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Top Time Tips #32

Open Plan Survey - startling results

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1. Open Plan - Love it or hate it?

When writing '[Getting a Grip on the Paper War](#)', which came out last September, I decided that my subjective opinion about open plan efficiency was not sufficient - that we needed some hard data. So, (and some of you were the kind respondents, thank you very much), I asked you, our ezine readers, three short questions about your preferred working style and how easily you are distracted by surrounding noise.

From 3867 ezine subscribers enrolled at the time, we had a 12.5% response rate, and that was without offering any delicious inducement, such as a trip to Fiji! I'd tapped a raw nerve!

If you want the best productivity out of your staff, you might want to consider the following results.

- Prefer open plan - 9.8%
- Prefer to work in a separate office, or away from others - 41.4%
- Depends what they're doing. Need quiet when they're concentrating - 41%
- Don't mind - can work in any situation - 4.9%

So am I saying open plan layouts are all bad? No. But I am saying that they need managing, if you're to have any hope of reasonable efficiency in this environment.

Obviously we can't go into huge depth in this ezine, or you'll be

cross with me for making it too long. In the book each of the following points are expanded, and other solutions are given.

In the meantime, here are some simple strategies to help.

1. Quiet rooms.

What room can you set up, with computer connections or terminals, so anyone needing a smattering of shush can book space there? No phones allowed, especially if shared by other seekers of peace. (Think of any large library, and the rules that make them such a great place to study.)

2. Headsets.

They can serve a dual purpose - not only do they block background noise, but they also send a visual signal that you don't want to be disturbed. Connect them to your own choice of music, either in your CD drive, or through a portable CD player.

3. Red time/green time.

How many folk come in early or stay late so they can get their 'real' work done without interruptions? Heaps.

Red time is a period of the day when no-one is allowed to interrupt you. Green time is when you will take interruptions, even though of course you're always busy. We've created a set of red and green flags so you can blu-tack the relevant flag to your work station or computer, thereby sending a silent visual message to anyone heading your way. More info at

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/TL007.html>

4. Shut the door (if you have one) for at least an hour a day, and allow no interruptions.

This is an extension of the red time/green time strategy. The ironic thing is, management theory has gone too far down the '*I must be there for my people*' philosophy, to the point that many managers feel as though all they do is everybody else's work instead of their own.

Result? They go home either exhausted from over-work and ridiculous hours, or frustrated because they got nothing done.

5. Work from home some of the time, or somewhere off-site. (We've even heard of people going to coffee shops for some peace and quiet).

6. Hot desks.

Becoming very fashionable with large firms in expensive CBD floor

space. People who spend a lot of time out of office, e.g. sales reps or consultants, don't need a fully dedicated office. Instead, they either bring their files and laptop with them whenever they need to be at the office, or some companies have roll-out desks which are folded up and parked in storage whilst the owner is offsite.

The mobile worker books space, which gives them a phone and computer connection, and when they leave the space is free for the next 'visitor'.

[Click here for more about 'Getting a Grip on the Paper War - Managing information in the modern office'](#).

2. Coming Events

We've got several events open to the public coming up around New Zealand over the next couple of months. Full details are at <http://www.gettingagripontime.com/training/events.html>

Places you'll find me in March and April - **Whakatane, Gisborne, Tauranga** and **Auckland**.

Consultancy Package

Since the launch of [Getting a Grip on the Paper War](#) last September, a lot of firms have asked for consulting help for their 'paper and time-challenged' staff. To meet the need we've worked out a simple package which returns huge value. If you think about it, one key person with poor paper and information-management skills can have a huge negative impact on a firm's cash-flow - and we can change their behaviour in a very short time.

There are three levels, which will fit most budgets, if you're serious about improvement.

If you'd like to know the details of the consultancy package, drop me a quick note - robyn@gettingagripontime.com

3. Are you as fit and healthy as you'd like? Or are you a stressed executive?

I've recently come across a great little private gym, for those readers in Auckland who'd like to do more for your health and wellbeing.

If you've let your fitness slip, or have high blood pressure or if you're not happy with your body composition or energy levels, you might

like to get in touch with personal trainer Sally Martin. She specializes in getting baby boomers back to optimal health.

Sally does a state-of-the-art computerised assessment of your current health position and then steers you in the right direction with an individualised exercise program to suit your needs / lifestyle /budget.

I'm having so much fun (and success) with her, I asked her to provide my subscribers a free no-obligation 30 minute trial of ideas at her home gym in Remuera. Why not grab your shorts and head over for a look at the facility and a relaxed chat about the services?

For more information check out her web site at www.hi-tech-health.co.nz or phone Sally on 9 578 2101 and arrange a chat and/or trial.

You love a bargain?

Check out

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/bargains.html>

And '**Getting a Grip on Life - Goals Toolkit**', the easy goal-setting, life-balance, appraisal and career planning tool that came out a few months ago, is also there for you - it's been burning holes in the postal system as orders fly in.

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/goals-toolkit.html>

4. From our readers - Daily energy peaks and troughs

From **Lesley Gillett**, author of '*Sleep your way to success*'

"Throughout the day you experience 6 to 8 peaks of energy, lasting 90 - 120 minutes each. These peaks are separated by 10-20 minute troughs of fatigue during which it is impossible to perform at your best. This rhythmical energy is so fundamental to your entire body and mind that it is called the human Basic Rest and Activity Cycle (BRAC). It's also known as the Ultradian Rhythm. Almost every biological process in your body/mind responds to this energetic mechanism, including:

- left-right brain dominance
- attention span
- concentration levels
- memory
- endocrine system
- digestion
- even your gene cell metabolism.

So, if you want to work smarter, not harder, start paying attention to the stress signals your BRAC sends you, and take some quality 'time out' several times each day."

Find out more about Lesley and her excellent book at

<http://www.tosc.com.au>

(If you'd like to ask questions, add inspirational thoughts or post your own Best Practice ideas, visit our [Discussion Board](#).)

Want more help with time tips and strategies? Check out the back issues of these [Top Time Tips](#) or the [Discussion Board](#).

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