How to manage your time better

It's the start of the year, you probably have a long list of resolutions, or perhaps you have read that 100th book telling you to wake up at 4am, take cold showers to be the best version of yourself...

Well, there are easier ways to be productive and be a better leader for your team of company.

Step 1: understand where you add value

As a CEO or co-founder of a startup or scale up you might have the reflex to take on everything under the sun, whether it be reporting, admin tasks or investors meeting. The _key to being more productive_ is focusing on specific tasks – you can't do it all, so it's probably best to pick what no one else but you can do.

A good way to assess how you spend your weeks is to track your time; you can do it by putting blocks in your calendar when you are doing something in order to audit yourself at the end of the week, or you can write it on excel, or check your to-lists. The main goal of this step is to be able to understand roughly where you spend most of your time. Create categories that make sense to you; it can be admin, _meetings_, projects or 1:1s, client meetings, financial reviews; you want to make sure you have up to 5 buckets so you don't make it too complex for yourself.

So now that you know how you spend your time, take a look at where you truly add value. For this ask yourself "what can only be done by me?". If you notice that you spend 50% of your time managing small projects, or doing reporting or admin tasks, then something might be off. As a leader, you have a unique position in the business and should be focusing on where your skills and knowledge truly make a difference. Usually these would be setting the strategy or vision for the team, managing and coaching your direct reports, working on external relationships with investors or other founders for example.

Step 2: What can you delegate?

If you're still not sure what you can delegate, a good mental model to use is the Eisenhower matrix which splits work or tasks between the level or urgency and importance. The tasks you should be delegating are the ones that fall in the:

> urgent but not important; so it needs to get done but not necessarily by you (for example managing payroll, doing weekly reporting),

> and the tasks that are important but not urgent; these can be admin tasks, smaller projects, repetitive work or specialist work.

Now of course, you might keep some of the important tasks to do yourself, but the model helps you see what needs to be prioritised by you.

If you've done this step well you probably have a list of things to drop from your to-do but you're now wondering who takes these on. There are different ways to delegate;

> get an assistant; a lot of CEOs or leaders don't see the value or wait until they are drowning to get someone, but onboarding an assistant early on helps you delegate some of the tasks that will creep up but always need to be done.

> lean on your existing team; is there someone if your team with more bandwidth who can take on an extra project? or can you empower more of

your leaders or heads of department to look at metrics for example.

get fractional help; by either working with freelancers, or part-time workers. This is ideal if the work is temporary, or you don't have the budget yet to bring someone full time.

hire people; if you notice a project or work will require more time to support then you might want to look at hiring someone in your team to help. If you need more of a Swiss army knife you might want to consider hiring a chief of staff or special projects manager.

Step 3: time box

Now that you have a list of tasks you can focus on and have delegated the rest, you'll need to organise your week to make sure things get done on time. When doing this, take into account your personal time too, start by listing what needs to be done and what you want to do in a week; this can include picking up your kids, dinner with friends, going to the gym, etc. Make sure you block this time in your calendar first.

Then, add the work meetings, and time block for deep work to not be interrupted.

Once this is done, give it a try for a few weeks and notice what actually happens or not (do you have a "no meeting" zone in a calendar that no one respects? do you always move certain meetings, etc), and adapt your calendar as you learn about how you work.

If you are looking for fractional support, or have more questions on how to be more productive with your time, you can book a free consultation with me at aliceivanoff.com

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