



PRODUCTIVITY

Your Personal Guide to a Productive Work Week

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PRODUCTIVE?

What is this “productivity” you speak of?

Employee Productivity aka “workforce productivity” is how workers are assessed as to their efficiency in the performance of their jobs. It is a particularly important consideration for organizations as most of the organization’s success relies directly upon the productivity of its workforce.

How this is evaluated will depend upon the job requirements and industry, but generally it will be based on the output of the employee within a specified period of time. Often times, a worker’s productivity will be evaluated based on a related average of employees performing similar work.

Simply put, productiveness increases the overall efficiency of an organization. Typically, this will reflect that all resources are being utilized to their optimum performance levels. In an organization, increases in product output will result in lower overhead and in turn provides a higher profit. Conversely, when productivity is overlooked, the result will be seen in higher costs for production and reduced sales and profits.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PROFIT?

Focusing on productivity rather than solely on profits and revenues will often times result in a more successful company. The importance of this can never be ignored by the owner of an organization. While the main goal of the organization is profit, productiveness reaches further than profits. If tasks are being completed as efficiently as possible, payroll will decrease, employee morale increases, and customers will be attracted to the impression that your company is well-run.

Where do we start in establishing our organizations productivity though? The first place to look is right under your nose.

What Your Desk Says About Your State Of Mind

We all want to feel like we have everything together - that we know what our goals (both personal and work) are at all times, and that we are on task to completing or reaching them. Many of us use to-do lists, project management software, and other organizational applications to help keep us on track. But how many of us organize our desks, cars, offices, etc., like we do our task lists?

I was reading *EntreLeadership* by Dave Ramsey recently and he spoke about this topic. He says, “Your physical desktop represents the organizational condition of your mind and maybe even indicates the organizational condition of your whole company.” After I read this, I got up from where I was sitting and walked over to my desk. The image was quite terrifying.

I asked myself how I had let it get to this. Every day in our work lives we are inundated by incoming projects and tasks, and if we are not good at delegating and organizing it can be overwhelming, and we lose control of our workspace.

I realized at that moment that the state of my desk represented the organizational condition of my mind. I was running to tasks and projects in a reactive manner, instead of being intentional about my processes and long-term project goal completion.

There are certain things I need at my desk. My computer, my headphones for calls, and a pad and paper.

I certainly did not need a hat, 10 magazines, a stack of bills, car keys, a pocket knife, a Starbucks napkin, a JBL bluetooth speaker, a kitchen towel, the Zappos Culture Book, Dial Hand Sanitizer, my Comcast Xfinity welcome packet, a remote control, and four books.

I immediately decided to clean up. It was amazing how quickly transforming my desk in an organized manner translated to my mind's organizational state of being.

Just having a clean and detailed workspace helped me think more clearly. It made me FEEL more organized.

So the big question now is how do I maintain this going forward? We all know the to-do list is going to pile up on us again. I try to take the following actions to avoid going back to that state of disorganization:

- For five minutes at the end of each day, I organize my desk.
- No dishes or wrappers left overnight, ever.
- Only ESSENTIAL items are allowed to stay on the desk.
- Keep my Moleskine there at all times, easily accessible.
- Use the trash can/recycling bin.
- Keep it simple.
- Put away everything when you are done using it.
- Use a whiteboard.
- Delegate!

Phew! Now that some of the housecleaning is out of the way, let's see where else you might be wasting time.

How You're Wasting 70 Percent Of Your Day

If you're a leader in your organization, there's a pretty good chance that you're spending the majority of your day on activities that are less than the best use of your time.

That's what venture capitalist (and former CEO of three companies) Bill Trenchard shared with *Inc.* magazine in [this article](#). His work with dozens of CEOs showed that a full 70 percent of their time was spent on what he called "sub-optimal" activities. But he did find a few superstar time managers among his coaching clients, and found that those leaders did the same things consistently. We've seen these same techniques used, in combination with the services of a virtual executive assistant, to completely change the way leaders spend their days and set their organizations on a path for increased productivity and results.

What do these leaders do?

- **They use email templates.** Turning over your email, at least in part, to a virtual assistant will free up huge amounts of time in your day, without sacrificing timely responses. Work with your virtual assistant to figure out the most common requests you're getting via email, and craft email templates your assistant can send on your behalf. Some of the most important responses will be the ones that decline a request for your time and involvement in something that isn't the best use of your resources. A well-worded response in an email template, and an in-depth discussion with your virtual assistant about what requests you want to accept, will keep you from spending hours involved in a project that you didn't really need to be part of in the first place.

- **They have an email management strategy.** Leaders who optimize their workdays have a strategy for managing their email (hint: it's not monitoring email all day, every day - that's a recipe for constant distraction). Effective leaders batch their email and check their inboxes two to four times a day, and leaders who've handed off their email management to an assistant report that it's revolutionized their workdays.
- **They write playbooks.** Leaders shouldn't spend their time writing step-by-step instructional manuals, but if there's an activity you find yourself doing more than three times, and it's not something that only you can do (like strategic planning, business development, and the like), then someone else should do it. Spend some time documenting how you do those things and hand that document - and the responsibility for results - off to someone else.

Now, take a deep breath because this next topic will go against your instincts. We're going to discuss some of the dangers of multitasking. Breathe ... just breathe.

What exactly is keeping you from being productive?

DANGERS OF MULTITASKING

Uh, um, excuse me. Danger? Multitasking? Isn't that what we've been told to do to be more productive, to be more efficient? Not so fast! Multitasking may cause more harm than good -- if you are bad at it.

Multitasking requires focus. Huh? How's that? Well, multitasking requires the ability to focus on the execution of many things, processing ideas and conflicts that arise during the execution of task(s). Task(s) as in plural. This can only be accomplished with solid time management skills.

Think I am a nerd on this subject? Consider these statements from **David Meyer**, University of Michigan, Director of the **Brain, Cognition, & Action Library** in the realm of cognitive science:

- "You can't do two cognitively complicated tasks at once."
- "Multitasking is ... very often highly inefficient and could be dangerous to your health."
- "Even the most adept multi-tasker will crash and burn trying to resolve simultaneous conflicting demands."
- "Too much access to the cerebral grid shuts down critical thinking." Eg ... Driving while talking on the cell phone or texting.
- "The conflicts triggered by incessant multitasking can set off chronic stress and slow you down."
- "If you're disciplined enough, you can map out the usage of your time in a way that minimizes your exposure to interruptions."

WHAT SHOULD BE ON YOUR ZERO TOLERANCE LIST

What are the things you need to **stop doing** so you can devote more **time** and focus to things you really want to focus on? Here's a possible list:

- Twitter
- Hootsuite
- Facebook
- Instant Messaging
- Groupon
- Texting
- Netflix
- StumbleUpon
- Angry Birds

- Candy Crush
- Solitaire
- Instantaneous email replies
- Reading/watching news sites
- Co-workers you like to chat with
- Magazines
- YouTube
- Badges or notifications on your phone

It's easy to lose yourself and your daily momentum with things that take you off focus. Those "things" should be in your crosshairs for your Zero Tolerance List. So now that you know some of the things you should stop doing, let's move right along to how you can accomplish more.

5 Steps To Start Getting Stuff Done

Leaders in companies of every size, shape, and approach can benefit from what I am about to tell you...

If you want to complete a project, bang out a task you've been putting off, or just see-through a lot of work in a relatively short period of time, there's an easy way.

Here's how to knock stuff off FAST!

- **Decide how long you will work.** Don't plan based on, "I'll work as long as I can," or "I'll work as long as I feel productive." Set a specific target. Carve time out on your schedule to do your Action Items -- and stick to your schedule.
- **Tell everyone your plan.** Be clear to everyone what you are up to. Interruptions are productivity killers. People important to you know what you intend to accomplish and will know (and feel) if you don't succeed.
- **Start really early.** Have you ever taken a long car trip for a vacation and left really early in the morning? Like at 2AM or 3AM? Those first few hours on the road fly by because you've stepped outside your norm. It works with work stuff too. Don't believe me? Try it.
- **Take productive breaks, not rest breaks.** Momentum is everything. Don't take a walk, or watch a little TV, or goof around on the Internet. You will need breaks, but breaks should not compete with your desire to keep going until the job is done.
- **Don't quit until you're done ... even if finishing takes longer than expected.** Stopping short is habit-forming. **Start finishing and stop starting. Get stuff done.** People are watching you in more ways that you realize. *There's a significant difference between a "starter" and a "executor."*

The leaders I know find ways to get stuff done. Stuff of all sorts. I use these tips above in my work and, trust me -- they work!

When you are getting stuff done: Practical Tips To Save Your Time

At **BELAY**, we work with organizations of all sizes across the US and Canada and see many leaders who could be better at time management. As we onboard our executive virtual assistants with leaders, we discover a lot of interesting habits and decisions that waste their time and kill their productivity. Here are four tips we've discovered to help leaders save valuable time:

- **Invest the extra time up front to train someone else to help you.** It is always faster to do something yourself than to teach someone else to do it; however, if you take 30 minutes up front to train someone how to do something that you do in 15 minutes every week, in just two weeks you've made up that time. It is worth the long-term time savings.
- **Don't be afraid to ask.** If someone is hired to assist you, they want to be able to help. They will not tell you that you are crazy for asking for help making dinner reservations, researching flight options, or typing notes from a meeting. If it will free you up to do what only you can do, they are happy to help.
- **Set proper expectations.** The more information you give on the front end, the more likely someone else can just 'run with it' going forward. When you ask for help with something, tell that person when you need it by, where it falls in the list of priorities, who needs to receive the completed project, etc., to make sure you've set them up to deliver.
- **Look for ways to automate.** Save contacts, documents, notes, and any other key information electronically - especially if you think you will ever need to find it again. Set recurring appointments, use document management systems, use electronic task lists. Embrace the technology that is out there; it makes it easier for you to delegate tasks to someone else for completion.

Protecting your time is not rocket science. It is more about the willingness to let others help you. It is more about you trusting someone to come alongside you and help you protect your time as a leader. If you do these four things above, I can assure you your leadership capacity (and RESULTS) will increase. Leaders, be a good example.

Protect your time!

We're saving you time, cleaning your space and crushing your beliefs about multitasking, but you're still with us. That's fantastic, but question. Are you the type of person who feels it's easier and faster to do things yourself? Let's discuss delegation ...

I Know I Need To Delegate: Should I Outsource or Do It Myself?

DIY or DFY

At some point in time, when a leader is excelling they come to a place where the idea of getting something done comes to an intersection. The road of "doing it myself" hits up against the intersection of "I'm out of time and I am prioritizing all that I can."

As you stop at the intersection long enough to think, you see two roads:

Road 1: DIY - Do It Yourself (aka - protect your money)

OR ...

Road 2: DFY - Done For You (aka - protect your time)

What is it gonna be? Protect your time or protect your money? Many high capacity leaders can just task away without needing help. They blow through tasks, and they think - "It would take me longer to teach than just to do it myself." The fallacy in this notion is that when you sum up the time of the task(s) over an extended period of time, it ends up being WAY more time than it would take to train someone qualified to do it for you. Having someone help you do things, execute tasks, and get a job done is not a luxury. It is just plain smart. Chances are, they can do the job better than you, quicker than you, and better than you have done it all along. Your pride (not your budget) prevents you from yielding up tasks so you can focus on only what you can do.

Becoming A Good Delegater Doesn't Happen Over Night

Particularly for Type-A leaders and contributors, delegation involves more than just shifting work away from oneself and unto others. For this reason and others, it's important to approach delegation as an ongoing exercise.

Even when all the items on your to-do list are checked off, or after they've been dispensed into other capable hands, there are always more tasks to learn, adopt, and test delegating.

That's why we've compiled this list of solid delegation resources. From top bloggers to well-known business journals, surely there's something here for you. Happy delegating!

Delegation Resources:

- **The Art of Manliness:** As a "blog dedicated to uncovering the lost art of being a man," The Art of Manliness might seem like an unlikely source to get advice about delegation. But it turns out that Brett McKay has much to say to men (and any reader, really) about "growing up well"—and part of that requires utilizing one's strengths and resources to meet the dimensions of business, love, parenting and creativity well. Inspired by his grandfather's inimitable ability of navigate life and its many facets, McKay and his team of writers tackle topics like personal development, wellness, relationships, finances and, yes, **delegation**.
- **Art Rainer:** Art Rainer's goal is to help people in "managing God's resources at home and work." To be successful in blending both spheres of life, delegation is clearly part of the plan. Art tackles topics like "**Why Young Leaders Struggle with Delegation,**" among other **delegation-related posts**. By day, Art is the VP of Institutional Advancement at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, perhaps making him a suitable source to broach this subject and others—such as leadership, communications, ministry and personal growth.
- **EntreLeadership:** Focused on "helping owners of an organization become better leaders," EntreLeadership helps people blend entrepreneurship with leadership. Through podcasts, events, coaching and its blog, visitors will find plentiful sources and guidance about navigating operations while fostering headship. Delegation is clearly a top topic among this audience, bringing up more than 500 search results.
- **Entrepreneurial Marketing System (EOS ®):** This operational philosophy simplifies organization performance and was crafted expressly with owners in mind. EOS is part model, part process and part toolkit—together forming an interconnected approach to boosting organizational vision, traction and health.

- **Getting Things Done ®**: Inspired by David Allen's book **Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity**, the GTD site crystallizes some of the same concepts associated with the work-life methodology and management system. In particular, Allen seeks to bridge the busyness of daily life with the promise of becoming more productive and stress-free in spite of it.
- **Harvard Business Review**: A standard-bearer in the world of business, HBR is the go-to source of entrepreneurs, executives and professionals. Not to be outdone by other industry periodicals, the Harvard Business Review offers a wealth of articles about timeless and trending business topics, including **delegation**.
- **Intuit QuickBooks**: You probably know this brand for their popular bookkeeping and accounting software, but did you know that Intuit offers a wellspring of information about business topics? The QuickBooks Resource Center features all sorts of articles, guides, tools, and videos about every topic that a new, aspiring or established entrepreneur needs—such as operations, technology, taxes, current events, HR, and more. A search for “delegation” brings up a wealth of content about how to scale your organization, make the most of limited time, and enjoy life.
- **Michael Hyatt**: This former BELAY client, bestselling author, and “virtual mentor” is a highly sourced thought leader in issues of faith, personal achievement, and business. These days, his core focus is to help “high achievers . . . get the clarity, confidence and tools [needed] to win at work and succeed at life.” Perhaps as expected, a big part of this success revolves around the topic of **delegation** and related themes like productivity, efficiency and time management.

We've thrown a lot of information at you, but you're doing AWESOME! You've cleared your desk, learned some tasks to save you time, and gotten some great resources to help you delegate. Thing is, tools can help you be more productive with your teams, also.

5 Essential Collaboration Tools

Research has shown that virtual teams are just as, if not more, productive than their in-office counterparts. But that wouldn't be the case without the slew of novel technologies developed to support them. The old saying that “A man is only as good as his tools” holds especially true when applied to remote teams. Without the right virtual collaboration tools to help your team connect, your remote organization won't thrive.

So, here's a list of our top 5 virtual collaboration tools for remote teams:

- **Zoom** – There's no replacement for face-to-face interaction. But video conferencing applications like Zoom are allowing virtual teams to maintain intimacy from anywhere on Earth. Zoom also allows meeting participants to share presentations, screens, and other content in real time.
- **Google Docs** – There's a ton of document collaboration tools out there, but Google Docs remains the gold standard. It's a streamlined, no-nonsense platform which allows team members to work on a document together from anywhere on Earth. Docs also provides ample cloud space in Google Drive to share and exchange files. And did we mention it's free?
- **Slack** – Depending on the needs of your organization, quick instant-messaging applications like Slack may be essential. Not every interaction requires a phone call, video conference, or e-mail. For all those minor exchanges of information, Slack works wonders. Users can create a group chat for the whole organization, plus individual “channels” for specific departments or teams. Slack also comes with an added bonus – users can now start a **Zoom** meeting straight from their Slack channel with the /zoom command.

- **Basecamp** – Basecamp aims to be your company's virtual HQ. It's a platform that gives you a single, authoritative location to house all your projects and communications. Leaders can assign work to specific team members, and manage individual project teams and departments in an organized manner. Company-wide productivity features like **automatic check-ins** are also excellent ways to keep virtual teams engaged.
- **Dropbox** – Think of Dropbox as a giant, virtual file cabinet. Team members can upload files easily and grant access to their coworkers. As soon as a file is edited, everyone will have access to the updated copy, saving tons of time and confusion from messy email chains and attachments. Dropbox also provides you with data backup, to help ward against loss. You'll get 2GB of storage space for free to start, and can expand on that for a monthly subscription as your needs grow.

There are hundreds of websites, platforms, and applications designed to help virtual teams connect and collaborate. We couldn't possibly cover all the ones we think are worthwhile, but these 5 are a great place to get started. Another thing to keep in mind is that which tools are right for you will depend on your organization's unique needs. For tech-related companies, for example, coding collaboration applications like **GitHub** are indispensable.

But whatever your organization may be, it is bound to benefit from some form of virtual collaboration tool. Remember, don't work harder when you can work smarter!

Once you hire a virtual assistant, you'll never go back! They're time tested and mother approved. We would be remiss, however, if we didn't point out that all of these changes we're proposing might impact your company culture. So how exactly do you delegate and be more productive without messing up the status quo you have going on in the office?

How To Keep Company Culture Healthy While Increasing Productivity?

GROWING IN A HEALTHY WAY – COMPANY CULTURE

If you are finding that there's more work to do than there are hours in the day, it might be time to increase your headcount. It's normal to feel apprehensive when you've grown faster than you anticipated or to feel unprepared for what managing a staff might be like. We want to help alleviate some of your concerns by giving you a few tips for how the landscape has changed in the workplace.

DID SOMEONE SAY TPS REPORTS?

Building your organization from an idea you came up with in the middle of the night, to an actual operating long-term success is no easy task. While growth is always the goal, growing too quickly can lead to your inability to keep up with employee needs, but grow too slowly and you might not make payroll.

Today's work environment is substantially different than it was a mere 10 years ago. Benefits such as in-house daycare, paid paternity leave, flex-time, working remotely, and hired contractors are the new landscape. Gone are the days when an employee clocked in at 9 am and clocked out at 5 pm. We've become a society where people's jobs often bleed over into their personal lives.

Remember the office set from the movie "Office Space", where rows of workers are typing away and sitting at their desks the entire day? Totally a thing of the past now. Today, if a worker is physically at their desk even 50% of the day, that's unusual. **Productivity no longer needs to be measured by how long you sat at your desk, it's really just focusing on the results being obtained.**

TECH FOR THE WIN

Technology has opened up opportunities for organizations to truly show how much they value and respect their employee's needs.

Experts have seen impressive increases in productivity when workers are given flex-time and remote access. According to a ConnectSolutions Study, "77 percent of remote workers get more done in fewer hours thanks to fewer distractions like meetings, conversations, and noisy coworkers." It allows employees to work at the times they are most productive and in an environment they are comfortable with. Individual or team check-ins can be done with the latest video, phone, or messaging technology and apps. Given the chance to meet the needs of their life outside of the office, most employees become even more vested in the company that places such value on their personal needs. This is, however, contingent upon the individual, their personal discipline, and the policies stipulated by the employer.

Additionally, it cuts expenses for the employer who has remote workers. People working from home do not require employers to pay for office space, equipment, heating/cooling, electricity and certain types of insurance. "According to Global Workplace Analytics, **employers can actually save over \$11,000 per half-time telecommuter per year**, which is a lot of money when you think about all 3.7 million employees who currently work from home at least half the time." Sick and personal time off decreases as well. These studies seem to show that while the productivity argument can be manipulated, the decrease in overall expenses to the employer are without dispute. **By giving employees the freedom to work remotely, productivity increases, expenses decrease and you'll have a much healthier team to work with.**

IT'S NOT FLYING CARS, BUT THIS IS THE NEW REALITY

As you are beginning to grow in numbers, approach your plans for scaling your workforce by thinking of what you want your culture to be five years down the road. Be very careful to not get stuck in the past with how you approach your employees and their needs. Stay on top of the new trends in business models, technology, and employee benefits. Do your best to bring new employees into the conversation and you will be rewarded with reminders of why you hired these amazing people to begin with. A team that works and plays well together is the most profitable asset available to you.

How Can A Virtual Specialist Help Me Be More Productive

Many of our clients here at BELAY come to us because their organizations have outgrown their available time. These leaders are finding themselves buried under all the details that go along with a successful venture, and are in danger of drowning in those details. Fortunately, that's exactly why BELAY is here!

Here are some ways our BELAY Virtual Specialist can help you manage your time more effectively:

A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT CAN:

Protect your calendar

With a BELAY Virtual Assistant, you no longer have to be the bad guy when it comes to saying “no” to appointments you really don’t have time for. By working with your assistant to establish what times are reserved for which projects, you’ll accomplish that much more. Your assistant can handle all the back-and-forth of scheduling necessary appointments, and help you remember that you’ve committed to that t-ball game/soccer clinic/violin lesson/date night at a time when someone else might want to schedule a meeting.

Manage your network

Many of our BELAY Virtual Assistants are tremendously skilled in the ways of social media, and can help you take advantage of all the development opportunities available through those platforms. Curating an active social media presence takes a lot of time, and you likely didn’t set out in your organization venture to learn about which Twitter scheduling tool is the best. But our assistants did, and they can jump right into your social media profiles to help you maximize them and build your network, while you do what only you can do.

Push projects forward

Rather than spending hours of your week following up on vendors, contractors, and unpaid invoices - have your BELAY Virtual Assistant do that for you. Your assistant can keep your projects moving toward deadlines, and do all the time-consuming follow-up with everyone involved so you can focus on your portion of the project. BELAY Virtual Assistants can solicit proposals, send out post-project surveys, manage project-related expenses, and any other tasks that need to be done to successfully finish whatever projects you have in the works - while you’re focusing on brainstorming the next one.

Deal with the details

BELAY Assistants deal with thousands of details every day for our clients - seriously, thousands! Confirming flights/hotels/car rentals, scheduling dentist appointments, recording mileage expenses, making phone calls to potential vendors or customers, researching new productivity tools, transcribing meeting notes, posting social media updates, proofreading documents, writing documentation, creating PowerPoints, updating project software or task management applications, and the list goes on. If you ever catch yourself wondering, “Why am I doing this task?”, that’s a task a BELAY Virtual Assistant can do for you.

Organizations of all sizes – and at every tenure level – are at risk of making bookkeeping mistakes. Keeping the books and preventing blunders are a financial equalizer among organizations of all types. It’s just par for the course of doing business. But, do you have to be the one doing your book? No, a virtual bookkeeper can help keep you in the driver’s seat of your organization while they tackle the daily crunching of numbers.

A VIRTUAL BOOKKEEPER CAN:

Handle your Bank Reconciliations

BELAY Bookkeepers love numbers. They choose to spend their day deep in your books looking for any potential problem that might be lurking as they reconcile your various accounts.

Bookkeepers can serve as a strong spoke in the overall wheel of organizational financial accountability. They can initiate conversations about identified concerns, clarify and reinforce policies, help develop newer, better practices, and perform reviews of legacy data to spot gaps and opportunities.

Compile Tax Documents and Work with your CPA

Let's be honest, no one likes receiving a phone call from their CPA (sorry to any CPAs reading this). Their phone call usually ends with having to search for a missing document or receipt. Depending on how many times they find missing documents, you could spend more time than you should hunting paper. This is where having a dedicated bookkeeper can be a tremendous timesaver. Your bookkeeper will own this communication and provide any needed documents to your CPA in a timely fashion. Better yet - your bookkeeper will keep your books so organized your CPA doesn't find any missing documents. Bill Watkins (a client of ours) actually said his CPA asked where he found his bookkeeper!

Keep your Books in Tip-top Shape

Organization owners, new and veteran alike, may inadvertently blur the lines between personal and business finances. They blend expenses, pay bills out of both accounts and build a case for writing off a personal discretionary expenditure as a business deduction. Bookkeepers can help keep small businesses and entrepreneurs on target, on task and more accountable. Plus, bookkeepers can recommend apps and software to maximize and segment expense tracking.

Deal with the Details

Though bookkeepers are not necessarily tax preparers and aren't IRS-Certified Tax Preparers, through experience they may have developed an eye for applicable business deductions. These could include professional development classes, matched funds contributed to employees' retirement savings accounts, home offices, hardware, supplies, repairs and more. This is one area where their know-how as finance generalists brings added value.

We get it, you can't just take our word for it. We need to put our money where our mouth is. We're going to do exactly that! Once you're done reading this success story, we'll be ready and waiting for that call to get you set-up with your very own **BELAY** Virtual Assistant, Bookkeeper, and/or Website Specialist.

We Can Prove It

SUCCESS STORY – HOW PRODUCTIVITY LEADS TO SUCCESS

If you're seeking a prime example of BELAY's mission to "glorify God by providing solutions that equip clients with the confidence to climb higher," then look no further than Stanton Lanier. It may seem improbable that an award-winning, internationally known musician would have needed anyone's help to get better at what he'd already mastered . . . but then he hired a **BELAY Virtual Assistant**.

"My virtual assistant has encouraged me about the value I offer to people," the Marietta, GA-based pianist says. "It's led to some great concert opportunities. Having a comrade with you, standing with you, carries a lot of credibility."

That's what Stanton says now, but less than a couple of years ago, he was playing a different tune. Stanton, the "Pianist of Peace"™ and leader of Music to Light the World, a 501(c)(3) faith-based nonprofit that is the platform for his inspired instrumental music, had essentially been a one-man band until he teamed up with BELAY in early 2016.

"It's been a long journey – one day, month, and year at a time," he says.

For more than a decade, he and his wife, under the guidance of their Board of Directors, had primarily administered the many functions of their growing ministry. Stanton tended to creative production, event booking, and various operational concerns, while his wife provided expertise related to financial management, bookkeeping, and compliance on a part-time basis. Occasionally, they had volunteer help.

The couple proved successful, though pinched for time between their limited bandwidth and aspirational vision. Lanier had released nine albums and even vied for – and won – awards for which megastars like Enya and Yo-Yo Ma were nominees.

But eventually the former businessman – perhaps drawing from his financial planning, consulting and insurance industry background to get him this far – knew he needed help.

BECOMING AWARE OF BELAY

A fan and follower of Michael Hyatt, one day Stanton came across the bestselling author's endorsement of EAHelp, as BELAY's virtual assistant service line was previously known.

"I had a trust level with Michael Hyatt. His experience and professionalism spoke volumes," Lanier recalls of the bestselling author's testimonials about the benefits of having a VA.

So Stanton followed up, requested information and spoke with the company.

"In 2016, at the turn of the New Year, I had a really clear sense that it was time."

Two months later, in March, Stanton was a bona fide BELAY client and had his first-ever virtual assistant. The care and intention with which the company matches clients with talent made a major impression on Stanton. He credits the synergy he's achieved with his VA not only to her skill and diligence, but also to BELAY's client success consultants' expertise in pairing client needs with the background, competencies, and personality of the just-right support.

REAL RESULTS

Even as a songwriter, composer and performer, Stanton has achieved true bottom-line results by hiring a virtual assistant. His VA, Laura, works about 10 hours a week tending to the tasks and needs that used to account for way too much of Stanton's time.

She manages his booking calendar, engages with donors and customers, arranges meetings and appointments, researches performing and event opportunities, and helps to administer Stanton's social media accounts. Additionally, Stanton has a new rhythm to his work week. Laura has helped to bring new structure and parameters around each day, optimizing every hour with new focus and productivity.

"I have a weekly template," he explains. "Monday is for content. Tuesdays are for projects, Wednesday is studio time, Thursday is for booking, and Friday is when I have appointments and meetings. It's not a perfect science, but the strength of that structure has grown by having a VA. I had never spent a full day on music, on a regular basis, until I had a virtual assistant."

Plus, though Stanton is in Metro Atlanta and his virtual assistant is in Florida, there is absolutely nothing stereotypically “remote” about their interaction. They speak routinely, see each other regularly via videoconferencing and collaborate just as seamlessly – if not more so – than office-based colleagues.

“There’s a sense of connectedness and workflow on a continuous basis,” Stanton says.

THE DEAL WITH DELEGATION

Like many people who want to become more productive, efficient, agile and focused, Stanton vacillated about hiring a virtual assistant before finally making the commitment.

“The need was there for a while, and it got to a point where we needed to take that leap of faith and hire an assistant,” he says. “I needed to reach a place where I could spend more time writing more music instead of operating the ministry.”

Stanton admits that he’s “still growing, still evolving” as a delegator, but the long-term risks would have been greater had he not taken the plunge.

“We previously had volunteers who were willing to assist in various ways. We could pay them hourly in some cases. But all those experiences never had a sense of professionalism or matching – truly top-tier talent helping us,” Stanton details.

Keeping your company productive is no simple task, but hopefully, we’ve provided you with plenty of help on how to go about doing it. Remember, your company is made up of many moving pieces and neglecting any of them will impact the others. Implement some of the tips and tricks, keep an eye on your culture and let’s see if you see improvements in profits. You’ve got this, we have total faith in you! If you get stuck at any point, we’re always here for you. Productivity for the WIN!

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