

Manage Your Time More Effectively with a Model Week

By Teresa Riccobuono
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Have you already given up on your New Year's resolutions? Lacking the time to fit one more task on your calendar is one of the primary reasons resolutions don't stick.

Many books and articles have been written about improving one's time management. The reality is, we cannot manage time. The clock keeps ticking whether we want it to or not. What we can manage is our activity. Instead of time management, think activity management.

You have probably heard of the model week, which is sometimes called a static calendar.

Before you groan and say to yourself, "That just won't work for me," read on. I promise you, this is a resolution worth keeping.

Having helped hundreds of professionals in the financial services industry create model weeks, I can tell you that the benefits far outweigh any negative preconceptions you have.

I've heard all the excuses:

- I can't stick to some rigid plan. My clients, staff or boss constantly interrupt me.
- I never know what emergency I'm going to walk into in the morning. How can I plan for that?
- I'm not always in the mood to do a specific task, like write a financial plan. What if I don't feel like doing the task that my model week says I should be doing?
- What if something takes longer than the time I have allocated to accomplish it?

Here is where the beauty of the model week comes in. We all have hundreds of things that we could or should be doing. Much of our mental capacity gets eaten up by trying to constantly reprioritize those activities.



By creating an effective model week and making sure your important activities are included, you free up mental capacity. This helps you accomplish more instead of constantly reprioritizing and thinking about everything that isn't getting done.

Think about it. If I know I have an hour on Tuesday morning to call prospects and centers of influence, I can stay laser-focused on my Monday morning task of preparing for client meetings. I don't have to pay attention to the little voice in my head telling me to call my prospects and centers of influence. I know that I have time dedicated to that activity each week – just not on Monday morning. I don't have to worry about what is not getting done right now.

Not only is it important to be certain that essential activities are on the calendar. The placement and timing of the activities are also important. Here are some questions to ask when crafting a model week.

- When is my peak time – morning, midday or afternoon?
- Do I have time-zone restrictions (for example, I work on West coast time and the corporate office is on Central time)?
- Am I dependent on market hours or other people's working hours to accomplish tasks?
- Do I need more than two hours at a time to work on complicated projects?
- Is there a time during my day when more distractions occur?
- When is my dedicated time to meet with team members, attend networking meetings and spend time with family? Don't forget date night!
- Do I have a staff member who works part-time and needs access to me during their time in the office?

As you craft your model week, it is possible that you may run out of time before you run out of tasks. This is when you need to rethink your activities:

- Am I the best person to be handling this task?
- Is it time to hire a person or virtual assistant?
- Can the task be streamlined?



- Does this task need to continue being done, or is it just habit?

Just last week, an advisor told me that he now manages his practice in a proactive mode. Before we put together his model week, he was running his practice “by the seat of his pants.”

If you have been hesitant to consider crafting a model week, I challenge you to test it out. You have nothing to lose and much to gain. Now that’s a resolution worth keeping.

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