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# Tips to manage time more efficiently

Busy days tend to be productive days. But when especially busy days are strung together, adults can begin to feel a little overwhelmed and may wonder if there's anything they can do to make hectic schedules more manageable.

Time management strategies can be an effective tool in busy adults' arsenals. Efficient time management can free up more minutes or hours in the day, which can ultimately afford adults more time to exhale and thus make each day seem a little less overwhelming. Time management may require a little trial and error before adults find a formula that works for them, but the following are some tips to improve personal efficiency each day.

- Identify tasks that can be tackled at night. A hectic start to a morning can set a bad precedent for the rest of the day. With that in mind, adults can identify tasks they can perform at night to ensure mornings are less hectic. Lay out clothes the night before to save the trouble of finding an outfit in the morning. Prepare the family's lunches

and even breakfasts the night before so mornings go more smoothly.

- Exercise in the morning. A recent study from the World Health Organization published in the Lancet Global Health Journal found that 31 percent of adults don't get enough exercise. Lack of routine physical activity has been linked to a host of negative health outcomes, including an increased risk for conditions like heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and stroke. Adults who exercise at night may find that attempts to squeeze in early evening or nighttime workouts add to feelings of being overwhelmed brought on by busy schedules. Exercising in the morning can free up time for other tasks in the evening, and doing so can even make it easier to manage daily stress, as the Mayo Clinic reports that exercise in any form releases endorphins and helps to relieve stress.

- Minimize distractions. Distractions are arguably more prevalent than ever, as many adults feel every minute goes by without a smartphone notification and/or message

from friends, family and coworkers. Minimizing those distractions and resolving to tackle one task at a time can improve efficiency and reduce stress. Turn off smartphone notifications from apps that are not vital to work and family. During the workday, prioritize tasks each day and block off hours on your schedule so time can be devoted exclusively to the most important jobs. If hours on a schedule are left open, coworkers may schedule meetings that can make it difficult to complete necessary tasks.

- Adjust as necessary. Flexibility is a must when making an effort to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Each day presents its own



unique and fluid challenges, so remaining flexible can help busy adults overcome unforeseen obstacles. In addition, some time management strategies may not be effective for everyone nor useful every day, so it's best to recognize the need to adjust from time to time.

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# Tips to manage workday stress

Work-related stress is a significant issue for millions of professionals. Recent research from the management system experts at Moodle found that 66 percent of American employees are experiencing a form of burnout in 2025. Stress also is an issue for professionals working north of the United States border, as data from Gallup indicates 49 percent of Canadian workers report feeling daily work-related stress.

Stress is sometimes considered a good thing, and medical professionals even note that acute stress can help to sharpen focus and compel some to fulfill their full professional potential. However, the Mayo Clinic reports chronic stress has been linked to a host of serious health problems, including anxiety, depression, digestive issues, and heart disease.

The American Institute of Stress notes that work-related stress is a major stressor for professionals. Embracing strategies to manage work-related stress can help professionals reduce their risk for the serious health conditions that can be brought on by chronic stress.

• Monitor your stressors. The American Psy-



chological Association advises professionals to maintain a journal for a week or two in which they document situations that are triggering stress. When documenting stressors, also jot down your responses, feelings and details about the environment, including the people around you, when stress kicked in. Keeping a journal can help identify the sources of stress and determine if there are any patterns that trigger it.

• Embrace healthy responses to stress. The APA notes that exercise, yoga or any other form of physical activity are helpful and healthy responses to stress. Too often individuals lean into unhealthy responses, such as drinking alcohol and/or eating unhealthy foods

after a stressful workday. But the Cleveland Clinic notes that relying on alcohol as a coping mechanism for stress only exacerbates the feelings of depression and anxiety that stress can trigger.

• Establish boundaries between your professional and personal life. The APA notes that the digital era has led many professionals to feel pressured to be available around-the-clock. But work-life boundaries can be vital to combatting career-related stress. Turning off notifications from your work email account at the end of the workday can help to establish a work-life boundary. In addition, resist any temptation to check emails before going to bed, as doing so might trigger stress that makes it hard to fall asleep.

• Use your personal/vacation time. The 2024 Sorbet PTO (Paid Time Off) Report found that 62 percent of professionals did not use all of their PTO in 2023, which marked a 5 percent increase in unused PTO from the year prior. The APA notes that time off is linked to reduced stress as well as lower rates of heart disease, depression and anxiety. In addition, professionals may or may not be surprised to learn that time off has been linked to improved productivity.

Work is a significant source of stress for millions of professionals. Embracing healthy ways to combat work-related stress can benefit your personal and professional life.

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# Unlocking business growth: Lessons from inspiring leaders

(BPT) - By Sarah Acton, Chief Customer Officer, BILL

One of the most exciting aspects of my role as Chief Customer Officer at BILL is learning from our customers every day. There are always new lessons, especially in today's world of rapid change in consumer behavior, business practices and technology.

We recently hosted a group of customers to network and share their experiences regarding unlocking business growth with others. This topic proved compelling for our panelists and attendees alike, with many businesses facing some of the same challenges.

Entrepreneurs and leaders are powering through - finding ways to attract and retain customers and developing growth strategies that are working. I was particularly inspired by four pieces of advice that any organization can implement to win.

## Understanding your customer

SFJAZZ reminded me that knowing what your customers want, expect and are willing to pay for is music to any organization's ears.

Based in San Francisco and now in its 41st year, SFJAZZ is the largest nonprofit jazz presenter in the world. Originally founded in 1983 as a two-day festival, SFJAZZ serves over a quarter of a million fans and students every year through its year-round concert, commissioning and education programs.

SFJAZZ CEO Greg Stern has built the non-

profit's success on understanding his audience of jazz fans and artists, connecting with local communities in San Francisco, and finding ways as a nonprofit to build a revenue stream from patrons and donations.

Greg knows that San Franciscans want more jazz, more often. SFJAZZ produces 400 shows a year between two state-of-the-art venues tailored for jazz appreciation. Fans are busy - so shows are generally 90 minutes long, giving people time to enjoy a break and still make it home to go to school or work the next day. He knows his audience wants to feel connected to the community, so outreach through education and artist development are integral to the SFJAZZ mission.

SFJAZZ now has one of the highest rates of audience-sponsored revenue in the artistic nonprofit arena. Donations and sponsors are still important, but knowing what customers want has given SFJAZZ a unique advantage in being self-funding (through ticket sales) for a large part of its operation.

## Creating product-marketing fit

Second, create product-market fit. Not every organization nails this. Some try to create a fit over time or believe so much in their own innovation that they power forward, unsure why revenue is slow to keep pace. Sasha Orloff, cofounder and CEO of Puzzle, has been hyper-focused on product-market fit since before the company even shipped.

Sasha knew he wanted to upend the status quo in

bookkeeping and accounting. Artificial intelligence (AI) and rapid technological change were creating opportunities for new ways to handle finance, but accounting software wasn't keeping pace with the rest of the tech world. While Sasha understood some of the frustrations, he explored deeply what customers would want by tackling product development from a variety of perspectives.

He leaned hard into the Sean Ellis methodology, a fast and effective way to evaluate the consistency of a particular product in the market, by taking best practices from the methodology and applying them effectively. He surveyed and had deep conversations with business entrepreneurs and founders to understand what they were missing from legacy accounting technologies. Then he talked with the people who would use any accounting technology on a daily basis and got close to accountants and bookkeepers.

His efforts have paid off tremendously. Puzzle is now positioned as the modern accounting platform for the AI era, enabling its customers to get financials and insights every day. Importantly, Puzzle is trusted by the industry and thousands of start-ups and has auto-categorized \$30B+ of transactions.

## Remaining flexible

Third, remain flexible. Business is going to change every day - twists and turns are normal. Christine Tedstrom, Senior Director of Finance at apparel powerhouse Marine Layer, tells other business leaders and colleagues to look at long-

term value creation and not just short-term gains. The only way to achieve those goals is to acknowledge that flexibility is essential to great outcomes - and while plans are super, they will have to adapt.

A well-known host of a fashion reality show used to say that in fashion, "one day you're in and the next you're out." As an innovative, California-inspired retailer focused on sustainability and recycled materials, Marine Layer's leadership makes sure they stay absolutely "in" by committing to great products, keen market tracking and business understanding delivered with financial data. They know when to stay the course with a decision and they know when to pivot or change direction.

Marine Layer has created massive success with "absurdly soft shirts that are perfect for a 7-day weekend kinds lifestyle." The company started when the founder's girlfriend threw away his favorite shirt and grew with the help of friends and a '69 VW bus. What was once a shirt company now spans almost every type of apparel.

Flexibility can take you to successes and growth you didn't anticipate.

## Making decisions in real-time

Fourth, make decisions in real-time. This is the counsel of Kate Hultin-Schott, Director, Consulting at Armanino LLP. Armanino is one of the top 25 largest independent accounting and

See **UNLOCKING** business growth on Page 8





# Employee appreciation ideas staff will love

It's not always easy for business owners to find the right ways to show employees how much they're appreciated. According to the O.C. Tanner Network, an employee recognition platform, 40 percent of employees say the recognition they receive at work feels like an empty gesture. This is compounded by the burnout that Deloitte says affects 77 percent of respondents. Employers may be missing the mark when it comes to developing techniques to help employees feel valued and satisfied.

Improving employee morale can start with various techniques to help staff feel more appreciated. The following are some ways employers can do just that.

- Send along a work perk. Employers can share a particular work

benefit they have received with an employee. This may include a first-class upgrade for a flight or tickets to a hot sports game. Hard-to-get reservations at a trendy restaurant also can be passed on to a hard-working employee.

- Create a work trophy. Trophies often indicate victory in sports and other events, so employers can follow suit in the workplace. Create a trophy that is a recognized symbol of staff appreciation that is given to those who have accomplished something good.

- Let employees choose their gifts. Put together a catalog of appreciation gifts and let employees choose their own rather than thinking you know what is best.

- Go public with ap-

preciation. Let customers know how they are valued by taking to social media or signage in the office that shares tales of exceptional employees. Speak about what staff did and how much they are appreciated.

- Stay current with salary increases. One of the easiest ways to show employees they're appreciated is through periodic reviews and pay increases. These increases can go beyond just the cost of living increases many companies provide.

- Go out for lunch. Take employees out individually or in small groups for lunch or dinner. Use

this opportunity to get to know them better and engage in conversation regarding what they believe will benefit the company. Employees may feel more valued if their ideas are heard.

- Celebrate various milestones. As a company, you can celebrate milestones that are not necessarily work-related, such as when an employee has reached a certain wedding anniversary or if they have welcomed a child.

Showing employee appreciation through creative means can help staff feel valued.

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# UNLOCKING BUSINESS GROWTH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

business consulting firms in the United States. They are a nationwide leader serving privately held companies and private individuals, as well as nonprofit organizations and public entities. Kate is a fan of historical trend analysis and looking at trends over quarters. But she is justifiably frustrated when companies make decisions based on old data. She questions why we demand real-time data from every other aspect of our lives - sports scores, weather, traffic - but are fine waiting days, weeks or even months for business data.

To Kate, real-time is the time that matters most. Yes, it is important to combine real-time with historical data and context (no one wants to mistake a blip for a trend),

but not having fast, reliable data that presents the “now” is a miss.

With more than 12,000 customers, over 2,500 valued employees, and 21 offices in the U.S., keeping up with what is happening in the moment has obviously paid off.

I hope these lessons for unlocking business growth inspire you as they’ve inspired me. And I hope they unlock your own organization’s success.

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# How businesses can build a more diverse workplace

Companies that value diversity, equity and inclusion are wildly popular among workers. A 2021 survey from CNBC and SurveyMonkey found that 80 percent of workers want to work for a company that values those qualities. Recognition of these preferences can help companies draw the most talented and team-oriented professionals, potentially setting them up for years of success.

There's no magic formula for building a more diverse workplace, and such a goal likely won't be achieved overnight. However, company leaders can try these strategies as they look to build more diverse workplaces and reap the many rewards that such efforts produce.

- Revisit certain hiring practices. Staffs are built through hiring practices, so revisiting those policies can be a great place to start when looking to build a more diverse workplace. One area to consider concerns where openings are posted. DiversityWorking.com bills itself as the largest online site for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) jobs and features postings in a wide range of industries. Sites such as DiversityWorking.com and RecruitDisability.org, which connects employers with job seekers with disabilities, including veterans, can be great places to attract applicants from various backgrounds who want to work at companies that value DEI.

- Emphasize diversity in internship programs. Estimates from the National Association of Colleges and Employers indicate that around 70 percent of employers end up offering their interns

full-time jobs, and nearly 80 percent of interns accept those offers. Given those figures, emphasizing diversity within internship programs can serve as a good foundation for building a more diverse workplace when interns graduate and begin their careers.

- Provide diversity training. Another way to build a more diverse workplace is to provide diversity training. Such

training can raise awareness of any lack of diversity at the company and also illustrate how building a more diverse workplace benefits everyone. Diversity training can include unconscious bias training for human resources professionals and anyone else involved in the hiring process. The Office of Diversity and Outreach at the University of California, San Francisco says unconscious biases are social stereotypes about

certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Unconscious bias training can help HR professionals and others recognize and overcome these biases.

A more diverse workplace can benefit businesses in various ways. Company founders and leaders can embrace various strategies to make their workplaces more diverse and inclusive.



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# How to navigate a remote interview

Not so long ago, job interviews were conducted almost exclusively in person. Hiring managers were able to assess candidates during these interviews, getting an idea about everything from the applicant's skill set to how he or she affected the energy in the room to body language and the confidence of a handshake.

Today a growing number of interviews are virtual. Many are conducted via popular video conferencing apps like Zoom. In a recent survey of talent leaders and recruiters conducted by the tech firm Talview, 80 percent of respondents said their hiring process is now fully remote. There are many advantages to remote/virtual interviews. They tend to be more convenient for screening applicants for remote positions because the applicant pool may be coming from anywhere around the world. Remote interviews also can be less time-consuming.

As useful as they can be, remote interviews are not foolproof. Technical snarls or uncooperative conditions at home can affect remote interviews. Virtual interviews also may not give candidates an accurate idea of the culture at a given firm. But remote interviews are likely here to stay, so here's how candidates can put their best (virtual) foot forward.

Test the technology

Open the conferencing app and test links to make sure that you can

get on the service and understand how it functions. Log in early, even if it means sitting in a virtual waiting room until the meeting organizer arrives. At least you'll be ensured of being on time.

Have a cheat sheet at the ready

A remote interview gives candidates a distinct advantage, as they can utilize notes without it being obvious. Place them just above the device camera or off to the side slightly so you can refer to them like one may read a teleprompter or cue cards on television.

Use your space wisely

If you'll be on video, set up your space and your appearance so that it is professional but engaging. Use your home office environment to make a strong impression. Keep background clutter to a minimum. If necessary, use a virtual office backdrop, which was preferred by 97 percent of the 513 recruiters that Harvard Business Review observed and interviewed over an eight-month period in 2020.

Engage with the interviewer and avoid distractions

Distractions can knock you off of your game and make you come across as less en-

gaging to recruiters. Ask housemates to make themselves scarce during the interview and lock pets out of the room. Silence your phone (if it isn't the device being used for the interview) and look into the camera while speaking. Maintaining eye contact is a sign of respect and confidence. If the interviewer is speaking at length, utilize the mute button on your phone or conferencing app to silence ambient noise.

Remote interviews are a large part of modern working environments. Mastering an ability to interview remotely can help candidates ace their next interview.

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# The many ways a thriving agricultural sector is beneficial

Inflation has been a hot topic for several years running. Many businesses have been forced to raise their prices in an effort to combat a host of variables, including materials costs, labor shortages and political uncertainty across the globe. That's been hard on consumers' and business owners' pocketbooks, and precisely when inflation will simmer down remains a mystery.

Though the cost of many goods and services has skyrocketed in recent years, discussions about inflation often focus on the rising cost of groceries. According to USDA Economic Research, food prices in the United States rose 23.6 percent between 2020 and 2024. That's led many people to cut back on luxuries like dining out. As people dine out less, they may be looking

to expand their culinary horizons at home, and that goal is best achieved when the agricultural sector is put in position to meet consumer demands. Indeed, that link is just one of the many ways that a thriving agricultural sector benefits everyone.

A strong agricultural sector greatly benefits the economy. Job creation is widely cited as a pathway to economic recovery, and a well-supported agricultural sector can create millions of jobs. The agricultural tech firm Sabanto estimates 2025 began with around 2.4 million unfilled jobs within the agricultural sector. A 2022 report from Maryville University indicated the agricultural sector contributes \$7 trillion to the U.S. economy, employing as much as 10.3 percent of the nation's workers. The link be-

tween a thriving agricultural sector and a strong economy is undeniable, making it a worthy endeavor to support policies that prioritize agriculture.

A thriving farm is a productive farm. Modern grocery stores offer an abundance of healthy foods, and many of those foods are grown on farms. The Farm Bureau reports that a single acre of land can grow various crops, producing as much as 50,000 strawberries or just under 2,800 bushels of wheat. Consumers who enjoy visiting grocery stores that offer an array of fresh, nutritious foods, including fruits and vegetables, should know that those options are only available when a thriving agricultural sector is prioritized.

Farms are vital to production of other prod-

ucts as well. Maryville University notes a thriving agricultural sector is involved in more than just food production. IFP Energies notes that bio-based chemistry uses raw materials derived from biomass, such as plants like wheat, corn and potatoes, to produce an array of products, including inks, dyes and detergents. So it's not just the foods people eat that can be traced to a thriving agricultural sector. Bio-based chemistry also is considered green because it promotes a reduction of the environmental impact of industrial production.

There's no shortage of reasons to support a thriving agricultural sector. Indeed, consumers from all walks of life benefit in myriad ways when the success of the agricultural sector is prioritized.

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