Managing Time Around the Holidays

As the year draws to a close and we see fewer calendar days available to get things done, we may wonder how we’re going to fit everything in. At the end of the year we typically need to close out tasks and meet our end-of-year objectives, plus develop practical plans for the coming year. Added to that are the many things we need to do to prepare for the holidays with our families, friends and coworkers.

Here are some tips on making time work for you during the holiday season.

**Build and work with a focused list.** Prepare lists of all the work and personal/family tasks you need to accomplish prior to the end of the year. Prioritize these activities, and decide what’s necessary and what can be left off the list. Be careful not to overload yourself at this time of year.

**Delegate as much as possible.** Try to make sure there’s an equitable distribution of tasks on your staff so that no one ends up swamped over the holidays. Do brief check-ins with those who report to you to gauge how they’re doing.

**Keep meetings focused.** Remember to keep your meetings time-limited, with structured agendas that emphasize getting key tasks done to meet your group’s end-of-year goals. Remind staff to finish the year strong and hit their targets.

**Manage procrastination.** Try dividing your large, complicated tasks into smaller, more manageable parts, and start tackling them one at a time.

**Make room for celebrations, but watch the time.** If you hold holiday celebrations during work hours, be reasonable about their duration. And try to spread out any event-related tasks evenly between staff.

**Re-align goals as necessary.** If you can’t realistically accomplish a particular work objective in 2012 given your staff resources, decide if it’s practical and appropriate to move it to after the first of the year. If so, you can begin 2013 with a clean slate and renewed resolve to get it done.
How Sleep Impacts Work

How well can you work if you can't sleep? Probably not well at all, as most people find out. And you’re not alone. According to the National Sleep Foundation’s annual Sleep in America survey, **65 percent of Americans experience some sort of sleep problem**.

Most people don’t know what causes their sleep problems. Common difficulties include restless leg syndrome, sleep apnea, narcolepsy, and insomnia. Regardless, a lack of sleep can reduce work productivity. Sleep problems can cause a lack of concentration and alertness that can result in work mistakes, and even accidents. The estimated cost to U.S. employers in lost productivity due to sleep loss issues is $18 billion.

It’s best to confront the problem if you’re having trouble sleeping. While some disorders can be effectively treated with medications, in most cases making small changes to your daily (and nightly) routine can help. Here are some recommendations for a better night’s sleep:

**Watch your beverage intake.** Avoid caffeine and alcohol in the hours before bedtime. Eat lightly in the evening. Eat only light snacks to promote sleep; heavy meals can disturb sleep.

**Exercise regularly.** If you have a regular exercise routine, don’t do it too close to bedtime. Before and after the work day (and possibly at lunch), get some exercise and you’ll be more alert and energetic.

**Keep the bedtime environment peaceful.** Keep light and noise to a minimum. Don’t use the bedroom to watch television, answer text messages, use a tablet device or discuss the problems of the day.

**Follow regular bedtime routines.** Do the same things each night to tell your body that it’s time to wind down. Try a relaxing pre-sleep ritual such as a warm bath, soft music, or reading.

**Don’t fight it.** If you can’t fall asleep within 20 minutes, do a quiet activity somewhere else and return to bed when you’re sleepy.

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Goal Setting for Managers

While many people establish personal New Year’s resolutions, as a manager or supervisor it’s good to have job-based improvement goals for the coming year. Consider these tips as part of your growth objectives.

**Set standards for quality performance.** This will help your team know what is expected of them. Give them enough room and incentives to meet these standards once they are in place.

**Foster communication.** Keep communication flowing between you and your team. Be available and approachable to staff so they aren’t intimidated to come to you. Be open to their feedback.

**Be supportive and recognize contributions.** Employees often look to supervisors for feedback and direction. A supportive management style reinforces confidence and encourages employees to continue their hard work. Positive reinforcement always helps.

**Emphasize training.** By fostering a learning environment, you will help employees stay on top of the latest skills related to their job duties. Access the online training guide at www.Here4TN.com under the Managers tab for available trainings.

**Encourage goal setting.** Work with your employees on a plan to achieve their individual and team goals. This will help motivate employees and may encourage them to further develop their skills. For state employees, review and revise SMART goals as needed.