

little while, and then I go out at night."

And yet for all his attempts at organization, it's a good thing Green is in the boxer shorts business. "When I get home and do my laundry tonight that's been sitting there for three weeks," he says, "then maybe I'll have a better idea about how organized I really am." At least he'll always have clean underwear.

OVERTIME MANAGEMENT

Successful time management means getting more done in less time, not working long overtime hours to accomplish what should have been done before sundown.



The typical office is filled with distractions—from water-coolers to gossiping co-workers to incoming phone calls. Unless you learn to work against these distractions, you'll never find enough hours in the standard work day to achieve your short- and long-term goals.

Below, *The American Express Real Life Planner* offers 10 pointers and short-cuts that will help you buy precious time and allow you to leave the office at a decent hour:

1. Use the phone. The travel time to a one-on-one meeting, for you or for your client, can get in the way of other work opportunities. A lengthy, uninterrupted phone call can often achieve the same results as an in-person meeting. (It's even a good idea to conduct in-house meetings over the phone, if appropriate. Sometimes, particularly in a big company, there is too much short-stopping between offices to make the short trip worthwhile.)

2. Train your secretary or assistant, to handle routine matters that don't require your attention. Your assistant should be able to screen phone calls, sort your mail, and handle some of your workload to free you for more important tasks. Don't be afraid to delegate responsibility.

3. Arrange for an uninterrupted block of time at least once a day. Sometimes a half-hour is enough time to think about what it is you have to do, rather than plunging right in and blindly going through the motions. Put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door if you have to.

4. Avoid "workday erosion" by setting hourly schedules for yourself. Eight hours can disappear quickly if you're not careful with your time, but if you establish 60-minute targets for certain projects, you'll be less likely to dawdle.

5. Put a limit on personal calls. It's okay to take or make quick calls to plan for dinners or functions, as long as they don't get in the way of your work or cause you to stay late.

6. Circulate an agenda before each meeting you chair, so that participants have ample time to gather their thoughts and notes beforehand. A poorly-planned meeting is a waste of everyone's time, not just yours.

7. Set realistic deadlines. If you have a choice, don't take on a project you know you can't finish on time. Instead, convince your boss or supervisor that the project will take more time than he or she expects, and get the deadline extended before you even begin.

8. Arrive early. You're likely to find your most productive office time is early in the morning, before your colleagues arrive and the phones start ringing. Many young professionals find they get more done in the hour before nine o'clock than they do in the three hours after quitting time.

9. Limit the number of trade publications you read. It's a good idea to pool time in this area with your co-workers, with each of you monitoring certain publications, photo copying and distributing to important articles to the others.

10. Leave the office. If the workplace becomes too hectic, and you can't concentrate on that report you have to draft, pick yourself up and leave. Work in the conference room, or in the office library, if there is one. When office distractions are not related to your own work, you can't let them keep you from your job.

Don't become a workaholic unless you have to, and don't let your boss or co-workers turn you into one by example. Of course, you should expect to have to stay all night now and then in times of crunch and crisis, but it's a dangerous habit to develop at other times. If your boss likes to

work late, make sure he or she understands and appreciates that you've handled more than your share of the workload during the standard workday. Some bosses will unreasonably demand that their support staff stay to work alongside them until all hours, but most will be glad to hear you're on top of things, and happy to learn you have a personal life to rush home to.

If your colleagues work late and make you feel guilty by comparison, make sure they understand you are not shirking your responsibilities for a night on the town. Tell them that you're up to date on your workload and that you value whatever free time you're able to muster. The work-late ethic is their problem, not yours, and it's often a tell-tale sign that the workaholic's job is too much for them to handle.



CASE IN POINT

You've probably heard the theme song from *Hawaii Five-O* on your college radio station recently. Or *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Chances are you've heard someone whistling the theme from *The Andy Griffith Show* on your way to class (or even in class). Everywhere you look and listen, it seems, you're hit with the blast-from-your-past theme songs from your favorite shows of yesteryear. Well, the man responsible for the tv theme song revival is Harvard Law School graduate Steven Gottlieb, and he has to switch speeds to 78 rpm if he hopes to get through the rest of the world's 33 rpm day.

Gottlieb, who launched his company TeeVee Toons, Inc. from his Manhattan apartment, has turned on his generation's thirst for nostalgia to build a thriving, multi-million dollar record and video production company. But for a while, during the development stages of his company's first effort—a two-album compilation of tv theme songs called, appropriately enough, *Television's Greatest Hits*—the enterprise looked like an episode of *Mission Impossible*.

"I'm terrible at organizing material," he says. "I have more little leather books and notepads than I know what to do with. And I love them, and every time I buy one I say, 'This is going to do it.' It's almost superstitious, that I think suddenly some material is going to impose order on my life,