4 time killers you need to eliminate

Time is valuable. And it is something that we can't get back. Once it's gone, it's gone forever. If you can identify your biggest time killers you're half way there. There are a lot of time killers in business you should look out for and stay away from. Only then can you put your available time to the maximum possible use.

Each of us have unique time killers that are particular to our business niche. Below is a list and how to avoid them.

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1. Telephone calls.

Phone calls can often be quick and to the point. The problem arises when one of the participants on the phone decides to turn a short question or answer into a lengthy conversation. This is why I personally prefer email over a telephone call. It's not uncommon to get someone on the phone who is not nearly as busy as you are and they want to spend time brainstorming or coming up with new ideas when that wasn't the purpose of the call in the first place.

When it comes to time killers on the phone, I've found two things that help me cut down on wasting time:

- Schedule calls with a predetermined agenda and length of time. I try not to schedule calls until I've got a clear outline of what we are discussing and I've been provided with a scheduled start and stop time.

- Announce at the beginning of the call that you have a limited amount of time. There are times when I just need to pick up the phone and work through a current project with someone. Or when a private client calls with a few questions. Whenever these situations arise, I always say, " I only have ten minutes and then I have another scheduled appointment…" or " I only have a few minutes before my next appointment…" That way I've made it clear, right away, that the call must be kept short.

2. Bad equipment.

This is another terrible time waster. How many of you have wanted to take a hammer to your computer or copy machine? The equipment you use each day can kill hours of your time. If your equipment is not working properly, then you need to upgrade it or you'll be left with a ton of frustration and wasted time.

A computer that takes a long time to boot up, a photocopier that gives shamefully faint photocopies, a stubborn drawer that doesn't open easily, a calibration machine that doesn't calibrate right, etc. -- these can waste a lot of time and send you up the wall. If you have such equipment or machinery, get it changed at the earliest possible date. It is worth the cost when you take into account the amount of time and energy that you waste on it every day.

3. Chatterboxes.

Haven't we all met them? They simply love the sound of their own voices and once they open their mouths there is no stopping them. They waste not only your time but their time as well. Steer clear of such people.

I have a vendor who I refuse to see unless it's an emergency. Every time I talk with him, he wants to consume 45 minutes or more of my time -- time that I don't have. In fact, I do less business with him now than I have done in the past. Mainly because he is a time killer.

Identify which vendors, employees, or colleagues suck up all your time with endless chatter. Then, set boundaries. If you have to meet with chatterboxes, make sure you've clearly given your schedule to them in advance. If they start chattering about something unrelated to your meeting, you'll have to be tough with them (and maybe even interrupt them), and say, " Remember, I only have 15 minutes. Let's get back to the main point of our meeting."

4. Meetings.

I think most meetings are a huge waste of time. When I left my last job, working for a large publishing company, and started working for myself, I quickly realized that by not having to go to meetings each day, I gained many hours back into my schedule.

One of my private clients has a great solution to prevent long meetings. Their meetings are always limited to 15 minutes and everyone stands in a circle instead of sitting at a table. No one wants to stand around while their hot coffee is waiting for them back at their desk. So instead of talking for an

hour about useless information, they have to be quick and to the point. This is a highly effective strategy.

I understand meetings are necessary for most companies, so when you have them, make sure you have clearly outlined what you are going to discuss. If possible, make it a standing meeting and put a short time limit on it. Whenever you deal with time killing meetings, use your common sense and try to find a way to get rid of them. Don't expect them to go away by themselves. You must find a way to prevent them from consuming your valuable time!