

Hi, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI, where *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about how to plan more effectively. The idea for this vlog comes from the CEO briefing that I take every day. The author was Dan Bigman. When we do presentations around the country, we often ask the audience, "What's the thing that you have the least of in your life?" Among contractors, the universal answer is time, never enough time to do all the things you want and need to do.

So how do you get control over your time? Well, the first way is to stop doing some things. That makes sense. People never think about that. But the only way to get more control of your time is to stop doing some of the things that you're currently doing. It makes perfect sense. It's perfectly rational. But people continue to add more and more and more to their schedules and their calendars, and they never think, "Oh, I've just got to start saying no to stuff." It's the easiest way to get control.

The other way to get better control of your time is to plan better. Now, what about this is important to you? Well, if the universal answer among contractors, that they don't have enough time, then surely there's a way that you can do better and you can get control of your time and your schedule, and of course, your life, because your life is nothing more than the series of moments and minutes and hours that you put together each day, each week.

So how do you plan better? Stop doing some things and plan better. How do you plan better? First thing is start, right? Some of us have these dusty, moldy strategic plans that we put together seven or eight years ago, sitting up on a shelf in the office. Plan better, plan more frequently, plan more deeply. What's the thing Abraham Lincoln said? If he had a day to chop a cord of wood, he'd spend the first four hours sharpening his ax. Sharpen your ax. Plan better, think it through, be more strategic.

The second tip here is use paper. Now that is really anachronistic, isn't it? I mean, nobody... We all have computers and iPads and everything else. We're going to use paper. But professors at Columbia, Drexel, and Cal State tested paper planning versus phone planning, specifically the use of calendars. 50% of your brain cortex is devoted to processing sight. We are visual animals, and being able to visualize, in a big context, calendars and the paper component actually makes our plans more effective.

Two things here. The professors tested 450 people doing home improvement projects, and they also tested students for completion of classwork. They said that the people that used paper developed higher quality and more detailed plans, and they had three takeaways. First, the big picture counts. The people that used paper did better planning. But the phone people, the people that were using their phones and their iPads, when they had them use the bigger picture, the landscape view, their planning and execution actually improved. Again, we're visual animals.

The second thing, people that used paper and big picture got into more detail in their plans. And the third thing is people that used paper and the big picture were more likely to complete the activities. Implementation. If you don't implement, why go through the exercise? You've got to start things. You've got to execute things. And by gosh, you've got to finish them.

I would like to add any visual means works, not just calendars. Whiteboards, easel pads, colors, graphs, charts, graphing things, using sticky notes, different color sticky notes, anything visual helps us execute in our planning. So be as creative... You've got wonderful creative people on your team. People that are skilled in using graphics and doing presentations. Have them help you in your planning, not only to make the planning more fun, but to make it more effective, but especially to make sure that you implement the plans that you start.

What works for you? We'd like to hear in the comments. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, where *We Build Better Contractors*.