



## Part 3: Organizing your time

### Finding time versus making time

One question to ask yourself is “Am I busy or am I productive?” Some frenzy of activity is going on in your life that seems crucial, but...is it the right thing to be doing at any particular moment?

Sometimes the answer is “Yes, I have to do this before anything else can happen.” But sometimes my husband is right (that question in the last paragraph was his), and I’m living in an illusion of productivity. *Busyness can keep us from the business at hand.*

Guess what? There is no more time. You have the same amount of time as the President or as Warren Buffett.

“But, but..!” I hear you cry. No but, buts. There are 24 hours in the day. You cannot make more time. Instead, you have to find it.

Back to Warren Buffet – he has a pretty big vision and a pretty big impact on his businesses, stockholders and the community. Even the people who don’t want to listen to him still pay attention. I imagine that he has a clear vision of his desired outcomes, a fierce grasp on his priorities and an efficiency expert’s focus on how much time he spends on each one. If you are going to add writing a book to your already busy schedule, you’ll need the same type of focus, and the same efficiency in managing your time, as Warren Buffet.

Remember, the crucial question to ask when you look at how you choose to spend your time is: *What am I trying to create?*

A clear picture of your vision, of what you are trying to create and why it is important, will help you protect that time you found to write. A clear picture of your readers can be an inspiration to you when your own focus blurs.

*The key to time management is to manage priorities, not time.*

You can reallocate your priorities and readjust your schedule. What you cannot do is make more time.



## *Manage priorities, not time*

Take a few minutes and make a list of your priorities.

...OK, done? Now look at how you've allocated your 24/7 life. We're going to focus on business activities, but it's all on the calendar – personal, family, business, everything, right? You probably have business activities that fit into categories such as:

*Marketing*

*Sales*

*Delivering your services or products*

*Financial management*

Take your list, look at your calendar and block out specific times in your week when you will work on each of these activities. At this point, you don't need to worry about exactly what you will do in each of these blocks of time; that will differ from week to week. But you might decide, for example, that you will spend two hours each week, from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays, working on marketing for your business and that every Friday afternoon, from 2 to 4 p.m., you will work on record keeping and financial management.

Your business priorities will also include administrative activities that support the list above. These might include:

*Correspondence* (that's what we used to call it before email and e-newsletters)

*Organizing* (your electronic and physical and TIME worlds) – in other words,  
PRIORITIZING

Yes, I'm putting prioritizing into administrative activities, although it seems as if it should be more important. It is extremely important.

Why? Because if you don't prioritize, the important things won't get done. Steven Covey, the author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, suggests using a quadrant to help prioritize your time, dividing your activities into these categories:

*Urgent and Important*

*Urgent and Unimportant*

*Not Urgent and Important*

*Not Urgent and Unimportant*

For example, a ringing phone or pinging email urgently pleads for your attention, but is often unimportant at the moment. And the two hours you block twice a week to work on your book are *Important but Not Urgent*, so it's easy to let something else slide into that time slot.

How much of your time is spent on those Urgent but Unimportant activities? Using this quadrant will help you see just how you are using your time. If you don't administer your time

wisely, you will be disappointed. At the end of your day, your month, your year, your life, you will be disappointed. And you will never FINISH YOUR BOOK.

I'm going to suggest that writing your book is a marketing activity – a crucial one for many business owners, speakers, coaches and consultants.

So look at the marketing activity blocks you now have on your calendar, add more details to what you are doing for marketing...add FINISH YOUR BOOK to the list and find **the time on your calendar.**

Ha, still easier said than done, I know. You may have to experiment. I originally blocked two hours on Wednesday afternoons for writing. Just after lunch. Right. What happened was, I had to come home from wherever I was, clear my head, ignore phone calls and emails, and focus.

I resented the “coming home” time, I still had to eat lunch, I was already thinking about a million other things, and I looked at the blank spot on my calendar and kept filling it with appointments for “just this week.”

What is working right now? How did I move from never working on my book to almost finished? Forget clearing my head and shifting gears. It was too hard for me. I now write every Wednesday *morning*, starting at 7 a.m., I get up, do the minimum personal stuff, make a pot of coffee and go up to my computer. Do not check email. Do not check bank balances. Do not engage anyone else who happens to be up with more than “good morning.” Just write.

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A Time Management Guide for Writers

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