

So, You Want to Start a Business?

Written by Jamie Wolf

Tuesday, 25 September 2012 11:49



Time is of the essence!

TAKING ACTION – Part 6 of 6

My father was a physician but when I was little I wanted to be a veterinarian, not a “people doctor”. Dad was afraid of dogs so didn’t think much of my plan. However, he told me if I could ever figure out a cure for skin conditions I’d be more than a little wealthy. Pet owners know how often they take Fido and Garfield in for irritated skin – hot spots, flea allergies, and more!

Likewise, as an entrepreneur, if I could ever figure out a guaranteed time management formula that people could follow easily and could stick with longer than a New Year’s resolution, I’d be in high cotton (as they say here in the South!)

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Time management is as important to an entrepreneur as the subject of my last article about cash flow and knowing your business numbers! How do you take action? One step at a time. Yet in our busy lives, somehow even that becomes virtually impossible. If you have a dream, however, you can't afford to get too busy to get it started and keep it going. Life is just too short not to start now.

If you do not go after what you want you'll never have it.

If you do not ask, the answer will always be no.

If you don't step forward, you will remain where you are.

Nora Roberts

It is important to differentiate between time management strategies and tools. First lay the foundation of your time management strategy. To do this, you must consider the outcome you want. Then use tools – physical, virtual, or a combination - to implement your strategy.

The most successful people don't pride themselves on multi-tasking. They slow down. They focus. They value clarity. They prioritize. They select the most important thing required to

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accomplish their objective and they give it laser attention. They also know how to delegate so that their energy and expertise is expended on what they do best, on what others can't do. Whether your goal is to improve the quality of your life through improved physical or financial health and better relationships, or your goal is to start and grow a successful business, create your strategy to accomplish that goal. Then choose tools to help you implement your strategy. Recognizing we are all subject to the same limitations of 24 hours per day, acknowledge the one thing you CAN influence is how you manage yourself and what you DO with the time you have.

Here's my advice, learned from trial and error... and when I learn to follow my own advice, I'll let you know!

- Get enough sleep – research shows that you need at least 7.5 hours per night to maintain healthy weight and healthy mental focus
- Eat breakfast – skipping breakfast to save time compromises your energy levels and clarity for the rest of the day. Get up 15 minutes earlier if you need to and eat something nutritious (coffee alone doesn't qualify as breakfast!)
- Each night before you go to bed, make a list of the 3 projects (not 300) that you want to move forward the next day. Prioritize, with the one that scares you the most going first. Recognize the difference between projects and tasks, and whenever possible, delegate tasks to someone else.
- Don't open your email first thing – or if you feel you must, limit your time on email to 30 minutes or less – and use that time to determine what emails require attention later in the day. This one change in behavior is key; without controlling your time on email your day just becomes a reaction to someone else's demands.
- Set a stop time for everything you start. Over time, this will teach you to get more efficient. (Tip: this is especially important with phone conferences and meetings. Set a start time. Begin

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on time whether others have arrived or not. They'll learn you mean business. Have an agenda and stick to it. Commit to ending on time, always! Also, try to limit your meetings to 30 minutes rather than an hour. If you are in a meeting that's still going on after 2 hours, you are killing everyone's productivity!)

- Exercise daily. Go for a brisk walk, garden, ride a bike, go to the Y, workout at home to your favorite exercise video, go to yoga class, practice tai chi – but do something for your body regularly. It will boost your immune system, improve your concentration and creativity, and improve your mood.

Where does this leave you? Waking up refreshed, nourished by a healthy meal, focused on getting at least one big thing out of the way before any other distractions enter in, feeling positive and energetic about all the opportunities coming your way, and enjoying the confidence that comes with repeated success as you take action that moves you towards your goal.

One final note before we look at some tools for you to use.

If you are stymied, stumped, afraid, overwhelmed, or otherwise just stuck, ACTION is the cure and the solution. Whatever it is that you are avoiding, postponing, delaying – whatever it is that's blocking the rest of your forward progress, tackle it RIGHT NOW! Stop thinking. Take a deep breath. And get it out of the way! I guarantee it will be less painful than you think and you will feel such relief when it's behind you. Truly, you'll wonder what all the fuss was about. Make that call. Schedule that meeting. Go ask that question. Do that interview. Have that conversation. Submit that letter. Ask. Tell. Do. ACT!

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Here are some time management tools for you to investigate – but remember, don't add learning how to use a new tool to your already over-burdened day without first altering your mindset and habits concerning HOW and WHY you use your time.

- Things at [itunes/apple.com](http://itunes.apple.com)
- YadaHome at apple.com/webapps/productivity
- Toggl at toggle.com
- Evernote at evernote.com
- Zomm at zomm.com/products/personal-concierge
- 2Do at 2doapp.com
- Awesome Note at bridworks.com/anote (this is not a typo; it is 'brid' and not 'bird')
- Klok at getklok.com
- Time Master at on-core.com/timemaster/

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If you're interested in reading books about time management here are some to choose from:

- Tell Your Time by Amy Lynn Andrews
- Time Management from the Inside Out by Julie Morgenstern
- Time Management in an Instant by Karen Leland
- The 25 Best Time Management Tools & Techniques: How to Get More Done without Driving Yourself Crazy by Pamela Dodd
- Successful Time Management for Dummies by Dirk Zeller

And my personal favorite blogger on the subject of time management and more (leadership and organizational skills) is Peter Bregman who writes for Harvard Business Review.

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DO's

- **DO** understand there is a big difference between taking focused, calculated action and being frenetically busy. You want to do the first one.
- **DO** take one action today regarding something you have been postponing or procrastinating over. It will feel marvelously empowering.
- **DO** take a reality check regularly – once a week or even once a day – to see if how you are spending your time and energy is accomplishing what you intend to. You must work with intention to reach your goals and experience success.

DON'Ts

- **DON'T** dismiss your accomplishments. If you have to schedule it, take some time to celebrate how far you've come and how much better you are at managing your time and moving your goals forward.
- **DON'T** forget to take some time to have completely unscheduled time! Set aside an hour for a bath or a walk in the woods or on the beach. Spend an afternoon lost in a museum or a book store. Enjoy an evening home with good friends. Motivation and discipline are fine things but everything deserves balance.

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ACTION ITEMS:

- Write down the following: what time you're going to go to sleep tonight, what time you'll wake up tomorrow (remember, at least 7.5 hrs from when you go to bed and early enough that you have time for breakfast before you leave the house!), what you'll have for breakfast, and what time and where you're going to exercise
- Write down what time (am or pm and a specific hour) you are going to write down your 1-3 big things you will spend focus time on first thing each day
- Think about what tasks you might be able to delegate and who you can delegate them to. Also consider turning on your auto-responder notifying people that you'll only be checking and responding to email between 4-5 pm each day (or some period that works for you.)
- Plan to keep checking in with this series to learn next steps to start a business.
- Be sure to check out my new book and workbooks available for sale on Amazon in print and Kindle versions.
- Send a question to Jamie.Wolf@theStartOver.com! Tell me what's happened for you so far (or tell me your pet's name and what skin problems he has!) Thank you!

Beaufort resident Jamie Wolf is the author of 'Start Over! Start Now! Ten Keys to SUCCESS in Business and Life' and ten accompanying guidebooks. ☐ If you're ready to be Master of your Fate and Captain of your Soul, she invites you to come on board! Jamie offers online courses and coaching for entrepreneurs and people interested in starting over or in starting their own business. Visit her at <http://www.thestartover.com>

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