

Time in a Bottle

By Bruce Carter

I think it might have been Kenny Loggins in '72, or was it Cat Stevens in '74? No, I think it was Don McLean in '71. Hey, I've got a good memory, it's just short. *"If I could save time in a bottle, the first thing that I'd like to do..."* You remember the tune I'm thinking of don't you? Whether it was Neil Young, Glen Frey, or Billy Joel does not really matter I suppose, but the idea of capturing time in a container was sure an intriguing one. Even this devout teetotaler would take a big swig of that concoction. Perhaps it would even improve my memory!

Most of us find time a precious commodity in all too short supply. A whole lot to do and far too little time to get it accomplished. Sound like a familiar challenge in your life as well? Yep, there are many hectic days when a big gulp of that time in a bottle brew would be the perfect elixir.

Traits of Top Time Managers

We know that success comes in all sizes, shapes, ages, colors, faiths, and social backgrounds. Successful people can be found in the strangest places, under the oddest circumstances, and from some of the most unlikely walks of life. Studies of the world's most successful men and women, however, reveal that there is at least one aspect of all their lives that they share in common. Each one has precisely the same amount of time allotted to them. Albert Einstein, Sir Edmond Hillary, Thomas Edison, Andrew Carnegie, Nelson Rockefeller, and Henry Ford all had exactly 86,400 seconds per day, 43,800 minutes each month and 8,760 hours every year to work with. The same as you and I have!

How is it that some people achieve so extraordinarily much with the time at their disposal while others so little? The answer is in the way that time is treasured and wisely invested by the successfully select few, yet haphazardly squandered and wasted by the average mass majority.

In his thought-provoking audio series, *The 80/20 Principle*, presenter Richard Koch reports that 80 percent of the activities that working people spend their time on in a typical workday result in a meager 20 percent return in desired results. Conversely, 20 percent of the day's activities generate an 80 percent return in results.

Somehow it seems that top producing individuals are highly self-disciplined and able to involve themselves in more of the high-result producing activities and much less of the low-result producing tasks. They have mastered the art of identifying the day's most important tasks then getting to work on them with a



focused diligence. It has been said that one of the poorest uses of time is to perform a task particularly well that need not be performed at all. Top time managers understand this principal thoroughly.

As beloved American humorist Mark Twain once astutely observed, "If you've got a frog to eat, you are better off eating him early in the day than to wait and look at him all day long." Productive individuals get the most important tasks done early in the day even when the task is the "ugliest" one on the day's agenda. They eat the frog early.

Sales and personal development expert Tom Hopkins shares the twelve-word credo that has been so valuable to him in his rise to the top of his field: I will do the most productive thing possible with every given moment. It's not an endorsement of eighteen-hour workdays or of achievement at the expense of valued personal relationships, but rather a call for the purposeful investment of that precious commodity—our time.

Bruce Carter is a popular motivational speaker and sales trainer specializing in the fire equipment industry. Bruce is available to you and your organization for: in-house sales and customer service seminars, in-the-field sales training, and consulting. For information visit www.nafiresales.com or call (513) 772-3778.



Time Savers

As competition intensifies and maximum productivity grows increasingly essential, the fire protection professional must become even more skilled at managing his time efficiently. A simple yet effective formula for using time more productively and wasting less is followed by many top achievers.

Here are a few steps to help manage time efficiently:

- Begin each day with a clear mental picture of precisely what needs to be accomplished that day.
- Transpose the mental image to a "to do" list, noting those most important tasks which, regardless of how unpleasant (the frogs), must be tackled earliest in the day. Here, a simple legal pad works as well as anything.
- Eliminate or reduce daily time wasters. Uninvited office visitors, personal telephone calls, spam and junk e-mail, extended lunch hours, and poorly planned meetings fall into this annoying category.
- Remember that simply starting each workday morning fifteen minutes earlier and tacking on an additional fifteen minutes at the end of the afternoon will yield an additional three weeks of usable time annually.
- For the men and women out on the service trucks, windshield time is an efficiency killer. A few moments spent in the most efficient routing of the day's service stops can pay big dividends in terms of conserving both time and fuel.

I know, I know, never say never. After all, modern technology and the speed at which it advances truly is mind boggling. The day could come sooner than we think when we are able to walk into our local pharmacy and purchase a family sized pack of time in a bottle. Until that day arrives though, we should all strive to conserve, manage, and utilize this most precious God-given commodity in the most productive way possible

Ah yes, time in a bottle. You had a great idea there, Elton. ♦