

# Just Get Serious About Success

**Need More Time?  
Here's How To Get Some.**

**August 2010**

*Time is free, but it's priceless. You can't own it, but you can use it. You can't keep it, but you can spend it. Once you've lost it, you can never get it back.*

- Harvey MacKay -

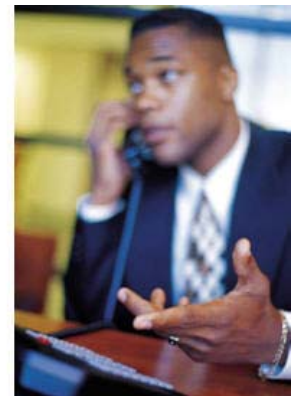


Donna "Serious" Satchell



Time seems like it is flying by so fast. Next week is September and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the year will have gone. For those of us working on our goals and dreams, time is precious. If you are like me, there always seems to be individuals or events disrupting me and preventing me from doing what I intended. They come in the form of telephone calls, emails, verbal requests, emergencies, invitations, and so much more. Some are unavoidable. Some are welcome. Some are great opportunities. Some are a nuisance. These disruptions can be time-consuming and continuous disruptions can be draining.

Except in the case of emergencies, it is best to think through all requests for help, lunch engagements, invitations to events, favors for friends (or relatives) and other so-called "opportunities." Many times we feel we must answer immediately, and we say "yes" when we should have said "Let me get back to you." We should check our calendar and fully consider whether we have the time, energy, or interest before responding. Not taking the time to think and feeling like I had to say "yes" has cost me time, money, and energy doing things while my goals sat on a shelf. I have had out-of-town guests who stayed for weeks instead of one or two days. I have served on committees that ended up requiring much more time and work than I thought they would. I have spent hours on phone calls, at social activities, and helping others while my goals were unattended. How about you? Have you found yourself in similar situations?



How can we deal with the disruptions that will come into our lives? There are several strategies. Below are two of them.



The first is knowing how to say "No." There is a popular saying: "No is a complete sentence." I like to add to it an ending, so it becomes "No is a complete sentence that most people cannot or will not say." Why? Because many of us, including myself, have a problem with being that direct and curt. So we end up committing one of the cardinal sins of communication - TMI (Too Much Information). We just can't seem to resist the impulse to offer more details than necessary. So we say, "No, I can't help you today because I have a meeting downtown at 2:00, and I am sure it will not be over until 5:30, and then I need to rush home to fix dinner." The person asking the favor can then respond with, "Well, if you can come over at 11:00 or 11:30, you can leave by 1:00 to go to your meeting." Now that's a fine plan if it is something you want to do. If not, you have to come up with another reason why you cannot help or end up saying "OK" when you don't want to. However, few of us can just say "No" or even "No, I cannot help."

The solution is "no" with limited information. So responses are replies like:

- No, I already have plans for Saturday.
- No, I will be studying for a test.
- No, I will be really busy over the weekend.
- No, I am working on a project.
- No, that's not in my budget.

Now the person with the request has no information to use to try to rearrange your day, so you can do what they are asking of you. Some people find it necessary to add, "I am sorry" between the "No" and the information. An apology is not necessary, but if it works better for you, then use it.



A few years ago, I was taking a class on stress management where I was introduced to the idea that "plans" can be anything we anticipate doing. They don't have to just be tasks, like going to the dentist, working on a theme paper, taking our car for an oil change, attending a meeting, or going to work. So your plans can include staying home to relax, playing with the kids, or having some alone "me time" to unwind.

Another strategy I call "Let's make a deal." Here you discuss what you can do that is less or different than what is being asked of you. You can think about it as "negotiating the terms of the request." For example, you tell friends you can help them for two hours instead of all afternoon. Or you can donate \$25.00 to the organization instead of purchasing a \$50.00 ticket for the banquet. Or you are willing to serve as Director of Events but not Vice President. I think you get the picture.

As we are using these strategies, it is important for us to understand that at some point we will need to ask for help, a favor, or assistance in some form or fashion. We will have an event we want friends and colleagues to attend. We will have a cause we would like people to support. We will need someone to watch our children, work with us on a project or help us get something accomplished personally or professionally. We will need favors in the form of someone's time, talents, money or energy. We are then being a disruption in someone else's plans. So remember that and do what you can to help, attend, and support others when possible; just make sure it is a definite decision you have made and not a "knee-jerk" response that you later regret.



Lastly, when you are the person asking a favor or making a request, be willing to accept a "no," "yes" or a response that is less than what you wanted to hear. In the case of the latter two, be considerate of the person's time and be appreciative of their efforts. And don't forget the two words most of us learned as children: "please" and "thank you."

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