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Time Management for Stewards

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Time Management for Stewards

Abstract
[Excerpt] Too much to do? Too little time to do it? Stewards face that problem every day – and the smart ones do something about it. It's called time management.

Keywords
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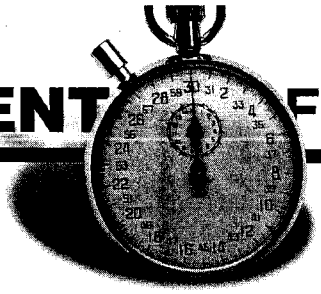
TIME MANAGEMENT FOR STEWARDS



Too much to do?
Too little time to do it?

Stewards face that problem every day — and the smart ones do something about it. It's called time management.

The fact is, you already manage your time — everyone does. All it means is making decisions about what gets done and what doesn't get done within the time you have. Here are some tips on managing your time in a way that can make life a lot easier.

■ **Review how you use your time.** Look for patterns. Are you constantly talking to the same people about the same thing? Are you always helping members do things they could easily do for themselves if you just gave them a little direction? Are you always trying to reach people on the phone and getting return calls when you are not in?

■ **Take a few minutes and write down your goals,** such as getting more members active or teaching your supervisor to respect the contract. If you work on a project or task without setting goals you're setting out on a road trip without knowing your final destination.

■ **Make "to-do" lists of the tasks you face and handle the most important things first.** Lists help you remember to do things. They reduce stress because you don't worry about trying to keep everything in your head.

■ **Share information so more people can help you and themselves.** For example, instead of constantly giving out health forms, set up a place where members can pick them up. Post important phone numbers and names of people the members can call for more information.

■ **Hold short informal meetings** and/or distribute a written guide to give members answers to their most common questions.

■ **Deal with problems at the source** — don't repeatedly fight the same battle. Rather than filing grievance after grievance over the same issue, see if there is something you can do about the underlying problem.

■ **Handle big tasks in pieces.** For example: request information, schedule a meeting, write an outline, think about it for 10 minutes, ask for advice, etc. Using this technique will help you get started and make a big task less overwhelming.

■ **When handling paperwork, sort things by importance.** File things so you can find them later. Try not to shuffle papers from one pile to another. If you pick up something don't put it down without doing something with it — file it, toss it, write a note on it and send it to someone else, enter it on your calendar, write a reply, etc.

■ **Create and use forms,** rather than write the same thing repeatedly. Save re-usable paragraphs from letters or memos you write.

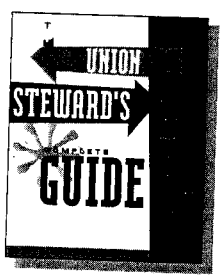
■ **Cut down on playing "phone tag."** Use voice mail to leave as detailed a message as possible. Rather than calling, fax a short memo. Talk to secretaries/assistants and see if you can do your business with them. When you leave a message, include the best time to be called back.

■ **Shorten your phone conversations.** Before making a call have a written outline of what you want to accomplish. Get right to business. Develop some good closing lines to end the call, such as, "I know you are busy so I'll let you go."

■ **Keep commonly called phone numbers handy.** Every time you use a number enter it into your system.

Don't set your expectations too high, too fast for improving your time management skills. Expect that some days you may still feel frustrated when other people take up all your time or when you just can't seem to get anything done. Just keep plugging away. It'll pay off in the end.

— Ken Margolies. The writer is on the labor extension faculty of Cornell University.



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