

THE TIME MACHINE

That's what the busy businessman is asked to be on a daily basis. If your 'time machine' is sputtering along, here are some tips designed to get it hitting on all eight cylinders again.

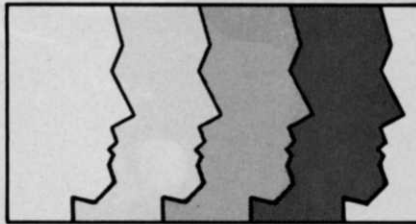
by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

One of the most common complaints in the green industry is the lack of time available to complete all the tasks involved with being in business. This is particularly true at the beginning of the season. This is the time when everything comes at you all at once and there never seems to be enough time to get everything done. Here are some ideas that may help you get a little more control of your time. They won't help you do your job, but at least they will help you cope with time.

1. Set priorities. There must be some set of priorities for the tasks you are expected to perform. Some tasks are needed for the running of the organization. Make sure you attend to these first. Write down a ranking of those tasks which are the most important and make sure that you keep coming back to those as you have free time.

2. Look at the tasks you have to do to let others do their jobs. First make sure that you know which ones are critical for other people to complete their jobs. Try to get these done early in the day. This way, they won't be as

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likely to call you during the day to ask questions about information they need to get their jobs done.

3. Delegate jobs that can be done by others. A lot of managers, particularly in small companies, feel that they are the only ones capable of doing most tasks. Usually, this isn't true. You should make a list of work for the day and then decide whether or not you personally have to do them all. Most of the time, you don't.

4. Keep a pen and some paper by the phone. If you find that you spend a great deal of time on the phone, you will find that the pen and paper help. When someone calls, write down the reason for the call. Keep that in front of you as you talk and you will be able to keep the conversation to the point. Most people will tell you why they are calling in the first 30 seconds. Write this down and keep working on it.

5. Keep a timer by the phone. The pen and paper will help, but if you put a timer by the phone, you'll start saving time on each call. Get yourself a

6. Learn to say "no." If you're in your office or on the way to do something that needs to be done and someone asks if you have a few minutes to talk, say "no." Then give them the reason and a time when you will be available. By making sure you complete your most important tasks, you'll get your job done more effectively. People will understand that you are just trying to do the most important tasks for the day.

7. Put agendas together for any formal meetings. If you have to meet with others in the organization and the meeting is pre-planned, have an agenda. Make sure that each section of this meeting is timed, and stick to it. A lot of time is lost in meetings when there is no timing attached to a given topic. The meetings have a tendency to go on and on and generally accomplish about the same as a meeting that takes one-half the time.

8. Write down what you have to accomplish in the course of the day. If you can anticipate, to some extent, how much you have to do, you may find that you actually get it done. In addition to writing down what you have to do, write down how long it should take. This requires discipline, but if you want to get some time back, you should get used to doing it.

Summary

Most of time management deals with being aware of the places where time slips out of your control. By looking at the eight ideas above, you will have better control of your time and be aware of the various tasks that you



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three- or five-minute timer and you can learn to get off the phone in a short period of time. Most phone conversations take too long. By forcing yourself to recognize the time spent on the phone, you can get some of it back.

have to perform. There is no one way to be sure of total time management. But by going through a variety of disciplines, you may find that you have better control of your time and are able to do your job better and more efficiently.

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