

STRUCTURE + BOUNDARIES = FREEDOM

by Joanne Victoria (joanne@joannevictoria.com)

No matter what the size of your business, you need to set boundaries and provide structure to your workday. You determine your schedule, not your clients or vendors. If you decide your day starts at 9:30 AM, then don't answer the phone or turn on the computer until then.

First, start the day with a good breakfast. It *is* the most important meal of the day and you should break-the-fast like a king or queen. Don't forget the protein. Take frequent breaks during the day to give your brain cells a rest. Furthermore, be sure you schedule in exercise for the body as well as relaxation for the brain. If possible, leave your office for lunch at least 3 work days per week. It's much too easy to work through lunch, eat at your desk and ignore your personal needs. Also, don't forget those evening meetings, be it networking or classes. You need to allow time during the day to leave work, whether home office or not, revitalize yourself, and be ready for these events.

If you work with others, learn to close your door or put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your cubicle. It's difficult to concentrate when constantly interrupted. If you allow full access to co-workers, clients or vendors, you may wind up being angry or over-reactive to minor infractions. As for the telephone, it works three ways: you can pick it up, hang it up or not touch it at all. Preferably, have voice mail or an answering service. An answering machine where you listen to incoming calls will only prove a distraction. Should I or shouldn't I answer that? OK, I'll pick it up. It's never as important as you think. If you are working on a project, decide to give it an hour of effort at a time. Then, you can check messages and decide the importance and urgency of these calls. You can also decide if you need more protein. Athletes are not the only people who require constant nourishment. Using your brain is just as exhausting, but has never been given sufficient credibility.

Another tip, don't get 'stuck' on-line. If part of your marketing is focused on the Web with e-mail newsletters or similar marketing tools, hire someone to do the updates for you. If you value your time and have set a dollar figure for Web-update time, you can see the wisdom in having a less expensive individual perform this function. Use an employee, independent contractor or virtual assistant. It's way too easy to sit in front of the computer and get lost when that time could be better spent writing or going for a walk.

Use mornings to complete all your detail work. The mind is refreshed and capable of high functioning. It's probably best to return phone calls in the afternoon, especially if they are non-urgent phone calls. Critical thinking is best done in the morning. Learn to delegate all your non-essential tasks. The more structure you have in your work, the more freedom you have.

As a last item, learn to say no. Say no to anything that does not fit into your annual plan and your goals. The purpose of creating your plan is to determine what you really want to do. If a request comes for a volunteer or paid situation that does not fit into your plan, just say no. Saying no is most difficult for people, especially if they are just discovering their boundaries. Remember, take care of yourself first!

Joanne Victoria offers both one-on-one coaching and MasterMind Group Coaching for continuing success. Joanne can be reached at joanne@joannevictoria.com or (415) 491-1344.

© 2001 Joanne Victoria, All rights reserved. You are free to reprint or repost this article, in whole or in part, as long as you include complete attribution. Please include the following information:
web: <http://joannevictoria.com> - e-mail: joanne@joannevictoria.com - telephone: (415) 491-1344

Once published, please send a hard copy to New Directions, 1001 Bridgeway Avenue #144, Sausalito, CA 94965, or e-mail the URL link to joanne@joannevictoria.com. Thank you!