

The Hunt for Buried Treasure

GROUP Magazine: Consultant's Column 2004 by Mark DeVries

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12)

What would you do if you found out that just beneath your backyard swing set was buried a treasure beyond your wildest imagination? If you're like me, you'd start digging.

I've got good news for you. You *are* sitting on a gold mine. But few have ever learned how to tap into it. The treasure I'm speaking of is that frustrating four-letter word: TIME.

I heard Dave Rahn of the Link Institute speak recently about research done by his organization that identified the greatest challenges facing professional youth workers. He shared the top five with our group:

When busy, I sacrifice my devotional time.

The job demands are more than time allows.

I feel the emotional strain of my work.

I regret not spending more time with youth who have dropped out.

I have too little time for myself.

Do you see the common theme? After thousands of youth workers were surveyed and the results were tabulated, the findings were clear. The greatest threat to long-term, satisfied youth workers (and to effective youth ministry) is not a lack of skills or creativity, but our inability to manage the competing, confusing, chaotic demands on our time.

I've always thought that the wrong kind of people teach time management. They tend to be folks who alphabetize their spices, who have in their DNA a natural proclivity for order. What we need is time management training created by an Attention Deficit Disordered, creatively chaotic youth minister (like many of us are). Here's what I might include in [The A.D.D. Youth Pastor's Guide to Mastering Time](#):

Post-It Notes Before Palm Pilots: I know guys who have all the latest time management gadgets but they can't seem to actually *do* the most important things first. If you can't get the strategic things done with a Daytimer, spending your hard earned cash for a Palm Pilot won't likely help much.

Blocks and Balconies: Start your week by identifying the major chunks of time you will need to do the most important things. Start with your Sabbath day, then three more blocks in the week when you will be uninterruptably at home. Then carve a 3-hour block to focus on “balcony time,” working only on things that *aren't* due this week. Fit your meetings, phone calls and to do lists around your core blocks of time.

Finish Before You Start: Unless you commit time at the beginning of each day to determine what your priorities will be, it is unlikely that you'll ever get to the most important stuff. Instead of letting other people's agendas decide your day's schedule, determine up front what you'll want to have done by the end of the day (and what you'll ignore guilt-free).

Ask the Experts: Once we commit to being time management treasure hunters, we'll discover that people in our lives who are extraordinary time managers. Find them, learn just one of their secrets and try it out.

Happy Hunting.

Mark DeVries is the CTH (Chief Treasure Hunter) for Youth Ministry Architects (www.YMArchitects), a coaching team dedicated to building deep-impact, sustainable youth ministries, one church at a time.