



Quick Questions & Time Robbers

We're on a roll. In response to many of you saying you're overworked and way too stressed, we're offering additional ways to take control of your life.

Our ongoing series of Points has so far addressed:

- the positive aspects of saying “no,”
- the value of having margin in your life (this is adequate time to do what you need—and want—to do) and
- how liberating (and profitable) it can be to “fire” a difficult client.

If you'd like to review our previous Points, go to www.corsini.com and click on E-Newsletters to get to our archives.

Let's continue our empowering discussion of ways to deal with problem people, and this week we'll look at situations *inside* your office. To start with, learn to recognize the culprits. Keep these things in mind:

Rule # 1— “Quick questions” are never quick.

We've all had someone come into our office or workspace and say, *“I have a quick question for you ...”* And then 20 or 30 minutes later you remind them that their “single” question was supposed to be “quick.” By the time they finish, half your morning is spent on their problem.

Rule # 2— Your office is full of robbers (time robbers, that is).

I'm talking about people who want to socialize or, worse, gossip. They ask if you watched the game last night. They want to tell you what's *“going on with ‘Alice’ in accounting.”* It seems some people get “paid per email”

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity”
— **George Patton**

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judging from how frequently they forward messages on everything from religion to reality shows. They will routinely interrupt your concentration, derail your train of thought and reduce your momentum to a virtual halt if they have their way.

We have suggestions on how to handle both of these types of time-management nightmares.

First of all, **close your door**. When you really need to be left alone, create a barrier. Most of the “*got a minute?*” or “*did you hear?*” people will think twice about actually opening the door to have you solve their problems or listen to their gossip.

If they do come in, **don't let them intrude**. How do you do this? Well, firmly saying “*no*” or “*not now*” is probably the easiest way to get rid of someone. We've said it before, and it's worth repeating: “No” is probably the best tool you have to take back control of your life. “No” is a sentence all by itself, and it doesn't really need explanation.

Don't enable those “quick questioners.” Encourage people to solve the problem themselves. You might want to quickly and concisely tell that person where they can go to find the answer on their own. Another department? Your product literature? The Internet?

Use body language. Stand up when someone comes into your office uninvited. Invariably, they will try to sit down in front of you—until they see you stand up. Remain standing during the duration of your conversation. With any luck, that will speed them up. (At least it won't allow them to get too comfortable.)

Get busy. As someone comes into your office unannounced, pick up the telephone receiver as if you are just about to make a phone call. This tactic works wonders. There's something about an old-fashioned telephone call that makes people stick to the “one-minute” question or hesitate to waste your time with chitchat.

Turn things off. Turn off your cell phone. Ask your assistant to hold your calls. Disable your email announcement. Make your own quiet (productive) time.

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Interruptions and impromptu interactions with others in the office are some of the main reasons people feel overworked and stressed out. That's because interruptions put you behind your own already-busy schedule. They disrupt your concentration and ruin your momentum. Look for ways to reduce your interruptions. Say "no." Create barriers. Use body language to your advantage. Avoid "quick questions" that are never really quick. Evade the "time robbers" with their gossip and chatter. That's how you stay focused and enjoy a more productive and less stressed day. That's how you Do What You Do Better.

Do What You Do Better™ Executive Workbook

Business owners, executives and managers can hone their organization skills, expand their goals and learn to lead better with Marc Corsini's new *Do What You Do Better™ Executive Workbook*.

It's a step-by-step guide to more effective leadership in the office and a more satisfying life outside of work. Participants track their progress through the workbook during one-on-one, monthly Executive Coaching sessions, which also offer a confidential forum for discussing issues and exploring creative solutions.

Executive Coaching and the *Executive Workbook* help you do what you do better. Contact Marc Corsini at marc@corsini.com or (205) 879-0432 to sign up.