

Ask a Creativity Coach

It's Later Than You Think

by Romney Nesbitt

"Time is a created thing," Lao Tzu said centuries ago. Couldn't time also be a "creative" thing? Is time your ally or adversary? Changing the way you see time—literally—could make a difference in your ability to achieve your long term goals. A birds-eye view of time will give you a realistic picture of what's ahead.

Artists create over time—minutes, hours, days, months and years. Time is also invisible, elusive and it does funny things--it can get away from you, you can lose track of it, it flies when you're having fun and it can creep up on you.

Managing time in minutes, hours and days is pretty easy. Many of my coaching clients meet their daily and weekly commitments; it's the commitment months out into the future that are problematic. Even when a show date has been set months or even years in advance, the weeks, days and hours leading up to deadline twist into a barbed wire of sleepless nights and frayed nerves. A custom-designed career calendar can lower your stress levels and help you meet your deadlines with confidence (and sanity).

10 Easy Steps To Create A Career Calendar

Find a "flip the page" month-at-a-glance calendar. The best choice is one with big squares providing space for write-in information.

Make a copy of each month's page starting with the current month through the month in which you have your big deadline. Enlarge the standard size sheet for more visual impact.

Lay the individual calendar pages out on a table with the months in order from left to right and tape them together. Take a moment to "see" the expanse of time before you.

Reference your personal calendar and record important dates on your career calendar such as holidays, days when you'll be out of town, finals week or family events. Draw an "X" on the days that are already booked.

Count the remaining days. These are your "work" days—days when you can log in time on your creative project.

Write your "work" days total on your career calendar and circle it. For example, if you start your calendar on Labor Day, September 7 and you have a show opening on Saturday, December 5, 2009 you have approximately sixty days to get your work completed (minus

your "off" days).

Make this information more real by recording the numbers on each date working your way from the total number forward in time to D-Day which will be zero. (Think of this in the same way retailers calculate the number of shopping days until Christmas or students count the number of days until school's out.)

At this point check your pulse. You're either feeling encouraged by the number of days you have left to work or you're in shock. It all depends on how close or far away you are to your deadline. Either way, at least you know the facts.

Make a commitment to work at least twenty minutes a day on each of your "work" days. Some days you'll have a couple of hours. On busy days use twenty minutes to work on your mailing list or order frames. Working every day keeps you connected to your goal. Each day that you do some creative work, draw a star on that day as a tiny reward.

Look at your calendar daily to stay connected to your goal.

The career calendar works because it reminds you of the value of each and every day and it is visual proof that you've chosen to take charge of your time and career goals. People really do make time to do what's important. ■

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