

# 10 TIPS



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## FOR BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT



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What's the one thing that small business owners never seem to have enough of? No, it's not customers, inventory or capital—it's time. If you're constantly wishing that there were more than 24 hours in a day, try these 10 tips to better manage your time.

1. **Harness your natural rhythms.** Do you notice that you have more energy in the mornings, or that you're most creative late at night? Whenever possible, take advantage of these natural energy cycles. For instance, if you're more energetic in the morning, schedule key tasks such as client meetings, brainstorming sessions or long-range planning then.
2. **Choose a scheduling system.** Having your to-do list and appointments written down in multiple places causes confusion. Create one electronic calendar you can access anywhere, such as iCal, Outlook or Google Calendar, and put all your commitments there. Simplify scheduling by sharing it with your assistant.
3. **Make appointments with yourself.** Important but non-urgent tasks like strategic planning often get pushed aside by urgent tasks like dealing with a customer crisis. Set aside time each week to work on long-term issues in your business, and treat this time as you would an appointment with your biggest customer.
4. **Manage interruptions.** Interruptions can't be avoided, but they can be managed. Try building in a 15-minute cushion between appointments to account for interruptions; closing your door for a set time each day so you can focus; and turning off sound alerts on your computer so you don't get distracted every time a new email arrives.
5. **Get a grip on email.** Try checking your email just three times a day—in the morning, before lunch and in the late afternoon. Train your team to eliminate unnecessary emails and avoid "reply all." Consider holding a "no email" day (or afternoon) once a week so people can focus on work uninterrupted.
6. **Limit meetings.** Hold meetings only when necessary and keep them as brief as possible. (Holding meetings standing up can encourage brevity.) Start on time, and people who are habitually late will quickly learn to show up on time.
7. **Use technology.** There are apps to help you do everything faster, from scanning receipts to sharing contact information to taking notes and more. Search "business productivity apps" online, and ask your colleagues what apps they rely on, to find the best ones for you.
8. **Pare down.** Are you participating in organizations, reading industry publications or using outdated processes that no longer add value to your business? Look for ways to simplify and streamline, whether by canceling memberships, unsubscribing from emails or revamping business processes.
9. **Delegate.** Trying to do everything themselves is a common time-waster for small business owners. Determine which tasks only you can perform, then train your employees to take over the rest. Yes, training will take a little time upfront, but it will save you time in the long run.
10. **Get enough rest and exercise.** It sounds counterintuitive, but taking time out to exercise and get adequate sleep will give you the energy to get through your day more effectively and productively.

### By Rieva Lesonsky

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