

Drilling deep into time

Robyn Pearce



I'm sure, in your classroom environment, working with the creative minds of your students, you've noticed, as I have, how the quality of the question determines the quality of the answer.

I had a request recently from Tim Wilson of www.Time-Management-Success.com, a UK-based website related to all things to do with time management, asking for an interview. His

great questions really got me drilling down into some quite deep topics and coming up with answers I hadn't thought of before. You might also find some of the answers useful.

TW: Many people feel their personal time management and organisational skills are poor. From your experience, what seem to be the reasons for this?

Two major reasons I see.

Good time skills don't come naturally for everyone. Howard Gardner talks about multiple intelligences. I think time awareness could be listed as another one, unless we agree that it fits in the 'Intrapersonal' intelligence category. <http://www.tecweb.org/styles/gardner.html>.

The science of NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) with its discussion on in-time and through-time behaviour comes the closest to explaining why. Bottom line – some people are born with the ability to manage themselves efficiently. Others constantly struggle. By nature the strugglers don't 'do' time easily; they're far more likely to go with the flow and then get criticised for being poor time managers. (That's my natural style, which I believe is why I'm able to help so many people – I truly understand what it feels like to always be late for things – and I've learned how to change the behavior.) It can be modified (as I've learned to do) but it requires a much more conscious decision and different strategies than if you're naturally good at 'doing time'.

Many people go into the workforce without good role models.

You might not have learned it at home or at school or college. It's seldom taught in schools. (Note to my *Education Today* readers – perhaps you're the exception, given that you're reading this article!) And if you're like me you may have even had incorrect role models – as a younger woman

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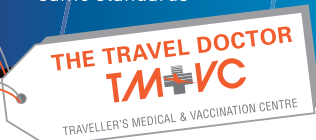
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my Mum was a shocker. So – my memories and inherited patterns are of constantly slinking into church late, rushing for the school bus, ... always a sense of being out of time.

TW: *To what extent do you rely on systems, habits and routine to manage yourself? Does it mean you have to rely less on motivation to kick start yourself into action?*

I've learned to be an early starter. But early for me doesn't mean that's the right answer for everyone.

Time management is really a misnomer – it's our energy we need to manage. Questions to consider: 'When in the day do I do my best work? When are my high energy times? When can I focus with least distractions?'

I guard my work space jealously.

Ask yourself: "What do I need to do to block out distractions?" If you have to work in an open plan office, try using a headset (with or without music) to block out background distractions. It's also a signal to your colleagues that you're busy. Ideally, find somewhere else to do your highest value work.

My research shows that less than 15% are happy to work in an open plan space and even in that small per cent, only half of them can really concentrate on high-level work with lots going on around them.

I've developed the ability to focus strongly. Doing this interview for you is an example, Tim. You had to wait until I could give you full focus. Now other things are pushed back. I rarely do email first thing in the day. Instead I chunk it to mid-morning at the earliest and then a few sessions later through the day. I have no alerts blipping at me – they're a distraction.

You ask if my systems and routines help kick-start me. I guess they do. But the biggest kick-start is a sense that the work I do is really important, that it changes people's lives. I love what I do so much that it doesn't seem like work.

For me, being a self-starter is no more difficult than waking up in the morning and thinking: 'what is the highest value activity I need to focus on today?'

TW: *Time management materials are often like church – preaching to the converted. What, if any, are the most effective methods for encouraging people to appreciate their time and improve their personal time management?*

The ongoing drip-feed of support is what keeps people on track. A seminar or speech gives a shot in the arm; it's the coaching afterwards (which these days can so easily be done via various digital methods and which is becoming a bigger part of my business) that brings the real habit changes. My whole business is constructed around delivering support to people all round the world in a range of ways.

A few specifics are via my regular Top Time Tips ezine (available after a person has received my free report 'How to master time in only 90 seconds' at www.gettingagrip.com/). There's also the blog at <http://blog.gettingagrip.com/>, all my books, CDs, digital downloads and the huge range of free articles also at our website. And of course there are webinars and much more.

The other encouragement is internal. Once you start to feel the benefits of your own behaviour change you want to keep looking for enhancements. I often tell my audiences:

'Become a walking question mark, looking for small improvements on your day-to-day activities.'

Success becomes its own reward (and encouragement).

TW: *How do you know when something you've produced that has no defined end point is good enough to call 'finished'?*

For most things, once something's about 70 – 80% 'good enough', let it go. You can always polish it up later but if you invest too much time

in perfection your progress is drastically slowed down.

An exception for me personally is my writing. Once that's gone out into the ether it can't be brought back. I confess to a degree of perfectionism in that area – it's a significant part of who I am and how I'm perceived in the marketplace.

TW: *What's your most valuable physical time management tool – the one you rely on most – and why?*

You might be surprised to hear me say that my small pocket Daytimer diary is my most valuable tool. Even though I'm quite techie I prefer a paper diary. I can see things in a flash, make appointments while my digital friends are still finding the right spot in their smart phones – and the battery never runs down!

There are two other vital items – a notebook to record conversations and notes, plus my Smart Phone – currently a Blackberry (although a number of my friends are nagging me to get an iPhone). I love the ability to check emails on the run and flip off quick texts – saves enormous amounts of time. One major caution with a Smart Phone, however – don't let it rule your life. It has an Off button and far too many people forget to use it.

There is also a new piece of technology that I'm just learning to use now – Dragon NaturallySpeaking version 11. It is voice recognition software, and it's amazing! **ET**



Robyn Pearce is a Certified Speaking Professional. Check the resources on her website www.gettingagrip.com including a free report for you: How to Master Time in Only 90 Seconds.

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