

Where you put your time is a political decision

A discussion and activity guide to
improve your team's political acumen

Based on cindy tonkin's article in **MPA**
MORTGAGE PROFESSIONAL AUSTRALIA



Seven Good Reasons to Document What You Do



Where you put your time is a political decision

Where you put your time is a political decision. Your time priorities reveal what's important to you.

Does where you spend your time reflect your personal priorities, the organisation's priorities or something else?

The E-Myth made common the expression "Work on your business, not in it". When you are busy doing business as usual, you can get sucked into doing what is most urgent, not what is most important.

This article, *Seven Good Reasons to Document What You Do*, is aimed at taking you outside of your normal process. It will take you "out of the business" for a little while. Once you are there you can evaluate and redesign where you put your time.

So read this article and do the exercises. If you do, you will find a little more time. Then when you have more time, you can start to improve, prioritise and be more effective at work.

As you read this article, consider whether your team needs coaching or training in being more politically astute: in managing their time, themselves and their clients more effectively.

This article was originally published in *Mortgage Professional Australia* in 2012

For your team

Chances are you downloaded this article because your team needs more political acumen.

On a separate page at the end of this article you will find a discussion and activity guide to work with them.

Of course you can also consider bringing a Political Acumen Consultant in to work through these.

Seven Good Reasons to Document What You Do

You're busy!

You know that you could do some things better, but it's often hard to know where to start, and what will give the best bang for buck. Documenting answers both those questions and more.

Here are 7 reasons to document what you do:

One: You do more than you think

Alex regularly got to the end of the day feeling like he'd achieved nothing. It seemed he lurched from one urgent important task to the next. He wrote down everything he did for just one day. He felt better when he saw that he had actually achieved something. That was before he even changed anything.

List your tasks and feel better too.

Two: You can Dump it

Alex showed his list to Kym at reception. She showed him her hand written list of client contacts, which duplicated the spreadsheet he kept. And that triplicated the main client database which Kym also maintained. They dumped both extra tasks and each saved 20 minutes a day.

List what you do, and work out what you can dump.

Three: You can Delegate it

After documenting for 2 weeks, Alex realised that almost half of his time was spent doing things an administrator could do for him. He delegated some of it to the receptionist, and out-tasked some more.

When you have 2 weeks' worth of data, you can begin to see the patterns of what you can delegate.

Four: You can Improve it

Now he had time to focus. It became clear to Alex that what mattered was lead generating and client follow up. First he chose to delegate parts of his client follow-up. He sat down with post-it notes and documented the client follow

up process with Kym. Between them they not only documented what Alex did, but they also added some steps designed to wow their clients.

When you take the time to document a process, you can see more clearly where it can improve.

Five: You can Teach it

Alex then mapped his lead-generating process with the whole team. He did it live, with post-it notes and coloured markers onto a large piece of brown paper. He not only told them what he did, step by step, but he could also explain why he did it like that. The team added their own ideas. With chips and some soft drink it was a team building activity and a team training. Afterwards people said they wished they'd recorded it on video to show new staff. Everyone had buy-in to the new lead generation process because it wasn't just Alex's any more.

You could document a process with your team, and teach them how they can help you (or replace you!).

Six: You can Release it

Alex let the team do things the way they had documented for a week or so. He says it was a little like when he taught his daughter to ride a bike: he needed to take his hands off and risk her falling. This part of the process was tough on him but it had an excellent payoff. He began to take days off here and there for conferences and events. A little long weekend here and there.

When you document and delegate, you can begin to release yourself from some responsibilities!

Seven: You get to Take a Holiday

When he knew that the team could look after his clients whenever he needed them to, Alex he took a nice relaxing holiday for 4 weeks in a row. He received no calls or emails from the office during that time.

Alex chose to take his holiday in Thailand. Where will you go?

Discussion points for your team

Chances are you downloaded this article because your team needs more political acumen.

To that end, here are some ways to use this article with your team.

1. Forward it to them or ask them to download it
2. Discuss it in your next work-in-progress meeting
3. Do some activities sparked by this article at your next offsite.

Here are some discussion points:

1. This article was written with independent business owners in mind. How is our business the same? How is our business different? What does this mean for us?
2. Where does your time go?
3. A lot of our time goes into meetings: if we were to step back for a moment, how could we make meetings more effective?

Here are some activities they can do in a meeting or offsite:

1. Do steps 1 and 2 from the article as preparation for the discussion. Categorise any meetings by purpose and attendees. Share the list with your peers with a view to delegating¹, dumping or redesigning activities.
2. Do steps 1 and 2 from the article as preparation for the discussion. What needs to be redesigned, what needs to be taught (to whom) and what can you let go of already? By when?
3. Before the meeting work with a colleague to map your biggest shared time-taker. How can it improve? Share your results at the meeting.

4. Download a trial version of either Rescue Time or Time Doctor for 2 weeks before the meeting. Share what it taught you about where your time goes, and how you can improve your time management. Buddy up with a colleague. Set yourselves a goal to save say 2 hours per week (in addition to the time you spend meeting to talk about it!). Coach each other through the 7 steps outlined in the article. Report back to the meeting.
5. Rewrite the article with your own workplace in mind. Distribute it for discussion at the meeting.

I'm really happy that you've joined my client list. If our styles mesh well, I would love to work with you and your team. There are systems, incentives and skills which will make working in an organisation more comfortable and joyful for you.

I can help you and your teams understand office politics. And if you want to play better, we can coach and train for fewer political injuries, quicker recovery and more fun while doing it. We have packages to suit individuals or teams and we are always keen to customize an intervention to make your culture smarter, more effective and happier. Please get in touch: cindytonkin.com/talk to talk about what your political challenges are. We'd love to help you out.

p.s. Most political problems aren't easily solved. Talk to me about identifying the real issues!

¹If you need assistance with **delegating**, I find Ken Blanchard's *One Minute Manager meets the Monkey* a quick to read, practical introduction.



About Cindy Tonkin

Cindy Tonkin is The **Consultants' Consultant**. She helps data science consulting teams work smarter, faster and "nicer".

Her background includes time as a consultant with Accenture and with KPMG as well as a boutique productivity improvement consultancy.

She is one of the best-educated Master Practitioner and NLP trainers operating in a business environment, with **Masters-level** academic qualifications in Linguistics from Paris, and a **First Class Honours** degree from Sydney University.

She also has practical, on-the-floor experience implementing **organisational change** from Chief Executive and Director to Supervisor level.

An internationally qualified NLP-trained trainer and presenter she combines an extroverted, energetic style with a strong understanding of what **makes people tick**. The results are fun, dynamic ways to make your team work.

Her solid background in **consulting and training** means her facilitation is not only about development, but about learning. She is also the author of 18 books for consultants and managers. Her first book, *The Australian Consultant's Guide*, was an Australian Institute of Management bestseller.

Cindy is a keen Theatresports® **improvised** comedy player, which means she can think on her feet and create magic from nothing. She plays on stage at inner city venues with some of the big names in Sydney Comedy. She is also an accomplished singer, and a mixed media artist.

In **25 years of running her own consultancy**, Cindy has worked on more than 130 assignments in clients with more than 70 different organisations. In this century 100% of her work has been repeat or referral business.

You can find out more information about Cindy at cindytonkin.com and consultantsconsultant.com.au

Tune into her podcast Smarter Data People at smarterdatapeople.com

www.cindytonkin.com