

Successful Scheduling Using Reality, Not Rules

Over the course of my working years, I've run the gamut of various jobs. In the world of 9-5 jobs, I've stocked shelves, worked in a machine shop, worked in a funeral home, team leader for the 2000 Census Bureau, and director in a large publishing/resource company. In ministry, I've served as a youth minister, single adult pastor, education minister, church planter, pastor of established churches, consultant, conference speaker, and currently as a director with the Baptist World Alliance. Each position gave me the opportunity for personal success and ministry fruitfulness. But, at every turn, it requires discipline.

Sometimes, I had it. Many times, I did not.

In this new season of work with the BWA, I'm covering a lot of territory in both my work responsibilities and in my travel geographically. To maintain my sanity, I'm moving into a more intentional schedule of life. It's not perfect and I'll adapt it along the way. Knowing that we're all looking for a life hack that will increase our effectiveness, here's my latest go at scheduling for success.

Daily Schedule:

- Rise early for exercise, private devotions, and writing. The older I'm getting, the closer to 5:15am I awake. For exercise, I currently aim for either cycling (four-eight miles) or just grab my jump rope (can get in 500+ jumps in no time).
- Get ready. Even though I office from home, I get ready because it sets me into work mode.
- Make a list. Whatever I need to do, I decide to get it done. As others have said, eat the frog first.
- Tackle the first round of emails for staff issues.
- Late mornings are for phone calls and emails to church leaders.
- Short lunch break.
- Early afternoon is all about logistics for upcoming trips or events.
- Late afternoon is the time to return emails, phone calls, and reading.

Project management: Asana is my go-to for project management. I use Evernote to keep up with random information when it comes up. It allows me to have it digitally and not transfer from handwritten to digital everyday.

Meetings: Given my current work, meetings happen with pastors and church leaders at various times. However, it's usually coffee shop or lunch meetings. Meetings with people trump logistical work. My advantage is that I work from anywhere so my laptop can come with me along with Asana, Evernote, and all the rest of the World Wide Web.

Reading:

- Daily reading includes websites on world news, what's happening in the church, life

among the Baptist family, and blogs by church thought leaders.

- Weekly reading focuses on the major topics are ministry leadership, business leadership, financial advancement, and missiology.
- Monthly reading is for fun. I have a novel going but I use the entertaining reading generally for flights (becoming more numerous) or off days.

When travel happens: I will generally take two domestic trips a month and three or four international trips a year. Obviously, this throws all of my schedule up in the air. But because I work remotely, I maintain a semblance of my schedule no matter where I am in the world. It is tough but doable.

Walk away: I need to physically walk away sometimes. It is for both a break and for clarity. Often, it is just to get the blood pumping. But sometimes it is to clear the mental cobwebs.

... and now for one bonus idea that will help pull it all together ...

The key is to be intentional instead of being legalistic.

No one but the leader of a large organization that has an untold number of minions can have any control over their schedule. Even then, it's an illusion. As my friend Brian Daniel said to me once, "Anyone who has your email address is your boss." It's true in so many ways so be intentionally flexible with yourself and people. Be intentionally focused on what you want to accomplish. Be intentionally willful about the vision for your work. Intentionality is not the same as rigid legalism. Use your work to help the people involved. Never use people to get your work done. Then, you'll find your way on a clear path of a successful personal schedule.

> [Read more from Philip.](#)
