

Time Well Spent

By Don Van Veldhuizen, Circuit Rider

Priorities, schedules, routine, emergencies, and planning: One person and too many jobs. Responsibilities keep on coming with no extra help and the same 15-hour work day. When is enough...enough? Here are a few tips that may give you that little bit of extra time for your family, recreation, or whatever.

1. Determine what type of person you are. Do you consider yourself a morning person? An evening person? Have a portion of your workday include your most productive time. This article was written around 5:00 a.m., as I am a morning person. This is my most productive time and at the end of the workday, I can look back and say it was a productive day.
2. Consider your strengths and weaknesses. Some things come natural for you and don't require as much effort. Do these items during the time when you may have distractions or when you may not be at the top of your "game." Most likely you enjoy these things and they will get done well no matter when you do them. You may even consider these things as a break from the chaos.
3. Even though you may find yourself "putting out fires" most of the day, schedule your day and stick to it as much as possible. Make a list and work towards completing it. Schedules work only if they are stuck to. Scheduling items that have a wait-time will allow you to do other items on your list. For example, in a wastewater plant, set up your TSS while the sludge is settling in your settleometer. What about the time when flushing the distribution system? It could be something small like a little cleaning, or major, such as working on a piece of equipment. Be flexible enough to handle the fires, but completing the items on your list will prevent fires from occurring in the future. This will help relieve your workload in the future.

4. Stay organized. An organized work place saves time. Less time looking for items and fewer trips back to the shop will make your day more productive and less stressful. A clean, organized workplace is also great for public and supervisor relations also.
5. Stay focused. The workplace is full of distractions, rumors, and gossip. Don't get caught up in these things as they detract from the job that needs to get done. The time spent on finding out about "so and so" is time that will need to be made up somewhere. Wouldn't you rather spend it with family? Catching that salmon? Or... well, you fill in this line.
6. Know your weaknesses. In knowing the areas where you are not as strong will allow you the freedom to ask for help or training. This in turn will decrease expectations from others and will assist supervisors to making you a more effective worker, reducing their stress levels and yours. It also decreases the chance for accidents. Nothing is more stressful than an accident, for everyone, not just the injured.
7. Get a good night's sleep. Loosing sleep will set tomorrow back as you will not have the clarity of thought that you would normally have. When you start your day tired, things will just get worse from there. Stress can be difficult to handle. It can become much worse if you haven't slept well. This in turn can prevent you from sleeping in the future causing a snowball effect.

In the United States, it's considered normal to work 40 hours per week. Many work 50 to 60 hours per week. Wouldn't it be great to be normal again, or better yet, be able to tell your friends, "It doesn't take me all day to do a day's work?"