



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Preferred Vendors Services Expanding!

If you haven't checked the Entrepreneurial Actuaries' (EA) Preferred Vendors site lately, now would be a great time to do so! Several new vendors have been added over the last month or so. These vendors can serve the interest of small business people and entrepreneurs. Some offer discounts to EA section members. To view a listing of vendors with a brief description of the services they offer, [click here](#).

January EA Section Webcast:*Influential Selling: Close***Time Management: Get People Out of Your Office and Back to Work!***by Sarah Woods*

You are busy. Your calendar is filled with meetings and conference calls, and then there are all those e-mails to cull through and a paperwork crunch due by the end of the day. Just when you thought things were slowing down, the pace picks back up. You miss lunch. You start your morning on top of your game, yet slowly throughout the day, time has a way of slipping away from you.

If you could only stay on schedule. It all seemed like it would work when it was put on your calendar. How is it that time seemed to accelerate during the day?

Busy leaders are expected to manage their people, their business and their time. But how? One way is to make a commitment to begin and end each calendar item when you said you would, period. Here are six tips to making that happen, consistently:

1. Set realistic expectations and time allotments for each meeting.

Allow enough time to accomplish your meeting goals, even if that means scheduling follow-up meetings. For example, you may find that you have a very simple plan to execute and so you've called a meeting to convey to your team how the project will be assigned. Before you know it, some team members have introduced a few variables you weren't aware of that turn your quick meeting into a lengthy negotiation of priorities. At this point, let your team know that you'll need to sort out the priorities offline and follow up with them at a future time and date.

2. Insist on agendas. Prior to any meeting, whether informal or formal, one-on-one or with a team, ask that the purpose and desired outcomes be established in advance, and that time be allocated to move through the agenda. When you solicit agenda items in advance, for example, from those planning to attend the meeting, make it clear what will be discussed, establishing a beginning and an end time for the meeting. This gives those attending the opportunity to add items and to request additional time or schedule a follow-up discussion, avoiding the scenario above. If the meeting topic requires brainstorming or creative collaboration, be sure to build in enough time on the agenda to do just that. Otherwise you'll risk missing the best ideas!

More Sales Even in the Most Challenging Markets Webinar

Jan. 29, 12:00 - 1:30 EST

Are you a consultant, business owner or sales professional looking to "close the deal," increase revenue and tired of prospects saying, "Let me think about it and get back to you?"

Are you an executive wanting to increase effectiveness during negotiations, bolster your influence with senior management or create a positive environment in hostile times?

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- Learn the one reason people change,
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- Discover the five levels of productive tension and how to identify which level your prospect is experiencing
- Learn the ideal flow of tension throughout the sales (or influencing) process and the most common mistakes people make to disrupt that flow

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Entrepreneurial Actuaries

3. **Define clear next actions during the meeting.** This will signal that the meeting or conversation is winding down and you are ready to wrap up. When a decision has been made, use that opportunity to identify the action steps around the decision, what the deliverables will be and when they need to be completed.
4. **Create ownership and accountability.** Establish who will carry the actions forward, and by when—and how this will be communicated to those who are involved. So often, we find that a meeting adjourns with everyone feeling great because issues were discussed and decisions were made. However, in many cases, the initiatives that were agreed to never quite get off the ground because no one actually owns the actions that will ensure implementation. This leads to more meetings and further unnecessary discussion. Assigning ownership to actions builds accountability and ensures that next steps get implemented.
5. **When the time allotted for the meeting is coming to an end, indicate that the conversation is closing,** by acknowledging what has been agreed to and thanking participants for attending. If you called the meeting, for example, it's up to you to close the meeting. Good leadership requires that you remain engaged during the time you are discussing your agenda, but also know when the time comes to finish the discussion and move to the next commitment on your calendar. Don't wait for participants to get up and leave. They're waiting for you to signal a close!
6. **If necessary, stand up and walk around your desk** (or conference table) toward participants while thanking them and saying, "Let me walk you out; I'm sure you have a busy day ahead." If you've allotted the right amount of time to a meeting, managed your agenda closely, created clear actions steps and assigned ownership, the rest of the time you spend will be about enhancing relationships. Give yourself the time to ask questions and listen actively, but be prepared to say, "I'd like to hear more" and "Let's find some time on the calendar soon to further discuss this."

Your effectiveness as a leader is reliant on your ability to prioritize your time and your energies, so your time should be spent on doing those things that ONLY you can do. Leave the rest to others. The more you protect your calendar, the more productive you, and everyone, will be.

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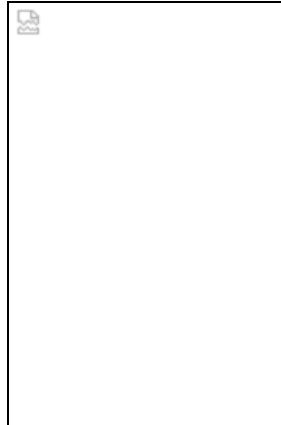
And review special offers for our members at our [Member Benefits](#) page, from vendors recommended by other EA Section members.

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