

Saying Yes Too Often? Ryan Steinert | ryansteinert.com

I read somewhere that in this industry, the typical manager and/or salesperson has 170 interactions per day. Based on a 50-hour work week these numbers are telling: 170 interactions per day multiplied by 5 workdays per week equals 850 interactions. Divide this by 50 work hours a week, and you find that you have about 17 interactions per hour. Or, in other words, you have about 3 minutes to focus on any one thing without interruption. Not only is this rarely enough time to get anything done *right*; it's rarely enough time to get anything done, *period*.

The problem is simple: most salespeople take on too many responsibilities and say 'yes' too often. This not only increases their time on the job, it increases their propensity for stress and oversights. As a result, they end up starting more tasks than they finish every day, and the tasks they do complete are often riddles with errors or inconsistencies. This is only the beginning of woes, as you know, for when tasks are amiss, more time must be taken to revise or redo them. Furthermore, if tasks are begun and not completed one day, they spill onto the next day, compounding the workload and flooding your river of responsibilities until you are forced to either put in marathon days to 'catch up,' or concede to a whirling, flailing pace every days.

So what can be done to fix this, you ask?

There are only two ways to scale back your busy workload and free up more time: (1) sacrifice sales (Oh, no!), or (2) say no more often. If you choose the first option, you are simply deciding that making less money is a fair trade-off for gaining more simplicity and sanity on the job and more time off the job. This is an admirable route, and if you chose to use it, I say more power to you. But it's not the most effective—nor is it necessary.

The trick is to break your tasks into three distinct categories:

- (1) Unnecessary tasks—these are things like web-surfing, e-mailing friends, chatting with co-workers, instant messaging, etc. If you really want to maximize your time, these need to stop.
- (2) Necessary tasks—these represent activities that have the potential to move your business in a positive direction but at a less productive pace than other activities. Examples could be goal setting, strategizing, qualifying prospects, dealing with paperwork, etc. These tasks need to be regulated carefully.

(3) Productive tasks—these most effectively move your business in a positive direction and are the best use of your time. They add to your bottom line. Originating, closing, prospecting, knowledge gaining, SELLING.

Productive tasks do not need to be regulated. Say no to unnecessary tasks and watch cautiously the amount of time spent on necessary tasks. Ideally, your day should have four hours for prospecting and selling (assuming you are working an eight hour day). So if you fall into the category of the national average for salespeople—ninety productive minutes for every eight hours—and apply the boundaries we've just discussed, you have already increased your productivity by 167 percent. Not a bad start!