

# Are You Time Starved?

Are you feeling the stress of today's fast-paced business world? Taking back control of your time can help ease that burden.

BY MARK RICHARDSON

**N**ine times out of 10, when I ask people, "Are you feeling stressed?" they will say yes.

When I ask them, "Has your level of stress increased over the years?" they also almost always answer yes.

While some stress can be good, the level and velocity of stress I am seeing with many professionals is having a real negative effect. This is affecting their business and their personal lives.

This high stress is resulting in frustrated customers, team member unhappiness and lower profits. As a leader, you not only need to focus on your product and service but also this dynamic with others.

At the risk of sounding like an armchair psychologist, this stress can be quantified and put into balance.

## THE STRESS OF OVERWHELM

Many years ago, I had a psychologist as a guest on my radio show to discuss stress. He said it is largely a product of overwhelm, which comes from the number of choices and speed at which things happen.

He spoke about how we need to be more empathic to how others process change and make decisions. He said if this were to become a priority everyone benefits.

While "people" stress can cause your business stress, I think getting your own overall effectiveness in check is critical.

Having lived through, studied and written about this topic I believe the biggest source of this stress is rooted in "time." Today most people are time starved. While there continues to be only 24 hours in a day, how we are planning and controlling it has not gotten better — and often results in negative outcomes.

## SURVIVING TODAY'S FAST-PACED WORLD

Today, the expectations we all have and the speed of life are much faster than ever before. Doing things or reacting faster can be as important as doing things better. In today's environment, calls need to be returned within an hour (versus the next day) or you run the risk of insulting someone or losing business/opportunities.

So while we cannot change the world we live in (or slow it down), I can give you a few tips on reducing this stress caused by being time starved.

- 1) **Plan.** This sounds not only simple but also a little patronizing. However, less than 10 percent of people I interact with do effective daily planning. Most create a daily To Do list but not a plan. There are many different types of planning systems and, in most people's defense, they have never been trained in daily planning. You just need to use a system if you are ever going to reduce the stress and get control of your day. Planning is a skill that can be learned.
- 2) **Be proactive.** Being reactive wastes your time. You can get a dividend of 20 to 30 minutes a day by reducing reactivity. This will provide you a dividend of about 150 hours a year back. About 80 percent of professional reactivity comes from your customers, your team and your suppliers. So, on Monday morning plan to take 30 minutes and proactively communicate to all those that might want to communicate with you that week. Set times to connect or control a process to communicate back to you. While you will not bat 1,000 percent, you will find 30 to 50 percent of these interactions will result in positive

proactive communications, meetings, calls (or even just a thank you for your professionalism).

- 3) **Say no.** Stress and wasting time can also be a product of not saying no. Think about the number of times you have looked at projects, done things or tackled initiatives that you should have just gracefully said no to. Saying no is not unkind. Saying no does not have to be unhelpful or unproductive. By spending a little more time with a prospect over the phone before making an appointment or asking a few more questions when someone is requesting your help, you can save 20 to 30 minutes per day resulting in that 150 hours a year. Keep in mind when you are tasked to help or advise it does not mean you have to do it. Sometimes giving a person a solution or a referral is the better gift to their request.

Being stressed is a choice. How you spend your time will be the biggest factor in creating or reducing this stress. If you can own this dynamic, you can control it.

If you control it, you will not only be less stressed but you can also accomplish more, make more money, keep more promises and, overall, be happier and more fulfilled. ■

*Mark Richardson is an author, speaker, columnist and business growth strategist. He has written several books on business management including "How Fit Is Your Business?" and "Fit to Grow." His latest book is "Control Your Day Before It Controls You: The 7 Steps to Mastering Your Time." All of his books are available on amazon.com. He can be reached at mrichardson@mrichardson.com.*

## EDITORIAL/DESIGN

**Editorial Director Tim Hodson**  
616.520.2161 • thodson@greatamericanpublish.com

**Managing Editor Jasmina Dolce**  
616.520.2162 • jdolce@greatamericanpublish.com

**Retail Editor Abby Kleckler**  
616.520.2163 • akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com

**Digital Content Manager Ana Olvera**  
616.520.2171 • aolvera@greatamericanpublish.com

**Multimedia Designer Amanda Mackey**  
616.520.2157 • amackey@greatamericanpublish.com

## ADVERTISING

**Vice President, Group Publisher Bob Bellew**  
616.520.2164 • bbellew@greatamericanpublish.com

**Integrated Media Consultant - East Coast Tiffany O'Kelley**  
616.520.2172 • tokelley@greatamericanpublish.com

**Integrated Media Consultant - West Coast Kim Sammartino**  
616.520.2173 • ksammartino@greatamericanpublish.com

**Classified Advertising Manager Kim Meyers**  
616.520.2137 • kmeyers@greatamericanpublish.com

**Production Assistant Samantha Orsi**  
616.520.2148 • sorsi@greatamericanpublish.com

## STAFF

**Corporate Office** ..... 616.887.9008

**Audience Development Becky Stovall**  
616.520.2138 • bstovall@greatamericanpublish.com

**Business Manager Sally Ostman**  
616.520.2136 • sostman@greatamericanpublish.com

**Creative Director Kristina Howell**  
616.520.2168 • khowell@greatamericanpublish.com

**Custom Content Manager Jess Schmidt**  
616.520.2141 • jschmidt@greatamericanpublish.com

**COO & Director of Custom Media Kimberly Baker**  
616.520.2135 • kbaker@greatamericanpublish.com

**CEO Matt McCallum**  
mmccallum@greatamericanpublish.com

## AD INDEX

ADVERTISER	PAGE
Berger	2
BioWorks	5
Fluence Bioengineering	11
Fine Americas	15
Great Lakes Expo	16
MasterTag	12
Premier Tech Horticulture	7
Sun Gro Horticulture	13

 [www.facebook.com/BigGrower](http://www.facebook.com/BigGrower)