

SereneScene

A man in a dark suit and a plaid tie is holding a large, plain brown cardboard box over his head, completely obscuring his face. He is holding a black pen in his right hand, which is raised to the top edge of the box. The background is plain white.

Magazine For Long Term Healthy Lifestyles of Recovery

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Interview with
Dan Griffin of
Griffin Recovery Enterprises
By Andrew Martin
MBA, CADC II, SAP, CA-CCS

New Understandings
of Attachment's Role in
Addiction

By Thomas Hedlund, LMFT

Effective Time
Management for
High Achievers, Part 4

By Andrew Martin,
MBA, CADC II, SAP, CA-CCS

12-Step Trek
Worksheet

It Happens to Boys , Too
By Carol Teitelbaum, LMFT

I Know I'm Enabling but...
Recovering from Addiction

in the Family
By Candace Plattor, M.A.

Learning the Food Fight
By Sheryle Cruse

The Kindred Spirit of the
Terminally Unique
By Pam P.

Effective Time Management for High Achievers, Part 4

By Andrew T. Martin, MBA, CADC II, SAP, CA-CCS

Chapter 6: Organizing

For this step you must have successfully scheduled all tasks and labeled them with dated sticky notes.

You are probably feeling a bit overwhelmed and anxious at this point. It can be frightening to realize how much time is needed to complete all your scheduled tasks at a quality level and incorporate family time and personal time as well. Most people discover that there seems to be far too many tasks to complete, appointments to attend, and personal obligations to attend to; and much too little time to complete them. However, now that all your tasks are scheduled with appropriate time to complete them, and at the time of day that you will be more efficient, you can feel confident that they will be completed more quickly than they would have been without your time management effort. While your scheduled tasks may be completed late, they will eventually be finished and future tasks will not suffer the consequence of delays, inaction, and procrastina-

tion.

Because you are now scheduled, it is an excellent time to notify your coworkers, supervisors, friends, and family of the anticipated completion date of your tasks and promised appointments. A word of warning, not everyone will be happy to find out that his or her expectations will not be met. If this happens, kindly remind them that you are not inclined to sacrifice quality for timelines, and if they need the task completed earlier than scheduled you will need additional resources. This type of communication is foreign to the high achiever, as high achievers rarely ask for help or understanding when it comes to their own needs. Therefore you can rely on the comments being well received by others, and not interpreted as an excuse, because when the comments are coming from you they will be acknowledged as truth. If you tell your coworkers, family and friends that you are too busy to handle everything at once, they may not like hearing it, but they will believe you and respect you for being honest with

them. Your coworkers, supervisors, friends, and family are just as aware of your high achiever attitude as you are; they will not think you are making excuses for poor performance or lack of interest.

Now that all the tasks are scheduled, it would be convenient to be able to locate those tasks easily and efficiently. This chapter will describe an tremendously effective method of organizing tasks, projects, documents, and correspondence.

Supplies Needed

- File cabinet within reach of your workspace (electronic or physical)
- Hanging files with label tabs (or electronic folders)
- File folders
- Felt pen

Process

Continue using the four to six-hour time period commitment made for scheduling. You will need about one hour in order to set up an organization system and file away the stack of tasks you have from the prior chapter.

1. A filing system must be set up to accommodate the new level of document organization. If you are primarily using electronic folders, it is still recommended that you use the guidelines communicated herein. Depending on how much paperwork you must process in an average day, you may wish to have an individual 'To Do' folder for each day of the calendar, or have an individual "To Do" folder for each week of the month. This is a decision that you will need to make for yourself. For example, if you need to process 20 pages of new material each day, a separate 'To Do' hanging folder for each day would be appropriate. However, if you process 5 or 10 pages of new material each day, a 'To Do' hang-

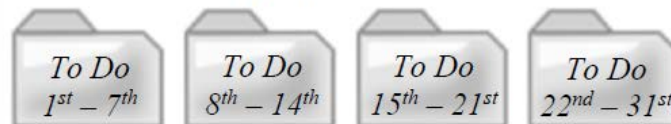
ing folder for each week would likely be appropriate. Make labeled 'To Do' hanging folders to identify the day, or the week, of the month. Also include a labeled 'To Do' file folder, which will slide into the identically labeled 'To Do' hanging folder, for each day, or week, of the month. This 'To Do' file folder can accommodate single pages or small documents that do not justify their own file folder. Install all of your empty 'To Do' hanging folders and file folders into a filing cabinet that is located within reach of your workspace.

To Do Files

Example 1:

I have 10 new pages to process each day.

I will make 4 hanging files labeled as follows:



each identifying a week of the month.

Example 2:

I have 20 new pages to process each day.

I will make 31 hanging files labeled as follows:



each identifying the day of the month.

Be creative with the filing system. Feel free to design a file system that suits your specific paperwork needs. The only criteria are that each file is labeled with the day or week of the month.

2. If you have many tasks that are bounded by some commonality, it may be helpful to split these tasks into their own subsection within the filing system. Using differently colored file folders can easily create specialized filing sections that can be used for routinely processed paperwork such as invoices, quotations, or requisitions, or keep track of personal training efforts, weight loss charts, or theatre and sporting tickets. If you use this method of sectioning tasks, be sure to keep the 'To Do' folders

in addition to any new specialized folder generated. The new specialized folders should be labeled with the title of the common task, such as 'Quotes 1st - 7th' or something similar.

3. Once all the empty hanging files and file folders have been labeled and installed into the filing cabinet, take the top task from the filing stack and file it away in the appropriate file. You can tear off the sticky note at this time and throw it away. Continue with all of the tasks until there is nothing left outside of an organizational file.
4. Now close the drawer to your file cabinet and relax for a moment. Close your eyes and take a deep breath, then open your eyes and realize that there is nothing left for you to do, except for the things that you have already scheduled and organized for your undivided attention at a later date. Isn't that a tremendous feeling of relief? Your workspace is clear of clutter, and all of your responsibilities are scheduled with a time of day that you will be able to accomplish the tasks most efficiently. Remember this feeling; for if you can stick with this time management program you will feel this way all the time. If you do not have the feeling of relief, and instead feel as if you cannot possibly get all the tasks done, please go back and start to schedule your tasks again, this time focusing on being specific and honest about your ability to complete the tasks at hand.

All of your tasks should now be scheduled and organized and there should be nothing remaining that needs to be attended to in any way until your first task that is scheduled in your calendar. This is critical to your success in this time management program. Do not proceed without first scheduling and organizing all tasks in your filing system.

Chapter 7: Staying Current

For this step you must have successfully scheduled and filed all tasks; there should be nothing remaining that needs to be attended in any way.

Staying current is the most difficult thing to do for the high achiever. The natural tendency is to attempt to please everyone all the time, which means taking care of a coworker or supervisor issue immediately regardless of the consequences, or committing to help out a friend when family time has already been promised. In reality, this type of behavior does nothing but reduce your overall performance by creating a haphazard schedule in which everything gets started and very little gets finished. This is tantamount to you being managed by your demands, rather than you managing your own demands. This fire-fighting behavior must stop now. Although there will undoubtedly be a period of adjustment for yourself and your peers, the net benefit will far outweigh the minor short-term inconveniences realized as a result of your behavior modification effort.

Supplies Needed

- Commitment
- In box
- Support by way of accountability

Process

1. Review your time management action plan to refresh your commitment to the behavior modification program. The change process will benefit you and those around you to an immense degree, but you must stick with the program. Because you are a high achiever, you can stick with this program; but only if you want to.
2. At work, put an in box on your desk. Make sure to label the in box so your coworkers know its purpose. Position the in box near the corner of the desk that is closest to the path that your coworkers travel to see you or drop things by. If your coworkers have to reach across your desk to put something in the in box, they will probably drop the item on your desk instead: that defeats the purpose of having an in box in the first place. Your in box will be the only route by which any task or paperwork will enter your schedule, it is important that it is used effectively.
3. At home, designate an area in the home as the place where all new plans, requests, tickets, and

documents will be placed. Inform your family that anything that needs your attention must be placed there to insure it receives your consideration.

4. Schedule a fifteen-minute meeting with your action plan supporters. At the meeting let them know of your progress with the day plan, your scheduling and your organization. If you are enthusiastic about the progress, they will be too. Once they are in the encouraging and supportive mindset, let them know that you will need their help for the next several weeks in order to successfully accomplish the next step in your time management effort. Ask them to support you by delivering all tasks and paperwork to your in box. Let them know that you will be concentrating on effectively handling your scheduled tasks, and you will be working on avoiding distractions. Ask them to help you avoid distractions by letting you know if they see someone interrupting you with a non-critical item. Ask them to help you by communicating with you through notes, voicemails, emails, and scheduling brief appointments rather than communicating when passing in the office hallways. Ask for their cooperation in understanding that you will be doing everything possible to avoid dealing with any item that is not written down or formally communicated. They will understand when you explain that the simple action of their taking a few seconds to write a simple note will ensure that you give their important issue your undivided attention rather than forgetting what it was they had asked. Most importantly, ask them to hold you accountable for your time management effort. Ask them to get involved and make sure you are scheduling your tasks according to your day plan. Ask them to check in with you every day to find out if you are following your time management program. More than anything else, this process makes your participants a part of the process and eases their concerns with your new behaviors. A similar meeting can be held with family and close friends.
5. Accept no tasks unless you receive it in writing, on a voicemail, or in an Email. If it is not an official form of communication or delegation, the task is not important. If someone insists on communicating only verbally, ask him or her if this is a formal request for you to take action, and then write down the request while you are standing there in front of him or her. In other words, take their time to write down the task, and then have them confirm that the task you wrote down is correct. Over time, this method will help them to change their behavior when dealing with you.
6. Use your in box for every item being brought to your attention. All the tasks, notes, mail, magazines, paperwork - everything! Picture the in box as a gateway to your world: all must pass through the gateway or it does not belong to you and does not deserve any of your attention.
7. Schedule ten minutes or so, two or three times a day, when you will go through the in box and schedule all of the tasks. Avoid the temptation to schedule things as they arrive in your in box. Handle things only once, that means if you pull an item out of the in box, you will handle it, throw it away, delegate it, or schedule it. Depending on your job description, it may be necessary to glance at the new items in the in box to make sure there is nothing extremely urgent and important. However, if nothing fits that description, do not pull anything out until the prescribed scheduled time to go through the in box items.
8. Stick with the program. It will be extremely difficult at first, but it will become easier as time goes on and as you are able to handle your tasks with much greater efficiency and far less anxiety. Handle the tasks in your schedule at the prescribed times. Fight the urge to handle something else first: you will be happy once you have completed that difficult task that has been scheduled for a few days. Resist the urge to take on the easy tasks first and commit to strict compliance with your schedule.
9. Once your task is completed - delete it in your schedule! Close the book on the task. This feels wonderful! Get rid of the reminder that it needs to be done, because it has been done!
10. Fight the temptation to relax your time management efforts as things go smoothly. It is common-

place for high achievers to begin to relax their efforts as they find they have more free time each day. The time management system is the reason for the free time: to relax your efforts now would mean starting all over again, with the time management effort, once things fall apart. Do not relax your efforts. Stay committed and you will succeed in building new and improved time management habits.

At this point you should have an in box with all tasks, paperwork and inbound items being delivered through it. You should also be scheduling tasks according to your day plan two or three times per day. The support of your coworkers and family should also be holding you accountable for your time management efforts. If any of these things are not in place, go back and review the process until all factors are working for you.

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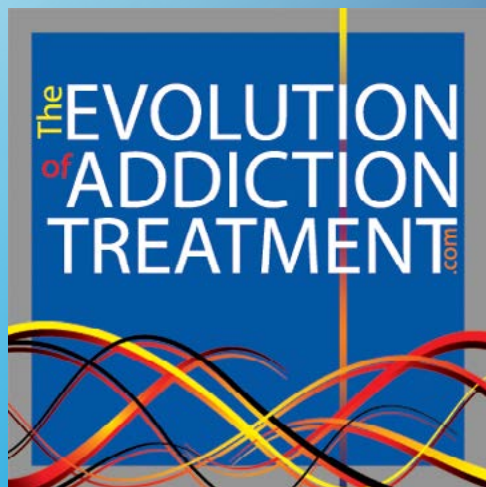
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Andrew Martin began his entrepreneurial approach to business in 1982 at the age of fifteen. Throughout his career, Andrew has fulfilled his duties as a senior executive in viable business ventures in various industries including; health care, sound reinforcement and lighting, electrical safety equipment, commercial catering, specialty metal shapes manufacturing, and the

entertainment overhead suspension industry. Andrew's current business efforts are encompassed by Serene Recovery Network, a group of branded organizations with a common vision of helping people in early recovery to help themselves to a long-term rewarding quality of life without addiction. The individual businesses include Serene Connections, a publishing and professional educational conference production company catering to the field of addiction treatment: The Evolution of Addiction Treatment is the flagship conference. Serene Directory, an online directory of professionals and organizations affiliated with the treatment of addiction. Serene Foundation, a micro loan lender providing funding for the continuum of addiction care. Serene Scene Magazine, a publication promoting long-term healthy lifestyles of recovery. Andrew Serene Institute providing educational opportunities to professionals.

Andrew has authored many articles related to addiction treatment, health care agency productivity, industry specialties, as well as business approach and leadership and has been published in Serene Scene Magazine, Behavioral Health, Freedom Newspaper, Sound & Video Contractor, Western Wall and Ceiling Contractors Association Bulletin, Connections Magazine (Australia), dB Magazine, EQ, Lighting & Sound International (Canada), Sound & Communications, Live Sound International (UK), Recording-Engineering-Production. Additionally, many patents and trademarks have been awarded to Andrew Martin for various business related products, brand names, and service marks.

Andrew is also very active on boards related to the treatment of addiction. Andrew also keynotes for many organizations and speaks internationally on many topics relating to the treatment of addiction.