

Entrepreneur February 2011 Article
“Succeeding One Task at a Time”

“The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” These are profound words from author Kelly Ann Rothaus. Sounds like a fundamental prescription for success, right? Yet, I would bet big bucks that you have bragged at some point about your ability to multi-task. At the very least, you’ve probably felt proud of your juggling skills. It’s not your fault nor is it surprising since this is a concept many of you learned at your Mother’s knee. It continues to be propagated by society at large and by the media specifically. Stand in any grocery store line and read the story titles on Women’s Magazines, you’ll see story after story about how to efficiently multi-task. Though multi-tasking may be an important **survival** skill for you, is it a **success** skill? Focus is a critical earmark of female entrepreneurs who reach high levels of success and excellence. They push other things aside so they can focus 100% of their energy, creativity, and intelligence on the most critical tasks and projects.

This maybe a two-fold issue:

- Rights/Value
- People-pleasing

What is your “rights” mindset? Do you believe you have the right to focus on important tasks? Do you really value your business and your role in that business? Do you have the right to close the door and tell those around you that you need to focus? For the home-based business owner this can be a huge challenge. Maybe your office is a corner in your kitchen, bedroom or family room. Even if you have a dedicated office it’s still plopped right in the middle of your home. Consequently, you see many other tasks that need to be done. Fight the urge! Ask yourself this question, “What can I **effectively** do at once?” The key word is **effectively**. You may feel **efficient** but are you **effective**?

Heed this excerpt from Rebecca Matthias, in *Mother’s Work*, her autobiography about the creation of her multimillion dollar companies Mimi Maternity, Motherhood and A Pea in the Pod maternity clothes stores:

“Do you think Steve Jobs ever cleaned out his garage when he was inventing the personal computer? No! He didn’t have time for insignificant crap like that. And you don’t either. If your mother-in-law doesn’t like it, then good, she can have Thanksgiving dinner at her house next year, where it’s clean.”

Don’t get me wrong, it’s easy to fall into traps like these. While writing this article I fell right into the distraction/people-pleasing hole myself, my husband was packing for a business trip and needed the Downy wrinkle spray. He has never quite mastered the art of ironing. What did I do? I went scouring the laundry room for that darn Downy. What can I say; sometimes I am not the model to follow!!!! At least I’m willing to show you my truth, warts and all.

What’s the prescription for a focus-driven business? Try the following:

- Track it! Keep a log for a week, heck even one day. Find out where your time really goes. Recently a coaching client of mine conducted a weekly time/activity log. The realization? She never completes any task and she feels guilty when she takes planning time. What a revelation! A log will tell you if your multi-tasking behavior is really working for you.
- Not now! Set boundaries with your family/friends/loved ones. If this is focus time for you, then have the guts to enforce it. There is no doubt that we teach others how to treat us. Are you at everyone's beck and call when you need to be focused? Whose responsibility is the focus? Yes, it's tough to say, "No" but the outcome is soooooooooo sweet.
- Silence it! Work in a distraction free zone. What does that mean? Close the door! If you don't have a door, invest in a folding screen. Home Improvement stores have inexpensive ones in their outdoor furniture departments. I bought a screen last May for \$99 at Lowe's. Let your voicemail pick up the calls. Silence your email message notification. Put away what you are not working on. This isn't rocket science folks. Isn't it the simple prescriptions that we often find the hardest? Be there! Work at work and play at play. Zig Ziglar once said, "Most people are at home when they are at work and at work when they are at home, so ain't nobody no where no time." Keep in mind he's from Yazoo City, Mississippi. Even if the grammar leaves a little to be desired, the concept is profound.
- Block it! Block out your time. Block your time off in chunks. Inside those chunks create a very detailed schedule. For example, I have created specific days and times for my telephone coaching clients. I used to schedule them whenever the client requested, but it really chopped up my day. Now I offer specific times when clients can sign up. On January 24, I conducted three two hour coaching calls in a row, with only 15 minutes between. That gave me just enough time to make some notes about the previous call, go to the restroom, and eat a meal replacement bar for lunch. Though jam-packed, what a productive and revenue generating day!
- Hire it! Think about the multiple tasks that need to be done, which ones deserve your time? My business coach, James Malinchak, www.BigMoneySpeaker.com and star of the new reality television show *Secret Millionaire* debuting on ABC March 6, 2011 says, "A business owner should never be doing mundane tasks that they could pay someone else for do for \$10-\$100 dollars an hour." Some of you are saying, "Sure he can do this he's a millionaire." Trust me; he did it even in the lean times. Let's say you are just starting you business and money is tight. Hire a high school student to do some of the routine tasks to free you for the revenue generating projects. Shoot, maybe you have your very own elementary, middle school, or high school student. What a great way to have them make some extra money and give them the opportunity to learn about the world of work. I hired a young woman recommended to me by the local high school three years ago. She has been invaluable to my business. She is now graduating from high school. Recently I had the opportunity to write a letter of reference for her in the quest to obtain a college scholarship. Obviously, a win/win for both of us.

Don't fall victim to the multi-taking myth. Become a focus-driven home-business owner and glean the competitive edge you need. Just so you know, this article was written in record time because I followed the advice above—except for the whole Downy debacle. What can I say; I'm a mere human, just like you. If you have other thoughts, ahas, or questions regarding this topic, please visit www.HighHeeledSuccess.com or email me at Kay@highheeledsuccess.com.