

The Value of Time

We all know that there are 24 hours in a day, 7 days in a week, 4.3 weeks in a month, and 12 months in a year. We also realize that once time is spent, we don't get it back. What we often forget, however, is that there's no such thing as a Time-Grabber, some nimble-footed creature who sneaks up on us when we're not looking and steals time from us.

How often does a business associate cancel an appointment with you because "something came up?" Gee, there's a surprise. No one has ever arrived unexpectedly in my office or called me on the phone just as I was leaving. How often has a client asked to reschedule an appointment with you because they caught the flu? I thought the flu knocked you flat on your back for at least a week. It least that's what it did to me the last time I had it. How come they're sure they'll be feeling better in 24-hours and want to reschedule for tomorrow?

In case you haven't guessed, I've recently had a number of clients and business associates cancel and reschedule appointments at the last minute. It really irritates me.

Sure, things come up. But nothing happens to them, and you, that doesn't happen to me: clients are late, phone calls interrupt, 47 e-mails arrive Monday morning, unplanned meetings arise, other people's priorities somehow become mine. Real things come up, too, like parents dying, women giving birth, friends wrecking their cars, and people getting divorced.

Each of us has the same number of hours in a day. What each of us needs to do is realize that our time is no more, or less, important than someone else's. If we make a commitment, we should keep it unless an emergency comes up. If someone arrives late for an appointment with us, we should reschedule if it's going to set us back for the day and mess up the schedule of everyone else who'll be arriving to see us after the guy who was half an hour late. Don't you

just hate sitting in the doctor's office for forty-five minutes—whether it's in the overly warm waiting room or in that freezing cold examination room with your behind hanging out of the paper Johnny? Well, everyone else does too.

Time shouldn't schedule us, we should schedule our time. We should value it and respect it, because once it's gone, we don't get it back. We should also build time into every day's schedule, leaving it sitting there, ready to be used when something real does comes up. Then we don't mess up our schedules--or anyone else's. The worst that could happen is we find ourselves with fifteen or thirty minutes we hadn't counted on.

Gee, what could I do with an extra half hour? I could do one of the 20 things I haven't gotten to yet, I could call my father to say "hello," I could e-mail those pictures of the moose who visited our yard to my granddaughter... Heck, I could get a head start on this article!

You get the point. Maybe your New Year's resolution this year could be to make a point of collecting time rather than spending it.

Happy New Year!

-- Linda