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You will likely never work more hours in a day, month, or year than you did as a young lawyer. However, as you transition from the role of associate to that of partner, or from subordinate to manager, you will inevitably find yourself responsible for an increasing amount of work product with less time in your weekly schedule to accomplish that work. More to do in less time.

Not only has your day at the office become busier, but if you are in your 30s or 40s like I was when I made this transition, life outside of the office simultaneously becomes more hectic as well. Children, home ownership, aging parents—just to name a few ways life's demands take over.

Every Successful Lawyer Does More in Less Time

By Aidan R. Welsh

As your responsibilities and demands increase, learning to manage those obligations is critical to your success in the next phase of your career. There are a few key skills that I have learned, failed at, and continue to try that will enable you to stay organized, increase productivity, and simply make work more manageable (and less stressful) for you and your colleagues.

Record and Maintain a Detailed Contact List

Every colleague that you meet and every potential referral source you connect with is a contact in your network. There is no better way to stay organized with your networking than to keep and maintain clear and detailed records of those contacts. Although it is never too late to start, this is a habit that you can begin on the first day of your first job and carry the work with you for your entire career.

Technology today makes this easy. Your e-mail system, such as Outlook, can keep track of your contacts and, in most cases, automate the creation of new contacts or modification of existing contacts with the click of a button. You can store information regarding the contact's name, e-mail, address, and other notes about the individual. By keeping personal notes about a contact, it provides context for your relationship

with that person, something that is especially important if the contact is someone you do not see and connect with on a regular basis, making it easier to reconnect later. Maybe you went to the same college, or had a nice meal together, or vacation in the same area. Whatever the detail is, it will go a long way the next time you see them. And of course, I periodically review my contacts and reach out to people that I have not connected with in a long time.

E-mails—Where Does Your Time Go?

There is no bigger waste of time than e-mails. I remember older partners that I have worked with talking about the days before e-mails. While most young lawyers barely remember a time when e-mail did not exist, we should, once in a while, pretend it doesn't.

E-mails can cause distraction, create an endless feedback loop, trigger anxiety, and sometimes create confusion out of a simple issue or task. If this sounds like something that happens to you, try the Zero Inbox and OHIO (Only Handle it Once) methods. Now as I explain what these mean, please don't be scared by what seems like a herculean task. Even the most distracted and disorganized lawyers can embrace these methods. Every day I attempt to strive to these goals

and idolize those who have mastered them.

The Zero Inbox Policy—this means that by the end of the work day, there is nothing left in your inbox. Once you have reviewed an e-mail, save it to the appropriate location or forward the e-mail to the appropriate colleague, and then *delete* it from your inbox. Do not be scared of the delete button (but save first!)! If the e-mail requires a task to be completed—add the task to your to-do list.

OHIO—Only Handle It Once method. Have you ever opened an e-mail and started to address it, then another e-mail comes in and you are distracted by what that e-mail says and then 30 minutes later find yourself back at the first e-mail, starting from square one? Then this method is for you. Once you start to address an e-mail—finish it through before moving on to the next e-mail or task. By handling the task one time and *one time only*, you will save an enormous amount of time and actually finish the tasks you start.

If you find yourself on e-mail all day and you did not get a chance to complete the prep for that meeting, presentation, deposition or court hearing, then what you need is segregated e-mail time. Schedule a period of time in the morning, around lunchtime, and in the afternoon to dedicate to reviewing and answering e-mails. This will allow you to shut down your e-mail at other times and better focus on other assignments and tasks you have (OHIO!). Your colleagues and clients will notice your increased focus and attention to their matters. If they really need you, they can pick up the phone.

Plan Out Your Day

Take ten minutes every night or every morning to plan out your day. If I look at two different days—one day where I take the time to plan and another where I jump in head first—I can easily see that I am much more productive when I have a plan. This means I accomplish and bill more hours—two things that I am sure my partners love.

Even if I plan my day, there will certainly be unexpected issues, assignments, and even emergencies, but when the unexpected comes I am calmer and better able to manage the new task because I know what my priorities are.

Take the daily plan one step further and look at the upcoming week and month. Eliminate the fire drills by planning ahead. Your colleagues and partners will notice a major positive change in your productivity, organization, and work product.

Delegate When Possible, but Do It Well

You cannot possibly do it all alone. Delegation is key to staying organized and on top of your workload. Delegate work to associates, paralegals, and admins. However, if you delegate, you must do it well. Doing it well entails delegating to the right person, training, and mentoring those who you delegate to. Give your colleagues a chance to succeed in doing the work for you. Your firm or business hired these people because they are competent and capable of providing a good work product. The first step in helping them succeed is to give them the opportunity.

Identify areas of your work that can be delegated. Delegate early on in the process to

allow time for feedback and review. Then let the individual perform the task. Give yourself enough time to provide deadlines that fit into your schedule for responding back to the client. Review the work that is produced and provide both positive and critical feedback. The individual is not going to produce the work in the exact same way you would but that does not mean the work product is not good. The purpose of delegating work is to free up your time to do more important work. It is your job to move the process forward effectively and efficiently, reduce fees for your client, and produce a quality work product.

As I reread this article and the tips provided, I realize that these tips may be more of a wish list than reality for me, but they are certainly goals I seek to achieve. It is never too late to become more organized and efficient. Every successful lawyer knows how to do more with less time. **CL**

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