



## Two Lists

### “We’ve all felt it...

Life seems to be spinning out of control. There’s too much to do and not enough time to do it all. The desk is piled high with paperwork. There are too many unfinished and partially finished tasks, all weighing heavily on your mind. And no time to just sit and think, or to read or relax.

In the first place, it’s all about time and tasks and how you match them up: how you allocate time and what tasks you really should do and what you should have someone else do, *if they need to be done at all*. That sounds simple, I know. Unfortunately, in practice, it rarely is.

To start getting control of your life as an entrepreneur and the head of a business, you must recognize that there are certain things that you really are responsible for and that few, if any others, can do. **Those things (and believe me, there are very few of them) are what you really get paid for and that must be on your ‘need to do’ list.** Then, there are other things in the business that you want to be involved with because you enjoy them. They, too, go on the first list. But with these (the things you enjoy doing) you should be selective because if you spend too much time on them, they prevent you from doing those ‘need to do’ tasks.

**Remember, your job is simple: it’s to make your company successful.** It’s not to be spent frittering away your time on things that really aren’t critical to that mission or on things that really can be done just as well by others.”

*The above is an excerpt from Jack Miller’s book Simply Success.*

A few years ago I interviewed Jack Miller, former CEO of Quill Corporation, an office supplies store that he started from nothing and later sold to Staples for \$685 million. Jack started the business in 1956 on a small loan of \$2,000 from his father-in-law. All he had at the time was a desk, a chair and two phones. His first office was in the back room of his father’s poultry shop on the north side of Chicago (in the interview, he joked about how he had to explain to prospects what the constant clucking sound was in the background).

With very little money and no connection, resources or experience in retail, he built his client base through old-fashioned prospecting to build the business. When he finally built a book of business where he could invest in marketing, he revolutionized his industry by mailing out product catalogs to clients, becoming the first mail-order company in the United States. Because of their aggressive marketing, the company’s revenues skyrocketed, amounting to \$180 million in the mid-1980s.

A few key things: First off, I hear a lot of small, start-up MSPs blame their inability to do marketing on a lack of funding. This is nothing more than an excuse, because MANY of the multibillion-dollar companies we now know were started by an entrepreneur hitting the street and *cold prospecting*, just like Jack Miller. Fred Smith. John Paul DeJoria. Richard



Branson. It's not ideal, but it's often necessary UNTIL you have sufficient funds to build marketing systems to make that unnecessary.

**Another excuse:** "I don't have time to do marketing." Again, a foolish excuse. You're *confused*. When you print "Owner" on your business card, your #1 job is to bring in new clients, opportunities, revenue streams – profitably - like it or not. That requires selling. Marketing. Talking to strangers and doing things you don't feel comfortable doing. *Cold prospecting* if you have no other means, staff, resources, lists, etc. So many people are looking for an easy way or a trick to getting clients when often you just have to venture out and sell something.

If you don't like it, you'll be far better off taking a job doing technical work so someone else can do that for you. There is no "lack of time." There is only a lack of motivation or a fear of asking people for money (selling). And if you are truly that busy, you ought to be making enough profit to hire staff to shed the lower-income-producing activities you're doing. If you have "no time" and you have no money, your business is severely flawed. Stop what you're doing IMMEDIATELY and hit the pause button. Take stock. Cut out all the clients, projects and activities you're doing that aren't profitable. START working diligently on activities that ARE. And stop *whining* about having no time or money.

When I read the above excerpt from Jack Miller's book, I stopped reading, opened up the document where I have my goals outlined and made two lists: 1) What are the most important things I must do to grow the business profitably (which is every CEO's #1 job), and 2) What should I stop doing, or be *delegating*. I strongly suggest you do the same—take an inventory of where you spend your time. I'll make you a bet that you're spending multiple hours a week on things that are of low importance or no importance, while telling yourself you have "no time" for marketing, growing the business and acquiring new clients.

That's not to say YOU need to do all the work in executing a marketing plan and prospecting and closing sales, but you certainly cannot abdicate the responsibility so you can go back to doing the things that come easy for you or that are enjoyable. Someone who only eats foods they find pleasurable is *fat* with high blood pressure and diabetes.