



CAREER

## 6 Clever Ways to Work Smarter

By Dawn Reiss, June 30, 2016



Working smarter, not harder, isn't a dream, it's a reality—especially for planners who have to budget time wisely. To maximize minutes, here are six clever ideas to consider adopting.

### 1. Set office hours on your cellphone.

When clients began calling during all hours of the day and night, Nosa Oyegun, an event planner based in Arlington, Texas, included office hours on her voicemail. "People started respecting my hours after listening to my voicemail several times," she says. "Prior to that I would get calls after 10 p.m. for an event that was several months away."

### 2. Use private Facebook subgroups to coordinate contractors for events.

To become more efficient with his planning, Tim Mack, founder and artistic director of Atlanta-based Imperial OPA Circus, created a private Facebook page for his core team of 50 to 60 artists to quickly ask who is available to perform for each event. "If they can do it, all the event info is laid out for them," Mack says. For larger one-off and monthly events, Mack also creates additional private Facebook pages where he invites all booked performing artists to join to keep the project information in one spot. "This reduces the amount of time I have to spend trying to coordinate everything," he says.

### 3. Schedule "fun time" to keep employees focused and engaged.

It may sound counterintuitive, but Bob Smith Sr., who runs a public relations and event planning company outside Rockford, Illinois, hires a comedian, entertainer or motivational speaker to come in once a month to his office of eight employees. Smith caters in lunch and spends about \$1,500 for someone to perform for 90 minutes during the middle of the week. "If we take ourselves too seriously all the time, employees will create outlets on their own," he says. "That's why I make it part of their workday."

#### **4. Fire everyone—even yourself—at the end of the year.**

At the end of each fiscal year, Oyegun fires everyone in her company, including contractors, an office assistant, a researcher who helps vet facilities and vendors, three event managers, her CPA, life and business coaches, and even herself. First, she re-evaluates her business' purpose, vision and focus, and then reviews what she and her team have done well and what can be improved. "I re-evaluate what each person brings to the table," she says. "Each individual must be productive and heading in the right direction [to be hired back]."

#### **5. Have a stand-up meeting.**

Paola Bowman, CMP, event sales and services manager at Fort Worth (Texas) CVB, says to expedite a meeting, stand around a conference table instead of sitting. She says this can quickly cut an hourlong meeting down to 30 minutes or less. "It keeps everyone focused and on time," she says.

#### **6. Assign response times to your emails.**

Every morning, Rindi Zavodsky, meetings and events manager for Travel Portland (Oregon), assigns her emails a response time of five, 15 or 30 minutes. She responds immediately to emails she can handle in five minutes or less, and creates a daily handwritten to-do list of the emails that will take 15 minutes to respond to. She schedules in her calendar time to answer emails that will take 30 or more minutes. "It forces you to do it if it's on your calendar," Zavodsky says.