

A recruiter's guide to time management Podcast Transcript

Hi, this is Rhys Jones. Welcome to my podcast.

This morning I want to talk about time management for recruiters. It's one of the things that I found over the years for recruiters can make the quickest difference to your billings. When you're working with a recruiter, one of the most important things that you need to do developing a recruiter is increase their pounds per hour. It's fine asking people to work longer hours but clearly efficiency is the key, so measure it in pounds per hour for me is one of the best barometers to how successful your recruiter can be by increasing, obviously, the pounds per hour.

Work out what you're doing with your day

One of the things that I do when I'm talking to the recruiter is to ask how you manage your day because each recruiter or each person, if you're talking time management across any profession, will work better with different time management systems because everybody's different. So, if you're coaching somebody rather than doing a time management training session it is better to try and ask how you actually manage your day and work around that to what suits them. And if you are a recruiter listening to this and you're thinking about the time management, do you find that you get to the end of the day, and you've not really achieved.

You've been all day, but you've not really achieved anything. Or do you find yourself sometimes saying I've not had time to do that to yourself or to somebody else. Well, if you've not had time to do something, that would suggest that it just hasn't been a priority, that's all. If you're managing a recruiter that say, 'I haven't had time to do it', then it's to look at what else they've done rather than doing it, because it clearly wasn't a priority for them at that point in time.

Create a 'things to do list'

This is where I found the quickest and easiest way to improve somebody's time management is doing a 'things to do list'. It sounds very, very simple, but at the end of each day, if you're the recruiter or your manager, ask the recruiter to list all the things they want to do the next day. And the reason you do at the end of the day is that's when you've got clarity of mind of all the things you've got to do and it's much easier then if you add your priorities to that list and you do that by simply adding a number next to each item on that list. I personally do one, two, three, four; you can do further down if you like.

And then it's as simple as the next day you just start with the ones, those were the most important things. But if you do it at the end of the day before you go home, it'll also close the day so you go

home a lot more relaxed, you've got a plan for the next day so you know how you're going to make money the next day, and you're not likely to be thinking about things in the evening that you've got to do the next day. So, it allows a certain amount of closure. If you are less stressed about your job, you're clearly going to be more effective; your time management is clearly going to be better because if you are a bit stressed you are likely to procrastinate during the day on what jobs you're going to do next.

Stop procrastinating

That is another reason to have the things to-do list. Because if you are procrastinating that is going to eat time; that's the thing that's going to take your time. It's that judgment of what you're going to do next and if you're surprised how long you can spend in that procrastination - just as an example, I know most people nowadays don't use much paperwork, but some still do, so if you do, try this.

Back when I was a recruiter, which is a long time ago, I had a heavy paperwork desk; lots of CVs, etc. and used to have an in-tray and priorities tray, that sort of thing. And I got taught something – that is to take a magic marker, and every time you pick up a piece of paper, you put a dot on it. And if you carry on doing that for the next week, sometimes you'll find some of the pieces of paper, and I certainly did, had like 30 dots on. And that just showed me how many times I was picking up a piece of paper, thinking about doing it, and then putting it down. And that's just procrastination.

And it's amazing how much you will do that during the day. Not that you spend a lot of time procrastinating but it's just that indecision. But also, if you don't do your prioritization and your things to-do list, as human beings we are going to migrate to the things that we enjoy. That's normal, isn't it? So, if you enjoy going on LinkedIn or you enjoy using the phone, you're going to do that more.

You're also likely to do things that are most recent. So, it's basically who shouts loudest. So, if you've got something that comes in now, you do it now and then you put to one side of the other stuff. And doing your 'things to do list' will help you avoid some of those natural characteristics that you will have as a recruiter, which is doing the things you like, doing the things that shout loudest, and maybe putting off the things that you don't want to do.

But it's about making sure that you are doing good work, and what I mean by good work, is that during the day you are doing the things that are going to make you the most money, short, medium or long term. It's actually doing the things that really matter and it's amazing how you can go through your career, whether it's recruiting, or any other profession and you don't necessarily do things that really matter.

Create a log of time spent

And one of the ways that I've found for you to find out how much things you are doing, aren't necessarily the most important things, or things that are taking up far too long, is if you just for the even for a couple of days, but preferably a week, if you log every single thing you do, write down every single thing you do. So, if it's a phone call for 10 minutes, log it. In the same way a solicitor would log time. You can then log down 10 minutes during your jobs, like your jobs, putting them on the job boards, whatever it might be.

And if you start logging that, every single person I've asked to do that, has found it massively beneficial. And I do it every six months because time management isn't the sort of thing you just fix. You do have to keep an eye on time management. And if you do that time logging system, you will quite quickly see things that I didn't know I spent so long doing that, I didn't know I did that so often. And it's a massive eye-opener.

If I'm coaching a manager or recruiter and ask them to do that, we can use that as a tool to go through together all the activities that they're doing and see where we can upskill things, save the time here and prioritize work. However, nine times out of ten, I find that the recruiter or the manager will see for themselves what it is that's taking up that time, the things they're doing too often. And that's far, far better because if you see yourself something needs changing, you're likely to get it and if you get it, you're more likely to do it.

That is the key in management, it's getting somebody to understand and believe and agree in whatever it is that's going to help them. And that's the key to coaching, it's getting people to think for themselves. So, if you do this system where you are looking at what you do over the course of the week, it helps massively for you to change things and you're more likely to change it because you see it. So, if you do that for a week but about two days, you'll have found enough.

How effective is your time?

One of the things that we can look at with your time management is how effective is that time. What is your return on investment on your time. And this kind of rolls into your prioritization to a degree, because how do you prioritize? Well, there's things that are time critical, so they're a priority. They could be number ones. You have more short-term values, so for example it might be a vacancy you're working on that you've got to lose a few days, so that is a short-term value.

Then the long-term value might be training or something like that. And the problem with long-term stuff is it tends not to get done, because as recruiters everything is about speed. Time kills deals; we all know that. So, we all work incredibly fast. If you've got a great candidate, you have to jump on that candidate quickly get them out for anybody else does. If you've got a great vacancy you want to fill it quickly; even if it's exclusive, you still want to work fast. So, the long-term things tend not to get done and that's one of the reasons why you need to use your time management system to make

sure they get done. Because it's not that they're not important. They are important and this comes back to the 'I've not had time'. It's a case of 'you've not prioritized it'.

Log your long-term tasks as well

So, if, for example you want to listen to a podcast, one of mine obviously, then it's about logging it in your diary somewhere. You can do it at lunchtime, you can do after work, but put it in there. There might be a quiet part of the week. Each industry has quieter times of the day, quieter days during the week, or you might find that there are certain parts of the day that you want to invest in yourself, because that's going to motivate you. I used to personally watch a DVD (because we didn't necessarily have podcasts when I was doing an awful lot of my development) first thing in the morning because it used to get me revved up.

So, a bit of personal development first thing isn't a bad idea. Or you can do it at lunchtime or whatever, but it's the sort of thing you've got to plan in because, going back to the pounds per hour, for you to make more money you've got to be more effective with your time but there are obviously skills that you need to improve as well. So, it's about the big picture, because as recruiters quite often we can work a lot harder rather than smarter.

Recruiters tend to have high work ethics and successful recruiters are always determined. One of the things I used to look for when I hired recruiters were people that were high achievers in other things outside work. So, people are high achieving in sport for example, because if you've got that dedication, that determination to be the best, that often translate into the workplace and that's why you quite often find that recruiters are a lot more competitive than Joe average and also, they're prepared to put the work in. And that's why time management is important as a recruiter because you can work too hard and if you're working too hard, you're not being effective, you're not being efficient, and you can become a busy fool. Or not necessarily just a busy fool; you could be just not as efficient as you could be.

Helps to prevent burn-out

But one of the things that I do recommend to recruiters who are working busy and working hard, because clearly, we want hard working recruiters and you want to be a hard-working recruiter, but you've got to prevent yourself from getting a bit burnt out by working too hard. And that's why I advocate that you that if you can, take a lunch. Not necessarily an hour, but take time out, get out of the office, go and get a sandwich, have a walk around, whatever it might be. It will make you more efficient in the second half of the day, but also, I'm a big fan of exercise; that helps clear the mind.

Because if you can if you can reduce the stress level, you're going to have more energy the next day. You're going to be able to think clearer so I think it's important that you do also keep an eye on the bigger picture for time management and that's where, if you do have a particularly busy period, say

for example you've got a big client that's got a number of vacancies, it's fine working long days as long as it is temporary.

And this is something you can slip into, and I see this a lot more in owner managers and managers, because they tend to be the people that are prepared to put a lot of harder work in. That temporary busy period, is it really temporary? You're kidding yourself that it's temporary and then you slip into doing an awful lot of long hours, which as a by-product can one, burn you out but two, it can make you unhappy in the job and that could be a slow burner. Before you know it, if you don't watch it, you can fall out of love with recruitment and that is a very dangerous thing. If you fall out of love with recruitment, then that can mean you're obviously unhappy in your job, but it can mean you leaving the sector.

Don't overdo it

Now recruitment is a massive passion of mine. I sold my businesses going back about eight years now and I was successful enough. I didn't need to necessarily work again. I could have opened a bar or a surf shack or whatever it might have been, but I thought long and hard about what I wanted to do because I couldn't do nothing, I've got too much of an active mind. I really love recruitment but there was a time towards the end of my business management career, if you like, or being an MD, when I started to fall out of love with recruitment because I was working too hard. And I'd hate to see other recruiters fall into that step because now I'm doing what I do for Davidson Gray, which is helping recruiters build their own businesses and make lots of money. It's the second-best part of my career I've ever had. I absolutely adore my job.

Incidentally, the best part of my career was the first two years I set up a business, because that was just unbelievable. The adrenaline of running your own company is amazing. But if I had not managed to address that falling out of love with recruitment, then I could easily have left the industry, full stop. And that would have been a shame because I really do love what I do now. So, keep an eye on the fact that yes, work hard but be efficient when you're working. Doing the more important things with your 'things to do list', prioritize your one, two, three, four, putting a line through each job you do as you go along; gives you satisfaction. Going home more stress-free because you know what you're going to do the next day and you've had a good day; you've achieved things. Try and enjoy your time out of work; don't work too late, do a bit of exercise, it's always great for clearing the mind. Get out at lunch time and do reassess how you're working every few months with that time log system that I mentioned, to see what you are doing because you will no doubt slip into habits that are eating your time and you're not necessarily being efficient. Things like you are doing far too emails and you're not making enough phone calls or whatever it might be.

Conclusion

But if you can get your time management right, you will be not only a far more effective recruiter, but you will also be a happy recruiter and you're more likely to stay in recruitment because I know statistically recruiters tend to last six years. And if you manage to last six years, you're into it. But

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the vast majority of recruiters don't last beyond six years because they get burnt out, so don't fall into the trap of falling out of love with recruitment. Get your time management right and enjoy your career.

Thanks for listening to my podcast, I hope you found it interesting and maybe even a bit informative. If you do want to listen to any more of my podcasts, they're all in the library on the Davidson Gray website. You'll also find plenty of blogs there as well if you're more of a reader than listener. If you do want to listen to my new podcast as and when they're released if you want to email me, and I'll put you on the mailing list. That's Rhys Jones at davidsongray.co.uk or if you also want to have a chat about potentially setting up your own company, you can contact me on that email address or through LinkedIn.

