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## ***TIME MANAGEMENT FOR BASKETBALL COACHES***

**The game of basketball changes every year. The players we coach evolve. Technology continues to advance beyond our wildest dreams. But one thing about the profession of coaching as never changed in our lifetimes... we all have 24 hours a day, 168 hours a week, 8,760 a year. And unless the Mayan's are correct, I am predicting this isn't about to change anytime soon.**

**The way in which we utilize those hours often separates the success we experience and most certainly determines how we as coaches are able to balance our on-the-court life with our off-the-court life.**

**Our ability to effectively manage those 24/168/8,760 hours can be the difference between a long, happy career and one that is short lived and miserable.**

**It's hard to mess up a career where you get to wear short pants and tennis shoes and play games, but if you allow time to become your nemesis, it can happen to the best of us.**

**There are time management guru's giving speeches and hosting seminars all over the country on a daily basis. There are volumes of books at Barnes and Nobles with ALL the answers from award winning authors. Problem is, most of them aren't coaches and some of their time saving tips just aren't a possibility in this profession.**

**I am certainly no TIME MANAGEMENT expert, but the one comment I receive most often about our UW Newsletter is "where do you find time in your day to do it". The answer to that is mostly because we have a great IT department here and great group members willing to share. But, time management was something that plagued me early in my coaching career and has steadily improved over the years. Just like with our transition offense or our Pac Line Defense, my ideas might not work for everyone and their particular situation. But if I can share one thing from my experiences that will help you spend more time with your family/friends, spend more time enjoying a hobby, or just allowing you more time to effectively execute the rest of your responsibilities, then this little piece will be worth it.**



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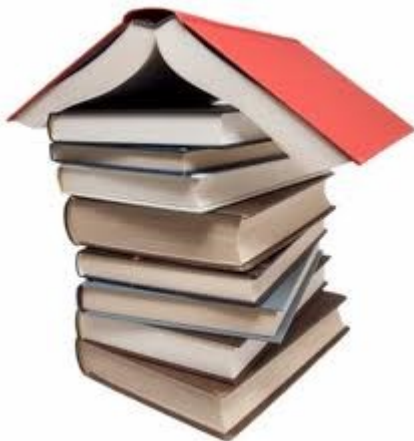
**ONE... stop attending the seminars and stop looking for a magical formula in a book that you can purchase. I made that mistake early on in my coaching days. I am not saying there aren't some good ideas in them or that these people aren't speaking the truth. It's just not 100% applicable to coaching. For example, if you google/bing articles on time management they will list as one of the top things to eliminate is your time on the computer. Well, for me email, FACEBOOK, twitter, and Instagram are the live blood of recruiting. So eliminating that from my day would not be such a good idea.**

**It okay to attend the seminars or read a few books. Just don't expect to come away with a "playbook" of how to proceed. Don't keep buying a new book or subscribing to a new method.**

**Take the information you do get, and just like attending a coaching clinic, *make the ideas your own.***

**When I got serious about managing my time, my goal was to save 5 minutes a week on 10 to 15 different things. That doesn't seem like a lot of time in the grand scheme of time. But in saving that small amount of time, I gained 75 minutes a day, 525 a week, 27,375 minutes a year... Do the math on that and you'll find I had 19 days more than I had before... 19 DAYS!!!**

**So, I am just going to take you through my philosophy and how it has evolved over the last 15 years and hopefully something will help you save five minutes and maybe help you look at your current situation and find other ways to reach your 19 extra days.**



**STOP USING A DAYRUNNER:** When I first broke into coaching, Franklin Planners were all the rage. Everyone had a "dayrunner" and it held everything that was important. There were (and still are) Franklin Covey stores in which you could buy a multitude of tools to organize yourself. I got one as a gift for getting my first head coaching job. I was meticulous in organizing it. I color coded everything. Red for this, blue for that, black for another, green for yet another. Daily, weekly, monthly calendars at the tip of my fingers. To-do lists we prioritized down to the minute with everything for the day ahead. It took about two years for me to realize I was spending more time organizing my day than I was saving by being organized for my day. I wasn't saving time and could not tell that I was doing better quality work as a result. Does making your daily TO-DO list really pay off in the long term??

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**WITH YOUR DAY RUNNER GONE WHAT THEN:** Now that I had disposed of my life line to organization I still needed a way that kept me focused and on track to complete what I needed to get done. I was a high school coach at the time teaching three sections of biology, two sections of chemistry, and one of physics in addition to coaching my team. Obviously I needed something to keep things straight. I sat at my desk one day until I had a plan. I came up with four things that were important to me... Family/friends, My Current Situation, My Future, My Hobbies... Those were the things that I dealt with on a daily basis and I needed to be good at. From that I created PILING system (I always hated filing things and thought that process too wasted valuable time). So I had for PILES on my desk. One for each of those Important Things. During the course of the day many things came across my desk that needed attention. If they didn't fit into one of those PILES it stayed on my desk until I completed it. Those things directly in front of me then were things that we either URGENT or IMPORTANT. If it was urgent I did it right then. If it was IMPORTANT it might be able to wait until all the URGENT things were done. At the end of each day before I went home, everything went into one of my four piles or it went in the trash can. If something had survived the day without being IMPORTANT OR URGENT and didn't relate to my FAMILY/FRIENDS, MY CURRENT SITUATION, MY FUTURE SITUATION, or MY HOBBIES it went into the trash can. If I had to take something home with me to finish that night I did. If not, the next morning I had a clean desk and perhaps a small stack of things that were IMPORTANT left over from the day before. I didn't have the neatest desk in the building, but I could tell you where everything was located. And I had a PILE for everything.

- \*\*\* I kept a stack of index cards handy to write notes and place into piles as the dictated
- \*\*\* I would periodically actually file some things from my four piles that didn't require daily attention
- \*\*\* I had a manager who was OCD so she had to color code the 4 piles which turned out to be useful
- \*\*\* I learned to be maniacal in my decisions between Important and Urgent

This system worked for me and was the sole tool I used in being organized for the next 4 years as a head coach at the high school level.

Organization became even more important to me when I went to work for Gary Blair at the University of Arkansas. I was transitioning from being a head coach of my own program to being the Director of Operations for a collegiate team. Just like the jump in the game itself, the biggest change for me was the PACE at which everything occurred and the fact that everyone around was as good (or way better in my case) than I was. I kept my piles but my stack of URGENT and IMPORTANT became deeper and harder to determine a place for. It took exactly two days on the job for me to have my second major break through in MY organizational plan.

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**EAT THAT FROG:** I learned after two days that I had to have everything done that I needed to have done for myself by 9 am. 9 am was the time (within a few minutes daily) that Coach Blair would walk into my office with a stack of things for me to do and 99% of them needed to be done by noon if not before. My stack of URGENT and IMPORTANT from the day before must be gone or very, very small. For me to effectively function I needed to have a blank canvas. EAT THAT FROG is a reference to Brian Tracy's idea of making sure that you do the things you least want to do first in your day. Find those things that you dread doing and get them out of the way early (eat that Frog). In doing this, the rest of the URGENT items were all downhill. Along the way I found too that if these matters dealt with other people, getting to them early in their day was equally as beneficial. This is something that to this very day I still naturally do. So, if you get a call from me early in the day that might tell you something!!!



**BATCH RATHER THAN PRIORTIZE:** Many people will teach you to prioritize your to-do lists in various ways. While I certainly agreed with the need to have a plan, once I got things into my two piles of URGENT/IMPORTANT I learned I was more effective with my time when I batched tasks together rather than simply doing them in order or importance. By batching I mean, grouping things together that are similar. For example, if I had a high priority task that required me to be in the film room it became smart for me to knock out any other tasks that required me to be in or near the film room even if they were lower down my priority list. This saved the few minutes of re-tracing steps and maybe a few minutes on becoming distracted along the way to and from. Another example might be returning all your emails or returning phone calls. Anything that makes sense BATCHED together saved a couple of minutes here and a couple of minutes there.

**DRIVE TIME:** In a perfect world, living close to your gym is a huge plus. The time spent in your vehicle making the trips back and forth can really add up quickly. So the first point of this one is live as close as you can afford or makes sense with your living situation. Secondly, if you do have a short (or long) commute. Use your drive time home at night to make that one phone call you need to wrap up your URGENT stack. Use your drive into the gym in the morning to EAT THAT FROG and make the call you would otherwise be dreading all day. Obviously with laws these days, hands free is a must and safest, but it is valuable time. Thirdly, this can also be YOUR TIME. Some days it could be your time to listen to that new song from itunes before you get home to a crazy house. Whatever you decide to use the time for, just make sure it isn't wasted and aimless.

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**READY ON YOUR ALARM:** This one is certainly a personality thing. In examining my own routines I learned that I wasted valuable time in the morning preparing myself to leave for the gym. Finding my keys, locating the proper practice gear for the day, loading up my work bag, where is my wallet?, where is my phone? Etc. It was three to five minutes a morning. Yet I laid in the bed at night fighting sleep, flipping the TV remote watching info-mercials. So, I committed to having my morning ready to start at my alarm by getting all that stuff ready the night before. Now, you may be a morning person and exactly opposite of me and would rather do that in the morning. Fine but I bet if you examine your nightly routine you would find a way to save a few minutes. Just being ready to start your day on a good note can lead to a productive morning into a good afternoon and wrap up with a great evening.

**DUMP YOUR CABLE PROVIDER:** This was toughie for me but maybe the best thing I ever did... I didn't do this during my days at Arkansas but I mention it here because I just made reference to flipping the TV remote. I cut off my cable. Cold turkey. Went from a 300 channel guy to a zero channel guy overnight. Were there some serious withdrawals? No doubt. But what I found was I could find almost anything I really wanted/needed to see on the internet or at the office. Then with the money I saved in six months of not having a cable bill I was able to buy an ipad on which you can view EVERYTHING... I extra time I saved from watching the tube lead to reading more and interacting with real live human beings. I know this is a drastic one, but I can attest that it won't kill you and the rewards are countless.

**SOCK SORTING SUCKS:** Since I broke with chronological order above, I will just go with it now. As a single guy, I do my own laundry. I am too cheap to pay someone else to do it so saving all laundry time I just needed to streamline the way I did it. I came up with a system that worked for me to get everything clean in a pretty timely manner. That is a big challenge for us coaches who may have a "4 change day" depending on the time of the year. The one thing I always dreaded and found myself frustrated with was sorting of socks. I always ended up with a basket full of socks at the end of the week (er, or month). I would plop down in front of game film and go about sorting them. Of course only to find that the dryer had eaten at least one leaving an odd pair every single time. It was 20 minutes of pure hell. Then one day it hit me... THE SOLUTION... I put every pair of socks I owned in the trash. Went to Dick's sporting goods and bought 50 pairs of the same athletic sock. Went next door to Jos A. Banks and bought three pair of colored dress socks that too were all the same. Now when I wash socks they all go in at once, come out at once, and go back into a drawer with out even pairing up. ONE BIG SOCK DRAWER. Reach in grab two and I am set for the day. No sorting, no pairing, no searching for. Why didn't someone put this one in their book!!!

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**FRONT ROW JOE'S:** This one also hit me on a random Saturday afternoon. I was that person who always thought there was a better parking spot just on the next row over. I was in constant search for the perfect spot and celebrated finding a FRONT ROW JOE at the mall like we had just hit a game winner to win the Championship. The new time saving me now parks in the first open spot I see and walk in. Roughly estimate I park 40 times a week doing various things. If I save 20 seconds per time... do the math per week, per month, per year...

**SHOPPING ONLINE:** I think someone more committed than me could even take this one to another whole level. In Seattle, you can actually do your grocery shopping online then just stop in the store, pay for you order, then roll out. As a coach I already throw away too many things before I eat them, but there are lots of other ways I SHOP online. I count bill paying in this one too. But finding things online and having them shipped to my door saves traffic, parking, out of stock issues that eat away quickly at the time you have worked so hard to save. I believe someone could pretty much get everything they need delivered without ever leaving their iphone or laptop.

**PHRASEXPRESS.COM:** A computer application to works like auto-fill on your emails and word processing. As a coach there are many common phrases that we use repeatedly. This feature recognizes those patterns in our every day routine and fills them in automatically. I send on average 250 emails per day (sometimes as many as 1000). If I can save seconds in each that adds up in a big, big hurry. There are others out there, but this is the one I came across first and have stuck with. (for example it has auto filled about 30 times in this document alone!!)

**RSS FEEDS:** Staying with the technology theme, using RSS feeds to alert you of things that occur in real time that are important to you are a huge time saver. Google Alerts, RSS feeds from other places bring things you choose right to your attention as they hit the world wide web... This is where you can be more efficient in your job because of all the other ways you have saved time in your day.

**RECREATE YOUR OFFICE AT HOME:** I have tried to re-created my office setting in the gym as closely as I can at home. I have a computer charger at home so I don't have to pack one from the office. I have access to all my office files via an external hard drive at home. Obviously there are things you can't bring home but being as functional as possible saves those extra travel trips, the lost time in procrastinating until you are "at your desk". Again you can take this one to extremes as you are able, but just a few small things like not packing and unpacking a charger saves you a minute or so each time.

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**TOUCH ONCE:** When I first started paying attention to this one it was dealing with dirty dishes. I was notorious for putting a dirty plate in the sink. Letting the sink fill up, then finally breaking down and putting them into the dish washer. The TOUCH ONCE principle told me that since I already have it in my hand, rinse it off, and put into the dishwasher all at once. Not only did it keep my kitchen more presentable, I also found myself implementing the TOUCH ONCE principle other places... Dirty laundry, equipment around the gym, tasks in your day, etc.

**PACKING:** This point alone could warrant an entire 10 page piece, but since I know not everyone travels I won't go into great detail. I will just say that having a plan in packing your bag can save a HUGE amount of time directly and indirectly. Not over packing clothes that you have to rewash after packing and never wearing but need to be washed as a result of being packed. Forgetting things that require time (and money) to replace away from home. I can't tell you how many BLACK BELTS I had accumulated after my first year of college coaching!! As someone who is on the road 75-100 days a year, this is a biggie. Still no expert, but now that I have a plan I see a noticeable difference in how comfortably I travel and being stress free away from home is priceless. It helps me be fresher come game time and if it helps me pay more attention to the game, then maybe it helps our team.

So, there are MY 15 things.

Not a magical formula. Not a playbook that everyone can follow. Nothing too life changing by themselves.

What I hope you can take from this is the way to examine your own routines, identify the things that waste time and/or just cause you frustrations, and help you recognize that saving a few minutes here and there really had up over the course of a basketball season.

Just like all things Basketball... take these ideas and make them yours.



PS... It's going to be impossible not to think of me every time you sort SOCKS if you don't make that change