

# STAFF & RECRUITMENT

## EXPERT IDEAS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

### Use it Wisely



Do you often feel like there are not enough hours in the day? HR expert **Vicky Stanton** is here to help...



**W**e'd all love more time, wouldn't we? Well we can't change what we get, but we can change how effectively we use it.

I'm sure you have all read about time management; my thought is that you can't manage time because time happens, *but* you can manage how you use your time.

Before I share my tips, I need you to have a think and be really honest. How much time do you spend watching television? How much time do you spend on Facebook or surfing the Internet? How much time do you spend chatting when you should really be doing something else? How often do you check your emails? How often do you get interrupted when you need to get something done?

#### 1. TRACK YOUR TIME

Steven Covey developed the 'Time Matrix':

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	1	2
NOT IMPORTANT	3	4

Take a moment to think about all the things you do in a day and allocate them to the matrix.

**Quadrant 1:** Urgent/Important (crises, pressing problems, deadline-driven reports, meetings)

**Quadrant 2:** Not urgent/Important (preparation, prevention, planning, building relationships)

**Quadrant 3:** Urgent/Not important (needless interruptions, unnecessary reports, phone calls, other people's issues, emails)

**Quadrant 4:** Not urgent/Not important (trivia, busy work, timewasters, escape activities, TV)

You need to spend as much time as you can in quadrants one and two. Award-winning companies spend 85 per cent of their time on important stuff. Non-award-winning companies spend 40 per cent of their time on important stuff.

#### 2. KNOW WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Quite simply, unless you have business and personal goals, written down, you don't - as someone once said, "Unless you have your own goals, then you are probably part of someone else's."

Start off with your big goal, then break it down into chunks that you can commit to do in shorter periods of time. Each of these smaller chunks will move you closer to your big goal. If it doesn't, don't do it. You may even need to break down the chunks into smaller bite-size tasks.

Without goals, you cannot work out whether a task is urgent or important. Those tasks that are in alignment with our goals are important (and often urgent). Other day-to-day stuff may be urgent because it is part of someone else's goals.

#### 3. STOP PROCRASTINATING

If a task is important, get it done. Make a decision to 'just do it'. There is a well-known technique to see how effectively you deal with paperwork. Every time you pick up a piece of paperwork, put a red dot on it. Do you end up with one dot before it is completed and filed away? Or does it look like a spotty hanky? Have a system and tackle one thing at a time. Don't put the task off.

#### 4. WRITE A LIST

It's a good idea to write a list, isn't it? Most people write a long list of everything they need to do and then start at the top. To be more effective, you need to prioritise the list. You

need to decide in which order you should do the tasks. Which are important, and which is the most important - i.e. the one you should start with?

If you've written a long list of everything you need to do, don't expect to achieve it all in one day, as you rarely will. A good way to utilise the list is to have one 'master list'. Then each day, as your last task, look at your list and prioritise the number of tasks you can realistically achieve the following day

#### 5. PLAN YOUR DAY

Once you have planned your list of tasks, allocate a time slot for each one. You will, of course, have meetings, time in the nursery, time to eat, etc. that should be taken out first. Then allocate yourself time to deal with emails (I suggest twice a day for 15 minutes), 'snail' mail (once a day), phone calls (can you diarise a time to make all your calls?) and then plan in your tasks from your list. You will find that you achieve so much more.

There will always be those things that happen that are urgent and not planned for, but if you can start to manage your time, you will find that you are so much more effective in both the workplace and at home.

### findout more

Vicky Stanton is director of HR 4 Your Nursery, a professional HR consultancy working specifically

with nursery and preschool owners and managers to take the challenge out of people management. Visit [HR4YourNursery.co.uk](http://HR4YourNursery.co.uk)

