



“HOW MANY COACHES DOES IT TAKE TO SCREW IN A LIGHT BULB?”... or

“What’s My Role Now?”

By Judi Jerome, LICSW, LADC

There are so many roles that make up who I am that it makes my head spin. Clearly delineating what tasks go with which role, and then scheduling all of the tasks that must be done on a daily, weekly, monthly basis for each of these roles is an absolute necessity for effective time management. Unfortunately, my computer, specifically my email program, was not aware of what my scheduled tasks for today’s role were, and chose to hold me hostage with a techie somewhere out there in cyber-space for 5 hours while we configured and reconfigured (10 times) my email settings on my 3 business email accounts. (Or, maybe it knew and it thumbed its nose at me in order to give me something to write about this month.)

I want to identify these roles and the importance they play in Time Management, and how to be flexible and preserve one’s sanity when life throws us curves. I very precisely set up the past 4 days according to what needed to get done for each of the personal and professional roles in my life, and the most efficient way to do it all. ‘ALL’ being the impossible word here of course. Hopefully, my TIP at the end will give you a start on mapping out your own roles in order to schedule your time.

The following is a humble attempt to delineate a few of my roles: Judi, the woman (This is first, I call this my “core role”, the “just me inner person role”), family member, gardener, potter, friend, neighbor, professional, and of course a business owner which consists of many sub-roles (no, not the kind you eat with lots of meat and veggies on it): coach, therapist, writer, secretary, bookkeeper, marketing publicist, just to name a few. Today, I just want to talk about my role as a business owner because those were the tasks that went down the drain when my computer completed its email rampage of the past week.

By the way, just so you know that I am not exaggerating, I have been receiving duplicates of every email I have gotten for the past 10 days. I

reached my sanity limit today after spending 2 hours trying to resolve the problem myself and then emailed an absolute SAINT at SpamArrest.com® to ask for help. This man actually stuck with me from 1:30 to 6:30. I sure hope that his shift wasn't supposed to end at 5:00! Each time we thought we'd fixed it things would happen like; getting the doubles again, only getting some of the doubles, re-receiving a copy of every email that I have gotten for the past two months – once as singles dispersed throughout my inbox according to date, and once in duplicates all in a row, not getting any emails, not being able to send any emails and everything just plain freezing up and refusing to move at all. I mention the different scenarios because I had to spend my precious scheduled time to delete all of these extra emails over and over again.

So, now that you believe the crisis was truly real and why it took 7 hours out of my day, I will remind you that it impacted the long list of tasks that I had efficiently scheduled for those 7 hours plus the current time that I am spending writing this article that had to come spurting out at this moment in time – which if you were paying attention, is dinner time.

As a business owner I have three roles; Coach/Therapist, Administrator, and Promoter. There are many tasks that need to be done in each role and marking specific days and time periods on my schedule for each helps me to be organized and keep my time management skills intact.

As Coach and Therapist there are many tasks that must be done pre and post meeting with a client; reviewing/writing session notes, emails, phone calls, case management (phone and written) and various paperwork and reports. Also, in the Coach Role is the task of writing (and re-writing) my articles. As the Administrator/Manager I am responsible for managing the bookkeeping, billing, organizing, scheduling, and banking. And let's not forget all the shopping trips for office supplies, large scale copying, and the post office. Also in this role is the volunteer work that I do. In my Promoter role I come up with the ideas for the growth of my business. Marketing these ideas has many steps, from brainstorming, all the way through emailing or snail-mailing the 500 postcards I've just created. Then, of course, there are the ideas, growth, and upkeep of my website which is currently under construction for a major overhaul. (I am letting eclecTechs™ do the actual technical stuff and giving myself a break for a change). This then spills over to the Manager role because I need to: communicate my creative ideas and needs, develop the specific information that they ask me for, make sure that it is delivered on time, and oversee that the results are reflecting my creative vision and practical needs.

As can be seen, each roll impacts on my scheduling and creates time-management issues. Just when I think I have it all down, a "bug" seems to creep into the system.

So ... What Can You Learn from All of This?

The answer: Lots about yourself and your time-management needs... Start by identifying and writing down all of the roles that make up your identity. Don't forget the "just me". Once the different roles are written down, make a list of all of the tasks that have to be done for each of the roles. For accurate VS estimated time management, it helps to time each of these tasks and keep a log book. It needs to be decided which roles have to be in action on specific days and times. While at work there are staff meetings, returning calls and emails time, open VS closed door time, reading/answering mail, break times, etc. Then there are personal activities that have pre-determined time slots such as car-pooling the kids, meal time, religious services, and other 'givens'. Work and home, the 'givens' all need to be classified into which role and put into the calendar/appointment book first. Then, the rest of the roles and their tasks need to be plugged into the calendar around/along with those "have-to's". Speaking of have-to's, don't forget to be creative with discovering alternative ideas for carpooling, play-dates, and other 'pre-defined' time consuming - day interrupting necessities. Consistency in keeping with those determined days/slots is important! If Friday morning is the Administrator Role and you do your billing, saying NO to a doctor's appointment next month for that time slot is something that truly CAN be done, just say NO. Flexibility: It is Thursday and your toothache is beyond bearable and the dentist can fit you in Friday morning. You say YES and immediately sit down to determine where else you can fit the billing into your schedule. The reason that there is somewhere else to fit your billing in (or my bookkeeping work on "black email day of '06") is because you are giving yourself SPACE, scheduling free time for each day and week to absorb the tasks that were taken up by unforeseeable happenings. If you are lucky enough to not have any chaos thrown into your week, you have 'down time' to just vegetate, extra meditation, exercise time, or anything your heart desires!

and a confession...

A large part of my next Sunday off disappeared into the beautiful sunset. On my behalf I will say that 7 hours is a lot of time to reschedule. That said, the 2 hours that I tried to fix the problem myself was a hyper-focusing nightmare and therefore a waste of my pre-scheduled time. After the first 15-20 minutes, when there were no results, I needed to STOP and ask for help. The asking for help needed to be done during a scheduled free time, NOT during my Administrative duties time. That was the moment that I needed to take a deep breath and close my eyes for 5 minutes to regain my patience. After all of the experience that I've had over the years on the phone with computer support techies, I know better than to think that there is such a thing as a 'quick solution'. I jumped right into it. The moral of the story is: **mindfulness does matter.**