



Task  
Management  
obstacles  
and  
solutions

Pastor Todd McKeever

# Task Management obstacles and solutions

I spend every month with my [coaching protégés](#) working on their task management skills. It is a firm belief of mine that those of us in children's ministries need to be some of the best task managers around. Name any other ministry in the church that has to oversee one of the largest if not the largest volunteer base, run our own worship, reach so many generations of people including their parents and grandparents (because as we all know with kids every family member wants to know what is going on). We also need to run training for more diverse groups, outreach, events, and the list just goes on and on. With all of this along with all the more, we need to become great in task management.

## **I have compiled a list of potential obstacles that could hinder your task management.**

- Data overload: Constant collection of emails, text messages, IMs and news pouring into your inbox. When you have a new notification, do you automatically STOP what you are doing, click, read, close? This takes up time, removes your focus and interrupts your work flow.
- Lack of focus: jumping around between tasks decreases productivity and output. Multi-tasking is not what it's cracked up to be. Stick with one task, finish it and move on.
- Procrastination: when you consistently put off tasks, you end up in a time crunch and can miss deadlines or leave things undone.
- Distractions: take you away from the task, cuts into your time, diminishes focus. Sometimes it is good to be unavailable in this incredibly ever-increasing world of connectedness.

# Task Management obstacles and solutions

– Disorganization: you misplace, or lose things and you waste time searching. I cover this in-depth through coaching about gathering points.

– Being a digital hoarder: when your inbox and folders are overstuffed, you spend more time searching for documents and emails. This inefficiency wastes your time

“You can manage information and the interruptions, because the problem really doesn’t lie in the amount of information and interruptions. The problem lies with our methods of processing that information and handling the interruptions.”

## **Some suggestions to get organized.**

– Block out your daily schedule with like-minded tasks.

– Schedule checking emails at specific times and stick to it. It’s amazing how many people can actually wait to get a response from you over the email they sent to you.

– Use your calendar to schedule appointments and to-do’s.

– Use the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. system.

– Keep workplace organized and a clear working area at the end of the day.

– Practice the art of delegation.

– Turn off the television

Outside of these quick task management ideas, I would suggest getting a coach who can help develop these concepts more with you.

# How time management is handled all wrong



I am a task management junkie who continues to strive to be a task management ninja.

One of the many struggles over the years for me has been handling the idea of keeping a separate to-do list apart from my calendar. If the items I would put on a to-do list are to be accomplished, would they not have to be added on the calendar? Yes they would!

This is exactly why I have stopped the madness of trying to keep a separate to-do list. It does mean I don't get to play with other apps on my phone or in my web browser, but, that has meant more productivity. The simple act of scheduling tasks on your calendar instead of on a to-do list will increase performance. With most calendars., there are places to add notes, reminders etc. to aid in getting said task done; use them.

As this process takes off for you, it may become overwhelming because the first instinct is to fill every time slot with something. Having every time slot filled would look like you're being productive, right? Wrong. To a skilled eye looking at someone's filled calendar, it says they don't know what they are doing yet. I know, seeing empty places can make you feel like you should be doing more, but resist. It is important to leave buffers in your day.

# How time management is handled all wrong

What's a buffer? A buffer is a block of time that you schedule to do nothing scheduled. Take a nap, search the web for fun, read a book, take a walk, review notes from a previous meeting, relax. These scheduled buffer times will help you not run from meeting to meeting.

The CEO of LinkedIn, Jeff Weiner, wrote a blog post describing how he blocks time on his calendar. He wrote:

*"If you were to see my calendar, you'd probably notice a host of time slots greyed out but with no sign of what's going on. There is no problem with my Outlook or printer. The grey sections show 'buffers,' or time periods I've purposely kept clear of meetings.*

In aggregate, I schedule between 90 minutes and two hours of these buffers every day (broken down into 30- to 90-minute blocks). It's a system I developed over the last several years in response to a schedule that was becoming so jammed with back-to-back meetings that I had little time left to process what was going on around me or just think.

At first, these buffers felt like indulgences. I could have used the time to catch up on meetings I had pushed out or said "no" to. But over time I realized not only were these breaks important, they were absolutely necessary in order for me to do my job."

Here are a few suggestions for this week as you become more of the Task management Ninja that we all desire to be.

- Move more to your calendar than on your separate to-do list.
- Find a couple of times a day to put in place buffers. Try to make the buffers at least 10-15 minutes a piece.

# Being Productive NOT for Dummies



It never stops amazing me when I meet people and ask them how do they stay productive and then to hear for the next 10 minutes of their very complicated methods and systems that they use.

This was the very reason I was an Apple user before it was ever cool to be one. I enjoyed their complete all-inclusive “simple” ecosystem. One of the main draws of using Apple products was how well they worked with each other and made it so I didn’t have to go around to a bazillion other places to get what I needed to do what I wanted. It felt seamless because everything you needed was already built-in; there was no need to download or install anything. It saved time, was easy and uncomplicated. Now I do understand this may not be as true today, which is why I used all past tense in my statements above. I sadly now watch Apple try to become everyone else instead of who they are. I will stop here as this is a whole other blog post rant that I would go on.

Successful task management (the task is used because I strongly believe no one but God can manage time only the task that happens within the time given) is putting into place systems and strategies that enable you to work at your highest capacity without losing sight of your personal identity or your calling in Christ. Here are some ways that help me manage my task and maximize my impact.

# Being Productive NOT for Dummies

Use Technology. I know some of you probably just groaned and started to tune me out. Please wait and finish reading before you do this. Some of you who read this would also be those who are just like those I started this post off describing, the over complicated system type. Hold in there with me and let's see if we can't simplify your system a bit.

"Technology is our friend", go ahead and say it again. It is about finding the right technology tool for you. Below I will list some of the tools I use that you may want to start with and then branch out to find your own. Remember, K.I.S.S. is important here. Keep It Simple Silly.

[Trello](#) for group short project management. This is a free tool.

[Evernote](#) for all things filling and serves as my electronic brain. This is also free but can cost.

[DropBox](#) for my group collaboration projects that will need to be stored long-term. This can be free but cost.

[Kindle app](#). I first buy a book electronically because they are cheaper and I can read them, highlight them and print all of my highlighted stuff off quickly for free. If the book is good enough then I will buy a paper version.

[1Password](#). This does cost but it is well worth it to me as it stores, fills in and secures all passwords everywhere for me.

[Unroll.Me](#) is a web service and app that helps me to mark all email as keep, Unsubscribe or add to roll up. This is a free service.

# Being Productive NOT for Dummies

[Hootsuite](#) is for all things social for me. It keeps all my accounts in one place for easy posting and reading.

[doodle](#) is for all group calendar setting. It allows me to pick some dates and times and then sends to those I'm trying to pick a scheduled appointment with. They will mark all that work for them and then I pick the one that can be attended by most. It then sends an email out telling of the agreed upon date and time. No more back and forth.

In closing, take a look and see how I don't use a variety of tools for the same function. Try and keep it all very short and sweet. Staying simple is not really simple after all. If we are left to our own ways we will over complicate everything time after time. Now you have taken long enough reading this post, go and be productive.

Todd McKeever

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The time between meetings is important as well



My life can be filled with meeting after meeting after meeting and well, you get the idea. I can stay busy running from one type of meeting straight into the next meeting without getting any type of break.

The time between meetings is important as well

# The time between meetings is important as well

This schedule had me thinking, is there a better way? Meetings are always going to be a large item in my daily agenda due to all the ministries I oversee. Being a family pastor opens up times where I could in any given day run between meetings like:

- \* Budget meetings
- \* School luncheons
- \* Pastoral luncheons
- \* Volunteer Trainings
- \* Staff meetings
- \* Webinars
- \* Marriage Counseling
- \* Parental Counseling
- \* School Assemblies
- \* Networking
- \* Coaching Video Calls
- \* Board meetings for ministries I sit on their advisory board
- \* Neighborhood association meetings as we build connections with our community

And again this is only the start of the types of meetings I meet on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. With so much of my time being invested in meetings, I wanted to make sure I stayed as productive as I could. I started to notice that my energy would get zapped quickly depending on meeting and how many I had that day.

What to do? I finally figured it out for myself when I ran across this poem by [Judy Brown](#).

# The time between meetings is important as well

## **Fire.**

What makes a fire burn  
is space between the logs,  
a breathing space.

Too much of a good thing,  
too many logs  
packed in too tight  
can douse the flames  
almost as surely  
as a pail of water would.

So building fires  
requires attention  
to the spaces in between,  
as much as to the wood.

When we are able to build  
open spaces  
in the same way

# The time between meetings is important as well

we have learned  
to pile on the logs,  
then we can come to see how  
it is fuel, and absence of the fuel  
together, that make fire possible  
We only need to lay a log  
lightly from time to time.  
A fire  
grows  
simply because the space is there,  
with openings  
in which the flame  
that knows just how it wants to burn  
can find its way.

**Judy Brown**

# The time between meetings is important as well

That was it. I needed to make sure I made space between the meetings. I stop and pause long enough to ask God for indifference. Asking God to help me be indifferent to every outcome except His will. I want nothing more or less than His desire for what was going to happen in the meeting that I was going to attend. I remind myself as I build this space, as I open myself to being indifferent to anything but the will of God. I am learning that the degree to which I am open to any outcome or answer from God is the degree to which I am ready to really hear what God has to say.

When I build between each meeting this kind of space, then I'm ready to engage in the next meeting. And to God be all the Glory as each meeting now profits more because of the space I chose to give between the meetings.