



10/3/2012 Tomorrow: From the Beginning Question Log

Questions from Live Event as answered by Cathy Hakala-Ausperk

Q: I would like to know more about the log notebook - did she say she uses a spiral notebook?

A: I use a spiral bound book because I want pages to stay put – and stay in order. That way, the tool ends up being both a to do (and “Did I finish this task”) log and a diary of sorts. I can look back at notes from meetings, phone calls or numbers noted, etc.

Q: As a manager I find my day is often ad hoc problem solving as things come up from staff and patrons. Do you log those kinds of things on your notebook? This gives you a sense of what you have been doing all day.

and do you avoid doing this electronically for a particular reason?

A: I don't log everything I do but if someone comes in to talk about something, that's where I take notes; or if the furnace goes out, that's where I note the part that broke, cost and repair numbers (for next time?) Major events like disciplinary meetings go in more appropriate (and confidential) personnel files. Remember, anything you write down as a public employee (even your log book) is public and can be reviewed. I carry this book with me to meetings, etc. I'm a baby boomer and a former writer, so I've always used paper. I guess I could try transitioning to using my ipad but I'm not as comfortable with it. The key is to use what you will really use! If you like technology better, then use that!

Q: When using the log, how do you manage it if you've written something down and don't get it done that day. I spend a lot of time carrying tasks over day after day.

A: I put an empty box next to things in the log I must do, then check the box when I'm done. At the end of each day, I move anything unchecked to the top of the next day's page. I think, because I organize my time like this, I have fewer and fewer things that don't get done than I ever had before.

Q: Q on reports and big stuff page: what if you're working on something, and have allotted a specific amount of time, but you're on a roll. Can you continue working on it even if it's not on the calendar?

A: That's part of the beauty of having your time well organized – you can be flexible and not get in trouble! If I look at my calendar and there's nothing coming next that's on deadline, then, yes, I can keep going. Empty time on a calendar is as important to note as “claimed” time, because it allows you that flexibility.

Q: How do you adapt when there are significant events and the information coming in that needs to be dealt with explodes, such as covering four administrative roles.

A: I get behind. We all have to realize neither we nor any time management system we use is perfect. And, we need to realize that's okay. By taking control of your time, though, this will happen less and less. We need to excuse and forgive ourselves for not always being perfect. When we learn to do that, we can do the same for our staff members.

Q: I'm in a public library with three staff members and I am the IT and cataloging person. I find it hard to complete tasks because I seem to answer questions for patrons, as well as staff members all day. Lots of interruptions...

A: I used to tell my branch managers they must, absolutely must, schedule some time in their day to do their critical management functions: developing staff, planning, training, mentoring, etc. The hardest part was always learning to trust their staff to handle things when they weren't there. Ninety nine percent of the time, everything turned out ok. Once in a while, problems/mistakes took place. Which were fixed, forgiven and everyone moved on.

Q: How do incorporate ongoing training of staff that keeps turning over into prioritization of goals and tasks?

A: If you're their boss, then I would suggest that should be and should stay at the top of your list. Training and development should always be ongoing. I try to stay on top of this by scheduling monthly meetings with everyone I supervise. I put them on the calendar in January (using Outlook, I send them an invitation so it's on their calendar too). We touch base, dream, confer, fix problems and track training and development. I often have to move our appointments (or they do) but I still continue meeting with them and helping them grow.

Q: So, you only read email at the end of the day - not first thing in the morning or mid-day?

A: I think the idea is finding what works best for you, but not using the first thing in the morning when you are most productive as email time. Try to start by picking 2 or (no more than 3) times a day. Period. Then, slowly, try hard to get down to once. You'll find you deal more effectively with each email when you know that's your only chance Until the next day!

Q: Do you have any tips for time management in a new job?...my supervisor is not great at time planning and I am finding this transition difficult.

A: I'd suggest telling your boss you feel you could be much more productive and successful if she/he would allow you just 15-30 minutes at the start of each week to review your work plan and assure you're priorities are their priorities. That way, if you begin to slip "under water," you'll have them to help you re-assess and make adjustments to how you're using your time.

Q: I manage two libraries and am at each one two to three days in a row. I need portable organization. I need to be able to access everything at either or both campuses. Any suggestions?

A: I would suggest using a product like Microsoft Outlook (if your library has it) or something simple like Google calendar and folders (if you don't). Older editions (maybe one year old??) of tools just as iPad aren't that expensive. I've purchased lots of time management tools for myself over the years, just so I can be more effective. If those ideas don't work, I'd suggest a rolling briefcase that can help you keep your files and paperwork with you.

Q: I have all of my documents and files on a portable hard drive. I take it with me whenever I leave the building.

A: Great idea!

Q: How to delegate productively.

A: Delegation is a negotiation in itself. On the bosses' side, it includes job requirements and expectations of performance. On the staff member's side, it should include hopes and desires to grow and expand skills. On both sides, however, it must include trust. Even if a task might not get done the same or as well or as quickly if you delegate it, let it go anyway. Let staff see you help them fix mistakes and, together, celebrate success.

Q: Charting progress to present to library board.

A: Regular meetings with staff, like the monthly ones I've discussed, allow you to create, track, adjust and implement real performance plans – both yours and your team's. Those successes would be easy to share with the Board!

Q: How to deal to multiple tasks assigned without losing track of the achievements.

A: Great question. You must take the time and make the effort to celebrate achievements! Maybe through a blog or staff newsletter or distribution list. By managing your time – and allowing your staff to manage their time and efforts carefully, success will be easier to see – and more frequent!

Q: What tools--online especially--are most helpful in planning, scheduling, reminding, etc.?

A: As I've said, I love the Microsoft Outlook tools – especially the calendar. But I use Google's calendar for personal work and that works almost as well. Those are the two I'd suggest starting with.

Q: We are starting a new church library from scratch. How do you recommend I focus my time. I can become so easily overwhelmed!

A: I'd suggest starting with a Strategic Plan for the year. Pick your top 2-3 goals – no more than that. Then, select measurable objectives to reach each goal – and assign them to a timeline. Make sure your timeline is real – then move forward. Adjust as necessary to meet inevitable changes.

Q: How do you handle upper management's pressure to do more and more as an upper level manager vs. the daily tasks?

A: Find out what the reality is? Review your task list with your supervisor and talk about priorities. Create a performance plan that shows what you think you can actually accomplish, and review that with her/him too. Work towards an agreed-upon plan and keep communication open, so you can ask for help (or at least understanding) when it might need to be altered.

Q: How do you accommodate someone who thinks their job is more important than what you have on you plate already.

A: If that someone is your boss, I'd suggest doing what I outlined in the previous answer. Sit down and look at tasks and priorities and talk them over until you find common ground. With anyone else – I would suggest open communication. With anyone – boss or not – I would suggest that YOU need to be comfortable with what you're doing and how you're spending your time, regardless of what others think of you.

I hope these answers are helpful! Contact me if you have more.
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Thanks!