

Time management success stories

By Gaynor Lowndes, MD of The Recruitment Training Company & The Recruitment and Training Factory

In my time as a recruitment trainer I have been privileged to work with a number of clients who, I believe, represent what recruitment should be about. Some are noted for their excellent candidate sourcing, others for their well-developed sales skills, and others for their unusual efficiency and time management prowess – it is this latter quality that I will focus on here.

Time management looms today as a more important issue than ever. The growing workplace pressure we hear about constantly is a cliché but not a myth. There are only so many hours in a day, but put simply, the way many of us spend these hours does not seem to justify this reality.

Everyone knows the theory on time management. There are constantly workshops being run and books being published on the subject. Yet I have observed that the message somehow still doesn't get through. So why not learn from those who have the balance right in practice? Three of the clients that I have worked with closely during my time as a trainer spring to mind (please note their names have been changed).

James is the director of a rapidly growing agency based in the Sydney area, with interstate offices as well. These days, he says his biggest challenge is to juggle the dual role of director and consultant, yet this is one person who can inspire people in either role. Before he became a director, he would be in the office each day at 7 am, and in his words, "I would be in the gym by 2 pm". When you look at James' hours in conjunction with his consistently met KPI's and high revenue generation, you realise that there are some important time management success tips to be learned here.

"You have to avoid getting bogged down with the wrong stuff", he says. "I have noticed that consultants see themselves too often as customer service providers." While candidates should always be treated with respect, he says, consultants do waste a lot of time trying to be nice, rather than being direct and honest with the candidate in order to "fast track the rubbish and get to what really makes the money: Business Generation".

James is the first to admit that both client and candidate relationships are important, but he asserts that it isn't the end result of what a recruiter does. "For example, I get into the office at 7 am, and spend the first hour 'smashing' through all the emails I receive, before the phones start to ring." Other recruiters, he says, will waste valuable time crafting eloquent, overly polite emails to candidates and clients. "So often consultants are afraid to be direct with clients and candidates. What they don't realise is that you can be direct and polite at the same time, and the time you save can be used to do what makes the money."

I first met Emma at a public workshop I ran in the Melbourne area, in 2005. She worked in healthcare recruitment and her philosophy was simple: "Clients and candidates: Don't waste their time!" When I spoke to her, I realised that she had touched on an important part of relationship building that others seem to miss: Time management isn't just a personal thing, it's a skill that must be developed for the sake of your client and candidate rapport. "I'm sick of hearing about time management as a way to 'feel in control of your day'", she told me in her typically direct manner. "Who cares about you personally feeling in control of your day – your candidates and clients are the ones you have to answer to in the end. Do it for them."

Emma has no illusions about time management as a direct factor in the repeat business that she gets from satisfied clients. "I get them on an exclusive basis most of the time", she says, "because they know I'm reliable, that I will follow through with my promises, and most importantly, that I will do it promptly and efficiently. They also know that I won't waste my time or their's with unsuitable candidates. If I don't have someone suitable on hand, I will tell them upfront 'I don't have anyone at the moment, but I will make it my top priority.' They agree, because they know that when I say 'priority', I mean priority!"

Ian is another consultant from the Melbourne area. He works in the office support and accounting sectors. Behind the shy, youthful smile is a sharp, logical and results-focused mind. I conducted an in-house workshop at his

agency on business development techniques, and he actually rang me a month later to tell me how my training had impacted his work. "Gaynor", he said excitedly, "before your workshop I was struggling to work out how to cold call efficiently. It just seemed to be rejection after rejection, a waste of time. I'd never made an advert chase call me in my life, but after you taught us the skills, I gave it a try. Now the majority of my cold calls are advert chases, and my results have gone through the roof!"

I asked Ian why he believed that ad chasing was the most efficient form of business development. "I guess it's because you're responding to a definite need. You look in the papers and on the net for ads, rather than wasting your time calling random companies who may not need anyone, and who feel like your call is wasting their time." And how had this new approach impacted on Ian's work day? "If I'm honest, I used to come to the end of so many days knowing that I could have had the day off and it wouldn't have made a difference. Now I know that the hours in the day get used, and they get used effectively!"

Varied individuals, varied experiences, varied approaches. But all of these individuals have found tools for time management success in an industry where it matters perhaps more than any other. James' 7 am start may not be convenient, and Ian's advert chasing emphasis may not be your style. To expect these techniques to work for everyone is to miss the point. I hope that you can come away from this article with a broader understanding of the possibilities of successful time management, and *use what you have read here as an inspiration to find what works for you*, to find your own individual time management success. ■



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