
What's on Your "To Don't" List?

by Stephanie Ward

As a business owner you may struggle with the question of how you will be able to get everything done. This is especially true for independent service professionals and solopreneurs. There are only so many hours in the day, this isn't going to change. So something else has to.

And if you spend almost all of your time working in your business, you don't have time for the rest of your life. Isn't it true that some of the reasons you started your own business were so you would have more freedom and fun? If you are stressed out and not able to get the right things done, then your business isn't serving you in the way you intended.

The answer is to only focus on the main drivers of your business. The kind of things that are the most important to the growth of your business. I know, I can hear you saying that your business is different and you have dozens of important things you must do. The truth is that not everything is equally important. It's really a matter of choice and you are the one who can decide how you choose to spend your time.

In many cases, in your heart you may know what the most important things are, but somehow loads of other things seem to get in the way. This is where a "to don't" list can come in handy. So instead of a long list of things to do, try turning it around and focusing on what you don't want to do. This will help you stay focused on the right things by default.

To get started, make a list of all of the things you are going to stop doing, things that are not directly connected to the core of your business.

Here are some examples of things for a "to don't" list:

- Don't schedule meetings with everyone who asks
- Don't check e-mail every 10 minutes
- Don't spend hours thinking about small things like the best font type
- Don't get lost surfing the internet
- Don't keep doing things manually that you can automate

Once you have your list ready, keep it in a place where you can see it. As you begin each day, think about what you want to accomplish and remind yourself of what you will NOT be doing. As you take action throughout the day, be aware of your activities and check to see if something you are doing is on your "to don't" list - if it is, stop doing it

immediately! You can always add new things to your list as you become more aware of how you spend your time.

After awhile, you will automatically notice a "to don't" and you will choose not to do it before you get lost in the activity and wonder where the last hour(s) went.

You can also use your "to don't" list as a way to set stronger boundaries for yourself, and your business. Saying no to certain things makes the things you do choose to say 'yes' to, that much more clear and powerful.

It's fun to make a list of all of the things you don't have to do. So why not get started and see how many things you can identify that are not supporting the creation of a profitable business. You will be surprised at how much more you can get done in less time, still grow your business, and have a life.