interior designers and decorators, carpet and flooring people, pool companies, garage door openers, electricians, plumbers, fence companies, sewer companies, inspectors of all kinds, and the list goes on and on). That's a tremendous amount of capital flowing around and people employed, all connected to the buying and selling of real estate. So if all that's true (and I say it is), then doesn't it stand to reason that if the real estate industry gets back on it's feet and more houses are being bought and sold, that eventually we will get ourselves out of this economic mess? Again, I realize that I'm making this way too simple, but sometimes the simpler the better.

So by now, maybe the little voice inside your head is saying "OK, Brad, I'm with you

so far, but what does all this have to do with time and activity management, which is what your book is all about, right?" Well, it has **everything** to do with time and activity management, especially for Real Estate Professionals. If my reasoning is sound, then if Real Estate Professionals became masters of their time, if they learned how to better schedule their activities and how to utilize their time more wisely and effectively, and got better at prioritizing and avoiding interruptions, and learned how to set clear goals and accomplish them, etc., wouldn't they become better at sales, and at selling their services, and getting more leads into their pipeline, and eventually selling more houses? If someone is a master at utilizing the hours of their day versus someone who is not, doesn't it logically follow that the master will get more done and will be more effective and productive, especially if they're not only doing things right but also doing the right things? (See Chapter 9 on Prioritizing for more on this distinction). I should think so.

So again, in the interests of time, I'm going to leave it at that. I believe that the real estate industry in general and Real Estate Professionals in particular are going to be the drivers that will pull this country out of it's current tailspin and get us back on track. And even if that's not true, or even if you don't believe it, I still say that becoming a master of time and activity management is one of the most important, if not the most important, skill that anyone can learn and master. So whether you're in real estate or not, please read on. The tips and techniques you're about to learn are not rocket science, but rather simple yet highly effective tools that can be readily used and implemented by almost everyone. There's only one way to find out, and that's to keep reading.

P.S. If you're interested in a very short yet fascinating critique of what caused the economic meltdown we've recently been through (and many would say are still going through) go to www.crisisofcredit.com and watch this 11 minute video created by Jonathan Jarvis.

Chapter 3:

Time and activity management

In my opinion, the ability of Real Estate Professionals to manage their time and their activities more effectively is the number one skill they need to master in order to sell more real estate and make more money. It is a skill that I say is severely lacking among Real Estate Professionals. If they were able to improve just that one particular skill, they could sell at a higher rate, make more money, and reduce their stress.

The main question I am going to be addressing in this chapter is why then is it so difficult for Real Estate Professionals to manage their time, or as I prefer to say, manage their activities, on a day to day basis?

First, let's address this whole issue of the phrase "Time Management." You cannot manage time. There is no possible way to do that. In fact, I even go so far as to say you can't invest time, you can't spend time, you can't waste time, you can't use time, and you can't save time. We have all these expressions about time, but in my opinion, they are inaccurate and misleading. Time just is.

When people talk about Time Management, I believe they are really talking about Activity Management. I have also heard others call it Priority Management. You can manage your activities and you can manage your priorities, so we're in agreement there, but my preference is to call it Activity Management. Because once you've managed your priorities, you still have to manage your day-to-day, nitty-gritty tasks and activities. So throughout the rest of the book, any time you see the words "Time Management" just think "Activity Management" instead. And my definition of Activity Management is: **what you manage are promises and commitments that you make to yourself and others to do something in a timeframe.** So these are things that you promise yourself that you will do, or commitments that you make to others to do something, to take some specific action, to produce some specific result in an agreed upon timeframe – that's what can be managed.

For instance, if I said to you "I want you to have that CMA (Comparative Market Analysis) on 123 Elm St. completed and on my desk by Monday at 5:00" and you said, "Okay, Brad, I agree to do that", I am now going to manage your promise, your commitment, to have an actual thing done by Monday at 5pm. That I can manage. For instance, I might say "Thank you, that's great, it's Thursday right now, so can I check in with you tomorrow via email and just see how far along you've come?" You agree, saying you can use the support, and then thank me. I would then check in with you on Friday, looking at your first steps to see how you're doing. You might respond by telling me you've pulled up 123 Elm St. and looked within a one-mile radius at what actually closed in the last ninety days of comparable size and square footage, etc. Now, I am managing

your promise and your activities, although I certainly am not managing your time. That is what I mean when I say activity management, because there is no such thing as time management.

It is very important to remember that if you don't manage your activities, they will manage you! And what I mean by that is this: our world has become increasingly complex with all of the computers, smart phones, electronic gadgets, etc. that are currently available. I believe people are actually addicted to their phones. In many cases, you watch people and they can't stop using their electronic devices. They can't put down their phones. I'm sure all of us have been with someone, engaged in a conversation, when their phone rings and they answer it right in the middle of talking to you! How rude! They've basically just said, "Hold on a second, you're not as important as this person that's calling, don't go away, I'll be right back with you."

When your phone signals that you've got messages and your computer blares to you that "You've got mail!" and you are interrupted by countless distractions every day from TV, radio, billboards, and other human beings, it's no wonder that many Real Estate Professionals wind up being a slave to whatever shows up in front of them.

If you're not good at managing your activities, or at following what's to come in the subsequent chapters in this book, if you, as a Real Estate Professional, are not good at keeping tabs on all of your promises, the ones you've made to yourself and others and the ones that others have made to you, then basically you are going to be run by your phone or your computer or your email inbox or other people. You will be reactive rather than proactive.

In the course of my coaching, I will sometimes get a real estate agent client who tells me that first thing in the morning they will boot up their computer and it screams at them "You've got mail!" So they sit down, start dealing with the emails, and they were finally able to come up for air two hours later! They didn't realize that they had come into their office at 9:00am and it is now 11:00am and they were just getting through the emails, responding to everyone. That is what I mean about your activities managing you, instead of you managing them. It's reactionary instead of being proactive. You are now more reactive where you are just doing whatever comes up in front of your face rather than saying that today you will accomplish these three major tasks. "I am going to get them done in this order, it is going to take me about this much time, I am going to manage myself throughout the day and use all these tips and techniques that Brad is going to give me throughout this book. I am going to manage my activities – I will not let them manage me." That is the stand you have to take in order to manage your activities rather than letting them manage you.

I believe there is a difference between Real Estate Professionals and everyone else when it comes to managing activities. One thing I have noticed about real estate and construction is that these two industries are very much driven by the client. Real Estate agents have things that they need to get done just like everyone else, but in observing and coaching them over the years I've noticed that they are very much driven by other

people's schedules. For instance, some Real Estate Agents will drop whatever it is that they're doing, no matter how important they claim it is, in order to rush out with their buyer client to view the "perfect house" right now because the client insists that it won't still be on the market in another 2 hours. And by the way, that house may or may not have been the ideal home anyway, but the agent confused urgent with important, and let their client's urgency rule the day. By the way, I am not saying not to take care of your clients, but there are appropriate ways to do that.

I have also found that Real Estate Professionals in particular, and the construction industry as well, are many times driven by forces outside of their control. For instance, the construction foreman orders a load of concrete to show up at the construction site. He hires ten guys to be there; they show up at 9:00am, and then the foreman receives a call. The concrete truck driver has a flat tire and is stuck on the freeway. Now, he has ten guys sitting around and he has to pay them while they wait for the truck to show up. It's very similar in the real estate profession. These two industries, real estate and construction, seem to be super-driven by outside forces (particularly their clients) more so than anyone else. That to me seems to be the big difference between these fields and other professions.

I do believe that most Real Estate Professionals are managed by their activities, not the other way around, as it should be. They are driven, as I mentioned, by the demands of others; clients calling, their cell phones ringing, even other agents making demands upon their time, and even though some of them do have what I call a Time Management or Activity Management System, they still need help handling these changes and demands.

Even if they have a system that they are using, many of them do not use it well, they do not use it optimally, nor do they have that system in front of them when they are using it. Some Real Estate Professionals use Top Producer, a software program used in the industry. Some may actually plan out their whole week in Top Producer and they write their itinerary down and think okay, this is how I am going to manage all my activities; I am going to do all of this. Then they get to the office on Monday and the phone rings. They don't even bother to open up Top Producer to see that on Monday at 9:00am they had a staff meeting and needed to be there since they were the presenter! Now they are on the phone and because they didn't open up their computer program, they did not get to the meeting, and they are now on the phone for fifteen or twenty minutes. Meanwhile, eight people are sitting around in the conference room wondering where Sally is; she was supposed to be here at 9:00am to do a presentation. Finally, one of them goes down, knocks on her door, and she looks up like a deer caught in the headlights and eventually stammers out an apology. Activities are not managed well when you don't even check your system to see what you've planned to do that day.

To help make my point, I've come up with the following analogy called The Driver of the Bus vs. The Passenger on the Bus. In my coaching, I try to teach my clients to become the driver, and in the next chapter I will speak about purpose and direction and

having aims and goals. When you are very clear about your purpose and you have a clear direction for your career and life, you are much more likely to stay the driver of the bus versus becoming a passenger on someone else's bus.

Now it is not always a bad thing to become a passenger on somebody else's bus. There are times when it is totally appropriate. I will give you a couple of examples: you have put into your calendar to lead generate from 9:00am to 11:00am on Monday morning because you know that lead generation is extremely critical to running your business smoothly; having many leads in the pipeline is a good thing. Arriving at the office at 9:00am, you diligently pull up your screen with your list of people to call. Your script is ready, you know what you are going to say, and you start making calls. At 9:15am you get a call from a frantic buyer who says, "Brad, please, we finally found a house that we like, you have to get over here right now! We have to go see it. I'm afraid if we don't go see it right now someone else is going to buy it!" You now have a choice; if you stay the driver of the bus you say, "Mr. Jones, I understand how excited you are about that house. I know the agent who put that house on the market, he just listed it last night and put it out there this morning, and he is not going to sell the house by the end of the day today, rest assured. I know this guy personally. I will put in a call to him and let him know that we are interested, but I am in the middle of a project right now, and I can meet you there at 11:15am. How does that work for you?" "Oh, alright, alright, I guess I was just so excited. We will see you there at 11:15." Now you go back to lead generating. You just stayed the driver of the bus, and Mr. Jones and his wife became passengers on your bus. Now let me give you another example: it's 9:15am in the morning and a potential seller calls and says, "Brad, you and I had spoken about three months ago. I interviewed you along with a couple of other realtors and I have made my decision. I want you to list my home; however, I am leaving in three hours to catch a plane to go on vacation for a week. I am sorry I waited so long, but if you can't be at my house in fifteen minutes to take the listing, I am going to go to the second person on my list." Alright, you still have a choice. Do you stay the driver and tell them you're sorry, you're in the middle of a project and can't be there (and give up the listing) or do you become a passenger on their bus? In this case, you become the passenger, in my opinion. This is what I would tell the potential client: "I'll be right over!" I am not coaching you right now but rather giving you my advice, which is to hop in your car, go get the listing, and make up the lost time on the lead generation later. We call that Erase and Replace, which we'll talk about later on in the book. But you just erase lead generation from 9:00am to 11:00am, take that hour and forty-five minutes that you didn't get to finish and just replace it somewhere else in your calendar. Now, in that case you became the passenger, but in that case I say more power to you; you got the listing! Good job, way to go, and in that case pat yourself on the back. But generally speaking, I like people to stay drivers as often as possible.

Now what if, in our first example, the client insists upon meeting you at the house right now? Let me introduce you to the Broken Record technique. You just keep repeating, "I can meet you there at 11:15, will that work for you?" You have somewhat graciously declined his invitation. You stayed the driver, and if the person insists, you might not want to work with him. If Mr. Jones keeps saying, "Well, look, I am really

upset, you have to get down here right now, all the other agents that I have heard of stop whatever they are doing and take off right away," I would say, "Well, I am not one of those other agents. When you signed your buyer/broker agreement to work with me for the next ninety days, I stated very clearly how I would work with you, and this is how I operate. In order for you to get the best service from me, when I am working on a project for you I will put off other clients who call and interrupt me. That is the way that I run my business, it works very well. Once again, please look at your calendar. Can you meet me there at 11:15?" They finally reluctantly agree to meet you there at 11:15. Perhaps I would tell them to do something like visit this website, www.123mainstreet.com and read up about the house, find out what it's listed for, and compare it to other houses that we have seen. Give them a project for that hour and three quarters while they are waiting for you to show up. This is how I would handle it as diplomatically as possible. But remember, it's your choice, it's your business, and you get to choose whether to stay the driver or become a passenger.

Chapter 4:

Passion and purpose

Many Real Estate Professionals are unclear or have forgotten why they entered into this profession in the first place. They don't have a clear direction or purpose for their careers, or for that matter, their lives. The question I will be answering in this chapter is:

How do you as a Real Estate Professional maintain the energy, excitement, and enthusiasm for a career in the real estate field?

To move ahead in life, one must be on Purpose, which the dictionary defines as "an intended or desired result, the end, the aim, or the goal." One of Steven Covey's 7 Habits is "to begin with the end in mind." For me, when I refer to direction or purpose, what I mean is "What is the end result, what is it that you're trying to accomplish?" You might ask yourself: Why did I enter into the real estate profession in the first place and what am I trying to accomplish? What is the end result or aim of my career or profession?

To me, it's all about your vision. I know that when most Real Estate Professionals first started, they had a purpose. I have coached many Real Estate Professionals and they have said to me that they entered into this profession because of their vision to help people purchase their dream home. They wanted to make a difference for families in America, by finding them the home of their dreams, helping them move in, and living there happily ever after.

I also have other clients say that the purpose, direction, or mission of their real estate career is to help clients make wise investments so they can retire and go to the beach. For some Real Estate Professionals, they were very clear when they first started. They had a purpose and they had direction.

The real estate profession takes hard work; you must be proficient at the skills you need in order to have a career in real estate. In my opinion, you must have direction and purpose as your underlying reason for wanting to be in this career, or you'll just be going through the motions. And that will make skill acquisition that much harder. You'll be forcing yourself to become proficient at the things you'll need to know and do, and that forcing will cause you to take longer to master your craft, as well as make the journey more arduous.

Purpose gives you a reason to get out of bed in the morning. For myself, I created a mission statement that took several days to draft. Attending a three-day class called Life Directions, I designed a mission statement that guides all that I do. It's my reason for being, providing me with direction as well as a roadmap. I find that by having that level of clarity about my purpose provides incredible focus. I love the F word, Focus. It gives me a reason to get out of bed, and it gives more meaning to my life. It also helps

me plan my day's activities because I am very clear about having that direction. And in case any of you were wondering, "Well, Brad, what is your mission statement?" here it is: **To engage in powerful conversations with everyone I meet that motivate and inspire them to take action to reach their goals and dreams.**

By having an aim or an end result in mind, my mission statement helps me throughout the day. I need to do this but not that. I get less distracted following a "good idea." Someone calls me and says they have a great idea that I should take on. Without direction or purpose, I just might get sidetracked and wind up doing what they've suggested. I find that by having a clear direction and purpose for my career and my life, I am much more focused and on track. My mission statement helps guide me.

It is my intent that the people reading this book will look back on their lives and figure out what drove them into the real estate profession in the first place, and then ask themselves if it still drives them today. If what drove you into real estate in the beginning was to make piles of money quickly and easily, and that is no longer happening, that might explain why you are not happy. It might help clarify why you have lost some enthusiasm, drive, and your original purpose. If you're clear about why you entered this industry in the first place, and now those needs are no longer being met, you either need to recreate your passion and excitement, or consider an alternative career.

In order to find what you are passionate about in life and as a career, you might consider taking the quiz in the book *The Passion Test,* written by Janet and Chris Atwood. By the time you have finished the quiz and all the directions, you should have, generally speaking, your top three to five paths that you are incredibly passionate about.

The reason why I talk about that book is that I actually had a client who was a Real Estate Agent on the East Coast. She was starting to lose her enthusiasm for real estate, so I mentioned the book to her. She took the test and left her real estate career within three months. She discovered that she was much more passionate about helping people in the field of alternative health. So I highly recommend getting the book and taking the quiz if you're struggling with your mission.

For you Real Estate Agents who are reading this book, hopefully you will be inspired to take the quiz as well. And hopefully, it will show that you are passionate about deals, you love putting deals together, and you love helping people find the ideal home. You love being involved in the whole real estate profession. That would be a way to figure out if real estate really is the place that you want to stay.

Beyond taking the career passion quiz, here are three questions that can help you determine your future in the real estate industry:

Number 1. Ask yourself: of the projects and activities that I am now performing in my career as a Real Estate Professional, which ones provide me the most satisfaction? Which ones do I actually enjoy the most? For example, you might write down: "I love doing the research, putting the clients in the car, and driving them around" or

"I enjoy negotiating on behalf of my clients." Figure out the activities or the projects that provide the most satisfaction to you personally.

Number 2. Which projects and activities advance your career the most? They could be similar to your answers to the first question or entirely different. For instance, some examples might include volunteering for a real estate organization, joining a committee within the Association of Realtors in your local community, or helping at a fundraising event that puts your name out there and brings you satisfaction. I don't mean just as a Realtor, but as a person who gives back to the community. And at the same time, these activities and projects are advancing your career in the real estate world.

Finally, Number 3. Which activities or projects that you are currently working on provide the biggest payoff for your company? For the broker you are working with, which activities provide the biggest payoff? Obviously, one answer is closing deals.

You might consider appearing on a radio show where you can mention your company, the name of the broker, and your location in town. This will help get the most exposure while providing the biggest payoff for the company. It may not be directly helping your career and you might not even like doing it, but it does provide the biggest payoff for your broker.

So the three questions again are: Which activities and projects provide you the most satisfaction? Which ones advance your career the most? And which ones provide the biggest payoff?

In order to help keep this all straight for you, let's talk about alignment (pardon the pun). To make sure that everyone is on board when we are talking about alignment, I will use the example of driving a car.

You drive onto the freeway travelling fifty, sixty, or sixty-five, whatever the speed limit is. When you let go of the steering wheel, if the four wheels on the car are aligned, the car will continue in a very straight path down the road. If your car is out of alignment, it will pull either to the right or the left and eventually, you will find yourself drifting into another lane. When you are out of alignment, you feel off course, out of kilter. But when you are in alignment, the projects and activities you are working on are going to provide you with satisfaction, advance your career, and provide you with the biggest payoff.

When I used to teach for the Fred Pryor Seminar Company, at this point in the seminar we would poll the audience by asking: "How many of you, when answering these three questions, wrote down the same or similar activities and projects for two of the three questions?" Nearly ninety percent of the room would raise their hands. But when we asked: "How many of you wrote down the same or similar projects or activities for all three?" it would drop to around ten percent! It was dramatic; a complete reversal.

That survey revealed that a small percentage of people are working at a profession that gives them satisfaction, advances their career, and helps their company. Now for Real Estate Professionals who are being asked if they have alignment, does that mean he or she should leave the real estate industry if the answer is no. "Should I find another job that offers alignment?" Well, yes, that's one possibility; however, the other is to seek out other activities and projects that will bring you back into alignment.

Let's say you are working on projects that provide a lot of satisfaction and they are helping the company; however, your career isn't moving ahead quickly enough. You might want to check out opportunities to better advance your career. Or, if you are very satisfied and are advancing your career by speaking and giving real estate seminars, but you're not closing enough deals and therefore not helping the company, your broker may tell you to hit the road.

Or you might love what you're doing, working with your clients. You get tremendous satisfaction actually being with your buyers and sellers. But your career isn't moving ahead and you're not closing as many deals as you'd like. I might recommend a training class that would help you close more deals. In other words, to get back into alignment you may need to curtail some of the activities and projects you've been working on, and likewise, pick up on some areas where you may be lacking.

Let me bring this chapter to a close with a couple of quotes. Peter Drucker said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it." If you don't want to be on someone else's to-do list, if you really want to predict the future and know how your tomorrow, next week, and next year will be, then you need to create it.

I find that by having a career that you are excited, energetic, and enthusiastic about (because you are clearly focused on an end result that you want to produce) is going to help you predict your future. And Will Rogers said, "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." It's great to be on the right track, but if you aren't moving, you may get run over by people coming up behind you. So our next chapter is going to answer the question: "All right, Brad, I've now got direction and purpose, so how do I get moving?"

Chapter 5:

Goal setting and accomplishment

In my experience, most Real Estate Professionals do not have a clear, written set of goals for the year, the quarter, or the month. If they do, they lack a written set of plans for accomplishing those goals. And even with a written plan, most do not even look at that plan on a weekly basis.

How much more focused and enthusiastic would you be if you had a clear set of written goals along with a clear, written plan of action to guide your behaviors and activities on a daily basis, and you actually looked at that plan every week?

First let's look at goals. A goal, in my opinion, is an end toward which you are striving, an objective, the end result. Again, I'm reminded of one of Stephen Covey's 7 Habits: Begin with the end in mind. Those objectives you are trying to reach, the end results you are attempting to accomplish and achieve, those are your goals. The actual dictionary definition of a goal is "the end toward which effort is directed."

Further, I looked up the word effort, which is defined as "conscious exertion of power." So goals are those things that you are consciously exerting energy, power, and effort towards. It's not haphazard; you are consciously exerting power to drive you toward the end result.

Goals provide focus to help you arrive at your desired destination. One requirement to work with me is you must have a written set of goals with a written plan of action for their attainment. I refuse to work with anybody until they have a very clear written set of goals for the year, the quarter, and the month, along with a plan of action to get there. I cannot get them "there" if I don't know where "there" is! If they cannot clearly state the number of listings they want to take, the number of houses they want to sell, or the amount of commission income they want to earn during a given month, quarter, or year, it's difficult to help them. If that's not clearly defined, if it's not in focus, then it's extremely difficult to decide what to do, what actions to take. You could pretty much do anything at that point if you're not focused.

I'm reminded of the story of Alice in Wonderland, where she comes to a fork in the road and asks, "Which way do I go?" The Cheshire Cat asks where is she heading. She says that she doesn't know. So he replies, "Well, then any road will do." Unless you have a clear end in mind, your actions will be scattered, futile, and frustrating.

I am quite clear with my clients about how important it is to be focused on that end result; why it's imperative to have goals. In my workshops, some of the things the participants have shared regarding the benefits of having goals include: you get to know, be, do, and have more; it's about what you become rather than what you get; they

provide a reason for getting out of bed in the morning; they provide direction, purpose, and focus. Goals help people become better people. It's not just about the tangible stuff; it's also about the intangibles as well. Goals help you use your mind and your talents fully; they stretch you, and help you make better decisions.

Having a clearly written set of goals and plans to accompany them helps you to be more organized and efficient, providing purpose and direction in life. It was Zig Ziglar who said, "You can be a wandering generality or a meaningful specific." Having goals turns you into a meaningful specific rather than a wandering generality. It challenges you; goals raise the bar and will challenge you to reach greater heights.

Goals provide structure, which is another benefit. When focused, you do more for yourself and others. Focus builds confidence, bringing fulfillment. You are more enthusiastic and motivated. And finally, having focus and goals helps you accomplish uncommon projects.

Uncommon projects are born of better decision-making. If a Real Estate Agent says to me that his goal is to sell ten houses, I ask him to get clearer about that goal. Do you mean taking 10 listings and selling them all, or is that five on the seller side and five on the buyer side? Depending on the answer, a completely different set of action steps will be required.

There is a big difference when it comes to making better decisions; whether your time is spent trying to find sellers rather than finding buyers depends on the clarity of your goal. By just getting clear on that one thing, you can then make better decisions about which events to attend, what the appearance of your marketing collateral looks like, what your website looks like, what your marketing efforts look like, and so on. You could wind up spending (and wasting) thousands of dollars on an email or postcard marketing campaign if you are not clear about whether you are looking for sellers vs. buyers. You need to be crystal clear about your goals.

One of the challenges in setting your goals is to actually sit down and devote a specific amount of time to their creation. I usually suggest to my clients that they begin in October or November doing this. They first must block the time into their calendar to do the writing. Then they need to sit down with pen in hand (the best way) and write out the goals. I suggest actually writing vs. typing because you are engaging more of your body when you write; you use more muscles writing than typing, and this makes the experience more kinesthetic and more memorable.

The computer, of course, gives you certain other advantages, such as the ease of editing, but it's your choice.

One of the challenges in goal-setting is that we are all so busy. No one stops to work <u>on</u> their business or <u>on</u> their life because they are too busy working <u>in</u> their business and <u>in</u> their life (this distinction comes from Michael Gerber's book, *The E Myth*). In fact, Brian Tracy says that most people spend more time planning out a two week vacation

than they do planning out their life! Ain't that the truth! I am a big fan of "time blocking," which is the process of blocking specific chunks of time to do certain tasks, whatever they may be. So you must block out specific chunks of time into your planner and your calendar in order to devote the undivided time necessary to getting your goals (and the plans of action) written down.

Another challenge when it comes to goal setting is self-limiting concepts. People do not set the bar high enough because of their internal dialogue (what I call "the little voice inside your head"). They are limiting what they believe is possible. Feelings and thoughts such as "I don't deserve it," "Who am I to think that I could sell twenty houses, I am brand new in the real estate business," or "I haven't really paid my dues yet" are examples of self-limiting thoughts. Harv Eker, in his powerful book *Secrets of the Millionaire Mind,* refers to this as mind friction. Mind friction is your own internal dialogue that blocks you from not only setting the goals, but also from achieving them. We can be our own worst enemy. Many times that little voice inside your head is saying things like "I don't have the skills, I don't have the knowledge or resources or time or money to accomplish these goals, so why bother?" Be very careful to monitor your own internal dialogue when it comes to setting your goals. Do not let that voice inside your head come up with rationalizations or explanations or excuses. As Harv has said many times, "You either have results or you have reasons why you don't have results." And Henry Ford said it slightly different: "If you think you can or think you can't, either way you're correct." So monitor those thoughts.

Sometimes it's just your attitude that gets in the way of goal setting and goal getting. "Oh, I've set goals before and didn't reach them, so why bother?" Or maybe you set lofty goals that were unattainable to begin with, got discouraged, and let your attitude stop you from trying again. Again, to quote Zig Ziglar from *See You At The Top:* "It's your attitude, not your aptitude, that determines your altitude."

Another thing that prevents us from reaching our goals are distractions: the phone rings, your computer is barking at you "You've got mail!", other people are asking you questions and distracting you, while your dog is sitting at your feet begging for a walk.

Many realtors whom I work with are in the same office, in cubicles; no walls, no door, and they begin the day fully intending to achieve their goals. They aim at spending the first two hours of the morning on lead generation, but then someone walks over asking for a minute of their time. Of course, they want to be polite so they agree. A minute is never a minute, but rather fifteen or twenty. You helped this person out, who then leaves and proceeds to land a listing, while you sit there wondering what just happened. You just got broadsided and lost twenty minutes of precious time. So other people can distract you and sabotage even your best plans.

Another obstacle is over-thinking, or what is referred to as analysis paralysis. People have said to me that their biggest barrier in setting and achieving goals is themselves! I tell people to conduct what Zig Ziglar refers to as "A check-up from the neck-up." Just check-in with your brain, notice your thinking, and notice your speaking. After you've

caught yourself in analysis paralysis, tell your brain "Thank you for sharing, but now I've got work to do" and get focused, set your goals, and then work toward achieving them.

Fear of failure is another obstacle that keeps people from starting anything new. They are afraid to fail. Maybe because of some past failures, they have lost their sense of confidence, so that stops them from even setting new, lofty goals. And finally, wanting to look good is also a hindrance. Because their little voice is saying things like "I want to look good, I want to get it right, this is new for me and I don't want to look foolish," they will not go out and take the risk.

So you can see that there are many challenges and obstacles that can prevent you from creating your goals and then taking the action to accomplish them. When you're able to overcome some of those obstacles, the next question you want to ask yourself is: where do goals come from? People say that goals are a result of your past, while some say goals come from looking out into the future. Others have said that goals come from a personal desire for improvement. Or they come from our wants, needs, and overall desires. Many of you have heard that goals come from the pursuit of pleasure or the avoidance of pain. Sometimes our goals are meant to help us feel better; sometimes our goals move us away from pain. Here is what I say: goals come from your speaking. They are created out of nothing. Let me give you an example.

When you think of a goal, it's a thought, and then maybe a feeling – "I think I want to sell ten houses." You acknowledge how incredible it would be to sell ten houses this year, how good it would feel. The commission on each one would be about $10,000. You then set your goal to make $100,000; a very good year for a Real Estate Agent, in my opinion (please keep in mind that this is only an example of the thinking process, your goals may be way higher). But you can see that it begins with your thoughts, then your feelings, and then finally verbalizing your goal. "I will sell ten properties this year and make $100,000 gross commission income." The goal came out of nowhere, it came out of you speaking it into existence. Which, by the way, is great news. Because if it's true that your goals are a result of your speaking, that you bring them into existence out of thin air, then you can make up any goals you want! You aren't limited by your past, by your upbringing, by your race or gender or income level, etc. The sky's the limit!

In working with my clients, some of them have claimed that they don't have goals, that they have no idea what they want. With them, I try to get them in touch with what is called *Their Big Why*. I might ask them, "Why do you get up in the morning, what gets you out of bed, what's your reason for living?"

They might respond by saying they want to provide for their family. I say that's great, and then ask them for a dollar figure of what their family needs. They may answer that $150,000 gross before taxes will meet their needs. I'll acknowledge that and ask if making that $150,000 a year will get them fired up. Does it excite you and motivate you that you will be able to provide for your family? These kinds of questions will help them reflect on those gut feelings about survival and being a good provider. When put to them this way, they will consider writing down some very specific goals. It takes them

from "I don't know" to "Wow, that really gets my juices flowing!" We sometimes call these BHAGs, or Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals.

Now, with other clients, that number is far too daunting, and they will need to dial it down. If $150,000 is out of their comfort zone, totally ridiculous, no reality to it at all, and they can't believe they could hit that number, then we will find a number that is attainable. Beginning there, we will work with what's more comfortable, but hopefully still a stretch. They will start to sell some real estate, acquire listings, polish their listing presentation, and continue to improve. Their confidence builds and we bump up the goals to the next level. In some cases, you want to start with baby steps and move forward at a slower pace.

As an example, I received an email recently from a client, congratulating me for how disciplined I am. She said she needed more of that in her life. I emailed back, asking how she could bring more discipline into her own life. I said to make it something small, perhaps getting right up at 7:00 every morning instead of hitting the snooze button two or three times. It could start with something that simple. When the alarm goes off at 7:00, she agreed not to hit the snooze button. She promised to get right up and start her day. There is nothing wrong with starting out small to build confidence. Then increase your goals and your scope as your confidence grows.

A powerful tool I use with my clients and myself is the SMART Formula for goal setting. I have seen this taught by all of the top speakers and motivators, and they all pretty much have the same word for each letter. As my clients share their goals with me and I see an element missing, we plug it in, and the goal becomes more powerful.

Typically, what the letters stand for are the following:

'S' is for Specific. The goal is very clear, very understandable, and very specific. No ambiguity is allowed. Anybody reading your specific goal would know exactly what it is you were trying to accomplish.

'M' is for Measurable. There has to be a way to measure the goal to see if you actually reached it. So some form of measurement is required: the number of listing taken, the number of houses sold, the total dollar amount of your gross commission income, the number of classes taken or books read, etc.

'A' can stand for many things: Attainable, Achievable, or my favorite, Action-oriented. I like goals to have action-oriented verbs in them, such as generate, create, earn, sell, etc. as opposed to verbs such as want, wish, hope to, it would be nice if, and so on. Action verbs are more powerful than passive verbs, and put your word on the line. Just look at the difference between "I will earn $150,00 in GCI in 2012" vs. "I hope I'll make $150,000 this year" or "It'd be great if I could make some money this year."

The **'R'** is for Realistic. Now we could get into a big discussion here about what is reality, and maybe something is real for you but not for me. What I want to know when

I discuss the R word with people is, "Do you really believe you can achieve that goal?" If they say yes, and their plan of action looks reasonable and it looks like they've thought it through, then I'll jump on board and support them in hitting that target.

For instance, a client says to me, "Brad, I'm going to sell twenty houses this year." I will ask, "Well, how many did you sell last year?" If he replies that he sold three, I will question him further. Now, if he shows me a great plan with the right people on the team and in place, and an arsenal of buyers' assistants lined up to help, and a bunch of other plans of action and it seems like he has thought this through, I can then more readily believe in his goal and accept his target. Even though that is almost seven times what he sold last year, his plan looks and sounds solid and it sounds realistic. His plan looks good, so I will support him. But if, on the other hand, he just talks about the money aspect, about how great it will be to hit 20, and how his broker kind of made him come up with that goal, I would then question him on the reality of going from three to twenty.

The **'T'** is for Time-bound, a due date, a by-when, a specific deadline. Many times, my clients will give me goals with a vague date of completion, such as "sometime next quarter." When I ask them to give me a specific date, a specific by when, they get much more focused and clear, which in turn can speed up the activities necessary to accomplish the goal. Now they have a very specific, concrete deadline and they can start to move and shake things up.

Here's an example using the entire SMART formula. A client said to me, "Brad, my goal is to spend more time with my family." Realizing that wasn't a SMART goal, I began to ask a series of questions: what does more time mean? Which family member(s) specifically do you mean? How will you measure whether you spent more time with them? And so on. So he re-wrote the goal as follows: "I will take my wife out to dinner to a fancy restaurant (and we defined fancy as meaning linen table cloths and napkins and candles on the table) without the kids, at least twice per month starting this month." Now <u>that's</u> SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and time-bound!

In addition to SMART, there are other characteristics that make your goals more real and tangible and more likely to be accomplished. First, they need to be written. They need to be written out and then placed where you'll actually see them. As soon as you think of a goal you want to accomplish, write it down where you can see it. When you think it, ink it! Don't wait until later to put pen to paper; write it down the moment the thought crosses your mind (this is also useful for any idea you get about anything. Don't trust your brain to remember it later).

Second, share your goals with other supportive people, and I emphasize the word, *supportive*. Don't share them with people who will laugh at you and ridicule you, or poke fun at you, even in jest. "Brad, you're going to lose 10 pounds this year? Come on, give me a break, look at all the cookies and cake you eat!" I want to share my goals with supportive people who will say, "Great goal, Brad! How about we go for a walk after lunch to work off a few extra calories?" Now that's support!

Another characteristic is to be very clear that it's a positively-stated goal (something to move towards) rather than a negatively stated goal (something you are running away from). The reason why many people, in my opinion, don't lose weight for example, is because they state their goal in a negative way, such as "I will stop eating jelly donuts." Now be honest, when you just read that, didn't you get a picture of a jelly donut in your head? Maybe one with red raspberry jam oozing out of the hole in the side? Maybe even with sprinkled or powdered sugar on top? How are you going to stop eating jelly donuts when you're carrying around that image in your mind? You need to state the goal as something to move towards, such as "I only put healthy, nutritious food into my body." Now what picture did you get? Celery, carrots, salads, broccoli, or what I like to refer to as rabbit food? Now you have something in your mind to move towards, rather than run away from.

Still another characteristic is your goal needs to be challenging. I mentioned earlier that you have to keep it realistic. But it can also be a stretch and a challenge versus routine and ordinary. It should move you out of your comfort zone and stretch you a bit. You know your goal is challenging when you read it and you get a little queasy feeling in your gut. Not all tied up in knots, just a little queasy.

Whenever possible, your goals should be fun! Yes, I know, goals are serious stuff, you might be thinking, but the attainment of those goals should put a smile on your face and make you light up at the mere thought of going after them. And they are not shoulds, need-to's, or have-to's, but rather want-to's.

Your goals also have to be YOUR goals, not someone else's. You want to own your goals. Now, perhaps in a real estate office or a mortgage company, as an employee, you might have certain goals that you have to hit, that were given to you by the broker or owner. If you do not own those goals like they were yours, where you created them, you will be less likely to put effort and energy into accomplishing them. Whenever possible, own your goals, and they will become easier to work on and attain.

Finally, to wrap up this section on other characteristics of goals, I make a distinction between short term and long term goals. Short term are daily, weekly, and monthly. In reality, when you get down to daily goals, they really are more like activities or to-do's, they aren't really goals anymore in the strictest sense of the word. But weekly and monthly definitely fit my definition of short term goals. Long term goals are quarterly, yearly, and beyond. Some people are better at writing and accomplishing short term goals, others are better at the long term. I believe you need to have both and be good at achieving both.

One challenge I received from my coach in 2011, the year that this book is being written, was to generate a three-year and a five-year plan for my business. I'd never done that before (I always just did a one-year set of goals and plans) so I took on his challenge and will be writing those longer term goals down before this year is over. It is a great idea to look down the road and think about what can be, what you want to be, do, and have in the longer term rather than just the shorter term. Devote some time to

it. Where do I see myself 3-5 years from now: am I still in my home in Castro Valley, or someplace else in California, or in Hawaii on the beach? Perhaps I will bring into my business a CEO to run things will I go sit by the pool. Who knows? But remember when I said that goals come from your thinking and your speaking? Spend some time thinking about those long term goals: quarterly, yearly, and beyond.

Lastly, I want to share something I learned from Zig Ziglar. It's a seven step process for setting and achieving goals. A process or system (which stands for Save Your Self Time, Energy, Money) is extremely important when it comes to not only setting your goals, but also accomplishing them. Here are the seven steps:

Step 1 – Identify the goals and write them down in the SMART formula. Mr. Ziglar spoke often about this. You must identify the goals, write them out, make sure they are in the SMART formula so they are specific, measureable, action oriented, realistic, and time bound.

Step 2 – Identify the obstacles, barriers, and challenges you are likely to encounter, and think about how they could potentially block you or take you off track. Do you have kids to take care of, or aging parents who might require more of your time? Identify as many of those down-the-road possible issues as you can. Begin thinking about them and engineer your contingency plans.

Step 3 – Identify the people, groups, and organizations that you will need to work with and/or who can provide assistance and support. For example, I have my sales and business coaches. I have 2 master mind groups that I am working with; I belong to 4 networking groups; and obviously, my wife is onboard. I share my goals with her at the beginning of the year to make sure she is supportive and behind them. It's all about building relationships. You have heard it said many times before: it's not what you know but who you know. So you want to start tapping into your network of people.

Step 4 – Identify what you need to know in order to accomplish your goals: the skills, training, knowledge, and information that you need to acquire. In 2011, I identified two coaches who were teaching a class on the *Law of Attraction*, something I was very interested in and felt like I needed to know in order to reach my larger goals. The teleclass I signed up for, taught over a four month period, educated me about the subject. They shared their expertise, implementation skills, and the knowledge I was missing that would help me use the *Law of Attraction* to attract and allow more things into my life. I have experienced a huge increase in my business this year, almost doubling my income over 2010. I attribute that increase to the gaining of that one particular new skill. That is the power of Step 4 - to identify what you need to know in order to accomplish your goals, and then acquiring the needed skills, training, knowledge, and information. And then of course, applying that new knowledge!

Step 5 – Identify a plan of action. Who will do what by when? This also includes a system for accountability. This could be your business coach, sales coach, and/or a master mind group. You must report to these people on what you have accomplished. A system for accountability and follow up will hold you liable for your time and activities in order to build your business. You also need contingency plans, back up plans, or Alternate Plan B (and in some cases, C and D!). These are the ***What If*** plans: what if this doesn't happen, what if someone quits, what if the economy tanks, what if I run out of money before I'm able to complete the project, and so on. All of these need to be considered and identified. And by the way, both your plan of action and your contingency plans must be written down. Don't keep them in your head. And you must take action! "The smallest of actions is always better than the noblest of intentions." Do something. Nike says it well: "Just Do It." You could spend the entire day thinking about who you should call. Instead, just pick up the phone and make that one call. If you merely pick up the phone and just do it, you will be one step closer to your goal. And if the call doesn't turn out well, you will at least have learned what NOT to do next time. Your next call will go much smoother.

Step 6 – Identify *WIIFM:* What's In It For Me? Why is it important for me to hit these goals, and what are the benefits to me if I do this? It's surely not just an altruistic, wonderful feeling that I'll receive as I help society, though of course that's important, too. But there has to be something in it for me, something big enough that it will get me out of bed in the morning. You want to be very clear about the importance of reaching that goal. Why is it important for you to hit your SMART goals? It's OK in my opinion to be a little (or even a lot) selfish here. Keep your sights and your focus on what's in it for you and it will help you through those hard times.

Step 7 – Identify how you will celebrate and acknowledge yourself and others once the goal is reached. Taking vacations is the way that I celebrate and acknowledge myself for having hit my goals. I cannot go on those vacations unless I have made the money to pay for them (an agreement I've made with my wife). Who plops down a couple of grand to fly off some place unless there's money in the bank? Well, maybe some people, but at what risk to their finances? The only way that we'll have the money in the bank is if I am meeting my financial goals by enrolling new coaching clients and acquiring speaking engagements. Other people may treat themselves by purchasing more tangible items. One of my clients is going to buy himself a boat. When he hits a certain level with his commissions, he is very clear that he is going to celebrate and acknowledge himself with an actual purchase. So choose something or some way to acknowledge and celebrate when you've reached your goal.

So that is the seven step process for setting and achieving your goals.

So now you understand the importance of having goals, what can interfere with both the creation and accomplishment of those goals, and how to design and create your entire plan of action to help you overcome those obstacles and challenges, and eventually achieve them. Let me say this: for the vast majority of American people living in the United States, home ownership is still the biggest goal that they have. If you, as a Real Estate Professional, can help them find and move into their dream home, they will be ecstatic and forever in your debt. They will hopefully send you more business and referrals, and in seven years (the average time that people live in a house before they move), they will think of you again. By helping them accomplish their biggest goal, you will experience an incredible feeling, as well as have enough money in the bank to do all of the things that you desire.

In order to have a successful real estate business, it is absolutely critical to follow all of the steps in this chapter, which I believe is the most important one in the entire book. Without a clear set of goals, your business will be a wandering generality instead of a meaningful specific. But once you are clear about your purpose and mission, and you have written your goals following all of the steps as described in this chapter, and you have put your structures, systems, and support people into place, this will be the most important step you can take to move your business to the next level. Armed with these ideas and principles, you will be unstoppable!

Chapter 6:

Keeping a time log

Based on my observations over the last two decades, I've reached the conclusion that the vast majority of Real Estate Professionals do not know how they spend their time at work. My question for you is: how much more productive could you be if you knew exactly how you were utilizing your time, minute by minute, every day at work?

You need to know what needs to be given more time and attention and what needs less. You will only know that if you are keeping track of and monitoring how you are spending your time. As an example, numerous clients of mine thought they were spending a good deal of their time on lead generation. When I had them write down, monitor, and track the number of minutes they actually spent on lead generation, it always was way less than they thought. If you think you've been spending two hours a day on lead generation and it turns out to really only be one hour, then you now know that you need to pick up the pace, to amp it up. You need to do twice as much lead generation as you previously thought.

You might think you know exactly where your time is going and how much time you are spending on each task at work. But I say that most often we do not realize how we really spend our time. This is based on feedback from my activity management seminars where I poll attendees about how they spend their day. Most of them have no clue.

When I ask them what they do, what activities they have focused on in the course of their workday, oftentimes they are unable to account for their time in an eight hour day. After having them actually write down what they did and how long they did it for, they either come up with around ten hours of work, which of course is ridiculous because they are only at work for eight hours, or they can account for only about six hours, which means they are missing a couple of hours. They know they were at work for the full eight hours, yet they can't account for what they did in that time! Pretty mind boggling, if you ask me.

Once you know how your time is spent, you will gain clarity on your return on investment. If you are spending and documenting one hour a day on lead generation, but it's not giving you your desired number of leads, then you know that you need to bump that number of hours on lead generation up higher.

If, however, you are getting the number of leads that you want to keep your pipeline full from the time you spend on lead generation, then your return on your investment of that hour per day is sufficient. Keeping track of the actual hours spent on any activity and the results produced is a great way to get real.

One way to track your time is by using a Time Log, a specific tool you use to keep track of your minutes and how you are utilizing them during the day. You'll not only track your minutes, but also your activities during those minutes. It's a systematic way to accurately record where your time is going and how it's being utilized.

Now let's look at the good stuff, the benefits to keeping a time log. The first major benefit is that it provides a reality check. You'll actually know exactly where you're spending your time and exactly what you're doing during that time. The results of discovering that information will help you make better and more informed choices.

Next, it will help you discover your rhythm, pace, or a time during the day when you are more productive, which is a great asset. By keeping a time log, you will start to notice how much more productive you are at some times during the day versus others. You may find that by making phone calls in the morning, you receive a better response than in the afternoon. You may find that your rhythm in the morning empowers you; you are more "on" and together and more awake. If, on the other hand, you tend to be a little more lethargic or slow-paced in the morning, then this would be a great time for filing or doing low-level research or logging onto the web. Then you'd make your calls in the afternoon when you're more awake. The time log will help clue you in to your rhythms throughout the day.

Another advantage to keeping a time log is you'll be able to show yourself (and your boss!) how you're actually spending your day at work. Assuming you're utilizing your time well, you'll now have actual proof of that.

Unfortunately, there are also barriers to keeping a time log. The first objection I often hear is "I already know how I spend my time, I know where my minutes go." As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, you may think you do, but in reality you may not. One of my mentors, T. Harv Eker, says that the four most dangerous words in the English language are "I already know that." Reflect on your own life. If your first reaction when I suggested you keep a time log was "Oh, I don't need to keep a time log, I already know where my minutes go," then that reaction may be the problem. Take a serious look at your week and if you are having trouble accounting for all of your minutes, please consider keeping the log (and you only need to keep it for one week, as I'll explain later).

A second obstacle I often hear is when people say "It's too time-consuming to keep a time log; writing everything down is tedious. Instead of keeping track of my time, I could have been doing a CMA, or making phone calls, or door-knocking." I'll show you a system for keeping a time log that only takes 16 minutes a day, and I promise you the knowledge and insights you'll gain will be worth way more than the time invested.

Lack of knowledge is often listed as another barrier. "I don't know how to keep a time log," so they ignore it. They know that keeping one is a good idea, but because they don't know the mechanics of keeping one, they just don't bother.

Hopefully by now I've convinced you of the necessity of keeping a time log. But if

not, let me share with you an actual example from a client of mine. This real estate agent (let's call him Bob) attended a volunteer committee meeting every week at his office that was two hours long. On top of that, he had homework and assignments outside of the meetings, which took up more time. I asked him if he really knew the total amount of time he was spending on this committee, and if it was time well spent. He said he really didn't know the total, and wasn't sure if it was time well spent, but it was more of a habit that he hadn't really questioned. So I had him keep a time log for a week, just focused on his committee time. After totaling up the number of hours he spent and multiplying that times 48 weeks (figuring an average of four weeks per month), he immediately resigned from the committee when he saw how much time it was consuming. Bob realized that was not time well spent, and by having the time log to back him up he knew exactly how many hours were going toward this volunteer committee. He decided it was not helping his real estate business at all, and he was missing other opportunities because of all the hours devoted each week to this group. With that realization, he outright resigned. He then devoted all that time toward lead generation, and he got his business back on track again.

So now let me demonstrate how to keep a time log. What I recommend is to keep your time log for just one week. In three or six months, repeat it again to see what's changed. Notice if you have actually made the adjustments that you wanted to make. And it can be any week you choose, except, of course, the week when you're on vacation! When I say any week, just start on a Monday and keep the log through that Friday. Over the course of five days, you should have experienced a "typical" week. Now I know some of you are thinking, "Brad, there ain't no such thing as a 'typical' week in the real estate world!" While that may be true for some of you, I still believe that any random five day period will give you enough valuable information that it'll be worth it.

There are two different ways to keep a time log. One is called the Transition Method and the other is the Quarter Hour Increment Method. Here's how they work:

If you flip back to the appendix, you will see a sample time log. The left hand column is the time of day, the next column is the activity you are actually working on at that time, then there is the column for the cumulative amount of time you spent on that activity, and finally there is a column for comments. So the first thing to do is to print up five of those sheets and label them Monday, Tuesday, etc. through Friday. If you work on the weekends, you might also want to include Saturday and Sunday as well.

If you are using the Transition Method, it might look like this: "Time of Day – 8:00 a.m.; Activity – Logged in to my computer, checked email; Time Used – 20 min.; Comment – got sidetracked starting to answer the emails, could have waited until later in the day, not the best use of my time." Now, you've stopped that activity and you're ready to transition over to another one. So now you go to the next line on the chart and write "8:20; Activity – did research for a comparative market analysis; Time Used – one hour; Comment – Excellent use of my time." It is now 9:20 and you are transitioning to a staff meeting, so you would write down "9:20; Activity - attended a staff meeting; Time

Used – 1 hour 10 minutes; Comment – complete waste of time, didn't need to be there, could have received better information elsewhere." So every time you switch from one kind of major activity to another is a transition. You stop for a brief moment and jot down in your time log all four parts of that line, make the transition and go on to the next activity, stop at the end and record it, and so on.

Now for some agents, they feel like they are transitioning every five minutes! Look at stats, make some calls, grab a cup of coffee, do some research, say hello to other agents, get distracted by the broker, get interrupted by a client, etc. They cannot work with the Transition Method because they are transitioning all the time. So they need to use the Quarter Hour Increment Method.

For this method, take the same time log from the appendix and in the left hand column where it reads Time of Day, on the first line write down 8:00am (assuming that's when you start your work day). Then write down 8:15, 8:30, 8:45, 9:00, etc. all the way through to the end of your work day. Use as many pages as you need to go from your start time to your end time in quarter hour increments. Then make five copies of the entire set so you'll have one for each day, Monday through Friday.

To help keep track of the time, purchase a small digital kitchen timer, and set it for fifteen minutes. Sit down at your desk at 8:00a.m. and start the timer as you begin your workday. Perhaps you'll respond to a couple of emails, answer the phone if it rings and chat with a client, talk with your broker for five minutes, or look at the stock market news or the real estate section of the paper. At 8:15 the timer goes off. Stop the timer and write down everything you just did over those last 15 minutes. You should be able to recall what you did, because after all, it was only a quarter of an hour. You want to be as specific as possible, and it's OK to use abbreviations. If you made three outgoing calls, write down 3 OCs. For one incoming call you would log 1 IC. If you answered some emails, log six emails, i.e., 6 EMs. It shouldn't take you longer than thirty seconds to record everything you accomplished within that 15 minute time frame. If you stopped once every quarter hour and took 30 seconds to jot down your results, you would spend just 2 minutes per hour keeping your log! That's a total of 16 minutes during an 8 hour workday. But you'd now have a written record of every activity you did in those fifteen minutes. So let's continue. It's now 8:15. Reset the timer and go for another fifteen minutes. At 8:30 it's going to ring again, so stop, take 30 seconds to jot down everything in the activity column, reset the clock for yet another fifteen minutes, and continue. Now, for a one-hour meeting, you will have one big block from 9:00 to 10:00. You will merely write the word "meeting" in the activity column, or perhaps just abbreviate and use M for meeting (by the way, you don't need to reset your timer every 15 minutes during the meeting or you'll drive your colleagues nuts!). At 10:00 you are back at your desk. Set the timer for fifteen minutes, and off you go again. At 10:15, the timer goes off and you are back to your quarter hour increments.

Remember, you want to be as specific as you can when capturing your actual activities. By doing this, at the end of your day you will have an incredibly detailed log

of information: the number of outgoing calls you've made, how many incoming calls you handled, the total time spent in meetings, how long your lunch break was (or if you even took a lunch break!), how much time you spent chit-chatting that day, how much time was devoted to lead generation, and so on. You will have it all there in front of you, broken down into quarter hour increments.

By using either of these systems for keeping a Time Log, the Transition Method or the Quarter Hour Increment Method, you will have a wealth of information to guide you towards making wiser choices about how you spend your time. They say that knowledge is power...but only if you use that knowledge! I like to say that education without action is entertainment. So use your new found knowledge, your newly acquired education about yourself, to take action and change what you're doing with your precious minutes to help you achieve greater results.

Chapter 7:

Activity management systems

Most Real Estate Professionals do not have a time or activity management system, and those who do are not using it effectively.

How much more time, energy, and money could you, as a Real Estate Professional, save if you had an actual Time/Activity Management System, and used it on a daily basis?

The dictionary definition of the word system is "any formulated, regular, or special method or plan of procedure." I have also heard it said that SYSTEM stands for "Save Your Self Time, Energy, Money." Whatever definition you use, the creation of a system for managing your activities is the key to getting more done with less stress.

In my opinion, an activity management system is something that is formulated; you've thought it through, it's regular, you use it repeatedly, it becomes a habit, and it works. You can either create your own system, or you could adopt one that already exists. I also call it your system for accomplishment. It's the steady, day-to-day, on-going tool that you use to accomplish the goals that you've set for yourself.

I believe that if you don't have a system in place that you are using on a regular basis, then you are at the behest of other people. In other words, your time and activities will be managed by others. The phone is going to ring, your computer will say you've got emails, you will receive some snail mail and you will open it up, and all of these interruptions will require you to do something. If you are not managing your time and activities through some kind of system, you will most likely be placed on someone else's to-do list rather than sticking to your own.

When it comes to managing your time and activities, having a system helps you form a habit. We all know how incredibly powerful habits are. If you look at the habits that you have in your life right now, you just do them. They are on auto-pilot; you do not have to think about them. Brushing and flossing your teeth before you go to bed at night is a habit you just do, without thinking. You just walk into the bathroom, pull out the toothbrush and floss, and you do it. "First we make our habits, and then our habits make us." Habits are extremely powerful, and I urge you to create some habits, some systems, for managing your time and your activities.

Systems also keep you organized and focused. I have spoken a number of times about focus and being organized throughout this book. A system does that for you. It also helps you become more effective and efficient (more to come on those topics and their differences a bit later). You do have to focus and be organized to be effective and efficient. In the chapter on Prioritizing, I will explore that in more detail.

By having a system, you stay the driver of the bus, rather than being a passenger on someone else's bus. By referring back to an earlier chapter you know what I am talking about; you want to have people board your bus. You want to have your system operating efficiently to show you what your day will look like. You figured out what is a priority for you (that is coming up in a later chapter) and you want to "keep the main thing the main thing." When they call, you look at your list, and decide that you are not going to be derailed. You will stick to your system, and stick to your plan. Hopefully you've heard the expression "You've got to plan the work and work the plan." A system will help you do that.

When it comes to time/activity management systems, there are always options. I advocate that the best system to use is the one that you will use every day, all the time. I don't have a particular bias as to which planning system you choose, although I use a paper based system. When I was first introduced to it in 1982, it was called ***More Time***, but they eventually went out of business (I guess they have way more time now!). I now use Day Runner, but there's also Day Timer, Franklin/Covey, and others.

I prefer the pen and paper system, and have used it for many years. I don't use an electronic system, but you could have an iPhone or a Blackberry, some other PDA (personal digital assistant), or any of a number of web-based planning systems. Some of my clients use Outlook; others use Top Producer, because they are in the real estate profession. With a wide variety of choices, it doesn't really matter which one you choose as long as it's the system that you are going to use on a consistent basis. It should be one that you feel comfortable with, one that you will repeatedly use, thereby making it the best system for you. It should also fit your work style, and one you're sure to benefit from. It should also have mobile capabilities for your convenience, in my opinion, which means portability. The problem I see with Outlook or Top Producer (unless you can download them to your phone) is that they work great while you're in the office, but what happens when you leave and go out on the road?

When I leave home, the only thing I take with me is my leather bound, zippered, time and activity management planner. It has everything in it that I need: a place for notes, phone numbers, my schedule for the day, my goals for the year and quarter, and a lot more. I use it whenever a new idea or task pops into my mind. I simply enter the information on the appropriate page, and I don't forget it. Remember, "When you think it, ink it!"

Now if your planning system is on your computer, I recommend printing out that day or even the schedule for the week on a piece of paper and taking that with you. Having your schedule for the week and your to-do list for the day with you helps you manage what to do next.

I also recommend having only one system. Lee Segal said, "A man with a watch knows what time it is, but a man with two watches is never sure." Some past clients have told me that they had one system on the refrigerator (maybe a calendar with the family's schedule on it), another personal calendar to manage their activities (maybe on

their phone), and perhaps a third calendar back at the office. By having more than one, they would miss some business appointments or their kid's soccer game, because the appointment would wind up on one calendar or even two but not on all three. So they wind up working late and miss the soccer game, or they're busy with family stuff and miss a business appointment. So again, I recommend only one system.

Many of my clients will sync their Blackberry or iPhone with their Outlook or Top Producer at the end of each day. That's fine, but again, it has to be a habit; it has to happen every day like clockwork or something will get overlooked or dropped out.

Now let's cover some of the components of a good system. These are the basics, the must haves. You can add other components as you see fit, but keep in mind, you don't want your system to be overly complicated. Simple is useful, complicated is interesting. I'm more interested in your system being useful and helpful rather than interesting. So here they are:

1) **A yearly calendar.** You want to be able to see the whole year at a glance, in order to know when the holidays occur, which days are the weekends, etc. I don't write anything on my yearly calendar because it's too small (I can see the entire year on one small page). But it's useful to be able to look out far into the future. In fact, I have calendars three years out into the future!

2) **A monthly calendar**, with enough room to be able to write down all of your appointments, all of the things that you'll do that require scheduled blocks of time. I don't write any to-do's on my monthly calendar, only appointments. That way I can see what my day's schedule is like at a single glance. My monthly calendar is 8 ½ x 11 turned sideways (2-page Month-at-a-Glance). If using an electronic system, make sure the squares for each day are large enough (or will expand enough) to accommodate a lot of appointments if needs be.

3) **A weekly calendar,** or week-at-a-glance. Some people like a weekly calendar or a week-at-a-glance in addition to the monthly calendar. The weekly calendar can be very helpful when it comes to planning your week in advance, the subject of a later chapter. You can use the weekly along with the monthly calendar and daily pages; however, it can be redundant. It's up to you; design your system according to your own needs. I have a section called The Future, that has all the weeks of the year for every month. When I have a task that needs to happen in a future month, but I'm not sure exactly which day I'll be working on it but I do know which week would be appropriate, I write it down in the weekly section. Then when I finally get to that week in the future, I consult that weekly list to see what needs to happen and I plan those tasks into the daily schedule.

4) **Daily planning pages or a daily screen shot**. This is where you list all of your to-do's for that day, all of the nitty-gritty activities that are going to get

accomplished: do 50 push-ups, go to the gym, call Mom, watch this DVD, send an email to someone, make my calls, write some more chapters for the book, etc. I list all of my activities for that day. In my planner, which is also a 2- Page Day-at-a-Glance-type section, the left hand side is my schedule for the day: 8am: call Joe, 8:30: eat breakfast, 9: check and respond to emails, 10: coaching call, 11: write another chapter, 11:30: make calls, etc. The right hand side is my actual To-Do list: all the emails that I need to send, the names of all the people I need to call, any research that I need to conduct, all of my tasks and activities that I want to accomplish that day. So, for instance, when I get to 11:30am and my left hand side says "Make calls," and I know I have an hour to do that, I'll look at the right hand side to see who needs to be called. (By the way, all of my calls have been prioritized the previous night or early that morning, so I just do them in the order that I've already picked. I don't like to waste time thinking, "OK, now who should I call first? How about Sally? Nah, that's going to take too long. What about Fred? Oh, I don't have his number handy" and so on. The prioritization has taken place already using the techniques I'll describe in the next chapter). I'll check off each call as it's made, each email as it's sent, and just continue working my plan and my To-Do list throughout the day.

5) **I call them customized sections**. These would include sections for expenses, your goals, books you've read, a section to keep track of all the speaking engagements you've done, a place to write down your mileage, and so on. I record all expenditures, including checks written, cash spent, or credit card charges, throughout the day in my expense section, especially when I'm traveling. I would also record income taken in if I am selling items at the back of the room during one of my presentations; all of these items will go into that expense section of my planner. Same for mileage: by keeping track of your mileage in your planner, you know exactly where to locate that information come tax time. And having my yearly and quarterly goals with me at all times is helpful when I'm waiting for a plane or for someone to show up for an appointment because I can just review them and revise them, maybe even adding some new goals that I've just thought of. So put into your planning system any specialized sections that you want.

6) **A notes section**. Have a section with some blank paper so you can take notes or designate a place in your electronic system for the same reason. You want a place to capture all the points that come up during an important meeting, or you may need to jot down directions while on the run. A designated notes section will again help you stay organized and make it easier to find and retrieve information.

7) **Contact section**. Make sure you always have a telephone, email, and address section with you. Of course, with smart phones, all of that info is readily available at the touch of a screen.

8) **(for paper based systems): a pouch for supplies**. If you were to look at mine, I have an extra pen, pencil, ruler, some stamps and small envelopes, a calculator, some aspirin, and parking meter change. I also have a place within my planner for business cards, so I'm never caught short when someone says, "Have you got a card?" Nowadays, I guess you could just point your phone at someone else's phone and transfer all the contact info that way. But if you're still old-fashioned like me, you want to always have some business cards with you.

9) **If you use a paper-based system, treat yourself to a leather-bound planner;** they are more durable than vinyl, and look much more professional. Make sure it also has a zipper to be able to close up everything to prevent an airborne disaster, i.e., your planner flies out of your hand, lands hard on the ground and opens up, spilling your entire life in front of you. Take if from me, a zippered system is a great tool to have.

OK, so that's my suggestion on how to design and build your planning system. Here are some more tips: take your planning system with you everywhere (well, almost everywhere, certainly not into the shower!). It is your constant companion. It is running your life, so be sure to have it with you at all times. I cannot begin to tell you how frustrating it is when I'm having a business meeting with someone and I ask them if they're free to meet on Thursday of next week and they say "Dang, I left my calendar back at the office. I'll call you later and we'll set something up." Yeah, right! Like that's gonna happen. If for some reason they don't have their planner with them, I'll immediately jot down on my To-Do list to call them later in the day to set up the appointment. I know if it gets into my planner, it gets done!

As I mentioned earlier, as soon as you have a thought, write it down or immediately enter it into the proper section of your electronic system. For me, it is written right on the daily page where I am going to execute the task. If I think of someone I need to call, I immediately turn to one of my daily pages and if that looks like a good day to make the call, it will become a new item on my To-Do list. With it now out of my head, I have more room to think creatively, and I've certainly noticed a decrease in my stress level because I'm no longer wondering, "Now who was it that I was going to call? I know it's important but I forgot to write it down. Dang!"

Another important tip is to review your time management system often and keep tweaking, updating, and checking it. Mine is always sitting on my desk, and it's updated often throughout the day. After all, my system is managing me, but I also have to manage it. I almost always have numbered my first ten to-do's in order of priority, either the night before or first thing in the morning before I start working. I will tackle number one first, then number two, etc. I have my system out in front of me, reviewing it, and adding items to it as my day progresses. I also check items off as I accomplish them

throughout the day.

Finally, do not lose your planning system! I know that is obvious, but it does happen (since 1982, I'm pleased to say I've never lost my planner, but I've had three close calls) so back up your system in case you do lose it. I have a second calendar and a second address and phone section at home in my office. If I do lose my entire planner, I might lose a week's worth of to-do's; a problem for sure, but not the end of the world. At least I do have a backup calendar where I keep all of my appointments, coaching calls, and other important meetings and tasks. So make sure that you back up your system as best you can, and try not to lose it.

Chapter 8:

Creating powerful to-do lists

Most To-Do lists are a collection of random tasks that we think need to be accomplished. What if your To-Do list was a powerful system that helped you get more done each day and guaranteed that nothing would ever fall through the cracks or be forgotten again?

Let's talk about To-Do lists. The purpose of a To-Do list is to help you get organized on a daily basis with your daily intentions, in what order they will be done, and the length of time it will take you.

A To-Do list is a focusing tool that organizes your day. Real Estate Professionals just seem to do whatever comes up at the time. They have an ongoing To-Do list, with random items written down, phone calls that need to be made, and tasks to accomplish; however, this list is not in any semblance of order. They do not group similar things together, they're not prioritized, and there's no estimate of the amount of time it will take to complete the item.

With all good intentions, a Real Estate Professional sits down with their To-Do list and attempts to get things done on the list, but they allow other tasks to interrupt them while attempting to follow their plan. They then wind up at the end of the day with none or just a few of the items checked off. They have also most likely added to the list, which grows at an alarming rate, overwhelming them and causing paralysis.

First of all, To-Do lists help you group similar items together. I group many of my emails in succession on my daily list. For instance, I might be writing something very similar to several people. In this case, I would group all of those emails together on the To-Do list, and I cut and paste or I Blind CC to three or four different people at once, thereby saving time and energy. The amount of time it takes to group the similar emails together is more than recaptured when I send the same message to several people at once.

The same idea applies to making phone calls, writing letters, paying bills, or reading; if you group similar tasks together, your effectiveness and efficiency soars. You are already in gear, you already have some momentum with that particular task, so now you save more time by grouping those similar items together.

Second, a To-Do list helps you prioritize your tasks. With an array of twenty or thirty different things to do, you must prioritize first, figuring out what to do first, second, and so on. Should I start at the top of my list and perform the tasks in order, or should I do the most difficult item first (or last), or some other option? Having your To-Do list in front of you will help with prioritizing

Another great reason for having a To-Do list is that you get to write things down. A favorite Chinese proverb of mine is that "The palest of ink is always better than the best of memory." So placing the item on your To-Do list keeps you from forgetting it. If it's written down on paper and out of your head, you're not thinking later on "Who was I supposed to call? What was that thing I was supposed to do?" Remember, wasting time trying to remember things is not productive, so don't squander your precious time trying to remember things. Get it out of your head, on to the paper, then group similar things together, and then prioritize them to accomplish more.

Another great benefit to a written To-Do list is the ability to check tasks off as they are accomplished. Using a checkmark once an item is completed gives you an incredible sense of triumph; it's done, it's off the list, and I'm moving on! In fact, I have even found myself doing a task which wasn't on my list, then writing it down just so I could put the checkmark next to it! And don't tell me you haven't done that yourself once or twice... or more!

Another tip: once an item's been completed and it's checked off the To-Do list, highlight it in yellow (if you're using a pen and paper system; or use the highlighter feature if using a computer based To-Do list). The items <u>not</u> highlighted will stand out on the page, helping you focus your attention on them. The tasks in yellow are not really "seen" by your mind's eye because it knows they are done and are no longer needing to be considered.

And keep in mind that our brains have a limited number of what I call Attention Units. For example, if you leave your bed unmade in the morning and later you just walk past the door and look into the bedroom, you will see the unmade bed. A single attention unit is now captured by your bed. You are thinking "I should have made the bed earlier" or "Oh, I'll make it later" but you just keep on walking past the bedroom. Your mind, still occupied with that thought, now has diminished capacity for more appropriate thoughts. And as you continue to go about your day, more attention units are taken up by other distractions, until your brain is totally clogged up. In fact, twenty minutes later you walk past the bedroom door again. Seeing the unmade bed again triggers another attention unit. And yes, while you should have made the bed the first thing after getting up in the morning, you do not have the time right now to do it, and so you are distracted even more. So put "Make the bed" on your To-Do list right at the top and make it the first thing you do in the morning. Once you see it there on your list, you will go in, make the bed, and not lose those attention units. Once your To-Do list is in place and you've written things down, grouped similar items together, and prioritized them, you will gain a great sense of accomplishment by just attacking the list and checking things off.

A Master Business Plan is different than a To-Do list. It's your overall set of goals that you want to accomplish, so it's more strategic, over-arching, it's the big picture. A To-Do list is more tactical. It consists of what you will specifically be doing at any given moment. It addresses issues such as "What is your specific plan of action today, which

people will you contact, and which emails are you going to send out?"

Let's say you are a Real Estate Agent with a specific goal for the year. One of your goals in your master business plan is to go on twenty listing appointments and land fifteen of those listings. That is part of your master business plan: twenty listing appointments and get at least fifteen of those listings.

A single sub-goal of that master business plan might be to design and deliver a powerful listing presentation. The sub-goal will teach you how to deliver the listing presentation, supporting the larger business plan goal of acquiring fifteen of the twenty listings.

The To-Do list associated with that sub-goal includes: observing another agent giving their listing presentation and taking notes, designing a power point presentation, practicing and rehearsing it in front of a live audience (a colleague or friend) before delivering it to a potential client, asking for feedback from someone about my listing presentation, packing all the right supplies to take to the presentation (laptop, cord, handouts, etc.) and so on. These are specific tasks that need to be accomplished one at a time in order to achieve the sub-goal of designing and delivering a powerful listing presentation, which in turn supports the major goal of giving 20 listing presentations and getting 15.

Now, depending on which activity management system you are using (some of my clients use Outlook, Top Producer, or a Smart phone, some are more traditional, using a pen and paper based system, such as a notebook or just a yellow pad) your To-Do list is obviously going to look different. But no matter which system you use, your To-Do list should reflect exactly what you need to do. For example, "Call Bob to schedule delivery of his CMA" or "Send out five emails to all existing buyers with an update" and so on. The items could even be numbered on the left side of the page – 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on.

You will also need, depending on the system, a date for completion. Now, in my paper-based system, my to-do's are written in on the daily pages, so it's assumed that the to-do is for that day. Whatever tasks are scheduled for completion for Monday are on my Monday to-do list; Tuesday's are my Tuesday to-do list, etc. If you have "a running To-Do list," or a yellow legal pad, you just keep writing down the to-do's as they come up. Perhaps you listed thirty or forty items for completion this week. You will therefore need a completion date column. Some of those items you may do on Monday and some on Tuesday, etc., so with a running To-Do list, you just keep adding to-do's as they emerge, and you make sure you've indicated the "by when they are due to be completed" in the completion date column.

All To-Do lists, no matter what version, have to have all the way to the far right, a column labeled "Results", so that you have a way to record what actually happened to that item.

There are generally four outcomes that can happen to any item on your To-Do list:

1) **It gets done!** For instance, let's say my to-do was "Call Bob to schedule a drop-off time for his CMA." Bob answers the phone, we discuss that I will drop it off at noon, I hang up the phone, and I'm done (except, of course, I now add another to-do which is "Drop off CMA at Bob's at noon"). But the original to-do is finished, so I put a checkmark in the results column on the right. You can highlight it as well to know you're done. And don't forget to celebrate and congratulate yourself for getting that item done! Even though it's relatively small, it is complete, and completion frees up energy, so acknowledge yourself with a brief pat on the back.

2) **The item gets transferred to another day.** Using our same example, let's say that I left Bob a message on June 16th. Now in my system, I have another column just to the left of the Results column. Here is where I put a little notation of LM, which stands for "Left Message." This tells me that I did take action on that item: I did call Bob, but I didn't reach him so I left a message. At the end of the day, if Bob has not called back, I will do the following so as not to lose sight of that to-do: First, I'll enter the date of the day that I'm transferring that to-do item to, next to the LM abbreviation. That way, if I'm ever wondering "What happened to that call I made to Bob?" I can just look at the original To-Do list and I'll see "LM: 6/17" meaning "I left Bob a message, he didn't call me back on the 16th, so I transferred the item to the 17th." Then I'll transfer that item to the next day (the 17th in this example) where, at the very bottom of the page, I have a section called "Heard From." Here is where I will list all those people that I have either sent an email (EM) to or left a message for (LM). At the end of each day, any to-do that still has an LM (or an EM) next to it, I will write that person's name in the Heard From section on the next page.

What happens next? I have a Follow-Up System to make sure I get back to all those people who are now in my Heard From section at the bottom of the page. Everyone needs to have a follow-up system designed for their business. Here's how mine works: using our same example, Bob's name is now in the June 17th Heard From section. Throughout the 17th, I'm waiting for Bob to call me back. Only 1 of 2 things can happen: either he calls me, we chat, I schedule the drop off, or he doesn't call. If he calls, I put a check mark next to his name at the bottom of the page. If he doesn't call by close of business, I put an X next to his name (this tells me I didn't hear back from him) and I turn to the next day's To-Do list (the 18th) and I re-enter "Call Bob" as a new to-do! In my system, I give people a full day to return either my emails or my messages before I follow up with another contact. How long you want to wait is up to you.

3) **Delegate!** Sometimes you may not have time to take action on a to-do item that's on your list. If you have staff, you have the opportunity to delegate it to someone else. Just make sure you've made a notation next to the

specific to-do with the person's name that you delegated to. In the results column, you can put a capital D, meaning Delegated. Just make sure you follow up with the delegatee to make sure they completed the task (in our example, that they reached Bob and scheduled the drop off of the CMA).

4) **Eliminate**. Use the letter E in the Results column when you eliminate an item from your To-Do list, either because you've transferred it so many times you're now sick of the item, or you have so much resistance to the item that you know you're not ever going to do it, or maybe it's now a moot point (Bob's decided not to sell the house, so dropping off the CMA is no longer necessary). So those are the four options for the Results column of your To-Do list.

Be sure to check your To-Do list frequently throughout the day. On many occasions, I question my clients to see if they have checked their To-Do list recently. Oftentimes, they will say no, I checked it once this morning, and then they are off completing other tasks and getting sidetracked (the phone rang, someone dropped by to ask a question, they got an email alert, and so on). I keep my To-Do list strategically placed on my desk, right in front of me, where it manages my activities all day long. I do something, check it off, and move on. In effect, my To-Do list manages me, I don't manage my To-Do list!

Make sure to go through your To-Do list one final time at night. Ensure that you've been thorough. Make sure that every item has either been checked off, transferred to another day, delegated, or eliminated. Next, turn to tomorrow's To-Do list. Scan through it to see what kind of day you've got coming up. You can group some of the similar items together, perhaps aligning all phone calls into one block of time. Plan from 9:00 to 9:30 to do items number 1, 7, 14, and 16. These are all phone calls and you want to be sure you accomplish them. Grouping your similar items together might help you increase and maximize your effectiveness.

I recommend that my clients script out their first ten items according to a priority system. (The next chapter is all about how to prioritize). You map out the first ten items you want to accomplish for that day; then, when you wake up and get to your desk, ready to work, you have your first ten items already planned out from the night before. Don't second guess yourself at this point; your planning from the previous evening is probably accurate, so just sit down, look at Item #1, and do it!

And consider scheduling your To-Do list according to your natural biorhythms. Think about when you are at your peak (I know I am much better in the morning when I tend to have more energy). If this is you, then when you're more energetic and enthusiastic and awake is when you have the opportunity to make amazing contacts and take care of your most difficult tasks. You can leave emails and paperwork and other mundane tasks that do not require lively verbiage for the afternoon.

Finally, some advice for travelers. If you use a computer-based system, when you're

traveling with little access to your computer, I highly recommend that you print out that day's To-Do list and take it with you. If you're using Outlook or Top Producer, for example, and it's not being synced up with your Smart Phone, then print out the week-at-a-glance, one day at a time. You can then use these papers throughout the day, making notations in pen. When you return to the office, transfer all the notes that you took throughout the day into your computer.

By having a well thought out To-Do system, and diligently using it every day (including weekends, by the way), you are on your way to becoming a Master at maximizing the use of your time on a daily basis.

Chapter 9:

Prioritizing

Many Real Estate Professionals are reactive rather than proactive. They get things right; however, they are not necessarily getting to the right things.

What if you, as a Real Estate Professional, had an array of options that allowed you to prioritize your tasks so that you could schedule your priorities rather than just prioritizing your schedule?

The dictionary definition of reactive is "to act in response to an event or influence." When something happens, you act in response to that event. When the phone rings and you answer it- that is being reactive. When a client calls and screams that we need to leave immediately to see this house before someone else buys it, and you stop your activity to take them to see the house, that is being reactive. Reacting to events and circumstances around you is letting the events and circumstances run your life instead of you running your life.

The dictionary definition of the word proactive is "serving to prepare for, intervene in, or control an expected occurrence or situation, especially a negative or difficult one; to be anticipatory." I interpret that to mean that when you are proactive, you imagine something happening before it actually does and you take steps to prevent it from ever happening in the first place, or at least prepare for it.

I have asked many of my real estate clients if they have ever had a troublesome client, you know what I mean, a client from hell. Although they laugh, they know exactly what I'm talking about. This is the client taking up eighty percent of their time, calling at all hours, harassing them while they are in a key meeting, insisting on special treatment, and so on. I ask my clients if they know that they will be interrupted by this client at some point during the day, and they say "Yes, Brad. They're very predictable, it's very clear that they will do it today and tomorrow and the next day." Then I ask them, since they know that this is going to happen, have they taken any steps to minimize and/or eliminate this behavior on the part of their client, and they look at me like I'm from Mars. I'm basically asking them if they're being proactive rather than reactive when it comes to that particular client, and they sheepishly admit that they're being reactive.

People will allow this behavior to take place, all the while knowing that they need to eliminate it by being proactive. In this example, you need to take preventative steps, you need to act proactively, and create ground rules for this client. They need to know specific times when they can call you and when not to call, when you'll take them out house hunting and when you won't, when it's inappropriate to interrupt you, and so on. In order to not be caught off guard and to be better prepared, you need to have that conversation with them as early in your professional relationship with them as possible

(I sometimes refer to this as an Expectations Conversation, where you and they lay out up front your expectations of one another and how you're going to work together).

It's this thinking about the negative or difficult things that might occur down the road and taking steps today to prevent them from happening that I call being proactive. The difference between being reactive vs. proactive could be the difference between sanity and insanity!

Quoting Covey from *The Seven Habits* book, he says, "Many people climb the ladder of success only to find that it's leaning against the wrong wall." And I believe it was Brian Tracy who made a similar distinction when he said, "It is one thing to be efficient. Efficient means doing it right. But effective means doing the right things." And by the way, you have to do both; you need to be both efficient as well as effective.

For example, let's talk about making phone calls – some people are very efficient at this task. They make the call, have a great conversation, and then they hang up; however, they might be calling the wrong people! They are calling people who are not in a position to buy, sell, or move from their house at this time. In this case, they are efficient but not effective.

Doing the right thing would be to first scan their database for those who have been in their house seven, eight, nine years or longer. Based on statistics, we know, on average, that people move every seven years. Instead of calling those who have recently moved in the last one to five years and having a great conversation with them, Real Estate Agents should be contacting homeowners with a longer ownership profile, combing through their database first to identify those people. Then, and only then, should they have those efficient calls with the right prospects. That's being efficient and effective!

Let's look at door knocking. Agents will pick a "farm," a geographic area that they consider profitable, and begin knocking on doors and introducing themselves. What if they pick the wrong neighborhood, i.e., residents who live in newer homes for less than five years? The likelihood of homeowners from that neighborhood moving is much less than if you farm an older neighborhood where people have been living there ten, twelve, or fifteen years.

In these neighborhoods, there is a good possibility that families have children who are going off to college or empty nesters needing to downsize. It could be that, God forbid, a divorce or death in the family forces them to move from the larger house. Selecting the appropriate neighborhood and doing your research first is an example of doing the right thing. Then you prepare your script, what you'll say if they answer the door, and you get your "leave behind" material ready in case they're not home, and now you're ready to be both efficient as well as effective.

So that's the distinction between efficient and effective. What are some other distinctions that will be useful to you when it comes to prioritizing?

There's a list in the appendix of 21 different ways we prioritize. Now would be a good time to look at that list. You'll see some that you'll instantly recognize as the way you prioritize, and other ways that you don't. For example, we do things that are easy before those that are difficult; things that are quick before things that are lengthy; and planned tasks before unplanned ones. We sometimes respond according to deadlines. The closer the deadline, the more urgent that task seems, so we work on it even though it may not be the wisest use of our time. We might prioritize according to who's asking for our time. The client wanting to buy a one-million-dollar house might be responded to quicker than the potential client wanting a $300,000 house. (It could also be a toss up, since the million-dollar home buyer might be a client from hell, driving you crazy and taking up all of your time). Or if you know they're down-the-road buyers, say six months out into the future, whereas someone else will be ready in one month because of a job change, you'll make the quicker buyer more of a priority.

Always be conscious and aware when it comes to deciding which criteria to use when prioritizing. You should be very clear. It's a matter of upping your consciousness, of asking yourself: is the fastest thing I can do the one I should be working on, or the easiest thing I can do, or should I choose the most fun thing I can do? You cannot make sound and clear choices unless you are conscious about your thinking.

Once you're clear about which criteria you're going to use, many people ask me "When is the best time to prioritize?" When it comes to your To-Do list, I believe the best time to prioritize is the night before your work day, or you could even do it first thing in the morning, if you're disciplined enough. What happens to many Real Estate Professionals, though, is they have good intentions about prioritizing their daily task list and they reason that they'll do it in the morning, but when the morning comes, they get sidetracked by a whole host of things, and they arrive at their work place with no clear prioritized plan for the day. Then the phone rings, their broker asks them a question, and you get the picture. So I highly recommend doing it in the evening, after your work day is done.

Here's how to do it: let's say it's Monday evening and you're wrapping up your day. First, check through your To-Do list, review it and make sure you've checked off what you've accomplished that day (also stop and congratulate yourself for having gotten so much done). Then transfer the items that were not done, eliminate those that you don't need to work on anymore, and delegate those that you can, and then look at tomorrow. The best thing to do at that point is to map out your priority for the next day, to choose a criteria from the list of 21.

Knowing what your goals are, take stock of where you're at. Maybe your bank account is a little low, so you want to focus on activities and to-do's that will put money into your account. Or maybe you're doing pretty well financially, but you haven't been devoting much time to professional development. Maybe you've neglected seeking out bigger marketing opportunities, so you decide to include more writing, blogging, and website development, or promoting yourself as an expert by writing an article. Based on

the criteria you choose, the order of which to-do to work on will be different.

Now let's say that on Tuesday, your criteria will be advancing your professional development. All of your phone calls, actions, and emails will be spent either reading or acquiring names of new books to be read, or visiting the library to do some research, or signing up for a real estate course to obtain a professional designation. You will have a very different day using that criteria than the person who is saying, "I have to get my bank account filled up as quickly as I can." That person's agenda and priorities will be different than the one who is working on professional development.

And even throughout any particular day, your priorities might change. Let's say your morning started out with a focus on lead generation. You get to your desk at 9:00am and you start working on generating leads. But at around 10:00am, a new opportunity presents itself in the form of someone saying, "Hey, Bob, we're having a conference this Saturday, and our keynote speaker just called to say she's sick and can't make it. I know it's short notice but can you be our keynote speaker?" Immediately agreeing, you now have to prepare the topic, get to the photocopy store, create the handout, get your suit back from the cleaners, etc. Suddenly, your priorities from 9:00am have drastically changed to what they are now at 10:00am! So continuously throughout the day, you will be reassessing your priorities based on how the day progresses.

So far, I've been talking about prioritizing in a less structured, more organic, come-from-the-gut approach. Now let me present you with four additional ways to prioritize that are more structured, more left-brained and logical. You will find examples in the appendix that will be very helpful as I explain each system.

The first is called Paired Comparison. It's Monday, and let's say you have seven things to accomplish. Perhaps you need to make a few phone calls, or send a few emails, or both. Write down your items in no particular order and then pick a criteria from the list of 21.

Let's say you've chosen "advancing my career" (which, by the way, is not on the list of 21; you can pick one of those or make up your own) as the criteria that you will be using, and so you want to be doing these items, these tasks, in the order of which one advances your career the most. Review these items and compare each one to all of the other ones in the following manner: start with #1 and compare #1 and #2. Put a check mark next to either #1 or #2, whichever one of the pair is the one that will advance your career the most.

Let's say that between one and two you have chosen #1. Next, compare one and three, and maybe it's still #1 that moves your career ahead more. Place another check mark next to #1. Now you will compare one and four, and this time, it's #4 that takes over (meaning doing #4 will advance your career more than doing #1), so you put a check mark next to #4.

You will then proceed comparing one and five, one and six, and one and seven. Each

time, you are taking a pair of tasks, comparing them to one another using your criteria, and putting a check mark next to the one that gets you closer to achieving that criteria.

Using this same methodology, you now continue on, comparing 2 and 3, 2 and 4, and so on up to 2 and 7, then 3 and 4, 3 and 5, etc., until you have gone through the entire list, comparing every one of the seven items on the list to all the other ones.

Now count up the check marks for each item. The one with the most becomes #1 in the rank column, the second most check marks becomes #2, and so on. You will now work on each item in the order of which got the most check marks. In case of a tie, just compare those two to each other and choose the one that gets you closer to the criteria to do first.

Paired Comparison is useful for a short list of seven, eight, or perhaps a maximum of nine items. Once you become proficient with this system, within one minute or less, you can compare all of the items to each other and by the end of that minute, you will know which item is first, second, etc.

People often ask: "What if ranked item #1 takes an hour to do and item #2 takes only five minutes? Shouldn't I do the shorter task first, since it will take less time?" I always answer with a resounding "No!" You chose the item that got ranked #1 because, based on the criteria of advancing your career, it was the one that got you the closest to that goal. Time does not matter here. Even if it takes one hour, that is the one you chose as the most important. We are not using time to make decisions. If you go with the same list of nine items and change the criteria to "Which one of these can I get done the fastest?" your rank order will turn out different. Item #6, for example, may actually wind up being ranked as the last item that you work on because it takes the longest, whereas before it wound up as ranked item #1 because it moved your career forward more than all the others. Choosing the criteria is absolutely critical when you are performing paired comparison, as different criteria will result in different ranked orders.

Deadline and Payoff is another way to select items and place them in a priority order. Now you are using two criteria at the same time rather than just one. You use this system when you have a larger list of to-do's, say 10 to 20 items. Again, you list all of your tasks on a sheet of paper to begin the process.

For the deadline, you have three choices: long term, short term, and immediate. These, of course, are subjective, so for argument's sake, let's say long term is a week or more into the future, short term means it has to get done today, and immediate means it has to get done in the next 2 hours. You are free to modify these deadlines and choose other time frames, for example, 2 weeks, 1 week, and 1 day. Play with it to see what works for you.

Payoff also has three choices: low, moderate, and high, and again, these are subjective. A 1 is for low-recognition, low-impact, or low-visibility items, meaning completing

that item or task doesn't give you a lot of bang for the buck. Moderate, which is a 3, is a medium amount of recognition, impact, or visibility. And a rating of 5 is high recognition, high impact, and gives you a lot of visibility, such as a major article on the front page of the newspaper.

So now you take your first item and ask yourself, "What is the deadline for this item? When does it need to be completed by?" If the answer is "within the next hour," it's immediate, so it gets a 3 in the Deadline column. And if you will receive a huge bang for your buck by completing this item, you're going to give it a 5 for payoff, which you place in the Payoff column. Now by adding those two together, you get what is called the *weighted score*. A 3 plus a 5 is an 8, which is the highest score.

Now you move on to your second item, which you believe is short term, meaning you need this done by 5:00 today, so you give it a 2 in the Deadline column, and it's a moderate payoff, so it gets a 3 in the Payoff column. The weighted score of that item is a 5. You now continue down your list of tasks, giving each one a deadline score of 1, 2, or 3, and a payoff score of 1, 3, or 5. Then you add the two numbers together for the weighted score. Your weighted scores will vary anywhere from 2 to 8.

Once you have the weighted scores, you now do your 8's first, because these are all immediate and have big payoffs. The deadline is the next hour and the payoff is high. It doesn't matter what order you do them in because they all need to be accomplished in the next hour and they are all high recognition/ high payoff, so just pick one and get going. When the 8's are done, then proceed with your 7's, then 6's, etc., all the way down to the 2's, if there's time that day to get that far. Items that are 1/1 or 1/3 will probably move to another day, because in general, they are items with a long term deadline and don't need to be worked on right now; however, as the deadline gets closer and the number changes from a 1 to a 2 or a 2 to a 3, that weighted score is going to get higher and you'll end up working on that task sooner.

The third system is called Triage, which I believe originated during World War I as a way to save lives. When the wounded were lined up outside the hospital tent, they were divided into three groups: those who would live and didn't need immediate medical attention right away, those who were going to die no matter what attention they got, and those who could be saved if they got immediate attention. Needless to say, the people in the third group were moved to the front of the line, received immediate medical help, and more lives were saved. We are going to use Triage on our To-Do list, not to save lives, but to get more accomplished during an emergency or during crunch times, such as right before a vacation.

Let's say you have thirty items on your To-Do list, and you are leaving Saturday morning for a one week vacation. You need to perform Triage on your list of thirty. You're going to break the thirty into approximate groups of ten using the following criteria: first, those that have to get done, which are your A's. They <u>must</u> get done, because if they don't, you could lose your job or a client will bolt and go to another company. In other words, something drastic or serious could happen if these A's don't get finished before

you leave on vacation.

Your B's are what you would like to get done. It would be great if you could get to them, but nothing critical is going to happen if you don't for one week.

Your C's are your nice to get done, but you don't even want to look at these; you don't even want to think about them, because they are so far down the road, they are virtually unimportant right now. Eventually, though, they will become important, but right now you steer clear of them, staying focused on your A's and B's.

So here's how to use this system: You will assign two different numbers to each task. The first number is called Importance. It gets a 1 if it's very important, meaning a high payoff and/or high impact. Give it a 2 if it's moderate payoff and/or moderate impact, and a 3 if it's low payoff and/or low impact.

Estimated Time is the second number you will assign. If it's a brief time investment, give it a 1, a moderate time investment gets a 2, and a significant time investment gets a 3 (brief, moderate, and significant are subjective, so for example, you might say brief is 1/2 hour, moderate is 1-2 hours, and significant is an entire day).

Now quickly go through your entire list of 30 tasks, giving each task an Importance number and an Estimated Time number. For example, if you have a task that's high payoff/impact and it takes a brief amount of time, it's a 1-1, or an A, a must do. If it's moderate payoff/impact and significant amount of time, it's a 2-3, which is a C, don't do (or better stated, don't do right now, the week before your vacation; this task can wait). Once you've gone through your entire list of 30, everything now has an importance number and a time number. Must Do's are 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, and 2-1, Nice To Do's are 2-2 and 3-1, and Don't Do's are 2-3, 3-2, and 3-3. If you look in the Appendix, you'll find the key to interpreting the numbers there as well.

A word of caution here with your list of 30 (or whatever your number is): it's not always going to break out exactly into 10, 10, and 10. It might be 12, 8, and 10, or 9, 10, and 11. But it's going to be very, very close to 1/3 in each group if you use this system. Once you're done doing the numbers, attack those A's with a vengeance, because you must get them all done before you leave on vacation. When you've completed them all, then move on to the B's. And don't even look at the C's, in fact, take them off the list and put them in a drawer (but make sure you look at them upon your return!). By removing the C's, your list is now only 20 items long, and psychologically, it looks easier to manage, so your stress goes down.

Finally, let me end with the Four Quadrants from Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. I recommend this classic book to anyone who is attempting to be more effective and efficient at activity and time management.

Stephen has developed his four quadrants, which you can see in the Appendix. Quadrant 1 in the top left hand corner is both Important and Urgent. These include

crises, pressing problems, deadline driven projects, possibly ringing telephones (certainly urgent, but you don't know until you answer if it's also important), maybe screaming clients, and so on. A screaming client may not be important, though they always seem urgent, so take that one with a grain of salt. Many Real Estate Professionals spend an inordinate amount of time in this quadrant. They're constantly putting out fires, holding clients' hands, filling out paperwork, and a whole host of other activities, many of which are essential to closing deals. But spending too much time in this quadrant can drive you crazy, and takes time away from Quadrant 2, which I believe is the most important quadrant of the four.

Quadrant 2 is called Important But Not Urgent. The activities that fall into this quadrant (located in the top right) include planning, recreation, relationship building, and prevention. Being proactive and taking steps to prevent something from happening is not urgent, but it certainly is important. It's not urgent to go on a vacation, but again, it's extremely important. And it's not urgent to plan your week in advance but it is extremely important. Many Real Estate Professionals do not spend anywhere near enough time in this quadrant, and that's why they have to spend a lot of time in Quadrant 1.

Quadrant 3, in the bottom left hand corner, is Not Important But Urgent. Some phone calls, some emails, some meetings, certain popular activities, and most interruptions, are not that important; however, they are urgent - the person is standing right there at your door knocking urgently to get your attention, but all they want to know is what your lunch request is. It's urgent (at least for them, and their urgency tends to rub off on you) but it's not important (unless, of course, you're starving to death, in which case it's really Quadrant 1, Urgent and Important).

Lastly, in the bottom right is Quadrant 4. This quadrant is Not Urgent and Not Important, such as surfing the web, opening mail, doing a crossword puzzle, trivial tasks, filing, and so on. You want to drastically limit the time you spend in this quadrant. Yes, once in a while it's nice to veg out, to zone out, to take a break. But try to limit the amount of time you spend here.

What Covey says throughout his book is that you want to make sure you are spending adequate time in Quadrant 2 - important but not urgent. This includes planning, thinking, visioning, scheduling, and reviewing your goals and priorities, so that you are more proactive and don't wind up spending a lot of time in Quadrants 1, 3, and 4.

For example, having the oil changed on your car is certainly important; however, it is not urgent (unless the red light on the dashboard is flashing, and black smoke is coming out of the hood!). If that's the case, now it's become both urgent and important. It's now a Quadrant 1 activity. However, if you had been proactive and scheduled an appointment to have the oil changed sooner (Quadrant 2), you would not have faced the crisis of the engine blowing up.

Heading to the gym is extremely important but not urgent. There are no physical-

fitness police cruising your neighborhood, requiring you to exercise. But we all know it's extremely important to get to the gym. Don't wait until you are recuperating in a hospital from a heart attack to realize "Yes, I should have hit the treadmill a little more often and maybe I wouldn't be here now." Choosing to make exercise a priority, and then planning to go to the gym and putting it into your daily or weekly calendar, is a Quadrant 2 activity. Remember, the more time spent in Quadrant 2, the less time spent in Quadrants 1, 3, and 4.

So hopefully you now see the importance of prioritizing, and you have some new tools and techniques to help you do the prioritizing. The question is, will you do it? Is it enough of a priority for you?

Chapter 10:

Planning a week at a time

Most Real Estate Professionals are driven by their circumstances; clients calling, deadlines approaching, phones ringing, etc. They barely plan out their day much less the whole week in advance.

What if you, as a Real Estate Professional, could easily learn and then implement, a five-step planning process for scheduling one week at a time that would dramatically increase your productivity and effectiveness while also reducing your stress? Well, here it is!

An experience with a dynamic class that I attended in October of 1982 changed my life forever. That class, taught by productivity experts, was called *More Time*. In that class, I learned how to go from what I was doing at the time, which was no planning, to being taught how to plan one week at a time and to look much further out into my future. As a result of that teaching, I became much more forward thinking, and that habit is still with me as of today. I started to plan my week in advance every Sunday, and I'm proud to say that I have not missed one single Sunday since October, 1982. Planning my week is now a habit and something I do on a consistent basis.

Dwight Eisenhower once said, "Plans are useless but planning is essential." He was referring to the planning process and how very critical it is to think things through, consider contingency plans, and the likelihood of what can go wrong here, there and everywhere.

The actual plans that you write down aren't always critical because they oftentimes change. Many Real Estate Professionals who I work with do their planning on Sunday for the upcoming next week. They have a pretty good grasp of how they want their week to go, and they've mapped out their activities, meetings, phone calls, lead generation time, and so forth, in a fairly precise manner. However, arriving at the office at 9:00am Monday morning, the whole plan falls apart within minutes because of a sudden change in the interest rates, or clients getting nervous about an offer, or the phone rings and they answer it, or a whole host of other unforeseen events. And everything shifts. Their whole world is turned upside down, their stress skyrockets, and the entire plan, so carefully thought out the night before, goes down the toilet. Sound familiar?

However, because they have done their planning and thinking (remember Quadrant 2 from the previous chapter?) they've developed contingency plans and back up plans that they immediately implement. The fact that they have spent the time looking ahead and knowing what's on their plate for that week, allows them both the ability and the flexibility to make adjustments. They have gone through that planning process on Sunday before their work week has even started, and actually looked at the whole week, so they

are more prepared to handle adjustments and crises than the unprepared person.

Brian Tracy says, "If you're failing to plan, then you're planning to fail." It's extremely important to take the time and put in the energy and effort to map out your future. It's crucial to look ahead and anticipate as much as possible what could go wrong, as well say how you want your week to actually go. Otherwise, you're going to be on someone else's To-Do list rather than focusing on your own!

It's absolutely critical for Real Estate Professionals to be aware that they are client driven. Having worked in an array of industries and with the people that I have coached in my thirty-three years of being successfully self-employed, I have found this to be true: both the real estate and the construction industries seem to be the ones most driven by external circumstances, by clients that keep appointments and those who don't, by interest rates changing overnight, even daily and hourly, depending on world events, by brokers and other agents interrupting you all day long, and so on. For example, in the construction industry, the foreman or the general contractor could diligently plan out their week on Sunday evening. They could have the whole crew show up on time at the job site at 9:00am on Monday morning to pour the foundation; however, if the cement guy is stuck on the freeway and cannot get there, the contractor has a crew with no job to do. If he's planned out his week like I'm suggesting, hopefully he's anticipated this event and has a back up plan ready to be implemented. But if he hasn't planned out the week, he's in a lot of trouble.

So I'll say it again: it is extremely important in the real estate arena to plan for the upcoming week. I would say that after goal setting, this is the next most important skill for Real Estate Professionals to master. If the only thing that you as Real Estate Professional take away from this entire book is 1) learning how to set your goals, and 2) being absolutely diligent in scheduling and planning your week in advance, I guarantee that you will dramatically increase your productivity and effectiveness as well as dramatically reduce your stress, and you will move your career forward faster than you can imagine.

(Note: when I refer to the real estate industry, I am including escrow, title, mortgage brokers and consultants, loan officers, real estate agents and brokers, etc. They all seem to have quite similar issues when it comes to planning, scheduling, and dealing with clients and a fast-moving and fast-changing landscape).

People who are better at using their time have been trained; it's an acquired skill, not an accident or something they were born with. They have turned planning into a habit; every Sunday without fail (as I have done for the past twenty-nine years), they make it a habit to block time into their calendar to sit down and work **on** their business rather than just **in** their business (more on that critical distinction later). These people have become much more disciplined. They've taken training on how to plan, they've practiced and refined it into a skill, and then they've turned it into a habit by doing it over and over and over. That's why, in my opinion, these people are better at using their minutes than others.

Every culture has one week as one of their measurements of time. It's always seven days, no matter which culture, no matter what type of calendar. However, the months may differ, and the years may differ. We even have leap year, adding an extra day to make it all work out. But if you mention a week in any culture on the planet, it's always seven days.

When it comes to planning ahead, there is something about a week where it's just enough time to think about the future. You still have some control over things that happen. It's not too far into the future like a month or a year, and yet it's more than a day which goes by too quickly. A week seems to be the optimum amount of time to plan.

Here are a few advantages of planning a week at a time that have been shared with me by people who I have taught my time and activity management class to in the past:

- ✓ it helps you think ahead;
- ✓ it helps you see and avoid problems that are coming down the pike;
- ✓ it streamlines the work flow;
- ✓ you can manage your employees more effectively when you are thinking and planning one week ahead of time;
- ✓ it helps you coordinate with others;
- ✓ you can avoid over-committing (when you look at an entire week and see where you are busy and where you're not, it's easier to say no to people);
- ✓ you actually accomplish way more;
- ✓ you become much more effective;
- ✓ you are more confident and relaxed; and
- ✓ your stress goes way down.

In fact, every person I have ever worked with in my career to whom I have taught weekly planning has reported the same two things to me: productivity has gone way up, and stress has gone way down when compared to either daily planning or no planning at all.

Working **in** your business versus working **on** your business are two very different and distinct tasks. In Michael Gerber's book, *The E-Myth*, he refers to working in your business as doing all the stuff that a Real Estate Agent or a Mortgage Professional has to do to make the business work: digging holes for the yard sign, scheduling and going on appointments, preparing for and giving listing presentations, putting together a CMA, looking up the rates, writing up offers, locking in rates, etc. are all ***in*** the business. That is the business of real estate.

Working on your business is stepping back, planning, and thinking through what your desired goals are and where you want your business to take you. It's a Quadrant 2 activity, according to Covey.

There are 168 hours in a week. What I am suggesting here is that you spend one of those hours working on the other 167! That's just .6%, not even a full percentage point. There's no other activity that I can think of where the potential payoff is that huge. Invest (and notice my choice of word here) that 1 hour, those precious 60 minutes, thinking about and planning the other 167 hours or 10,020 minutes. Again, I cite Covey: this is Important But Not Urgent. You must block the time into your calendar to do the planning or other things will pop up, demanding your attention.

I recommend that you block the time on Sundays to do your weekly planning. Sunday tends to be a day of reflection for many people anyway. It's also the end of the weekend and the next week hasn't started yet. And I recommend that you block a full hour to do this planning process, even though you may only need 30 minutes. If you get done early, great! Go watch some football on TV, or better yet, take an unplanned walk outside with your family (or just yourself).

Some of my clients initially scheduled their planning for Monday morning and have since changed back to Sundays. What happened was that when they arrived at work on Monday morning, they were immediately thrown into their business and they did not have time to work on their business, so the planning never happened. One of my clients who started with Friday afternoons as their planning day has recently switched back to Sundays because they hade a goal to leave early for the weekend to spend more time with their family, and the planning, since it wasn't urgent, got put off. So I definitely recommend that your planning for the week happens on Sunday.

Here are the five steps for planning a week at a time:

Step 1 – Review your yearly, quarterly, and monthly goals, revisiting what you said you wanted to accomplish for the year, quarter, and month.

If you've gotten this far in the book, you've already read the chapter on Goal Setting. You already have your yearly, quarterly, and monthly goals written out in the SMART formula we talked about: Specific, Measurable, etc. They are written out, they are challenging, and you know what you want to accomplish. All you're doing here is re-reading them to get back in touch with your dreams, your vision, your desires. I recommend that you take 5-10 minutes to go back and reread what you wrote on January 1st, just to refresh your memory and get back in touch with the bigger picture. After you've mastered Step 1 on a weekly basis, you can try reviewing your goals on a daily basis to see if that keeps them fresher in your mind.

Step 2 – Review the previous week. Look back at the week that just ended for lessons learned: insights or actions you want to repeat, and things you never want to duplicate ever again. Remember, we learn from our mistakes just as much, if not more, than from our successes.

This is not meant to be a pity party, a time to feel sorry for yourself. It is quite the opposite: 5-10 minutes to review and appreciate yourself for having had a great week,

and a time to learn from the things that weren't so great.

In looking back at your week, you might recognize that you had all of your phone numbers organized and at your fingertips before making your calls. That was a wise move, preventing an unproductive day. In saving you valuable time, it was an action you want to repeat.

And you can also identify things that need to be corrected. When looking back at last week, you noticed that you showed up for a lunch appointment and the other person did not. You have now learned that you need to confirm all appointments at least twenty-four hours in advance, ensuring that the other party is on the same page (of the calendar) and that they are definitely going to meet up with you.

> **Step 3** – Review the upcoming week and plan out your entire week's activities. You are checking all of your appointments, meetings, lunch dates, and things that have already been put into the calendar. Here is where you should check your calendar to make sure you did not double book anyone, and that you have left enough time for travel.

I know people who will book meetings and then forget to end them on time. They then must rush to get into the elevator, go down to find their car in the parking lot, climb in, and drive to the next appointment, oftentimes arriving late (which then throws off their entire schedule for the rest of the day). You need to ensure that all of your activities and appointments are scheduled with plenty of time between them so you can drive safely and arrive on time (which, in my book, means early!).

This review might trigger some action steps, so you'll be reminded of things happening later in the week that you can prepare for earlier in the week. For example, let's say you have a listing appointment on Thursday evening. This means that you need to take all of your items for that presentation with you, so you should probably put them out Wednesday night by the front door so you don't forget them on Thursday morning as you rush out the door to a staff meeting. You also need your laptop, along with the cord and the mouse. Remember, all this planning is taking place on Sunday. You are looking all the way out to Thursday, and it's triggering some action steps that you need to take on Wednesday. So as you are writing out your To-Do list for Wednesday, you will add "Pack all needed supplies by the front door Wednesday night" so they are there when you leave on Thursday morning. This looking ahead process actually prompts action steps. In falls in line with one of Covey's 7 Habits, "Begin with the end in mind." By looking all the way to the end of your week and then working backwards to the present (in this case, Sunday) you will fill in all sorts of action steps in a proactive fashion that you might have missed had you just planned each day in the morning. In our example, if you hadn't planned the week in advance and just gotten up on Thursday morning and looked at your calendar, you'd see that you had a listing presentation that evening and now you had no time to prepare or pack all the needed supplies.

If you use a monthly calendar for all of your appointments and a daily page for your To-Do lists, then Step 3 will also include transferring the items from the monthly calendar to the daily page. Start with the page for Monday and schedule out that entire day. Block out "8:30 to 9:30 - in a staff meeting" with fifteen minutes on either side for travel. Then travel home for a client call from 10:15 to 11:15, followed by an hour of lead generation, and so on.

Transfer your activities or tasks for that week to your daily pages and map out your entire day from the moment you get up in the morning to the moment you go to sleep at night. Looking at that page for that day, you now have a clear plan for the day, filled with great, productive activities.

A word of caution here: although you're extremely busy, try not to block up every single minute of every day. You need to leave what is called *white space* between meetings and appointments, time that is unscheduled. This is time to catch your breath, take a short rest, recharge your batteries. It's also good to leave some chunks of time unplanned and unscheduled, in case an emergency should arise. Let's say you've scheduled lead generation for Tuesday, 10-11am. You start out great, making a bunch of calls from 10-10:30, and then your computer says "You've got mail!" Unfortunately for you, you look at it and there's a crisis or emergency that appears to need your immediate attention (I say "appears" because many times these are emergencies in other people's minds, but unfortunately, you have to take care of it). So you stop lead generating for that last half hour. But you still need to make up that time later on, either that day or another day, in order to keep your commitment to do an hour a day. So you do what's called Erase and Replace. You erase the lead generation from 10:30 to 11:00 and you replace it somewhere else in your week, hopefully fitting it into one of those white spaces I mentioned a moment ago. In other words, you move that half hour to Thursday from 2:00-2:30 in a slot that you left unscheduled.

Step 3 of the planning process should take about 15-20 minutes to get the entire week mapped out so that you know every day what you're doing, where you're going when and with whom, what activities you're going to be working on, etc.

Step 4 – Lead Generation time. I highly recommend that ALL Real Estate Professionals use time-blocking to schedule large chunks of time for lead generation. I teach a two-hour class just on lead generation, so I won't be covering that topic here, but suffice it to say that my students know that without leads, you don't have a business. I believe that lead generation is so critical to your success that I have made it it's own separate step.

You must treat your lead generation business just as you would a separate business. You need to allocate multiple hours to it, plus resources and a budget. Be sure to block lead generation time into every single day if possible. And in case you're wondering, "Well, Brad, how much time each day should I allocate to lead generation?" the answer is, whatever amount of time you need in order to generate enough leads to hit your

goals! I usually recommend at least 1 hour per day. And remember to also allocate lead follow up time as well, as this is different than lead generation.

> **Finally, Step 5** – Step 5 is everything else that you need to book: going to the gym, doing paperwork, filing, spending time with your family, reading, watching TV, and so on. Anything and everything else that's important to you for that week.

You may need to fill in some of that white space, some of those open spots that I mentioned earlier. Again, be careful not to fill in every single minute of every day; leave some time in case there's a change of plans. If your boss invites you out for a drink or you want to have lunch with your spouse, you would want to accommodate those requests, so you'd have to change a few things around on your calendar, if possible. Keep some white space open for things like this.

There also needs to be time for spontaneity, serendipity, or just smelling the roses. Make sure that you leave some time available for that, but if you're like me, you may actually have to plan some spontaneous time. I know that sounds funny, but here's what I mean. Taking time to walk my dog is not usually scheduled in. I know I have to walk him, it's on the To-Do list, but I don't have it blocked into the calendar because the time varies daily. I don't block it in since it's more of a flexible to-do. That is what I mean by being spontaneous.

That is my 5 Step Planning Process for Goal Accomplishment. Make it a habit to plan your week in advance every Sunday. It only takes 30-60 minutes, and when you follow these five steps, I guarantee you will have a week that is way more productive and far less stressful than you have been used to.

And remember to watch out for Murphy! Many of you have met Murphy and you know his First Law: *Whatever can go wrong, will, and at the least opportune time*. So be prepared with contingency plans. But you may not be familiar with his second law: *It always takes longer than you think*. The meeting will run over, the traffic will cause you to take longer than expected, that phone call will go on and on (ever hear the phrase, "Hey, have you got a minute?" We all know it's never just a minute), and so on. So as far as time and planning go, since you already know it's going to take longer than you think, you need to take that into consideration when you're doing your weekly planning.

My recommendation to my clients is always to add 25% more time than you think it will take. Thinking the meeting with the Williams family will be an hour for that listing presentation, schedule an hour and fifteen minutes just to be on the safe side. If you have a project such as putting together a CMA or working on a few reports and you think it'll take 2 hours, go ahead and block two and a half hours into your calendar just to be safe.

Granted, you won't be able to schedule as much into your week as you'd like. You will, however, get to complete your task rather than being half-finished and having it spill over into the following week (you will also get the satisfaction of checking it off your

To-Do list, and we've already discussed how good that will make you feel). You may complete fewer items; however, they will be complete, and off your To-Do list. This also makes you pick and choose more wisely what goes onto your To-Do list in the first place.

Now what if you actually do complete your task in 2 hours instead of the two and a half hours you originally predicted? You now have an extra half hour of unscheduled time! At this point, go read, take a walk, be spontaneous, or call a friend for a bite to eat. I guarantee you will find plenty to keep you busy if you should finish the project earlier than anticipated.

There will always be more to do since you are a busy Real Estate Professional; that's the whole reason why I wrote this book. I wanted to help people like you get more done while having less stress and more fun. You have big things on your plate and you are never going to be at a loss for filling your day. Rest assured that you will always have plenty of things to do that are fun, fulfilling, exciting, and will move your business forward.

Now what about contingency plans? You know, alternate plans A, B and C. For example, you need to ask yourself as you plan your week: "What happens if...? What happens if Mr. and Mrs. Williams aren't there when I arrive at the door? What am I going to do, how will I reach them, what is my back up plan for contacting them, do I have their numbers with me, have I reminded them the day before?" You want to make sure you have covered all, or as many as possible, of your bases with contingency plans. Obviously, you cannot anticipate every possible thing that could go wrong; however, some things are predictable. Be prepared with some plans for "what if...?"

I have polled people in my classes and have asked them if they plan for emergencies before they happen. They sometimes look at me like I'm from Mars. "How can you plan for an emergency? Isn't an emergency something that's unpredictable?" And I ask them in return, "If you know with some degree of certainty that your clients from hell are going to bombard you with calls throughout the day, and interrupt you in the middle of a meeting, you need to take preventative measures earlier in the week to minimize those interruptions as best you can." You need to plan for emergencies before they become problems. That is part of your planning process as well.

I have read that approximately 5-10% of your work week should be spent in planning activities, in Quadrant 2. If you work a standard forty-hour work week, then 2-4 hours a week should be spent working <u>on</u> your business, not <u>in</u> your business.

2-4 hours isn't really very much time. If you spend one hour on Sunday using the 5 Step Planning Process to plan the week, and then from Monday through Saturday you spend five minutes in the morning planning out that day with five minutes at the end of the day thinking about tomorrow (for a total of ten minutes a day for six days) you've now spent your two hours. Even spending twenty minutes a day, six days a week, and one hour on Sunday, you will have spent only three hours of your work week on planning, which is still less than 10%. Obviously, if your work week is longer than 40

hours, the time spent planning will increase, as well it should.

In conclusion, by using all of the tips in this chapter you will, at the end of the week, find yourself having been much more productive and with your stress level significantly diminished. If not, you'll be the first person among the thousands that I've trained so far who hasn't, a rather dubious distinction, I might say.

Chapter 11:

Dealing with people and phone interruptions

Most people interruptions are as deadly as they are costly. They throw us off track, interrupt our flow, take us off purpose, and cost us time as well as money. The same can be said for telephone interruptions.

What if you could learn several strategies to prevent and/or minimize the occurrence of and length of people interruptions? What if you could minimize phone interruptions and shave time off of your calls? Just think how much more productive as a Real Estate Professional you would be.

A short time ago, you only had a regular land line phone in your office and you could only be interrupted if you were in your office when the phone rang. Now, with cell phones, people are interrupted everywhere, in the office, out of the office, while shopping, standing in line at the movies, even ***in*** the movies!

With call interruption capability on our phones, you are on the line with one person and another call comes in to interrupt you. Or you're at your office talking with a colleague and your phone rings. Almost everyone answers the call, interrupting their time with the person standing right there in front of them. And they (usually) don't even know who's calling them! It could be a telemarketer, for all they know. But because they want to be seen as helpful or nice, they take the calls. I say, with no hesitation, that taking those calls and disregarding the live human being right there in front of you, will hurt you more in the long run than actually help you.

Interruptions are deadly because they take us off track. Imagine a train that has been derailed, has fallen off the track; it takes a tremendous amount of time to get that train back up on the track. First, emergency crews need to attend to the injured passengers and the wreckage. Then other emergency crews need to transport another train with cranes to lift the cars that fell of the track back onto the track. It's an incredibly time consuming and long process.

The same thing happens with both phone and people interruptions. You get into a conversation, you get distracted, you are thrown off track, and it takes time to recover, to get back to whatever it was you were doing prior to the interruption.

For example, you are a Real Estate Professional working at your desk when another agent interrupts you, asking you a question and curtailing your activity. You pay attention to him, using all of the good communication skills you already know or will learn in a later chapter of this book. Now when he leaves, you have to figure out what you were just doing and where you left off, and that takes time. If you were writing an email, you might need to start back at the beginning, re-reading the entire message to

figure out what you were going to say next. If you were filling out any kind of form, you'll have to go back, find out where you left off, re-think what you were doing and whether you needed to attach an addendum, and only then will you be able to continue on.

I have heard it said that one hour of uninterrupted time is equal to two hours of interrupted time. (By the way, the average worker in the United States is interrupted approximately once every six to eight minutes). If you are being interrupted once every six to eight minutes, it will take you two hours to accomplish what could have been done in one hour if you had not been interrupted by people, phones, or email.

So again, interruptions are deadly and they are time consuming. It takes time to deal with interruptions because they're unplanned, unexpected, you don't have your materials ready or your wits about you, and in general, they throw your day completely off track.

Dealing with phone interruptions

1) The simplest way to prevent phone interruptions is to (drum roll, please) turn off the ringer or completely turn off the phone!!! When I make that suggestion to some of my coaching clients, they become unhinged, they are completely aghast at my suggestion.

One of my real estate clients mentioned that she was buried in paperwork, and it wasn't getting done because her phone kept ringing, and she kept answering it. I suggested that she actually turn off her phone for forty-five minutes per day, Monday through Friday. I challenged her to turn it off for just 5 days for those forty-five minutes per day, and she became rebellious and argumentative. "I can't do that, people need to get through to me!" she proclaimed.

After calming her down, I related to her that, to the best of my knowledge, no one had ever died from phone neglect. More likely than not, none of her clients would quit on her or be upset if she didn't answer her phone for those 45 minutes per day. Well, on the next coaching call, she told me that she was completely caught up on all of her paperwork since she had shut off her phone as I had suggested. Basically, it was like she was getting one and a half hours of work done in that 45 minute timeframe. She was doing in 3.75 hours what would have taken her seven and a half hours worth of time because of the interruptions. So turn off the ringer.

2) Another idea - again very simplistic – is to use caller ID. Look at the caller ID, and if the person calling is not worth the interruption, then let it go to voicemail and handle it later. Schedule time to listen to your messages, and then follow up and deal with them when you can and on your own terms, making you much more efficient.

3) Leave and request detailed messages. For example, when leaving a message, be short and concise, and if there's no reason for them to call you back, say so and don't leave your number. If you need something from

them, request the information clearly, with detailed instructions. For example, you call and leave a message telling Bob that both he and his wife need to sign addendum 47 down at the bottom. They can fax it to you at (your fax number), and then say thanks, goodbye, and hang up. Now, you have prevented that person from interrupting you by leaving a very clear, specific, detailed message. You were being proactive and eliminated a possible future disruption.

And you can train your clients by asking them to leave you very detailed messages to which you can respond via email, thereby skipping the necessity of making a return call. When you teach them to leave you very detailed messages and information, no one has to waste time on unnecessary calls.

4) Schedule a best time to receive calls. Your outgoing message would sound something like this: "Hi, you've reached the real estate office of Joe Smith. I will be available between 11:00 and 12:00 and then again between 3:00 and 4:00, so if you'd like to reach me in person, please call during those times." Or you could say, "Hi, you've reached the real estate office of Joe Smith. Thank you very much for calling. I am currently helping clients just like you and I will return all of my calls either between 11:00 and 12:00 or between 3:00 and 4:00. Please leave a detailed message and I will get back to you then." These hours need to be dependable hours. People will call you during the hours you mentioned, and they will want to speak with you directly, so you need to be available during those hours you mentioned on your outgoing message. Or they will leave a very detailed message, and they know that you are going to call them back during those hours, so they may be waiting by the phone for your call. You most likely won't be interrupting them because they are actually expecting your call.

5) Take an odd lunch hour. Since most people go to lunch from 12:00 to 1:00, a pretty standard time in the business world, take your lunch from 11:00 to 12:00 or 1:00 to 2:00. When your clients and everyone else in your office is out from 12:00 to 1:00, you can work solidly for that hour and not be interrupted (you'll also get served quicker at the restaurant when you do go during the less crowded time slot).

6) If you have co-workers or clients who constantly interrupt you, hold a preemptive strike and call them first. Phone the person who you know will interrupt you three or four times during the day first thing in the morning and say, "Barbara, I'm glad that I reached you. I am going to be in meetings all day and not able to take calls. Here is the information you requested and there should be no reason for you to phone back. I am trying to avoid interruptions today." And she says, "Yes, that's fine. Thank you for the information, I don't need to call you now." We call that a preemptive strike; stopping them in advance before they call you.

Shaving time off of phone you make and/or receive

1) If you are making an outgoing call, have a plan and have a script; in other words, write down what you'll be talking about with the other person. List out the three or four ideas that you need to spend time talking to them about and the order in which you will present them. Script it out. This will shave some time off of the call.

2) Cut to the chase. When you plan out these conversations for outgoing calls, be very clear - you are calling them. Get them on the phone, and get right down to business. It might sound like this: "Hey, Bob, this is Brad. Look, I know you're very busy so let me get right to the point." Or "Hey, Bob, I don't have much time right now, so let me just tell you ...." Now I realize that my style is very direct, and when it comes to saving time, I find it useful to just get to the point. Of course, your style may be different and this would be too blunt for you. Modify it if you can to suit your style.

3) Save time on an outgoing or scheduled call by emailing your questions, agenda, or topic ahead of time so the other person can do some research and get prepared. Get your questions for them out there ahead of time.

4) Shave time off a call by phoning your clients just before they head out to lunch or are about to leave the office. If you are phoning them at work and you know they have lunch between 12:00 and 1:00 or they leave the office at 5:00, call them at 11:55 (or 4:55). You know they are about to walk out the door to go eat (or go home) so they hopefully will be in a hurry to speed up the call and just cut to the chase.

5) Incoming calls are a little different. This person has now interrupted you; maybe you ignored my advice about minimizing your interruptions, they called, you answered, and now it's interrupting you in the middle of something. Here are some tips to make those calls shorter and trim a couple of minutes off of each call:

6) Paraphrase and Restate. Politely interrupt them after they have started to repeat themselves and say "Sally, let me repeat back to you what I have heard. You said this and this, is that correct?" "Yes, Brad, that's exactly what I said." "Great, thank you," and then tell them that you'll get back to them tomorrow, and then end the call. Again, don't be rude or abrupt, just be business-like during business hours to move your business along and save time.

7) Use the phrase "Right now." When they are on the phone and you have exchanged pleasantries, ask them what you can do to help them *right now.* When you phrase it with the *right* ***now*** at the end of the sentence, the other person becomes more focused. They begin thinking about the solution,

what you can actually do for them, rather than just bantering back and forth. Remember, you might not have time for a lot of small talk. If you chat for just 3 minutes extra with someone and you have twenty calls per day, you would be spending an hour of your time in small talk. In an eight-hour day, that's 12.5% of your entire work day; that's a lot of time. You want to start shaving time off of your calls.

8) Purchase a three minute egg timer, the hourglass kind with sand in it. When a person calls and interrupts you, flip the timer over to start the sand flowing. See if you can move the conversation along so as to be done in three minutes. (By the way, three minutes is a long time if you are anxious and want to get back to work).

9) How to end a call when it's gone overtime: "Say, Mary, before we hang up I have one more point to cover." The person knows that this call is coming to an end because you've planted the seed with that phrase. And make sure you only say one more thing! Do not continue with five other points; wrap things up.

10) Stand up when you are on the phone and your calls will go quicker. I've tried it and this actually works for me. When you stand up your sense of urgency soars. Your voice will change a bit and people on the other end of the phone will notice the difference. You are more relaxed when sitting down, and there's less of a sense of urgency, so people will talk slower and take longer to complete the call. Standing up does shave a couple of minutes off of a phone call. Now I know a few of you are thinking "So what's the big deal over shaving one or two minutes off of each call?" If I asked you how many phone calls you have in one given work day, many of you would answer somewhere between thirty and forty calls. If you could shave one minute off of each of those calls, you'd be saving a half hour per day or two and a half hours per week of time. If that were true, imagine if you took that two and a half hours and devoted it to lead generation! You'd probably have a lot more deals in your pipeline.

11) Save time by telling the person on the call that you are taking notes. If you say that you are taking notes, they are more clear and careful about what they say; they don't ramble on, nor do they tell stories or jokes. They pretty much get down to the point because they know that you are serious and that you are writing down some of the information.

Minimizing people interruptions

- **Interruption Log**. Minimizing people interruptions could be as effortless as keeping an interruption log. You would keep a log, similar to the time log from an earlier chapter, where you log the time of day, the name of the person interrupting you, the reason they gave for coming in to interrupt

you, and perhaps some comments. It might look like this: 9:20am (for 5 minutes) - Larry asked me a question about a deal that we're working on together; Comment: I answered that question yesterday, he apparently didn't take notes and now he's asking me again. At 10:33, it's Larry again with another question (but on a different topic) and the comment is, he could have looked that up on the Association of Realtors website or in the MLS section and answered the question for himself, or he could have asked someone else in the office. At the end of the day, you now have this list of all the people who interrupted you, for how long the interruptions lasted, what they wanted, and what your comments were. And you might find that the 80/20 Rule comes into play again.

Most of the time you will find that 80% of your interruptions come from 20% of your co-workers. You want to identify that 20%, schedule time to have a conversation with them, bring your log, and show it to them. Diplomatically ask them to please limit or curtail the number of times they come in to interrupt you. If possible, work out a deal with the Larrys of the office so they are not interrupting you so often during your day. It will save you lots of time.

- **Power Hour**. This is most effective when done on an office wide basis. Have a designated hour during the day when no one is allowed to interrupt anyone else with a visit (or even a phone call or text). Everyone works at their desk and gets the equivalent of 2 hours of work done because they are not being interrupted. If you can't get everyone to take the same hour, then allow people to take their hour whenever they want. They just have to have a way of signaling to everyone else that they're taking their Power Hour and are not to be disturbed (putting on a baseball cap, hanging a Do Not Disturb sign on your door, wearing ear muffs, and so on, are all creative ways to signal to your co-workers that you are not to be disturbed). A client of mine was constantly being interrupted because he was the Information Technology guy for the whole office. He answered software questions and repaired non-working computers and was constantly being interrupted all day long, severely hampering him from lead generating for his own business. At my urging, I told him to just close the door and put up a sign that says "Hi, I'm taking a Power Hour, please leave me alone." Well, people rudely just ignored the sign and kept bothering him anyway, so he purchased a rubber door stopper from a hardware store and jammed it under the door, making it impossible for people to enter. He finally had peace and quiet for at least one hour per day and he was able to catch up on everything he needed to do.

- **Work from home**. Even if it's just an hour a day, you will cut down on people interruptions. A lot of my clients have decided to work at home from 9:00am to 11:00am and do their lead generation from their home office. They use their database, get their scripts ready, and make their calls from

home, getting in a solid two hours of lead generation. After they're done, they'd go into the office to socialize for a while and then continue on with the rest of their tasks for the day.

- **Delegatable Project Pile**. You establish what is called a "delegatable project pile." Stack up a bunch of projects on your desk; perhaps they could be fifteen to twenty minute projects. Make them delegatable, meaning that you can give them to other people to do for you, for instance, buyer agents on your team or an assistant. If one of them walks into your office unannounced, not on your schedule, and they interrupt you, and it turns out they could have done a web search for the information on their own or it was an interruption that you deemed was unnecessary, you give them one of the projects from the pile. By giving them one of the delegatable projects, you will save yourself fifteen minutes, replacing the time you spent when they interrupted you. One broker found that by doing this, people were very reluctant to interrupt him unless it was absolutely necessary. It forced them to start working better with each other. All of his buyer agents found solutions by using teamwork instead of always seeking the boss's help.

- **Regular office hours**. Have regular office hours that you post on a sheet of paper each week. Post it on your door with a place for people to sign-up for an appointment. People will sign up for fifteen minute increments of your time between 11:00 and 12:00, and again between 4:00 and 5:00. Add a column for them to state the reason for their visit. Now if no one signs up, you will have time to keep working on your tasks. If they do sign up, you know who is coming to visit and their motivation for seeing you. Be sure to ask them to come prepared. Your meeting with them will go much smoother and quicker. This will minimize those bothersome drop-ins.

- **The Accumulation Method**. Instead of allowing people to interrupt you all day long, try the Accumulation Method. Ask them to accumulate their questions or requests throughout the entire day, and then schedule a brief meeting with them near the end of the day. You'll find that many of their questions got answered by someone else, or are no longer relevant. Since you're meeting with them at a set time, you're more prepared to work with them in a focused manner, because you've let others know not to interrupt you during that meeting. The total amount of time spent with them in one sitting will almost always be way less than if you met with them several times throughout the day.

Minimizing the length of the visit

Now let's say they've made it past all of your defenses. Nothing that I've suggested about minimizing drop in visitors seemed to work. So here are a couple of tips for

shaving time off of the visit:

- ✓ If you have already been interrupted and they are standing there in your office, just be candid and straightforward with them. Say, "Bob, I'm really busy right now, can you come back at 4:00?" If it's an emergency, obviously you'll have to deal with it right then and there, but if it's not, at that point Bob says sure, he'll return at 4:00. Just make sure that you'll be there as promised.
- ✓ Refer the interrupter to someone else. Referring Bob out to another person who is better able to help them is another way to handle this type of interruption. After briefly listening to Bob's request, suggest that he go and see Amy, an expert in that subject area. This will minimize the amount of time the person spends with you (unfortunately, it will increase the interruptions for Amy, so just make sure you've discussed these scenarios with her ahead of time).
- ✓ Stand up when they enter your office. If you are sitting at your desk when someone walks in, stand up as well and that meeting will go much quicker than if they sit down. If you're not quick enough and they walk in and sit down before you're able to stand up, listen politely for a few minutes, begin nodding your head in agreement, then stand up and slowly begin walking towards the door. They will stand up, too, and they will follow you to the doorway. Once there, wrap up the conversation, shake hands, and casually point towards the open doorway. Hopefully, they'll get the message that this meeting is over.

(Note: I've heard that standing up can cut as much as fifteen minutes off of a one hour meeting. Just by having everyone stand rather than sit, you can save 25% of that meeting time. Your meeting room can have a table but no chairs. Everyone has their notes in front of them, and they are all standing around the table. Standing produces a sense of urgency, just like when you stood up during your phone call, and people feel it and respond accordingly by moving the meeting along).

- ✓ Walk to their office. If you see through your office window that someone is on their way to visit you, get up out of your chair and walk out and meet them in the hall. Ask if he was coming in to see you. If he says yes, gently take his elbow and steer him back to his office. Once there, you do not need to sit down, just remain standing and hear what he has to say. When he's done, dismiss yourself and return to your office and get back to work. It's a lot easier to do that than to ask Bob to leave your office once he's settled in. From a politeness standpoint, it's easier for you to terminate the meeting when you are standing in his office than it is when he is sitting in yours.
- ✓ Remove all the chairs in your office. Try removing all of the chairs in your office so that when visitors do come in, they have nowhere to sit. Since they're standing, you now stand up as well, and as pointed out above, with both of

you now standing, the interruption will be much shorter. If you have chairs that you can't remove, then pile reports, plants, and reams of paper on the chairs to keep a guest from sitting down. The whole idea is that if you both are standing the meeting goes quicker.

Any of the strategies I've mentioned, or even a combination of them, should be enough to help you snip a few minutes off of each visitor interruption. If you can prevent 10 people from interrupting you, who knows how much time you'll save each day. And if you have ten drop-in visitors a day, and you can cut that meeting back two or three minutes with each one, that's twenty to thirty minutes you've saved to be able to perform tasks that you really want to concentrate on.

Chapter 12:

Dealing with e-mails

While emails have greatly enhanced our ability to accomplish tasks quickly, they have also created many new challenges. In some cases they have become a huge waste of time. Now I don't claim to be an expert in anything having to do with computers, websites, emails, iPhones, or anything electronic, for that matter. But there are several simple, commonsense things you can do to save time in this area. So here are a few simple ways that you as a Real Estate Professional can reduce the number of emails that you receive and save time dealing with the ones that you already receive.

For starters, do a Google search on "how to reduce unwanted emails" and see what you find. Check out the different sites for tips and techniques that can help you reduce the number of emails you get in the first place (proactive) and tips and techniques for dealing with the avalanche you already receive (reactive).

Protect your email address! Although this may sound like common sense, most people don't do enough to safeguard their email address. Be leery of just handing over your business card at a networking event to anyone and everyone who asks for it. I've seen people at these events march around the room, practically demanding everyone's business card. When I was foolish enough to give it to them, invariably the next day I was spammed with a request to join this group or that. So just be careful where you give it out and to whom.

You can acquire several email addresses and then give one email address to your buyers and another to your sellers. While it may not reduce the total number of emails that are coming in, it will save you some time because you will recognize your sellers and your buyers. The emails will go into separate folders (or they could even be in completely separate email programs) which will help you organize your responses and get your thoughts together. By grouping all buyers together and then working on those emails all at once, you stay sharp and focused, and may reduce your response time by sending the same email to several of them at once, or cutting and pasting pieces from one email into another one, thereby saving the time of having to compose the same email over and over again.

Make sure you do your due diligence, such as reading the website privacy policy before you sign up for anything. Be sure your email address is not being sold to another organization; you could wind up on their mailing list that goes out to all of their contacts, and then you start receiving a whole new batch of unwanted emails.

Also, be careful when filling out a warranty card. If you want to be proactive when you fill out a product warranty card, just fill in your name, the product, the date when purchased, and the location of the purchase. There is no need to supply them with your

address, phone number, email, etc. You want to be very selective as to where you give out your address so that you are not landing on so many lists, and consequently receiving so many emails.

Being proactive also means removing yourself from lists you no longer want to be a part of. Unsubscribe as often as you can from the email lists that you are currently on. Usually, you can scroll down to the bottom and, by law, you should receive an opportunity to unsubscribe. Be sure to do that. This action alone should cut down dramatically on the amount of emails that do come in.

As I mentioned above, using filters and folders to help you manage your inbox is another practical thing you can do. Depending on the email program you have and how it works, you set up the folders you'll need and then either manually or automatically, you separate your emails into the various folders. This can be done as buyers and sellers, or urgent response needed vs. not so urgent, emails that will take a long time to respond to vs. those that are quick, etc. How you organize your folders is up to you. Just pick categories that you believe will help speed up your response time.

A few of my clients have said to me, "Brad, I just dread opening and looking at my email inbox. There are all these emails; almost half of them are spam and the other half are from unknown sources. Very few are actually ones I want and need." Obviously, a spam filter will be helpful here. Find one that works for you. I've also noticed recently a new trend: I'll send an email to someone, and I'll get an automatic response back that says something like "Hi! Before I let any emails into my system, I need to authenticate that this is really you. Click on this button and..." and then it does whatever it does to make sure that it's really me and not some spam or porn site trying to access their computer. These automatic programs are getting very clever.

Many Real Estate Professionals approach me and ask how to stop themselves from being distracted by their computer when it says "You have mail." This is going to sound ridiculously simple, even comical, but here it is: Turn off the sound on your computer! I know it might sound silly to those of you who are reading this now. You are probably saying, "Well, duh." But it's surprising how many people will actually not even think to do that; it's a habit to turn on the computer and the speakers, and they don't even think about such a simple solution as turning off the speakers.

I had a client who was constantly interrupted throughout the day by the little voice telling her that she had mail. I suggested that she turn off the sound, because now she would just enter her office, turns on the computer, and dive into the email program. When I suggested that she turn off the sound, she was shocked that I would recommend something like that, but eventually she did it. Because the screen was on another desk and hidden from her sight when she sat at her work desk, once she had turned off the sound, she found that she could concentrate and get much more work done. When it was appropriate (i.e., when "scheduled email time" came around) she would turn to the computer, open up the emails, and respond to them during those scheduled times. Needless to say, she got a lot more accomplished by just turning off the sound.

Try to avoid turning your email program on at all until you are ready to deal with emails. Arriving at your office at 9:00am, turn on the computer but not the email program. Go about your business, doing your comparative market analysis, making lead generation calls, etc. Only at the scheduled time, perhaps 10:00, 11:00, or even 3:00, when you have actually blocked it into your calendar like an appointment, do you then turn on the email program. When an abundance of emails come flying in, you are in email mode, you're expecting them, and you're ready to start attacking them.

Begin by deleting unwanted messages, unsubscribe from unwanted solicitors, and reply back to people who require a response. Then, after thirty minutes (or sixty, or whatever amount of time you've allotted) turn off the email program completely. Not just shutting down the sound, but completely turning off the whole program and readdressing your other projects. Then later in the day, again at a scheduled time on your calendar, you can turn it back on again. These are ways to stop yourself from being distracted off and on throughout the day.

I highly recommend that you adopt this idea of scheduling two or three (or more, if necessary, depending on how many emails you get) time slots per day that you will devote solely to email. And the length of each time slot will also vary, again depending on how much of your business is conducted via email. Perhaps it should be more frequent time slots for shorter periods of time. Handling your emails this way will give you greater control over them, and should save you time in the long run.

If you must see your emails first thing in the morning (perhaps you were expecting something important to come in overnight, or there was a rate change, etc.), just give it a quick first pass. Literally scan all the emails, just looking at the subject line, and decide what needs to be dealt with right now and what not to worry about. In fact, don't even take the time to delete them during this first pass. Or, another option on this first pass is to delete all of them that are spam and the ones you know absolutely require no attention on your part. So maybe you've now reduced by half or more the number of emails that you have to deal with. This brings a sense of relief and removes worry from your mind. I have found that just doing this first pass activity allows me to turn my attention to my To-Do list and start working on my number one priority and not worry about email.

Later on, when making your second pass, slow down and decide which ones can wait and which ones you must respond to immediately. You will handle just the immediate ones now and then later go back and deal with the overlooked ones.

Now if you receive more email from your clients than you think is necessary, you need to train them. Someone once said to me, "You train animals but you educate people," so let me rephrase that by saying that you need to educate your clients on how best to use email to communicate with you.

As a busy Real Estate Professional, you have a multitude of clients with questions and requests for your time. They might ask what's out there on the market right now,

or about a house they just saw on the internet, or what's happening with rates today. They are flooding you with requests every five or ten minutes. You get emails from your clients all day long and wind up with 50, 80, or even 100 for the day. If that's the case, then you need to educate and train your clients on proper email protocol. This should happen when you first sit down with them. I call it having an Expectations Conversation.

During this conversation, you would tell them what you expect from them as clients when it comes to email communication, as well as what they can expect from you. Examples might include that you'll get back to them within 2 hours of receiving their email, so there's no need for them to send more than one. Or they'll be put on a drip system, where they'll receive email updates 2 or 3 times a week, with status updates on rate changes or what's new on the market, etc. You have now educated, trained, and taught your clients the habits you want them to develop to communicate with you through email. All of these ground rules are things that you can discuss with your clients as part of an Expectations Conversation.

One last item regarding emails is the subject line and its importance. The subject line is vital and varies according to whether you are sending out an email to a potential client, or to generate business, or just to update someone, etc. Here are some ideas on how to capture someone's attention with the subject line:

For example, you are sending an email to your buyers and need an immediate response. In the subject line, you could write IMMEDIATE RESPONSE REQUIRED! and hit the little red flag. This will signal to the recipient that you need them to respond immediately. It sends a signal to their brain "Hey, this is important, I'd better open this one right now."

If, on the other hand, you have the exact opposite need, i.e., you don't need (or want, for that matter) them to respond at all, then use FYI (For Your Information) or NRR (No Response Required). When your client receives this email with that message in the subject line, they know that no response is required, and that your message is just informational. They just need to read it, absorb it, and understand it. There is no reason for them to send you another email, especially one that says, "Hey, thanks, got your email, read it, thanks for the info."

You want to select your subject line carefully, and you want to make sure that you've educated your clients who are receiving these emails so they know what the abbreviations mean. When you are serious, they will know it. When you're just imparting information, they'll know that, too. It all begins and ends with education. When you teach them properly, they will know how to respond appropriately, and you hopefully will wind up with less emails in your inbox and more time on your hands.

Chapter 13:

Dealing with paperwork

Supposedly, with computers, the Internet, emails, etc. the amount of paperwork in our lives was supposed to diminish. Yet, at times, it seems like we are buried in an avalanche of paper, letters, faxes, forms, junk mail, and the list goes on.

If you, as a Real Estate Professional, could dramatically reduce the amount of paperwork that comes across your desk and develop systems for dealing with the rest, think of the time you'll save each and every day. The first thing to consider is to be proactive regarding the amount of junk mail you receive.

The best way to be proactive is to avoid junk mail lists in the first place. If you find yourself on one, get yourself removed. The simplest way to remove yourself from lists is to simply Google "how to reduce junk mail." You will get a variety of different websites that will help. One of them, www.obviously.com/junkmail, lists five pages of ideas on how to reduce junk mail, email, and phone calls. (There are other chapters in this book about emails and phone calls; this one is really about paper).

Or try www.stopthejunkmail.com. You can purchase a membership for $19.95 in that organization, which puts you in touch with the Direct Marketing Association and other companies that have your address. Just follow the directions to remove yourself from all of those lists. If you do not specifically opt out of mailing lists, magazine subscriptions, etc. you will end up with more paper than you want or need. It's important to be proactive, so check out the Internet to stop the junk mail.

Catalogues that you have never requested could be an indication of a problem as well. Receiving catalogues could be the result of purchasing an appliance or other product from a retailer where you filled out a warranty card. What I believe happens is that the information you supply on the card is either shared with or sold to an array of other companies. You might start receiving a myriad of catalogues and offers and other unwanted things in the mail and wonder how they found you. What you must now do is write back to every catalogue company and ask to be permanently removed from their list. While that's not proactive, at least it gets you off their list. You will not receive these unwanted items that take a whole tree to produce. Being proactive in this area means only filling out your name, where you bought it, and the purchase date of the product on the warranty card. I believe that's all that's necessary to place the product under warranty (but do your homework and find out for sure). Certainly don't put down your email address, age, occupation, hobbies or interests, date of birth, or any of the other information that they ask for. You're setting yourself up for an avalanche of junk mail if you do.

Another way to reduce junk mail is to be careful where you give out your name, such as a county fair. When you visit the fair, they will almost always have a drawing for a free car or trip to Hawaii. If I really want to win that prize, I will take the risk of filling out the card and popping it in the box. But please know that if you do, you are going to be added to at least one, and possibly more, lists and you will start receiving collateral of some kind. You may even receive phone calls as I did from a place I don't even remember giving my name and number to. So don't sign up in the first place is my advice.

Another way to stop some of the junk mail is to take advantage of the postage paid return envelope; use it to your advantage. On the form that you received, ask them to remove you forever from their list and use their postage paid envelope to mail it back to them. Now it's costing them the return postage to have that envelope sent back. They will not want to waste any more money on you in the future. This might take a couple of times, but they will soon get your point. You could even do what one of my attendees shared at one of my seminars. He would cut a piece of metal the same size as the return envelope and place it into the envelope. Because the return postage is calculated by weight, when the envelope was sent back to the company weighing several ounces, it was costing the company a lot of money to have it returned. The gentleman was pretty sure that when the company received that envelope back and saw what it cost them, they would be sure to drop him from future mailings.

I am not trying to sound unkind, nor am I suggesting that you purchase and mail back heavy metal as told above; however, you can fold up everything they sent you and return it in their own prepaid envelope. This way, they know you are serious and you stand a better chance of being deleted from their list.

Now let's get you organized with a Tickler File. You can either buy it in the store or create one. A tickler file has 31 slots for the 31 days of the month and another 12 slots for the 12 months of the year. If you purchase it, they are called accordion files, because, as you can imagine, they expand out like an accordion. Sometimes they are built together so you actually get the 31 daily slots and the 12 monthly slots all in one file; sometimes you have to purchase two separate files. If you do this, one of them becomes your days of the month, and the other, the months of the year. You might have to label them January, February, March, etc. all the way through to December if they're not already labeled, and number them from 1 to 31 if they're not already numbered.

When I constructed my file, I found a cardboard box the width of a manila folder and about 6 inches deep. Remove the top of the box. You will need a package of manila file folders, which come 45 to a set. You will cut out nearly one-half of the box front, so you can actually see into it. You take the first 12 folders and label them with the months, and then you label the next 31 from 1 to 31. So now you have used up 43 folders. You have 2 left, and you can use these any way you like, such as Future Projects, or Next Year and The Year After That. It's up to you.

Now you place the current month's folder in front, followed by the 31 numbered folders, followed by the remaining months, followed by the last 2 leftovers.

Now here's how to use this system. Let's say you receive a bill from the DMV (they generally send them out two months before they are due). Well, you don't want to send the DMV a check that day, as the money will be out of your bank account for 60 days before it's due. But you also don't want to forget to send your registration in. So let's say it's July and the bill isn't due until September 20th. You take that renewal and drop it into the September monthly folder and forget about it...until August 31. Now, on August 31, you are going to pull out the September file (which you may remember is behind the numbered folders) and move it to the front of the pile. You now take the file for August and put it in the back. Next, you take all of the papers that have accumulated in the September file and distribute them among the days. If your DMV bill is due September 20, you might drop that renewal notice into the folder that's numbered 13. Then, on September 13th, you look inside your tickler file for that day, open up manila file folder #13 and viola, there's your DMV notice. You either write out a check and mail it, or pay online, and you're done. Then on the 14th, you look into folder #14, see what's in there, and take the appropriate action steps, and so on. So a tickler file is very useful for organizing.

Perhaps you received a magazine that you want to look at it over the weekend. The weekend may be the 22nd of the month, so you just drop the whole magazine into the slot labeled #22. On the 22nd you're sitting at your desk, and you look at your tickler file for that day, and there is the magazine. This is a very efficient way of managing pieces of paper, memos, short articles you want to read later or follow up on, bills that are due later on, and more, as long as you remember to check the tickler file every day. If you do not, here is what might happen (from a real life example). I wanted to pay my American Express bill right before it's due, so I dropped it in the slot labeled #17, since that is when I wanted to pay my bill. Well, unfortunately, I forgot to check my tickler file on the 17th so I never saw the bill. Consequently, I did not see that bill until the following month on the 17th (I did remember to check the folder that time around) and needless to say, it surprised me to find that bill sitting there, now one month overdue. I was now going to get dinged a late fee as well as interest as well as a possible interest rate hike. So make sure that you diligently check the numbered folders every single day (the best thing to do is to put a recurring to-do on your daily To-Do list so that you'll be reminded every day to check your tickler file). Also, on the last day of every month, move the new monthly file to the front, emptying the folder and distributing all of the items throughout the numbered folders for the month. And by the way, I used my negotiating skills to get American Express to waive the interest and late fee!

I have been asked about the number of times we should touch a piece of paper. The answer, ideally of course, is once. Let's say you're sitting at your desk, opening your mail. You have received a request to make a donation, or someone needs some information from you about your business. Upon reading it, you have a choice to make: you could

respond immediately. If it's a request for a donation, pull out your checkbook, write out the check, and mail it. It's done, handled, it's over. Or you decide you don't want to write the check out now. So drop it into your tickler file in a folder with other bills to pay. Then on that day, remove all the bills and sit down and knock out your entire bill writing in one session. There's a lot to be said for consolidating similar tasks together, in that we become more effective and efficient when doing some kinds of repetitive tasks. In this case, you've got your checkbook out, your pen, stamps, envelopes, etc. and you get into a nice rhythm by just dealing with one after another.

A third option besides responding right away or filing it away is to look at that item and decide you do not want to support that cause or respond to that request for information (assuming it's not critical to your business or life). Wad the paper into a ball and make a bank shot into the recycle bin and you're done, it's off your desk!

Now let's say you've opened your mail, you've scanned the letter, and you don't want to read the entire thing now but you don't want to forget to look at it eventually. So have a "To Be Read Later" pile, where you stack up newsletters, requests for information, invitations to events or to donate, etc. that you want to read later. Go to your calendar and schedule in some "To Be Read Later" time, a block of time (say, 30-60 minutes) that you will devote just to reading the things in that pile. One or two of these chunks of time should be sufficient to reduce the pile dramatically, possibly even eliminating it. And another option, if the piece of paper is necessary but you just need to keep it to refer back to later on, is to file it away in a filing cabinet.

Besides dealing with the mail, it's useful to take this same approach with other kinds of paperwork, such as filling out reports, dealing with offers, handling forms and filing, etc. Block time to deal with paperwork in specific time slots rather than haphazardly throughout the day. Perhaps it's during a down time, say 5 to 5:30, the last half hour of your workday. If you work from home, perhaps it's that last half hour before closing your office door. You do become more proficient and efficient as you work on the same type of task all at once. Again, it's a good idea to block time, say twice during the day, to deal with paperwork. It shouldn't take more than that per day to keep your desk clean and all of your paperwork filed away.

Now that you have your files in order, it's time to clean out your file cabinets. I recommend once a year. In order to be the most efficient, start with the top drawer and go from the front to the back and check all the contents. If you don't need it, toss it. If it can be found on the Internet, or if it's outdated and no longer useful, get rid of it. At least once a year, go through your file cabinet and purge it completely. And actually, every six months would be more ideal than only once a year.

Another way to deal with the overload of paper in our work lives is to request more efficient reports. People tend to be a little wordy, so you need to be more effective and efficient in the reports you send out, and you can request that the people you deal with

create more efficient reports. Keep it short and sweet, without a lot of excess verbiage.

Another way to reduce the amount of paperwork is by having it delivered or produced on a less frequent basis. There is a book, written by Robert Kregal and David Brant, where they used the term Sacred Cows to refer to outmoded practices that were habitually continued without really examining why. They found that one of these sacred cows is more of a paper cow, a reference to unnecessary paperwork. They told the following story:

At Hewlett Packard, they did some cow hunting; they called it starvation. The people at HP found that a core of workers spent a lot of time preparing a monthly, ten-page financial report for the company's management committee. They had been preparing that report for as long as anyone could remember, a definite clue that it might be obsolete. So one team member suggested that two of the ten columns in the report were no longer needed. The others tentatively agreed. The next month they sent out the report with only eight columns. They received no complaints. Emboldened, they sent the next month's report with just six columns; again, no negative response. The following month, they really gambled. The team prepared the report but didn't send it out, and still no response! They didn't send it out the next month either, nor the month after that. Finally, when they did send the report, it had only two columns and was titled "The Quarterly Report." This time, the team got a response! It was from the Chief Operations Officer, who responded with "Great report; simple, clear, to the point. Keep up the good work." The COO also announced that this new format would be the standard for all departments. The moral of the story is that anything that has become a tradition or has been happening for several years, and no one has said anything about it, just might be one of these sacred cows - especially if it is dealing with paper and paper management. You then want to encourage people to examine the reports they're preparing and suggest that the length as well as the frequency of the reports be reduced.

An excellent reference book that English majors the world over are familiar with is called *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White. This very thin book goes straight to the point and is a great tool for writing and editing your own correspondence. The book will help you choose the correct words, the right amount of words, and to learn the art of tightening up sentences to sound succinct and professional. I highly recommend that all Real Estate Professionals read the book and apply the principles to any written communications, including written reports, emails, letters, fliers, etc.

Finally, consider this scenario: You send a response to a counter offer and the other side has now counter-offered your offer. This repeats over and over again, and you are beginning to lose your patience. Write out your next response, but then leave it overnight or for a couple of hours. Come back and re-read it with fresh eyes from the start, editing your response as much as possible. You will be calmer, and your response will be well thought out and lacking the previous emotion or upset you were feeling. I've heard it said that if you speak when you're angry, you'll make the best speech that you'll ever

regret. So give it a few hours (or days!) and then go back and reread it and, if necessary, re-write it. Ask yourself if you are saying exactly what you want to say in the least amount of words possible. If so, mail it if it's a letter or hit send if it's an email. You'll be glad you didn't act in haste.

Chapter 14:

Overcoming procrastination

Putting things off, while providing some temporary relief, does not solve your problem, and many times will exacerbate a situation.

What if you, as a Real Estate Professional, could learn 11 tips and techniques to help you permanently overcome your procrastination? Think how much more productive you would be, and how much less stress you'd have, if you learned how to stop procrastinating and could just get to work on your tasks and activities. Just remember that after all is said and done, more is usually said than done.

Since this is such a touchy subject for so many people, maybe we should talk about this later, right? Just kidding! Let me list several of the most common reasons I have heard people use for why they put off projects and procrastinate:

- The project is too big, too boring, too difficult.
- You do not have the resources for that particular project.
- You lack the time to work on it so you put it off for another day.
- It could be that you don't like the people you are involved with, the ones you'd have to interact with. If you have to work with Jane and Sally or Bob and Fred on this particular project, you might procrastinate because you just don't like them and do not want to get involved with them.
- You're not in the right mood. I have heard people say, "Brad, I just didn't feel like doing it. I know I wrote it down, and it was on my calendar, but I just wasn't in the right mood." So you kept putting it off. Of course, it just becomes more critical the longer you delay.
- Then there's The Law of Inertia; you know, "a body at rest remains at rest unless acted upon by some force in the universe." Inertia makes it difficult to get started and put our bodies into play. They say that when a rocket is fired from the surface of the planet Earth, seventy to eighty percent of the fuel is used just in the first few minutes of the launch, trying to break free from the Earth's gravitational pull.
- You lack the energy or motivation to get started.
- You put off several projects, so now you have a reason for getting up in the morning and going to work (this is using procrastination as a job insurance policy).

- You lack the knowledge, skill, and/or training necessary to complete the task.

- It could also be the fear of failure or the fear of success. Some people fear that they will not do a good job, that it's not going to work out, and they are unsure or lack confidence. They think that they'll fail before they've even given it a try, so they put off working on the project out of fear. Likewise, some are afraid that they *will* do a great job, and then they'll stick out and be noticed. People will now come to them to ask questions and bother them for their time. This causes them to do work that is just below the radar screen so they can basically hide, instead of working on a project that will make them shine, because on some level they fear success. So this fear of success causes them to procrastinate.

- And sometimes we procrastinate just because we can! It's human nature. There are some tasks we just don't want to do at a particular time, so because we *can* procrastinate, we do.

Procrastinating is not good for your health. When you are on a deadline that is getting closer, your stress mounts, anxiety increases, and mistakes happen more frequently. So by putting something off and then panicking and stressing about it because the deadline is drawing closer, you will most likely make a mistake and then have to go back and fix it, causing the project to be delayed even more. This will undoubtedly cause more stress, placing your health in jeopardy.

Many people say that they do their best work under stress, that they like the looming deadline to motivate themselves. While this may be true for some, the research shows that when most people are under intense deadlines and the pressure is on, they tend to make more errors and mistakes. Procrastinating doesn't work, and most of us know that.

For example, you have procrastinated about taking your car in for its oil change, and now black smoke is billowing out from under the hood while you are on the freeway driving to your first million-dollar listing appointment. Or you have postponed your gym workouts for days or weeks (or even months), and now it's manifesting into some serious health issues, such as obesity and the possibility of a heart attack. Procrastinating about your health will eventually cause you to pay the price.

Another downside to procrastinating is that the level of trust decreases. You promised a report to someone and then you put it off. You phoned them to request more time, and then you procrastinated again. The trust level on their end may now be non-existent. You did not deliver on time, and now you might lose them as clients, or at the very least, lose possible referrals from them in the future. Their faith in you is gone because you chose to procrastinate.

Overcoming procrastination takes discipline. Here are 11 effective tips and techniques

that can help you conquer your procrastination habit and become more efficient and effective. They all work either individually or they can be used in combination with one another:

1) **Plan and schedule it into your planner/calendar**. This is probably the simplest and easiest technique. Those of you who have gotten this far in the book have been reading about setting goals and having the plans of action to accomplish those goals, and about being very specific about them. You know to make it measurable and then to schedule it into your calendar. You also know that planning and scheduling doesn't guarantee that you will not procrastinate; however, if it is there on your To-Do list, you will look it and consciously see it. Hopefully, seeing it on your list, you will just go ahead and do it.

2) Delegate. If you are fortunate enough to have a team member to whom you can delegate, such as an assistant or an intern, you can hand over that task to him or her when you are resistant to doing it yourself. Perhaps it's an entire project you can hand over. If it's a research or filing project, delegate it to them and you're left with that time for other tasks that only you can do.

3) **Trade**. You can trade tasks with someone who has something they have been procrastinating about. For example, they might enjoy filling out forms that you are averse to doing, while you can do filing that they hate. If you trade tasks, both of you would conquer your procrastination and be helping the other person.

4) **Fractionation**. To fractionate means to break apart a large thing into smaller pieces. Many of you have heard the expression, "How do you eat an elephant? Answer: One bite at a time." You have a giant project that will take four hours. You keep putting it off because it will take, uh...four hours. Four hours is half the day, and it seems like a huge undertaking. So break that project up into thirty minute chunks. Perhaps it's broken up into eight, thirty-minute chunks and you'll work on those over the next week. Now use Tip #1 and schedule those eight chunks into your planner over the next week, and by week's end, you'll have completed the task.

5) **Random Start**. Instead of starting at the beginning, you might decide to start at the end and work your way backward. Let's say you're going to write an article for a professional publication. You just can't seem to get started on it, and you've procrastinated for several days now. You know the ending, you know how you want the article to end, but you just can't imagine how to start it. So write the ending first! By the time you're done with the ending, the middle will be more clear. And once you've written the middle, the beginning will now be more clear. So you've written the article from end to beginning rather than beginning to end. Or let's say you're going to vacuum your house and you've been putting it off because

you just don't know where to begin. So today, get the vacuum out of the closet. Just get it out of the closet and leave it in the hallway. Then the next day, move it into any room, say the living room. The next day, plug it in and move it over into the corner where you are going to start, and finally on the next day, you actually start vacuuming! Once you've gotten started, you're more likely to just keep going until the whole house is done. Or you can begin with the easiest task and work up to the hardest. There are many different variations of Tip #5, so make up your own that'll work for you.

6) **Plan a reward or consequence.** This depends on whether you are more motivated by carrots or sticks. If you're more likely to respond to carrots, then take yourself out for an ice cream sundae or reward yourself with a massage if you stop procrastinating and complete the project. On the other hand, if consequences are more motivating, then choose something that is strong enough to force you to overcome your reluctance to working on the task. I once promised my business coach that if I didn't complete 4 activities that I had been putting off for over 3 months before our next call (which was in a month) then I'd send $1000.00 to a particular charity that I really hated. Needless to say, I completed those tasks in record time (4 days!). The pain of having to give $1000.00 was strong enough to force me to work on the tasks and get them done.

7) **Host an event**. If you work in an office and you have been procrastinating about cleaning it up, you might decide to hold an event, such as an office party, and invite some clients in. This will force you to get the office cleaned up in preparation for their arrival. Likewise at home, if you want your house clean, just invite company over for dinner!

8) **Work with a buddy**. It's very difficult to procrastinate when both you and a buddy have made commitments to help one another. Set it up so that your buddy will come over to your office (or you to his) bringing the project that he has been putting off. He will meet you at 5:00 in your office on Thursday. The two of you will get to work supporting one another toward one common goal: overcoming your mutual resistances and being of assistance to one other. Working with a buddy will help.

9) **Become accountable**. Tell someone else that you've been procrastinating and make a promise to stop doing that. For example, go to your broker and tell her that you've been procrastinating about lead generation. "I promise you that starting today, I will put in a minimum of one hour per day on lead generation, and will report back to you when I have completed that one hour." Your broker is now very excited and relishes your promise to do lead generation, knowing that it will not only benefit you but her as well. Keep your integrity and stay true to your word because now every day she is waiting for you to report that you have completed your task. You have boxed yourself in with that promise and commitment, and you

have made yourself accountable.

10) **Set deadlines, especially interim, short term deadlines**. Deadlines create a sense of urgency, even when we know they are "false" deadlines or made up ones. If you have a large project that is due in two weeks, set a deadline for yourself to have it done in the first week. Break that down by fractionating the large project into smaller pieces and say you'll have ten percent done today and another twenty percent done tomorrow and so on. This way, even if you do slide a little, or something unexpected happens, you have an extra week of cushion already built in. By creating this "false" interim deadline, it's enough to get you started. Usually, once you get started, you will continue.

11) **Understand the consequences of not finishing the task on time**. Be honest with yourself; look at that task and say to yourself, "Okay, if I procrastinate on this any longer, there will be consequences and they will be severe." If the thing that is going to happen is very detrimental, extremely negative and you could wind up losing the client and/or the sale, that might be enough to get you out of your inertia and start working.

Many of these tips can be used in combination with one another. Try them out until you find the right combination that works for you. Hopefully, you will avoid the procrastination trap, conquer your procrastination habit once and for all, and get a lot more done in less time.

Chapter 15:

Becoming a masterful delegator

The ability to appropriately delegate is a major leverager of time, yet many Real Estate Professionals are reluctant to, and in fact, even resist delegating tasks.

How much more time would you as a Real Estate Professional have if you became a master at delegating? By utilizing a very simple seven step process, you can get a lot more work done, and focus your time on the tasks that only you can do while you get assistance from others. Keep in mind the words of Dr. Stephen Covey: "There are only two ways to get work done: do it yourself, or get someone else to do it. Masterful delegation is a major leverager of time."

So let's first look at the barriers to delegating. One of the most obvious hurdles is that you have no one to delegate to! But even in this situation, there is a possibility. You can trade! If you have a task which you either don't like to do or are really slow at doing, see if you can trade with someone who likes that task or at least is faster at it than you (and of course, you're going to take one of their tasks that they don't like that you do, or at least you're faster at it than they are). In this way, you can get more done during the work day. It's not really delegating in the true sense of the word, but it's better than nothing.

Another barrier is that people are afraid to ask for help. By asking for help you might appear weak, uninformed, or incompetent. Rather than risking that perception, you wind up not asking anyone and you try to tough it out and finish it by yourself.

Confidentiality issues stifle delegating as well. If you are privy to some confidential information, you know that you will keep it private and not share it with anyone. If, however, you were to delegate that task and hence the sensitive information to a co-worker to help you out, you don't know for certain that they will keep the information confidential. So we don't delegate because of confidentiality concerns.

Loss of control is another barrier to delegation. Most entrepreneurs have started their own business because they want autonomy from a boss, and to be on their own. These people want to do it their way. Let's tell the truth here: there are some control freaks out there. They see only one way of doing something, and that's their way. By not delegating, they maintain control over the task and get to do it their way, but at the expense of spending valuable time on it when it could have been done by someone else.

It's understood that some tasks are lengthy to explain. I've heard people say "Brad, it's going to take me thirty minutes to explain this filing project to my assistant, and it will take me another hour to train her to do it. Since I don't have the time to spend doing that, I might as well just do it myself." Unfortunately, that is being very short–

sighted. Let's say it takes you 2 hours to teach a staff member how to use a piece of software, showing them how to enter in all the information, the shortcuts they can use, etc. You know you will save 15 minutes each time you give them an assignment using that software program, which means you'll make up those 2 hours after the next 8 times you assign it. Even if it took you an entire day of 8 hours to train him/her, it would only take you 32 times of delegating to recapture the time spent training. After that, think of all the time that you'll be saving in the future. So think long term when it comes to delegating. And by the way, see if it's possible to delegate the training itself to someone else! Let them spend the 2 hours doing the actually training. Now you're really leveraging your time well.

Another reason why people don't delegate to others is because of job security. They figure, if they delegate everything to others, why were they hired in the first place? If they give all of these tasks away to other people, their boss may decide that their job is obsolete and they'll be fired. People may feel threatened by this, so they don't delegate. The problem is, they don't get the work done timely anyway and they still might get fired!

The last barrier is that people will want more pay. They will say to the boss that with all of these new responsibilities that they have taken on and all the new skills that they have acquired, they are now more valuable to the company and therefore should be paid more. If they don't get a raise, they will take their skills elsewhere. Out of fear that their employees or assistants will take their updated marketable skills somewhere else, or at least they might end up asking for a raise, we tend not to delegate.

So now let's look at the benefits of delegating, what you stand to gain when you appropriately delegate.

First and foremost, we gain the gift of time. Remember Stephen Covey's quote: "Masterful delegation is a major leverager of time." We are giving these tasks away for others to do in order to free up time for us to do the things that only we can do. Perhaps you need more time to generate leads or to call your database personally. Maybe it's to take someone out to lunch who's given you lots of referrals in the past, or to write an article that will get you some publicity. These are the reasons why you delegate, to free up time for yourself. Some of the paperwork tasks on your desk, or installing a sign at your seller's house, or doing research, are chores you can delegate to someone else in order to free up your time.

Delegating also builds a sense of teamwork and camaraderie. Your staff gets to see how other people work, and there is a sense of helping one another instead of each person in their own little cubicle, their own little silo, just doing their own thing.

Delegating provides some cross-training as well. If you are handing things off appropriately to your staff and they are learning from the experience, then if any of them are ill, or go on vacation, or if they leave the company, the other members on the team have gained this new knowledge and the new skills and you're not caught off-guard.

You might also find that different members of your team have newer, better, and/or more innovative ways of accomplishing a task than you do. Often my clients have told me that when they had given away tasks to other members of their team, new ideas and faster, more efficient ways of completing the task were brought forth, which the delegator hadn't even thought of. In that case, they gained greater knowledge through the process of delegating to others.

Finally, you become a more capable leader. Accomplishing big tasks and projects is not something you can do on your own any longer; you need to be part of a team of people and be seen as their leader. Leaders use their team appropriately. You do that by being a masterful delegator and mastering the seven steps that guide you in handing duties off to your team.

I have developed what I call The Seven Step Process for Masterful Delegating. Follow these steps, in this order, and you will see the productivity of your team skyrocket, and you will have a lot more time to work on the things that only you can do:

1) **Think through your decision**. When trying to decide to whom you should delegate a project, start first by asking yourself: have I chosen the right person, or am I just delegating this to the first person I see or who's closest to my office? Does this person have the energy, the time, the skill, and the expertise to accomplish the task? How much time will it involve getting them up to speed? You want to think through your decision, calculating what your return on investment will be. When you finally decide to delegate it to Bob, you realize he's going to need a few tools to complete the task. He's certainly capable and he'll be able to do this, and after he does it and we both now know for sure, I will be able to delegate this to him on a weekly basis, and I will make back my time investment in the long run. Just think and plan through the entire process – that is Step 1.

2) **Think through your training needs**. Bob is my choice; he's the right choice. He's got the right energy, the enthusiasm, and the brains. He just needs some training in order to be able to do the job correctly and efficiently. But how long will his training take, and will I be the one to train him? Do I send him to a training class? Or perhaps I could delegate the training to another team member so that it's completely off my plate. Or I might ask Bob to Google a few websites, or watch a video or DVD at his leisure, or read a training manual, etc. Then once he's done that, he'll be ready to take on the project. So you need to think through your training needs, all part of Step 2.

3) **Clearly define the task**. It needs to be written out, put down on paper, and include deadlines. You, as the delegator, become more clear about the task when you have to write it down, putting it into steps that are done sensibly and in chronological order. "You will perform this task first, and then this one second, and so on. And this is how you'll know when you are

finished. I need this job done by tomorrow, and that one by Friday, and this done by next week." You become very clear about the task when you get it out of your head and write it down. It's now readily apparent what the delegated person's tasks are. You will not have to repeat yourself, and they are not interrupting you as often or approaching you for more directions, etc. because it was all spelled out for them in the beginning. They have it all written out in front of them, you've reviewed it with them, they have asked all of their questions and they are completely sure of what to do. Of course, we all know about Murphy's Laws, so writing down the task isn't an ironclad guarantee that they'll do it exactly right with no further instruction, but you'll be much further along on your way by doing Step 3. In addition, you'll need to define the level of authority and responsibility. If you give people responsibility for something but do not give them the authority to accomplish it, you are defeating the purpose of delegating. For example, let's say you've delegated the responsibility for putting on the client appreciation party to one of your team members. You do not, however, give them any budgetary authority; they are unable to spend any money. Soon after starting work on the event, they'll need to make purchases, and then they have to locate you for approval. You have to give them your credit card or cash or instruct the CFO to give them money. They may have to pay out of pocket, and then put in for reimbursement. So having responsibility without authority will slow things down immensely. So in your initial agreement with them, they should know up front what responsibilities they have as well as what authority they have. And finally, still as part of Step 3, get confirmation that they understood you. When you have given them the written instructions and you all have reviewed them together, make sure that they look you in the eye and acknowledge that they understand their duties. Paraphrasing or restating back to you their understanding of the delegated project are viable options as well. Everyone will be absolutely clear and they will know exactly what to do.

4) **Be available for coaching and support**. After you've delegated the task, don't just disappear. That's called Dump and Run. You need to be accessible to the delagatee in order to answer their questions and to give encouragement and support. If you choose to exchange cell phone numbers, tell them your times of availability. The first time they are performing a complex task, they will be more inclined to come to you for support, to ask questions, or to ask for some coaching. Being available for coaching and support is Step 4.

5) **Allow for flexibility**. Focus on the results, not the methods; the ends, not the means. You delegate a project to your team and you inform them that you need 100 widgets manufactured and placed on your desk by next Friday at 5pm. It shouldn't matter to you whether they make 1 widget today

and 99 tomorrow, or 20 each day for the next 5 days, as long as 100 widgets are on your desk by 5pm next Friday. It doesn't matter what method they use, what order they do it in, or what means they use, as long as it is legal, safe, ethical, and appropriate. Allow them autonomy and flexibility. Always stay focused on the end result that you want produced.

6) **Follow up**. There is an inverse relationship between trust and following up. The more you trust the person, the less follow-up is needed, and the less trust, the more follow-up. If they have already performed this task repeatedly, or if it's relatively simple, you may not need to check in at all until it's finally done. However, if it's a complex project that will take a lot of time, involves a multitude of steps and other people to interact with, you may need to check in with them once or even twice a day, say at noon and then again at 5:00. Or you may just check in with them for progress reports as they reach different levels of the project. Keep in mind that you have to build in a system for accountability and follow up.

7) **Acknowledge and celebrate**. When the person has completed the project that you've delegated, it's time to acknowledge them. This could be done privately or in front of the whole team, depending on what the person wants. Pat them on the back; let them know that they did an outstanding job. Your faith and trust in them has gone up, and you'll be much more willing to delegate to them in the future. All too often this step is overlooked or given lip service, rather than a sincere congratulation and a pat on the back. Yes, it's their job and that's what they're paid to do, but everyone likes to be appreciated and recognized for a job well done.

By following these seven steps thoroughly, you will become better and betterat delegating, and will wind up having a lot more time to work on the tasks that only you can perform.

Chapter 16:

Communication skills

A huge portion of a Real Estate Professional's day is lost through poor communication skills: not listening well, not speaking powerfully, having to re-do projects because you didn't fully understand what was supposed to be done in the first place, and so on.

How many more minutes or even hours could you have each day if you became a Masterful Communicator?

Let's start by talking about interferences, the things that get in the way of communicating. The first interference I call **Environmental Interference**. This is any sound in your environment that causes a distraction, such as noise from an air conditioner or a radio or TV, an emergency vehicle goes by with its siren on, or while in a client meeting, you hear an agent raise his voice or shout. These are all examples of Environmental Interference, and the end result is that you become distracted, either in your listening or your speaking.

Next we have **Biological Interferences**. Examples include a headache, an upset stomach, or any physical condition where you're not feeling well. If you are in that state of physical illness, there is a good chance that your listening and speaking skills are not at their best, and you might miss something the other person is saying or you yourself will say something that's not quite right. You also might literally not hear what someone says because you have a pounding headache. So those are examples of Biological Interferences.

Next are **Emotional Interferences**. There's a saying I like: "Speak when angry and you'll make the best speech that you'll ever regret." When we're angry or upset, we're not thinking straight, and so we might say something that we don't really mean. Or our emotions will interfere with our listening, to the point where we might not even hear what someone is saying to us, even when they're standing right next to us. T. Harv Eker, author of *The Secrets of the Millionaire Mind*, has said, "When emotion is high, intelligence is low." I would expand on that and say when emotion is high, listening and speaking skills are low as well. So that's another interference that you need to be aware of.

Now we come to **Mental Interferences**. Some people call this thinking. I refer to it as The Little Voice Inside Your Head. All humans have a little voice inside their head. It's the one that just said "What voice? What's he talking about? I don't have a little voice inside my head. Only crazy people have that!" That little voice can be an interference if it impedes your listening. Or let's say you happen to be thinking about one client when another one enters your office, and that first client is still on your mind. That mental interference will get in the way of you being truly present with the client standing right there in front of you. They may even notice that you're distracted and say something

like "Excuse me, is everything all right? You look kind of distracted." And some people not only have a little voice, they have an entire committee in there! Have you ever found yourself arguing with yourself inside your head? "I really should go to the gym tonight." "Nah, don't go, it's only one night." "Yeah, but I promised the trainer I'd hit the stair master tonight." "Hey, how's he gonna know that you didn't show up?" and so on, back and forth. So if those voices are chattering away inside your head, you'll get distracted and you won't really be listening to your clients. Perhaps you could miss some very important information that's being shared by the other agent and you wind up making a mistake. These mistakes could cost you your reputation, your money, and certainly your time if you have to go back and redo things.

Another interference is **Social Interference**. This is sometimes caused by the perceived status we accord to people in society based on their position or social standing. If you walk into a hospital and see a name badge that says Nurse Jones, and then you see another person and their name badge says Dr. Jones, just the perceived social standing of the nurse versus the doctor is going to increase (or decrease) the way that you listen to them. In most cases, people will listen more attentively to the doctor than they will to the nurse. It's the same thing in the real estate profession. If you are talking to the broker of an office, you might find yourself speaking and listening more attentively to them than if you are speaking to the receptionist at the front desk. Again, you want to be careful about Social Interference.

Then there's **Structural Interference**. Accents, jargon, and slang are examples of this. These interferences hamper communication efforts. When conducting training sessions at companies with global employees, I may have to ask them to repeat themselves because I cannot understand their English through their heavy accent. While that's really my problem, not theirs, it does cause a breakdown in communication.

And lastly, we have **Gender Differences**, another form of interference. Many books have been written, most notably John Gray's *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, that speak to the differences in the way men and women communicate. And there's also the work of Debra Tannen; she has three or four books focusing on the differences in how men and women speak and listen, especially in the work place. So just being a different sex than the person you're trying to communicate with can be a form of interference.

This just shows that there are many things that can hinder good communication. Your job as a Real Estate Professional is to diminish and lessen those interferences as much as possible so that you are communicating with your clients and other people as clearly as possible. Being aware of these interferences is a good start.

So how else can you increase your communication skills? Let's start with your listening skills:

If you're sitting at your desk and someone comes in to talk with you, stop what you are doing! I know that sounds obvious, but you'd be amazed at how many people will

just keep on doing whatever it was they were engaged in (filing, doing research on the computer, reading an article, etc.). If you're sitting at your desk, typing away at your computer, and someone walks into your office, STOP! Don't keep typing away, or even looking at the computer screen – turn around, face the person, and make eye contact. Greet them or nod your head. This is how they know that you are ready to listen. That's the first tip on how to improve your listening skills.

Another great tip is to quiet the little voice inside your head as best you can. If you turn around and see someone and your little voice starts chattering away "Oh my gosh, I can't believe this person is in my office again! I thought I already told them what to do, why are they bothering me again?" you need to just quiet that voice so you are present and can focus on the upcoming conversation. Just silently say to yourself something like "OK, voice, thank you for sharing, I need to be with Sally now, so be quiet" or words to that effect, and it may still that voice for a while so you can focus and concentrate.

Another tip is to pay attention! Again, I know that seems rather obvious, but by consciously telling yourself to pay attention, you increase the likelihood that you'll listen better. And use your body to show that you're paying attention. If you're sitting, lean forward in your seat to show interest. If you're standing, put your arms at your side, step forward with one foot and put a little bit more weight on that front foot so that you are actually leaning into the conversation. This shows that you're ready to listen by sending non-verbal signals to the recipient.

Another rather obvious tip is to avoid distractions. Shut off your phone, turn off the sound on the computer, have your assistant hold all calls, and if possible, close your door if you have one. This will lessen the distractions going on all around you and will let you focus on the person there in front of you, or on the phone if that's the case. If you don't have a door to close, relocate to a quieter area. By avoiding distractions, you improve your listening skills.

Engaging in a conversation that is important might warrant taking notes. Acknowledge to the other person that the conversation is important and you need to capture what is being said. Taking out a pen and paper will signal to them to slow down and speak more clearly and intelligibly because they know you are actually writing down what is being said. Note-taking helps you focus and increases your listening. And of course, you can paraphrase and restate back to them as you're listening to make sure you understand what they've said. That would also sharpen your listening skills.

Now let's focus on speaking skills. With speaking skills, the first tip is to be clear about what you want to say. Get yourself organized by writing things down in the order in which you want to present them. You can even rehearse what it is that you want to say and practice it out loud. This will impact your delivery, make it easier for others to hear and understand you, and will save you time by not having to repeat yourself over and over again.

It's extremely important for Real Estate Professionals to have scripts. Your listing

presentation should be a script that is mapped out. "Here's what I'm going to say, here is the order in which I am going to say it, and these are the main points I want to make." Then you should practice and rehearse the presentation until you've got it down pat. However, when it comes time to do the actual presentation, do not read it out loud, just refer to it and use it to guide you. By doing this ahead of time, even though it takes time to prepare and rehearse, in the long run you'll save yourself hours and hours over the course of time.

Scripts also work well for those who go door-knocking, for making phone calls to past clients, or to generate more leads. You want to have a prepared script and be organized so that your speaking skills are at the max. It's also very useful to ask someone before launching into any of your scripts: "Is this a good time to chat?" or "Have I caught you at a bad time?" or "Should I come back later?" When you have their permission to proceed, you know they're now listening and you'll be much more effective with your speaking. And of course, enunciate and speak clearly, use appropriate volume, inflection, and vocal speed. Even though people can listen quicker than a person can speak (most people speak about 160-180 words a minute, whereas they can listen, hear, and understand words that come at them between 500-700 words per minute), it's best to slow down. Speak slower so the person can digest what is being said. All of these tips can improve your speaking skills.

Now let me address paraphrasing and restating. The difference between paraphrasing and restating is quite simple, yet these two are frequently confused. People think they are doing one when they are doing the other. Re-stating is to literally repeat back to the person verbatim exactly what they said. This is different than paraphrasing, where you give them a recap or summary, the gist of what they said.

Re-stating is useful when there is high emotion, or it's very important to give the person feedback using their exact words. This helps avoid misunderstanding and interpreting. However, you can't listen for more than a minute or two before you begin to forget what was said. So if you're going to re-state, do it more frequently during the conversation.

When paraphrasing, you can listen longer to the speaker and, when appropriate, interject with "Excuse me, Bob, let me make sure I fully understand you. You said... (or I heard you say...)" and then paraphrase the gist of what they just said. The pitfall of paraphrasing is that you might misinterpret and/or add words that they didn't use. You might interject words that the other person didn't say, and they will stop you and say something like "No, I didn't say that (or I didn't mean that), what I said was..." So just acknowledge your mistake and go back to listening. Even if they correct you, it will still lead to better understanding. Just be aware and know when to use one and when to use the other, and know that there are positives and negatives to both paraphrasing and re-stating.

Body language is extremely important when you are communicating, be it speaking or listening. For example, you want to be absolutely clear when giving instructions to

your transaction coordinator about an upcoming deal. You may think that you're the best communicator in the world; however, if your back was to her while speaking, she might not even know that you were talking to her! She might not hear all of your words, or she might have a little voice inside her head saying "Gosh, is he rude! I can't believe he's giving me instructions on what to do on this extremely important transaction and he's not even looking at me." Her little voice is chattering away and she is not hearing you. So once you've finished, she says "Excuse me, what did you just say? I wasn't sure you were talking to me." So now you have to re-state everything all over again, wasting more of your time and hers.

Here are some tips about body language. You want to turn, face the person, and have your shoulders and their shoulders be the four corners of either a rectangle or a square. You are looking straight at them, making a sufficient amount of eye contact, so they know you are paying attention. Lean forward just a little bit (showing that you are receptive and that you are listening) and maybe turn your head so that one of your ears is a little bit towards them, which basically says "Yes, I'm listening, I'm ready, here we go." By the same token, if you back up a little or lean backwards, it might be interpreted as you putting distance between yourself and the other person. They might interpret that to mean that you do not like what they are saying.

If you are sitting at your desk when they enter your office and they sit down in the guest chair, scoot your chair in closer to the desk so that you diminish the distance between you and them. Even though you still have the physical barrier of the desk between you, you've demonstrated non-verbally that you want to be closer, that you're ready to listen to them. Also, sit up straighter in your chair. These are subtle ways to use body language to be a more effective communicator.

And when standing next to someone, be aware of the distance between you and the other person. Different cultures have different rules about how close you can get to one another. This is called Proxemics. In some cultures, particularly Latin and South American, you can stand much closer to people; they like it when you are a little bit closer physically when you are communicating. The exact opposite is true in Russia. I know from experience (at least several years ago when I was there) that people stand a little further away from one another. I was told that in part this is because people were afraid of being grabbed or taken by the Secret Police or the KGB, so they learned to keep a little more distance. So again, there are cultural differences that you must be aware of when communicating. If you step a little bit inside somebody's "bubble," they will actually step backwards a little bit. In this case, do not continue to approach them; keep your distance. Otherwise, you'll step closer to them and they will step back again. Obviously, this is not good for getting along and building rapport!

Some people wave, or move their hands when they speak. If no one has ever given you feedback or said it's distracting, then it's probably not an issue. But if you notice their eyes focusing on your hands rather than on your eyes or face, and they don't look like they are following the conversation, they are not really listening to what you are

saying. Look for feedback in their body language to your body language, and then make appropriate adjustments.

Now we come to the art of giving and receiving feedback. The word feedback sometimes will set people off because it's mostly said with a sort of sarcastic tone of voice. "Hey, John, would you like some ***feedback***?" And John pretty much goes running away into a corner, shouting "Oh my God, not feedback! Anything but that!" Unfortunately, feedback has gotten a bad rap because most people really don't know how to give it constructively, and likewise don't know how to listen to it without getting defensive. We have heard that feedback is considered "the breakfast of champions" and that you can't change your behavior if you are not receiving feedback from people, and this is true. If you are oblivious to what is working for you and what's not, and what you're doing right or wrong conversationally because no one's offering you any feedback, it could be hurting your career, and most certainly is costing you extra time and effort.

A couple of tips on how to first give feedback. First, inquire if the person is open to receiving some feedback. "Marcella, is this a good time for me to give you some feedback on how you acted in the meeting this morning?" Now she may say "No, now's not a good time" or even "No, thanks, I don't want your feedback." If you still feel it's important to give that feedback, you might have to set up another time to talk to her when she's more receptive. So always check first. Now if she does say "Well, yes, I'm open to it" then start with the positive: "Marcella, I really appreciate your contributions in our staff meetings, you always speak your mind and I very much appreciate that." So now that you have given the positive, you state your truth with compassion. Remember, it's <u>your</u> truth, not <u>the</u> truth. "I also felt like you really came down a bit too hard on John. He voiced an opinion and you basically spoke right up, not waiting for me to recognize you; you spoke up out of turn and came down on him like a ton of bricks. If you noticed he withdrew and didn't say anything else in the meeting." And then end with something like "So again, thanks for contributing and please, I would appreciate it if you would be a little more aware of how forceful you can be at times. Just notice how people are responding to you. Is that okay?" Now, if she's in a receptive mood, she will have received the feedback non-defensively and she might say something like "Wow, Brad, thanks for letting me know that. I wasn't really aware I was doing that, I just really disagreed with him, and I guess my emotions were high, and my intelligence was low. I'll have to be a little more careful in the future." And remember to use sentences and phrases like "In my opinion..." or "This is what I observed..." or "The way I see it is you could have done..." That kind of language pattern is much less likely to make someone get defensive.

Another way to give feedback would be to say what worked, what didn't work, and what they could do differently next time. This can also be used at the end of a staff meeting for the entire group to give feedback to one another, both on how the meeting went and on how each individual contributed (or didn't) to that meeting.

And of course we have the "I" message vs. the "you" message. Notice the difference between these two exchanges: "John, you were late to the meeting again. What's the

matter with you, can't you get there on time like everyone else? Your lateness really causes problems and is very distracting to everyone. You need to do a better job of showing up on time" and "John, I feel really frustrated when you come to the meetings late because I have to stop and let everyone settle down after you've walked in. My request is that you show for the meetings from now on a few minutes early. Do you accept my request?" (John either accepts or denies your request. If he accepts, great. If he denies, you've got a whole new set of challenges to deal with that are beyond the scope of this book!). The formula basically is "I feel _____ when you _____ because _____ and my request is _____." By using an "I" statement instead of a "you" statement, you allow the other person to really hear what's going on for you, how their behavior is effecting you, and they hopefully are more receptive to accepting your request.

As far as receiving feedback, again you want to ask the other person if they are ready to receive it and then respect their answer. If you're not in the mood, or have a lot on your mind, or they caught you off guard, or you've just had your fill of feedback for the day, say so! Tell them no, this is not a good time. So, make sure that you are in a mood to receive it, that you are ready to receive it. If that's the case, then face the person squarely, have your ears fully open and your mouth fully closed. God have us two ears and one mouth, use them proportionally. Remember that when you are receiving feedback, you are just listening and taking it in. Feedback is about learning and growing, it's not about defending yourself or proving that you're right; it's just hearing the other person's viewpoint and learning. And it's also a gift and a blessing. People don't generally give a lot of feedback, it's an area where we aren't very well trained in how to do it appropriately, and so we shy away from it because we do it poorly. Most of us, in my opinion, do not receive <u>enough</u> feedback about how we're running our business or how we're treating our clients, etc. So consider it a blessing, and remember it's not personal. It's just the other person's viewpoint. It's not personal about you. Yes, sometimes people will zing you with their feedback, and the idea is to avoid taking it personally; let it wash over you. Just say to yourself "That's interesting, that's their viewpoint, and I see how they got it. I still don't agree with their viewpoint but at least I will listen and hear them out." Many times after you have received the feedback, you just look the person straight in the eyes and say (sincerely) "Thank you for sharing that with me" or "Hmm, that's interesting, let me consider that" or "I've never heard it said that way before, give me some time to think it over." So ask for some time to digest the information. And many times what I've found is that when I have actually listened all the way through, did not argue, thanked them for giving me the feedback, and mulled it over for awhile, I have gone back to the person later and told them that part of what they said actually struck home and made a difference. So take a little time before you actually respond back to the person that's giving you the feedback.

Since this is a book on managing time and activities and not on communication skills, I'm going to end here. But I do have one more suggestion. Since having good communication skills, both speaking and listening, is extremely important in not only getting along better with others and being more influential but also for saving time, go

learn some more about communication. Take a class, read some books, listen to CDs, observe people speaking and listening and learn what makes them good (or bad) at it. John Gray's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus,* books by Deborah Tannen, and one of my all-time favorites, Tony Alessandra's *The Platinum Rule: Treat other people they way they want to be treated!* are all highly recommended to assist you in becoming a better communicator. Joining Toastmasters will sharpen your speaking skills, and acting and improv classes will help you be a better presenter as well as helping you think on your feet. The better overall communicator you are, the more time you'll save not having to explain yourself over and over again, or being misunderstood and having to repeat things, or doing something for a client that you really didn't need to do if you had only been more clear in the beginning. So become a Masterful Communicator!

Chapter 17:

Learning to say no

We are taught to be polite and to help people, yet this can backfire on us when taken to the extreme. Saying yes to every request that comes your way will eat up a huge portion of your day, as well as increasing your resentment.

How much time could you, as a Real Estate Professional, save if you could, when it's appropriate, say no to someone politely, yet firmly and effectively?

I believe that Real Estate Professionals find themselves caught in a bind: they'd like to say yes to a request, but they really know that they better say no or they'll wind up using a huge portion of their day doing things for others rather than staying focused on what they know they need to do for themselves and their business. There are many reasons for this, but I think the main one is that they want to be perceived as polite. It feels good to say yes, we want to be nice and to be perceived as kind and polite. So many times we say yes so as not to offend.

Being able to call in a favor in the future is another reason why we might say yes to someone in the present; we'll want a positive response to our request of them later on. We might agree to do a favor for someone that we have no time for, or have no desire to do, in the hopes that when we need a favor from them, we'll be able to "remind" them of that time when we helped them out.

It's the Law of Reciprocity: I did something for you, and now you feel beholden to do something for me. Since we want people to say yes to us down the road, we say yes to them now. If we had said no now, there is a possibility that later on they will decline doing us a favor. I think this is why people agree to requests even when they want to say no.

Another problem with saying yes too often is that you start to feel anxious and stressed out. You begin to wonder, "How am I going to get all my own work done? I keep saying yes to everyone that walks in my door, and now half my day is shot working for others. When do I get to do my stuff?"

All too often, with too much on your plate, you find yourself staying late at work to finish things up. You stay at the office working past 6:00, or even 7:00 or 8:00, depending on your other evening commitments. You work extra hours to finish up your tasks, or you go home and stay up late answering emails and doing work there, upsetting your family life. You might work well past 11:00 and wind up going to bed really late, therefore not getting enough rest. You wind up taking on things that are detrimental to your long term health. So you must be careful what you agree to.

Then there are those who say yes without really thinking and later regret it. They build up resentment, beginning to feel the guilt of neglecting either themselves or their family. They will say yes, thinking it's not that bad, it's not going to take too much time to help out this other person, and they think they'll have time to get back to their own tasks later. But that's not how it turns out, and they start to build up guilt and resentment.

And some people become just plain rude or impolite when asked to take on something outside their "normal" workload. They just fire back at the person making the request, saying things like, "Come on, for crying out loud, this is the third time today you've come into my office and asked me to do something. You know I can't say yes anymore, and yet I really don't like saying no. Who are you to come in here and..." They say things they may not really mean, or they yell at the person out of frustration because they have said yes too many times earlier in the day, and they feel that this is the last straw. In reality, they're also mad at themselves for having said yes too often. So be careful that you are not handling too many requests for your time by saying yes without clearly thinking it through.

Here's something to consider: it's easier to turn a no into a yes than a yes into a no. For example, let's say you're sitting at your desk doing some work. Joe walks in and asks for your help with a comparative market analysis that needs to be done right now. You agree, he leaves, and now you are stuck with this assignment. Glancing at the time, you are surprised to see how late it is, you look at your To-Do list and all the things left undone, and then you glance at your computer and see all the emails coming in. You realize there is no way that you will get to the CMA. You now have to take it back to Joe and apologize. "I looked at my calendar and my To-Do list, Joe, and there's just no way I can get to this right now. I'm really sorry."

Now Joe has a dilemma. He has just made some new commitments to a few people because he thought he had freed up the rest of his afternoon since passing on the CMA to you. He has now committed time to go out with someone for drinks or to meet his wife and kids for a soccer game. Joe reiterates that you agreed to take on the project. He has made promises to other people thinking that you are reliable. He now grabs the project out of your hand and is upset with you for turning your yes into a no.

It would have been much easier to tell him, when he first walked into your office, that you're really sorry that you can't help him, but you're swamped for the rest of the afternoon. You suggest that perhaps someone else might be available. Naturally he's disappointed, so he leaves your office to try to find someone else.

However, a short time later you realize that most of those emails you were worried about were spam and you deleted them quickly. Your client from Hell didn't call you that afternoon, much to your surprise, and your wife just called to say she is now going out with the girls for the night. All of a sudden your whole evening is free. You can now go back to Joe and tell him that your schedule has changed, and yes, you can help him with the CMA. Joe now thinks you're the cat's meow, and tells everyone in the office what a

great guy you are. So you can see that it's much easier to turn a no into a yes than a yes into a no.

Here are some additional benefits to saying no: you get more of your own work done! I know that sounds obvious, but if you're not taking care of yourself first and foremost, you're not going to be of much help to others. I had a client who said yes to pretty much just about everyone in his office. He had a lot of skill with computers and information technology, and whenever someone had a problem, they'd run to him to ask for help. Not wanting to offend anybody (and it did make him feel important) he'd say yes and help them with their issue. But what was happening was he was neglecting his own career, his own lead generation and business building, and his income was suffering. It didn't take me long to get him to really face this and he began to say no more often (I'll teach you a 5 step process for doing it politely below) and of course, once he got back on track, he started to get more leads and more closed deals. He even resigned from some volunteer committees he had been serving on because again, he had said yes too easily when he was asked to join them.

By saying no politely and appropriately, you also avoid over-committing and creating negative feelings. Saying no prevents a buildup of resentment as I have stated earlier in this chapter. If you keep saying yes, you will eventually build up resentment toward that other person and/or toward yourself for being such a pushover. Learning to say no appropriately prevents that buildup of bitterness. It also helps to maintain boundaries when you know your limitations; "This is how many people I can help in a day, and this is what I am willing to work on and this is where I draw the line."

Maintaining boundaries also forces people to learn how to deal with those issues. In some respect, every time you say yes to someone's request, you rob them of an educational opportunity to learn the task for themselves. I believe you are doing people a favor by occasionally, when appropriate, saying no and forcing them to find creative ways to handle the job themselves. They may get resourceful by asking someone else to help them, or they may Google it on the Internet, or they just might go back and figure it out for themselves. Any of those solutions is better than taking it on yourself.

Here is a 5 step process that will help you learn to say no politely and effectively. But first, you must be absolutely clear that you have to say no. It is not that you are being difficult, it's just that you don't have the time in your schedule, or the capacity, or the means, or the desire, or whatever your reason is. You have to say no and you want to do it in a respectful manner. So here is the 5 step process:

Step 1: Always say no early; don't wait, don't hesitate. If you hesitate, it might sound like this: "Joe, I'm not sure if I can help, so give me thirty minutes to think about it." Now you know in 30 minutes you're going to say no anyway, so why delay? In fact, Joe goes back to his office thinking (or at least hoping) that you'll say yes. He doesn't accomplish anything on the project for half an hour while he's waiting for your response, and so he moves the project aside and works on something else. And then guess what? There he is, knocking on your door 30 minutes later, asking you

again if you can help. So if you know the answer is no, say it early: "Joe, I can't help you with your project."

Step 2: Acknowledge the other person. You say "Thank you, I really appreciate your confidence and trust in me, thanks for coming to me for assistance, but..."

Step 3: Assertively decline again. "My answer is no, I have to decline your request because..."

Step 4: Account for your resources. Give the person a ***because*** statement, a reason why you can't help them: "...I have to go pick up my kids from daycare because my wife is in the hospital and there is no way I can get out of that" or "...it's my kid's graduation from elementary school this afternoon and I can't miss that" or whatever your reason is for turning down the request. Of course, it has to be a legitimate reason, don't just make something up (remember, you use this process when you <u>really</u> have to say no). Account for your resources, account for your time, account for whatever it is that's preventing you from saying yes, and then give them a specific reason why you declined. And then end with:

Step 5: Alternative suggestion. This is where you give Joe some ideas and make suggestions. "Why don't you ask Sara for some help? I know she knows a lot about that particular topic, and I'm sure she can assist you" or "Have you looked that up on the N.A.R. website? I thought I saw an article about that very thing you're working on in the Resources section." By offering a suggestion, you're at least trying to help Joe out and not leaving him totally high and dry.

So again, the 5 steps are: always say no early, acknowledge the other person, assertively decline again, account for your resources, and then offer them an alternative suggestion. You need to practice this a few times until it feels natural and not like you're reading a canned presentation. You can also mix up the order if you want if that feels more natural. And keep in mind one potential pitfall: Step 4 is where you're most vulnerable, because that's where they might question your accounting for resources. They may try to counter you by saying, "Well, can't you get someone else to pick up the kids?" or "Hey, there'll be other soccer games you can go to, do you really have to go today?" So be very clear about why you can't help them, and stick to your guns. By using this simple process, you can say no politely and effectively and save yourself a lot of time.

Chapter 18:

Running more effective meetings

Many Real Estate Professionals spend way too much time in meetings with very few results produced.

How much more time would you as a Real Estate Professional have each week if the meetings you attended and/or led were shorter and produced real action items and real results?

Here are some of the top characteristics of unproductive meetings that I've observed in my role as a professional meeting facilitator. As a Real Estate Professional, these might be the ones that you encounter the most. These tend to be encountered more in your large group meetings; however, they also apply to your one-on-one meetings with buyers, sellers, or even the agents on the other side of the table.

The first characteristic of a non-productive meeting is that there is no printed agenda. Attendees do not know what's being covered, the order in which it's to be covered, and how long they should spend on each item. When there's no agenda, the meeting gets off track, extraneous subjects get introduced, the meeting goes on too long, and generally speaking is not as productive as when there is a printed agenda (which, by the way, should be distributed to everyone prior to the meeting's commencement).

Another characteristic is that the wrong people are attending the meeting or someone is missing. If you go on a listing presentation as a Real Estate Agent and only one of the spouses is present, you are better off rescheduling rather than having to give your entire presentation twice. If you follow through and do the presentation with only one spouse present, there could be a misunderstanding or miscommunication between you and the spouse, who then miscommunicates to their partner, and everything gets all fouled up. So you are better off rescheduling if someone is missing.

Likewise, be sure that only the people who need to be present at the meeting are there, especially at your large meetings. If not, you leave yourself open to having to explain things to the newcomers or the people who don't really need to be there, they get resentful being at the meeting because to them it's a waste of their time, and you wind up diminishing the effectiveness of your meeting.

Then there's Parkinson's Law: the task will expand to fit the time allotted for its completion. If your meeting is scheduled to be an hour long, it will be an hour long; if the meeting appears to be ending early, people will insert unnecessary material just to fill the void. If you say the meeting will be forty minutes long, you will probably cover the same amount of material in those forty minutes that you would have in an hour. People will be more on purpose, they will keep their comments more succinct because

they want to get done on time. Be sure that your meetings do not drag on unnecessarily.

Drifting off topic is another unproductive characteristic. Again, if you have a written agenda, this is less likely to happen. And a good facilitator is imperative as well to keep people on task. People will either drift off the topic or they will just go totally off the agenda if left to their own devices. So stick to the plan to get and keep their undivided attention.

Too much socializing also contributes to an unproductive meeting. People are talking before the meeting even starts, perhaps delaying the beginning as much as 10 minutes (again, a strong facilitator is needed to make sure the meeting starts on time and side conversations are either non-existent or at a minimum). People will converse throughout the meeting, forcing the leader to stop every few minutes. Too much socializing adds extra time to the meeting and leads to increased frustration.

Another characteristic is that the leader and/or the participants are unprepared. The leader has finally arrived, perhaps a few minutes late, and everyone else is already there and ready to go. They have their agendas in hand, but the leader left behind some of the materials that were going to be looked at and discussed. Or s/he didn't try out their power point ahead of time and the slides are in the wrong order. Or if they are going on a listing presentation, they leave some items at the office. Sometimes the participants haven't done their homework (read the minutes from the last meeting, brought materials with them, looked over the agenda ahead of time to see if they're supposed to be making a presentation, etc.). If the leader and/or the participants are unprepared, you most likely are going to have an unproductive meeting.

If you are going on a listing presentation, inform your potential clients ahead of time so they can be prepared as well. Let them know that you will meet at their house at 7:00pm at their kitchen table, the meeting will take one hour, and you will need electricity for your laptop. Send them the paperwork that you would like them to review prior to your arrival and get their commitment that they will read it. If appropriate, let them know that you will be asking them to make a decision that evening about hiring you. And don't forget that everyone who will be involved in the decision needs to be there. Again, you want to ensure that everyone is completely prepared. That's your responsibility.

Rambling is another characteristic of unproductive meetings. What if one of the participants starts to ramble? This is where they get up to say something, and before you know it, they are drifting off the subject at hand. Or they begin to ramble on, climbing onto their soapbox, and raising issues that are not pertinent to the agenda topic. Again, here is where a strong facilitator needs to step in and rein them in and bring them back on task.

One last item: the meeting does not start or end on time. Regarding the start time, the person running the meeting wants to wait for a certain person to arrive, so they delay until they get there. As far as the end time, meetings sometimes go longer

because someone arrives late and everything stops to give them a complete recap. This is rewarding their bad behavior (late arrival) and does not motivate the late attendee to arrive on time. He knows that he can walk in at his leisure and be updated.

But unproductive meetings can be avoided. It is primarily the responsibility of the group leader or the facilitator of the meeting. In many cases, this might be the broker, the title company owner, or the senior loan officer. But whoever it is, that person is responsible for running the meeting, ensuring it goes smoothly, and that all of the objectives are met. I also believe that the participants are equally responsible for the meeting running smoothly. If a participant in a meeting sees that the leader is going off topic, is rambling, socializing, or the meeting hasn't started on time, a participant should step up and speak out. Someone in the group should voice their disappointment that the meeting has gone off track and there are only a few minutes left with more items on the agenda. It's the responsibility of all meeting participants to ensure that the meeting schedule goes according to plan.

Now if that sounds easier said than done, here are a few things a meeting leader can do to prepare beforehand (I will also discuss things to do during the meeting and things to do after the meeting):

Designate a facilitator, a note-taker, and a time keeper. The facilitator is responsible for making sure everyone knows where and when the meeting is taking place, checking to make sure everyone has all the materials needed, puts together the meeting, arranges refreshments if necessary, etc. Generally, they are responsible for making sure, before the meeting even begins, that everything is in place for a successful meeting. The note-taker is responsible for taking the meeting notes, or minutes, and usually for typing them up afterwards and distributing them to all the attendees. You can assign this task ahead of time, or use this idea I got from a board chairman: at the start of the meeting, he said, "To insure your undivided attention, I will announce at the end of the meeting the one who will write up the minutes." If you do this, it ensures that everyone will be paying rapt attention because no one knows who will be chosen to write up the notes. And the time keeper's role is to monitor the time so that the meeting starts on time, keep track during the meeting and point out when time is running out on an agenda item, and then make sure the meeting ends on time as well. Having a stop watch or digital timer is very useful for this role.

Next, the facilitator (or better yet, the person who has called for the meeting to take place) needs to ask them self: what is the objective of the meeting? Why is this meeting being held? What is it that we hope to accomplish, and is there another way we could obtain those results without pulling everyone together? For example, if the purpose of the meeting is just to share information or to inform everybody about a new initiative that is being implemented, can you send a memo or an email instead of having to have a meeting? If so, you will achieve the result of imparting the information, and you didn't have to pull everyone away from their work. So you want to be very clear about your objectives.

Following are some examples of objectives or purposes for holding a meeting:

The first reason would be: to reach a decision. The purpose of the meeting could be to decide on a new company name, or decide on when to have the annual Christmas party. So this type of meeting is a decision-making meeting.

As I mentioned earlier, another example would be to either give or exchange information. That is the stated purpose of the meeting. No decisions need to be made, just the giving and/or receiving of information or data.

Another example is to create or develop ideas. You would say that the purpose of the meeting is to brainstorm and problem solve and come up with a number of different scenarios. You might ponder ways to get out of the current market that we're in, or discuss ways to turn things around and bring up morale at the office, or brainstorm ways to have your office become Number One in its area. You might then reach a decision and choose one of the ideas to implement, so in that case your meeting has two purposes: to brainstorm and then to decide. It's OK for a meeting to have more than one purpose.

Another purpose of the meeting could be to delegate work or authority. The broker would state that the reason for this meeting is for him to delegate work to all of you while he's on vacation. There are no decisions to be made, no reason for brainstorming. "I'm leaving next week, here are your assignments while I'm gone, meeting over." It really can be that simple.

You can actually call a meeting to get to know one another better or to socialize. These meetings are usually called parties! For example, you could have a meeting just to get acquainted with the new people who have come onboard. Again, the purpose would be just to socialize, not share information or brainstorm or reach decisions.

Another purpose or objective would be to establish or maintain a relationship. You call up one of your clients and say that you'd like to get together for lunch; you let them know that you'd like to meet with them for the specific purpose of re-establishing your relationship. "Hi, Sally, we haven't done any business together for over a year, so I'd like to get together for lunch to find out what you're up to, and to update you on my status and what's going on over here at our brokerage. Would next Wednesday work for you?"

Once you've established the reason or purpose for having the meeting, the next thing you need to do is to prepare before the meeting even takes place. Are you familiar with the Boy Scout Motto? It's *Be Prepared*. So here are a number of things to do:

First of all, who's coming to the meeting? Have you invited the right people? Have you confirmed them? Have they all said yes? And if they can't attend, will they be sending a substitute? Make sure they know the location, the start and end time, and all the materials and information that they need to bring with them.

Next you need to develop the agenda (see the Agenda Planning Guide in the Appendix). Figure out the purpose(s) for the meeting, what topics will be discussed,

in what order, and for how long. Also confirm the room arrangement and set-up, refreshments, supplies, etc. Then be sure to distribute this agenda in advance to everyone who will be attending, including all pertinent materials. Included in the materials might be the minutes from the previous meeting, articles they should read, reports they need to be familiar with, or a website to visit beforehand. That should all be distributed before the meeting even takes place, to allow for proper preparation. Once they've done their homework and have brought everything they will need to the meeting and they're sitting down in the room, once that meeting begins, they're ready to start and be a productive, contributing member.

You now know what needs to happen before the meeting takes place. Let's focus our attention on what to do at the very start of the meeting and also what to do during the meeting.

The first thing is to make sure that everyone gets introduced. If this is a closing meeting with title, escrow, bankers, buyer, seller, and their agents in the room, you want to make sure everyone is introduced, and knows who everyone is.

Next, the meeting should start on time, and if you haven't already done so, choose the facilitator for the meeting; will it be one of the brokers, the title person, or the escrow person? Is there a time keeper who will keep items moving along? Is there a meeting secretary or scribe who will record conversations, decisions made, and other pertinent information? If those roles have not been assigned prior to the meeting's start, then it needs to be done now at the beginning of the meeting.

Establishing ground rules is important so that everyone knows what's expected of them during the meeting. Ask that cellphones be silenced, and keep side conversations to a minimum. Let people know if there will be a set time for a break, or if it's OK to just go when you need to. Make sure that all participants know that they are expected to stay for the entire meeting, unless other arrangements have been made. Ground rules help keep the meeting running smoothly.

Next, review the agenda. Hopefully, there will have been no upsetting events rendering the agenda useless. Bad news on the economic front, a newly released report, or some catastrophic news about housing from the night before could render your carefully prepared agenda obsolete. You need to make sure that the meeting is still worthwhile to have, and you do this by just reviewing the agenda at the start, making sure the topics are still relevant. If necessary, make some adjustments to the agenda items and then make sure everyone is in agreement on the new, revised agenda.

As the meeting begins and hopefully proceeds along on schedule, there are ongoing tasks and responsibilities for each of the people in their various roles. First, the facilitator needs to be operationally neutral, which means he or she cannot be biased towards any of the participants nor can they be pushing their own agenda. They need to stick to the agreed upon agenda and insure that all parties are being heard. The facilitator also needs to practice good communication skills by paraphrasing, restating,

summarizing, clarifying, and asking open-ended and focused questions to move the meeting along. S/he will also need to exhibit good listening skills, making sure they are catching nuances as people speak as well as hearing what's not being said, too. They move the meeting ahead, making sure that the agenda is being followed in proper order, people are being respected and heard, papers are getting signed and initials are being entered in the proper places, and all questions are being answered.

The job of the facilitator is also to ensure participation and continue to enforce the ground rules. If people are becoming withdrawn or clamming up, this needs to be addressed. If someone leaves the room to answer their cell phone which went off, he or she should be confronted and reminded of the cell phone ground rule. It's very important that they remain in the room for the entire meeting, or at least return as soon as possible in case their signature is needed, as well as not wanting to miss out on their potential contribution. The job of the facilitator is to shepherd all of the people through the meeting.

If the meeting is winding down towards its conclusion and some items on the agenda have not been accomplished yet, the facilitator might propose the formation of a task force or sub-committee who will address those items after the meeting is over. They can be instructed to take those unfinished agenda items, meet "off line" after the meeting concludes at a convenient time for them, and come up with suggestions that will be presented at the next meeting. This helps avoid having the meeting run over, or having everyone rush to try to get it all done before time runs out. Remember, when emotions are high, intelligence is low. People under pressure to reach a decision as the clock winds down inevitably make poor decisions.

The responsibility of the note taker or scribe is to capture as many of the relevant points discussed in the meeting as possible. They also need to write down all of the agreements, who is responsible, and by when they'll have it done. They could even be put in charge, after the meeting is over, of holding people accountable for what they said they'd do. Many times, it's also the note taker's job to type up all the notes and distribute them after the meeting is over.

The timekeeper's role is to watch the clock and gently remind people of how much time is left on each agenda item. They can give a five-minute warning when a long agenda item is nearing its allotted time so that the facilitator can make adjustments if necessary. They are also responsible for getting people back from the breaks on time. Even though everyone's agreed in the ground rules to be back on time, it can't hurt to have someone nudging people back to their seats.

And then at the very end of the meeting, make sure to save enough time to review all of the agreements. Make sure you have a who, a what, and a by when for each one. Go back and have the note taker read out loud each agreement, who is responsible for completing it, and by when they'll have it done. That way there can be no misunderstanding or protestations of "But I thought <u>you</u> were going to do that?!?"

And you also need time to do a meeting debrief. After the formal part of the meeting is over and you've covered all the agenda items, you want to review what worked, what didn't work, and what could be done differently next time. I was taught a system called LBs/NTs, or Liked Best/Next Time. You go around the room and everyone who wants to can participate. So someone raises their hand and says "What I liked best about this meeting was that we had a printed agenda ahead of time and we stuck to it." Someone else chimes in with "What I liked best was that the meeting started on time and ended on time." This continues until all the Liked Bests are shared.

When that's done, begin a round of Next Time. "Next time we should start the meeting at 8am instead of 9am" or "Next time we should have less agenda items so we can spend more time on each one" and so on. When people make suggestions about what can be done next time, you want to listen for the golden nuggets that they offer. These are the things that can be instituted next time. Make sure they are being recorded by the scribe, and then made available to the next meeting's facilitator so they can use those nuggets when preparing the next agenda.

Finally, you want to end the meeting on time and announce when the next meeting is, as well as where the location is if you already know. If it's a regular, set meeting, say every Monday at 9:30am in the conference room and everyone is required to attend, you announce those details again as a reminder. And if you want, you can pick the next facilitator, scribe, and time keeper right then and there, and reiterate that the facilitator is open to any suggestions, new agenda items, and so on as they begin planning for the next meeting. Then people know to whom they should go if they have something for that next meeting. Then announce that the meeting is adjourned, say thank you very much to everyone for attending, and disband.

And finally, there's what to do after the meeting is over. One very important thing is that you need to ensure that the list of tasks that people signed up for gets accomplished! First, make sure that the minutes are distributed (preferably within twenty-four hours) so everyone has a copy of what happened, but even more importantly, so you can see who will do what by when. Make sure, as a participant, that you review the minutes right away to see if you volunteered for anything. If you did, be sure to calendar it into your planner right away so you don't forget. In the case of a seller meeting with their agent, or a buyer meeting with their agent, you might not have formal minutes from that meeting, but you could at least send them an email and recap what was discussed.

And make sure there is someone who will hold everyone accountable for their action items. This could be the note taker, the broker or owner, or people can pair up and have an accountability partner. Or if you have a coach, let them know what tasks you promised to do and by when. Just be clear about who you are holding accountable, and who is holding you accountable. Being accountable helps keep you focused, on purpose, helps you keep your word, and most importantly, ensures that you get your items done! That way, when everyone reconvenes for the next meeting, there are no incomplete items left over and the whole group can move forward more rapidly.

If you are able to implement any, and hopefully all, of these ideas, I promise you your meeting times will be shorter and you will accomplish more in that time, and it will be absolutely clear who is responsible for what and by when it is taking place. Instead of dreading meetings and thinking that they're a waste of time, people will actually enjoy coming to the ones that you lead.

P.S. One of the best books I've ever read on this subject is *How to Make Meetings Work* by Michael Doyle and David Straus. It's worth it's weight in gold, even at today's high prices for that precious metal!

Chapter 19:

So what do I do next, Brad?

Well, if you're reading this, it means you made it through the book (or not! Maybe you just read a couple of chapters that really interested you, or maybe you just jumped right to the conclusion. Who knows?). In any event, you're probably thinking: "What do I do next? I don't want this to be another book where I read it all the way through, think there's some good stuff I should implement, and then wind up doing nothing!" As you know, the road to heck is paved with good intentions. Well, if I were you, here's what I'd do next.

First and foremost, if you haven't already done so, write down your goals for the year, quarter, and month, following the suggestions I made in Chapter 5. Put them in the SMART formula, make sure you have by whens, break down the larger goals into smaller goals, etc. If you're not going to do that right now, then go to your planning system and actually block 1-2 hours right into your planner for when you will work on them. Make sure you've blocked it into a time slot where you know you won't be interrupted, and then go tell someone (your coach if you have one, a partner or spouse if they'll support you, a co-worker or your broker or boss, somebody who will hold you accountable for keeping your promise). This is the key to mastering your time and activities. You must have a clearly defined objective, a clear set of goals first, before anything else in this book will make sense.

OK, next you'll need to make sure that every week (and I recommend Sunday) you work on your business (and life) and not just in it by planning your week in advance (see Chapter 10). If you're already doing this, great! Keep doing it, refining and getting better at it each time. In fact, you can then begin to plan out two weeks in advance, or at least start looking further and further ahead as you plan. If you're just starting out with this idea of planning a week in advance, first you'll need to block the time into your Sunday schedule. Make sure you've got a full hour even if you don't think it will take that long (remember Murphy's Laws!). Do it early in the morning before the rest of the family awakens, or before you head out to church or the gym, or later in the day or early evening, whatever. It doesn't matter when on Sunday you do it as long as it gets done before you go to sleep. Don't try to plan the week in advance on Monday morning! Bad idea. Your week has already started and you'll be behind before you even get to the office. And make sure you block the time again for next Sunday as well. This isn't something you do once in a while. It's every Sunday for the rest of your life!

Now if this is all you do, write out your goals with your plan of action for accomplishing them, and you begin to plan your week in advance every week, you'll see two things start to happen: you'll be getting more done than you ever got done before, and they'll be the things that really matter to you, plus you'll see your stress do way

down. You'll feel more in control, not only of your week, but of your life! Yes, I know, that's a pretty bold claim I'm making here, but that's been my experience over the last 30 years, both in my own life and in the lives of all the people who have taken my time/activity management classes. They have reported back to me those two things over and over again - more productivity, less stress. And far more fulfillment as well, because they're now focusing on the things and the activities that really mean the most to them, rather than being on someone else's To-Do list! Remember Brian Tracy: "Those who do not have goals are doomed forever to work for those who do." I want you to live **YOUR** life, not someone else's.

Once you've gotten your goals in place and you're planning every week, then and only then begin to add in other tips and techniques that appeal to you from the other chapters. If you've been a procrastinator, then re-read Chapter 14 and implement one or two of the ideas presented there. If meetings have been your downfall and the area where you've been spending too much of your time, then go back to Chapter 18 and brush up on the information presented there to make your meetings work better. Whatever it is that you feel needs improvement regarding how you manage your activities, pick one or two new things to try and experiment with. Don't try to do everything all at once. That's almost certain to cause craziness, frustration, upset, and eventually failure. Go slow. After all, how long did it take you to build up the negative habit patterns you've currently got? Probably years, if you're like me. So don't expect to replace those negative habits with positive new ones right away. Be kind to yourself and take it slow and steady. Remember, no matter how many times your read the story about the tortoise and the hare, the tortoise always wins!

I could probably go on and on with other thoughts and ideas, but in the interests of saving you time (as if I could save you time, which I can't) I'm going to end by saying good luck. Good luck with implementing the ideas I've presented, good luck with managing your time and activities as you go forward, and most importantly, good luck with your life! You are a magnificent person, whoever you are, and I wish you all the luck in the world as you move forward towards your goals and dreams. Bye for now!

Chapter 20:

Conclusion and special offer

As you already know, I am a business coach and seminar leader, specializing in working with Real Estate Professionals. If you're serious about moving to the next level in your career, here are some ways I can assist you:

1. I offer a free session of my business coaching for you to experience coaching and see if it's right for you (by the way, I'm also checking you out to see if you're coachable. I don't take on everybody as a client). I guarantee you will get value out of the session, whether you choose to hire me as your coach or not. All you have to do is email me at brad@bradwarren.com and request your session. It's all done over the phone, so no travel is necessary.

2. I do travel, however, to do my speaking and training. I can be booked as a keynote speaker for a conference, or to come to your office to teach one of my business topics. Again, just email me for a complete list of all of my topics, or go to the Training page at www.bradwarren.com.

3. I have several CDs available for purchase, all designed to continue to help you with growing your business. Current topics include:

- ✓ Lead generation in these challenging times
- ✓ Negotiation skills
- ✓ The 5 Step Planning Process for Goal Accomplishment
- ✓ The Platinum Rule: Treat other people the way they want to be treated!
- ✓ And more are on the way!

Again, just email me if you're interested in purchasing any of these resources, or visit my website and order them directly.

Acknowledgements

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Third, I want to thank my daughter Jennifer, who doesn't always get how much she is loved and adored by me, her father. She is an inspiration to me as I watch her grow and overcome the many obstacles that life has thrown in her path, and I know that she was put here on this planet to teach me patience...and she's doing a damn fine job at that, I must say!

Fourth and fifth are Nancy Irish (grammyirish@gmail.com) who did all the transcribing of the interviews in record time and at an incredibly reasonable fee, and Jerry Homan of JH Graphic Design (jhgraphicdesign.net) for formatting the entire book, again in record time and at an incredibly reasonable fee. Please use them for your next book!

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Charles Donaldson
360 Web Designs
www.360webdesigns.com
Charles@360webdesigns.com
925.989.7737 / 877.360.5060

360 Web Designs features an integrated team of web consultants, creative designers, SEO and social media specialists, content writers, programmers, video and photographers, and marketing professionals that know how to achieve online results. Our group of professionals are dedicated to creating a positive return-on-investment

for our clients through the creation of intelligent strategy and advanced web solutions for their online success.

Kristen Hayes Kuse
Integrated General Counsel
4900 Hopyard Road, Suite 100
Pleasanton, California 94588
925-399-1529
www.IntegratedGeneralCounsel.com

Integrated General Counsel works with entrepreneurs, from start-up phase to $5 million in revenue, build successful online businesses and keeps them out of legal trouble.

Carol A. Marshall
The Write Business
www.cmwrite.com
carol@cmwrite.com

Carol is a professional marketing writer with passion for the written word. She creates effective collateral in print or on the web educating business owners in the art of communication.

Andy McClure, MBA
Principal & Business Growth Specialist
Sherpa Business Development
www.SherpaBusinessDevelopment.com
Andy@sherpabizdev.com

Andy and his team help small businesses with fewer than 100 employees secure more ideal customers and generate higher profits. To receive the valuable (but free!) ebook that shows the simple process they use, visit the Sherpa Business Development website.

Joy Montgomery
Structural Integrity: positioning clients for growth, profits, and acquisition
www.structural-integrity.com
Process development and streamlining consultant

Jim Norris
Senior Mortgage Advisor
Landmark Mortgage Group
925-600-2019
jnorris@lmglending.com

Jim has a long term career helping homeowners by specializing in residential purchase money and refinance loans in the San Francisco Bay Area. He includes jumbo, conforming and non-conforming conventional, VA and FHA programs.

Andrea Pritchett, D.C.
Vital Life Wellness Center
925-829-7900
www.vlifewellness.com
nucca@vlifewellness.com

Dr. Pritchett is a NUCCA upper cervical chiropractor. NUCCA works to align your spine and improve the way your body works, with no twisting or "popping" or thrust.

Don Smith
VP, Business Development Officer
Summit Financial Resources
925-497-0192
www.summitfr.com
dsmith@summitfr.com

Summit Financial Resources provides working capital solutions to the small to midsize business sector. We are able to lend against accounts receivable, inventory and equipment.

Marcella Trujillo
Land Investment Consultant
CA DRE License #1474001
www.linkedin.com/in/landwealth
MarcellaTrujillo@gmail.com

Marcella offers a unique opportunity for investors to diversify and hedge their portfolios through quality land investments in high-growth areas where populations and cities are expanding rapidly. This is an alternative way to enhance your 401(k), IRA, or 1031-Exchange options.

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Appendix

Sample time log

Time of day	Activity	Time used	Comments

Why do we do what we do when we do it?

Learning to prioritize

Many people climb the ladder of success only to find that it's leaning against the wrong wall.

Stephen Covey

You can't just do things right; you've also got to do the right things.

Brian Tracy

A. Paired Comparison

#	Item	Check	Rank
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 1-5
2-3, 2-4, 2-5
3-4, 3-5
4-5

B. Deadline and Payoff

Deadline 1= long-term
2 = short-term
3 = immediate

Payoff 1 = low recognition/impact/ visibility
3 = moderate recognition/impact/ visibility
5 = high recognition/impact/ visibility

	Item	Deadline + Pavoff =		Weighted Score	Rank
1		+	=		
2		+	=		
3		+	=		
4		+	=		
5		+	=		
6		+	=		
7		+	=		
8		+	=		
9		+	=		
10		+	=		
11		+	=		
12		+	=		

Triage: Importance and Time

Importance:

1 = high pay-off/impact
2 = moderate pay-off/impact
3 = low pay-off/impact

Estimated time:

3 = significant time investment
2 = moderate time investment
1 = brief time investment

Item	Importance	Time	A/B / C must/nice/don't

Priority:

A – Must do 1-1 1-2 1-3 2-1

B – Nice to do 2-2 3-1

C – Don't do 2-3 3-2 3-3

Stephen Covey's four quadrants: Urgent vs. important

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	**I** ACTIVITIES: Crises Pressing problems Deadline-driven projects	**II** ACTIVITIES: Prevention, PC activities Relationship Building Recognizing new opportunities Planning, recreation
Not important	**III** ACTIVITIES: Interruptions, some calls Some mail, some reports Some meetings Proximate, pressing matters Popular activities	**IV** ACTIVITIES: Trivia, busy work Some mail Some phone calls Time wasters Pleasant activities

Twenty-one Different Criteria for Prioritizing

Deciding where to start: Why do we do what we do when we do it? What criteria do we use for allocating our time? We have many different ways of deciding what we are going to do at any given point during the day. Following are twenty-one of the most common criteria we use to govern our time:

1. We do what we like to do before we do what we don't like to do.
2. We tackle what we know how to do faster than we tackle what we don't know how to do.
3. We do the easy jobs before we do the difficult jobs.
4. We do the quick tasks before we do those that require a lot of time.
5. We do activities we have the resources for.
6. We do things that are scheduled (for example, meetings) before we do nonscheduled things.
7. We sometimes do things that are planned before we do things that are unplanned.
8. We respond to the demands of others before we respond to demands from ourselves.
9. We do jobs that are urgent before we do jobs that are important.
10. We readily respond to crises and emergencies.
11. We do activities that are politically expedient or those that advance our personal goals.
12. We wait until a deadline approaches before we really get moving on projects.
13. We do things that are interesting before we do uninteresting things.
14. We do things that provide the most immediate closure.
15. We respond on the basis of who wants it.
16. We respond on the basis of the consequences to us for doing or not doing something.
17. We tackle small jobs before we tackle large jobs.
18. We work on things in the order of their arrival.
19. We work on the basis of the squeaky-wheel principle (the squeaky wheel gets the grease).
20. We work on the basis of consequences to the group.
21. We do things by habit, without thinking about the best sequence.

Your Master Business Plan

What the to do list looks like:

Date	Item	By when	Result

Four possible results:

1. Check it off when complete
2. Transfer it
3. Delegate it
4. Eliminate it

Sample Weekly Planning Guide

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:00					
8:00	Prepare for Tuesday meeting	Read email		Read email	Read email
			Meeting		
9:00					
10:00				Appointment	
			Return phone calls		
11:00		Appointment			
12:00	Lunch	Lunch (meeting)	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00					
		Recap meeting			Prepare Presentation
2:00			Prepare for Thursday meeting		
	Return phone calls	Meeting			
3:00				Meeting	
4:00					
		Recap meeting notes		Recap notes	
5:00					Plan next week's agenda
6:00					

Weekly Planning Guide Template

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:00					
8:00					
9:00					
10:00					
11:00					
12:00					
1:00					
2:00					
3:00					
4:00					
5:00					
6:00					

Meeting Agenda Planning Guide

Meeting date: Start time: End time:

Location:

Person responsible for:

Facilitating: Time keeping: Recording:

People to be invited:

	Name	Phone	Attending?		Substitute
1			Y	N	
2			Y	N	
3			Y	N	
4			Y	N	
5			Y	N	
6			Y	N	
7			Y	N	

1. Agenda topic: Time to be spent on this topic:
   Preparation if any:
   Materials to be sent (minutes, reports, etc.):
   Action steps to be taken after this item is complete:
   _____ will do_____ by_____
   who what when
   _____ will do_____ by
   who what when
2. Agenda topic: Time to be spent on this topic:
   Preparation if any:
   Materials to be sent (minutes, reports, etc.):
   Action steps to be taken after this item is complete:
   _____ will do_____ by_____
   who what when
   _____ will do_____ by
   who what when
3. Agenda topic: Time to be spent on this topic:
   Preparation if any:
   Materials to be sent (minutes, reports, etc.):
   Action steps to be taken after this item is complete:
   _____ will do_____ by_____
   who what when
   _____ will do_____ by
   who what when
4. Agenda topic: Time to be spent on this topic:
   Preparation if any:
   Materials to be sent (minutes, reports, etc.):
   Action steps to be taken after this item is complete:
   _____ will do_____ by_____
   who what when
   _____ will do_____ by
   who what when

Room setup:

Tables: Chairs: Configuration:

Audio-visual needs:

Refreshments:

Time. Our most precious commodity. What if you could implement some simple activity management tips and techniques and gain **AN HOUR PER DAY** more time? In this book, real estate business coach, author, speaker, and seminar leader Brad Warren will teach you:

- How to keep a time log to determine where your precious minutes really go
- How to set SMART goals and then accomplish them
- 4 different methods for prioritizing your tasks
- How to plan a week at a time using his famous 5 Step Planning Process
- How to deal with phone interruptions and drop-in visitors
- 10 Tips for Overcoming Procrastination
- How to run more effective meetings
- And lots more!

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