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INSIDER: You Don’t Have to Be A Shark
Luke Smith, MBA Candidate

INSIDER: Own Your Day
Amanda Rodriguez, MBA
Imagine for a moment, you are finishing up a contract that was due 10 minutes ago. Your to-do list is out of control, and your email, well, that’s another story altogether. A new agent knocks on your door requesting input on a home he’s listing, and the phone rings while a text comes through from a client asking if you can push this evening’s showing up an hour. How do you respond?

In today’s adrenaline-driven, overcommitted society, many real-estate professionals may respond with “yes.” “Yes, I can crank out that contract in 10, maybe 15 minutes. Yes, I’ll stay a little late to get through the email. Yes, I can give you feedback on your listing as soon as I send the contract, and, while we’re at it, sure, let me see about moving up that showing. I can always just come back to the office tonight, or finish up the to-do list when my kids go to bed.”

As you can imagine, the scenario above paints a picture of someone who is stressed, exhausted and whose work product and personal life may soon deteriorate and spiral out of control.

In Own Your Day, author and sales coach Keith Rosen examines how sales leaders can put a dent in the stress and exhaustion. Rosen outlines strategies on how to refocus, minimize distractions, properly manage the precious little time we all have and create an ideal life.

THINK POINT #1: Create Your Personal Navigation System

Driving cross country without a map or any GPS system isn’t a good idea. You’ll get somewhere, but you won’t arrive at the specific location you set out for in the first place. For this trip, a navigation system is an excellent tool to get to your preferred destination. Your real-estate career, and your life for that matter, can be summed up in the same manner. In order to refocus, you must first consider that specific location or end-result every single day of your journey. Where are you going, i.e., what is your professional and personal vision?

Rather than “I want to make more money,” or “I want less stress,” a vision statement must be specific and measurable. How much more money must you save for retirement, and by when must you reach that goal? Rosen encourages readers to dream big. Envisioning your ideal life
will help as you schedule your priorities and day-to-day tasks with the ultimate end-result of living your vision.

Step two in creating your personal navigation system is to identify your core values and priorities. This isn’t what you do, but rather, who you are and what is important to you as you make this journey. Each day revolves around personal values, which determine priorities. For example, if you value connections, your day-to-day priorities are most likely family and close friends. As you refocus, carefully consider what values you’re unwilling to sacrifice.

Step three to creating your personal navigation system is to set specific and measurable goals with a deadline. Rosen recommends setting 12-month goals and staying away from goals you define as shoulds. If you set a goal because you should do it, it’s an old goal or possibly stems from someone else’s agenda. Should goals do not support your priorities.

Once goals are clearly defined, you must create a strategy of how you’ll meet each goal. A further subset of your strategies are action plans, or the steps you’ll take to accomplish each strategy. For example, if you are in the field selling homes on a daily basis, your personal goal, strategy and action steps may look like the following:

1. **Goal**
   a. Sell 30 homes during the 3rd quarter

2. **Strategy:**
   a. Increase marketing in surrounding locations to reach potential buyers
   b. Obtain referrals from current and former clients
   c. Increase social media presence for additional reach to potential buyers
   d. Create specific checklist for sellers to complete to ensure all homes are market-ready prior to listing
   e. Network with other agents in community

3. **Action Plan** (for strategy item a – increase advertising in surrounding locations):
   a. Set budget for increased marketing
   b. Complete analysis of type of marketing best suited for area (billboards, local advertisements, flyers, mailers, etc.)
   c. Obtain quotes for preferred marketing method
   d. If sending mailers, flyers, etc., select distribution list
   e. Select and purchase preferred marketing materials
   f. If mailing, send materials to distribution list

Action plans must be created for each strategy item, and it is imperative to then block time to complete action items on your calendar. As your calendar fills, you may need to reconsider and rank goals in order of importance.
As you begin to block time for your action items, you are building your routine. While the term *routine* often garners an image of a rigid, non-changing environment, think of your routine as adaptable and organic. In real-estate sales, as in most professions, externalities, or the unexpected, are constantly in play and are a predictable source of unpredictable interruptions. Multiple clients call, a new listing becomes available in a client’s desired and hard-to-find neighborhood, etc. By scheduling your day with specific, measurable activities and allowing time blocks for externalities, your routine becomes flexible *and* realistic.

If you have agents working for you, you have a unique opportunity to set your own priorities, goals and action plans for your work while also coaching agents in your office to identify and set their own priorities. When these steps are followed throughout the organization, your firm’s associates may experience better work-life balance, team cohesion and a positive shift in organization culture.

**THINK POINT #2: Take Charge of Your Day**

As you block time for your action items, you may begin to see that you’re essentially doing it all when you should be delegating. Assign a dollar value to your time and determine which activities are most valuable to your schedule and increase your effectiveness in the long run.

Once you’ve determined your worth – do what you’re good at by developing your strengths and delegating your weaknesses. It can be difficult to delegate a (i.e., let go of control), but for those of you who are managing a team of agents, if you hire the right team and *trust* your team, you can empower these individuals with the right tools and knowledge to properly complete the tasks at hand. While delegating helps leverage your time, it also builds accountability, trust and confidence within your firm. For those working in the field, rather than spending hours driving from listing to listing, snapping photos that don’t accurately highlight your listings, hire a real-estate photographer who can properly light and edit and produce professional photos to make your listings stand out from the rest. You save time that can be focused on your strengths, and you may, for example, reach new potential buyers with better listing photos.

In order to take charge of your day, you must also make a list of your *non-negotiables*, or, the activities that you simply cannot remove from your routine, such as commute time and client showings. Self-care, such as exercise, time for self-reflection, *me* time or even *do nothing* time is a critical non-negotiable. If you aren’t taking proper care of yourself to unwind and process the day, you can’t effectively take care of your family, clients and team in the long run. From your self-care to weekly standing meetings to your *have-to* items that you may not particularly like to do (but that cannot be delegated), all non-negotiables must be scheduled.
Any *diversionary tactics* that appear in your routine should also be carefully evaluated. Diversionary tasks are comfortable to-do items, but just not priorities. Cleaning your office, checking emails, getting your presentation materials *just right* are a few examples of this busy work that takes valuable time away from completing action items that could propel your success.

As you continue to build your routine, treat every action like an appointment. Getting ready in the morning is an appointment. Reviewing the daily updates on the MLS is an appointment. Self-care activities are appointments, and so on. If your calendar runs out of time for your action items, you are overcommitted and need to carefully consider that you are a) not being realistic about the length of time certain tasks or projects may take; 2) not planning for externalities, or the unplanned; or 3) not being realistic with what is already on your schedule, like your morning routine, commute to work, etc.

The key to your day is to schedule everything, while still being realistic. Your calendar is a puzzle and must have the fluidity to move tasks around, planning the worst-case scenario. If you are meeting a client for a showing 15 miles away and know you can make the drive in 20 minutes, don’t simply block 20 minutes for travel time! What happens when you hit traffic or receive an urgent phone call that requires you to pull your car over for five minutes? You must be honest with your colleagues, your clients, and *yourself* about what you can and simply cannot accomplish in a day. While it can be uncomfortable at first, it’s better to under-promise so that you can set realistic expectations on your schedule rather than overcommit and under-deliver.

While organizing your appointments, schedule priority tasks at your peak performance times. During your peak performance time, resist the urge to open your phone when you are alerted to a new tweet or open your email with each incoming message. Rosen suggests scheduling phone calls and processing email every four hours. Email or phone interruptions can disrupt focus and work flow and cause wasted seconds and minutes, which compound over time to equal hours and even days of missed opportunities.

Finally, while scheduling your day, know your *stop time* each day. By scheduling specific and measurable action steps, you allow yourself to embrace the principle of *enoughness* in your
workday. Each activity has a designated time on your schedule, and you are then able to fully focus on your personal goals and action plans outside of work when you leave the office.

**THINK POINT #3: LIVE, and Live Each Day Responsibly**

As previously mentioned, you must be honest with yourself about expectations. The more overcommitted your schedule is, the more tempted you may be to multitask. While you may consider multitasking a great opportunity to quickly complete multiple tasks, consider how much attention each tasks receives. More often than not, you’re not fully engaged or fully present for either. In order to build trust with every person with whom you work, schedule tasks independent of each other.

If an externality or interruption occurs, for example, if a new agent stops in your office and requests input on a new listing (and you oblige), put down your cell phone, turn away from the computer, and give him your full attention. You may have to rearrange your schedule to allow for your 100% attention to the conversation at hand, but you are building trust and confidence. If you simply must complete the task at hand, ask the agent if you can schedule a time with him to discuss his listing. Your routine is ultimately your decision, and you must honor your own boundaries.

Managing your daily routine is much different than crossing items off your to-do list. Cut the cord with any lists which do not produce the focus, structure, accountability or deadlines that your scheduled routine provides. In most cases, daily to-do lists turn into lists of what didn’t get done.

In order to live fully, you must also get off of the *adrenaline train*. Adrenaline is good in small doses, but when every day and every task becomes an adrenaline rush (often because you’re on a tight deadline or unprepared), you may feel overwhelmed, develop anxiety, lose your peace-of-mind or experience dips in performance. Rather than thriving on adrenaline, build your momentum, which produces consistency and long-lasting results.

Finally, learn to say no. The *yes-aholic* is often stressed, overcommitted and struggles to keep promises, in turn, letting others down. To be true to yourself and those around you, it is critical to step back and carefully consider any requests before saying yes to a request. Acknowledge the importance of these requests, but set an appointment to evaluate the request before making the commitment.

**Conclusion**
As you press forward and create successes, stop focusing solely on results. Celebrate the journey and the small everyday accomplishments along the way. The result is a by-product of your efforts and how strategies have been executed. Be mindful of the future while being engaged in the moment, and model this process for all around you at the office and at home.

Your routine will evolve as long as you are flexible and open to change. Honoring this routine is an empowering activity you can do each day to maximize your success, helping you reach your greatest potential and ultimately lead the lifestyle you desire.

**Recommended Reading**


**About the Author**

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Amanda serves as the Assistant Director for the Keller Center for Research and as the Associate Editor of the *Keller Center Research Report* at Baylor University, managing the production and distribution of the journal. Before joining the Keller Center team, she managed Corporate Relations for Baylor's Center for Professional Selling. Amanda earned her MBA in Management and BA in Journalism from the University of Texas at Arlington.