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## **Work Smarter Not Harder**

By [Gail Zelitzky](#)

It's true. I have been accused of spouting clichés just like the title of this article.

Here are a few other favorites of mine:

Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan

Inch by Inch Life is a Cinch....Yard by Yard it's Hard

Everything in its Place....A Place for Everything

In my coaching practice I find there are two types of practitioners: visual and linear. One is not better than the other and many people are combinations of the two. Both types accomplish great things. They just get there differently.

This article is about visual entrepreneurs who, frequently, find that their vision gets all mixed up. They start out on a straight path – know where they are going – but, after traveling that same path for awhile they suddenly start doing S curves. They veer off target. Their days get all mixed up. So many things happen at once that each day now feels like one long crisis. For a while they hold things together. But, sooner or later, they need a life jacket to help them swim safely to calmer waters where they can relax and regain their vision and purpose. And, most importantly, direction. For these people it is putting systems in place that allows them to walk the high road.

For example, I coach the owners of one company that has grown quite substantially each year since inception. They do many things right and want to be sure they don't miss something that will trip them up in the future. They are a husband and wife team. He's the visual and she is the linear. She works at their business part-time, while holding down a full-time corporate job. They are about to have a baby so they are truly intent on taking the temperature of their business.

They have employees. Mr. X does a great job with the group of employees that closely matches his interests; however, he does a terrible job with the others. As we talk we see that there are no systems in place to set the employees up to succeed AND to make his job easier. As so often happens, employees hired in the early stages of a business become very much like part of the family. The owners become increasingly dependent on them as they become stretched in many different

directions. How hard is it to discipline a member of your family? How hard is it to fire a dear friend? And, this is the predicament many new businesses get into and, worst of all, can't figure out how to get off that track and onto a better one.

Enter the performance objective system. It starts with job descriptions – very detailed and precise (not so precise that it leaves no room for flexibility or the opportunity to create or add other duties). The goal is to help your employees truly understand their job responsibilities. Next come performance objectives – sitting down with the employee and setting parameters within which both the employee and the boss can measure performance. From there it is easy to have reviews. If the employee performs well both of them know exactly what to do. If the employee does not perform well, they still both know what that means and how to handle it. Think of the peace of mind this owner will have – no more struggling with how to handle a situation. The system is in place and you work it! It's easy and so stress-free. Entire books are written on this system.

Another productivity thief often lies in not developing systems to accurately bill clients. "What!" you say? "Billing is the lifeblood of my business. If I don't bill I don't have cash flow. I can't pay expenses or make payroll." Nobody doesn't bill! True? Sorry, false is the correct answer.

Many (lots) sole proprietors, especially visual types, fail to accurately keep track of their time as they do clients' work. They write notes all over the place, and then spend hours retrieving them to do the month's billing. They get so mixed up that often they do not charge as much as they should and so collect two-thirds or less in fees.

Here are two systems to eliminate all the hassle in billing for time: 1. QuickBooks – QB has a time/costs menu that enables you to run a clock while working for a client. If you are a coach, like me, you can do this two ways: Either set the clock when you start work for the client (remember to turn it off!) or, fill in the clock when you return to your desk. Do this as many times during the month as needed. To create invoices enter the client's name and a screen pops up that says "you have billing for this client". Retrieve the entries you made during the month, click a box and the invoice is automatically filled out. Thanks to Mary Lynch, CPA for helping this coach create a system that has worked beautifully for many years.

2. Manual – not everyone uses QuickBooks, so here is a fail-safe system to use with pen & paper. Create a 3-ring binder which you carry with you or leave on your desk. On a plain sheet of paper, list each of your clients and number the list. This is your Index and guide to the tabs so you don't have to worry about keeping names in alphabetical order. Then, using an accountant's green sheet with columns, create a single sheet for each client and put it behind the tab. Depending on the amount of work you do you can have a sheet for each month for each client, or use a single sheet with the months across the top and the items listed down the side. This is really easy because so much of your work probably repeats. As you are working, make notes on the client's individual sheet, noting date, work accomplished and time spent. When it is time to invoice all the information is neatly gathered on one sheet. Think of the time you will save not having to rummage through all of your notes. I recently gave this system to someone and she says it is so great I have to tell all of you about it.

Life is too short to waste it drowning in a lack of systems. Take the time to create ones that work for you and then delegate the task to someone else. True growth comes from continually replacing yourself. By working smarter, you will prosper and keep your sanity, too.

Gail P. Zelitzky is the founder and principal of Silver-Robins Consulting, a business performance coaching firm offering both individual and group coaching. Silver-Robins Consulting helps businesses grow by developing and implementing new sales, marketing and business strategies. The end result is greater revenue and profitability. Gail has 30 years of entrepreneurial experience that offers practical, no-nonsense solutions to the challenges faced by small business owners.

In addition to individual and group coaching, business owners can participate in a Business Performance Roundtable, a peer advisory group format facilitated by Silver-Robins consultants, where participants set realistic goals, focus on priorities and gain objective feedback on the business challenges they face. Only one client per industry may participate.

Silver-Robins Consulting also creates custom-tailored seminars to meet training objectives on sales & marketing, customer service, leadership and management.

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