

WHY PLAN

WHEN YOU COULD ACTUALLY
BE DOING SOMETHING
INSTEAD? By Steve McClatchy



In today's hyper-connected global business environment many believe that planning has lost its relevance. Here are some benefits to consider before giving up on planning. I have also included the BIGGEST planning mistakes to avoid

It Helps You 'Stay the Course'

If you don't have a plan then whatever comes your way becomes the plan. This leaves your success in the hands of others. What other people bring to you is going to help them succeed--not you. With a plan you can help them be successful with their agenda without falling behind on your own.

It Gives You a Feeling of Accomplishment

When a deadline for a task is approaching adrenaline floods your body out of fear. When the adrenaline leaves your body you crash. Repeating this cycle too often leads to feeling burned out. When you do a task ahead of the deadline endorphins release giving you a sense of control and accomplishment. With a list you can play offense, and release endorphins throughout the day by checking off your list, and put an end to crashing at night. How much more could you accomplish if you could use those hours at the end of the day more productively?

You Don't Forget

How much time do you waste forgetting things? Yes, you have memories from when you were five but sometimes you walk into another room and forget why you went in there. Your brain's capacity can only take you so far. With a plan you are less subject to the limits of that capacity, to distractions, and to the tendency to forget.

Recover Faster from Interruptions

With technology, social media notifications, and the expectation that you should always be available, interruptions are a big part of our lives today. Let's break an interruption down into two parts. There is the interruption itself and then there is the time it takes to recover from the interruption. When you have a plan there is no recovery time. You can recover quickly which means you gain time back in your day. How many times are you interrupted a day?

Save Time Transitioning

When you do have uninterrupted time, a plan is your best tool for accomplishing

the most during that time. Having a plan eliminates transition time between tasks so you can maximize your productivity.

You Make Better Decisions

When you don't plan whatever you think of or finds you becomes the next thing you do. But what if that is not the best use of your time? When you keep a list you can consider each decision against the list helping you to make better decisions.

There are so many benefits to planning so why don't people do it? Here are some of the biggest mistakes people make when planning.

They Add Everything onto Today's List and Become Discouraged

A to-do list should only include today's tasks. A list that includes everything you ever want to do is overwhelming and will do more harm than good. Keep a to-do list on your smartphone and give each task a date. If you can't do it until tomorrow, give it tomorrow's date and forget about it today. Keeping an achievable to-do list for each day gives you a sense of accomplishment at the end of each day. Avoiding this one mistake can get you back to planning. This also puts an end to the treadmill to-do list that never ends and just rolls from one day to the next.

They List Routine Tasks

From the moment you wake up until the time you start work your routine is pretty much exactly the same each day. Streamline this routine to make it as efficient as possible and then turn it into a habit. Keeping efficient consistent routines in the morning or other times of day makes you more likely to be on time and not feel burned out by daily maintenance tasks which will pile up if not addressed habitually such as laundry, cleaning, mail, etc. Once these habits are established they don't need to go on your to-do list.

They Over-Plan

Each day you have appointment and non-appointment time to consider. Your task list should not be longer than what you can knock out during your non-appointment time. How much of your non-appointment time should you plan for tasks? My rule of thumb is 50%. If you have 4 hours of appointment-free time today, you should only plan tasks for 2 hours of that time. A whole 8-hour work day with no appointments? Plan

about 4 hours of tasks for that time. The other 50% will go to your routines, interruptions, and getting back to people who are reaching out to you.

They Put Their Goals on Their To-Do List

A to-do list is for tasks that have deadlines and negative consequences. There are no consequences for not pursuing goals. There are only benefits to be gained for achieving them. Therefore, when tasks with consequences (such as paying bills) are next to goals with no consequences (such as a piano lesson) on your to-do list, your brain will choose to prevent negative consequences instead of pursuing gain. This is a survival tactic. If you just leave your goals on your to-do list to be pushed off again and again you will never "find time" for them. Goals belong on your calendar, not a to-do list, so the time you need to pursue them can be separated from, and defended against, tasks with negative consequences. Schedule time on your calendar for pursuing your next goal and get it off your to-do list.

They Spend Too Much Time Putting the Plan Together

Prioritizing tasks with ABCs and 123s and spending too much time putting the plan together is another reason people give up. It takes so long they could have checked off a real task in that amount of time. Your goals, priorities, and things you don't want to leave until the last minute should be scheduled time on your calendar. What's left are just maintenance tasks with deadlines and consequences so they don't need to be prioritized. Place them in the order that makes the most sense and attack!

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